

OBJ/036/W8

S22 WEATHERBY

THE PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (SUFFOLK LEVEL CROSSING
REDUCTION) ORDER

PUBLIC INQUIRY, 13 FEBRUARY 2018

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT REFERENCE: TWA/17/APP/04

OBJECTION BY **THE RAMBLERS** TO CLOSURE OF S22 WEATHERBY
CROSSING

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF **PHILIP PRIGG** of 1 Edgeborough Close,
Kentford, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8QY

Introduction

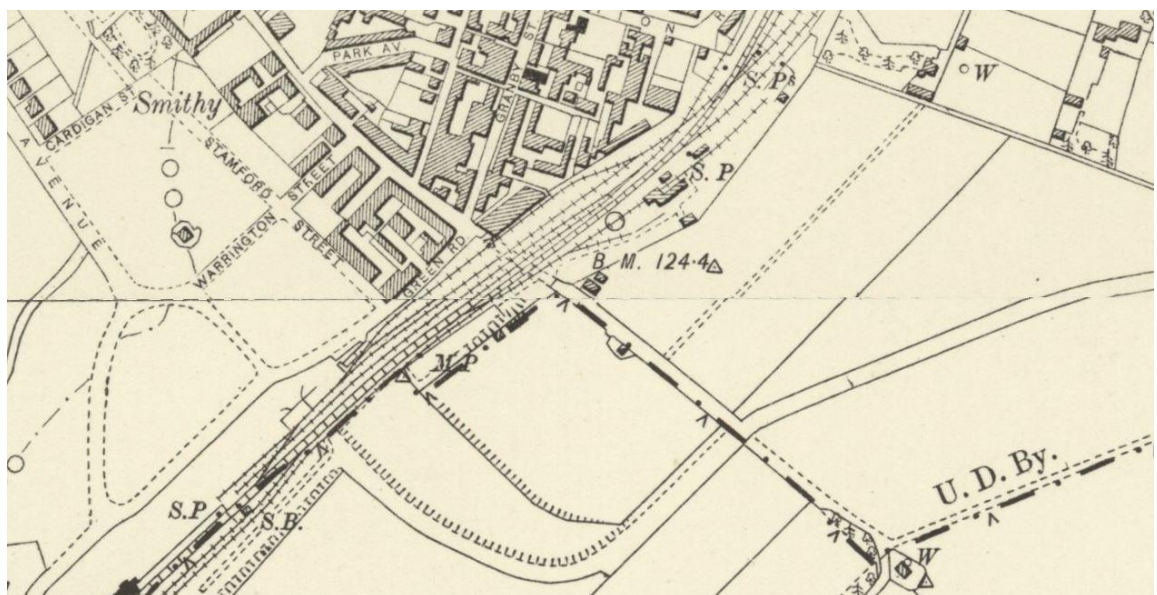
1. My name is Philip Prigg and I am the Ramblers Footpath Secretary for the Newmarket and District Group. In this role my responsibilities cover 27 Suffolk parishes near to the boundary with Cambridgeshire, running from the River Lark in the north to Haverhill in the south, plus 12 East Cambs parishes close to Newmarket. I have held this post since 2011 and, for about 10 years previously, had worked closely with my predecessor. Since joining the Ramblers over 30 years ago, I have regularly led walks for my Group and currently, with my wife, am also responsible for the preparation of the Group's programme. Both my wife and I are also Committee members of the Icknield Way Association, a body looking after the interests of users of this long-distance route. I am a life-long resident of the Newmarket area and attended the Grammar School in the town during the 1950s.
2. The Ramblers organizes itself through constituent parts known as "Areas", loosely based on traditional counties. The Suffolk Area carries out the Ramblers' objects through seven territorial Groups, together covering the whole county. Each Group has a Footpaths Secretary (in the case of one Group, two Footpaths Secretaries). These are authorised to make representations to the appropriate authorities concerning proposed changes

to the rights of way network. They make these representations following decisions made by themselves with other suitably experienced members of the Group, usually as a committee. For county-wide strategic issues or issues affecting the territories of two or more Groups, reference may be made to the Suffolk Area Footpaths Committee which consists of an Area Footpaths Secretary, all of the Group Footpaths Secretaries, Access Officers and, *ex officio*, the Area Chair or even the Area Council consisting of the Area Officers and delegates from each the Groups.

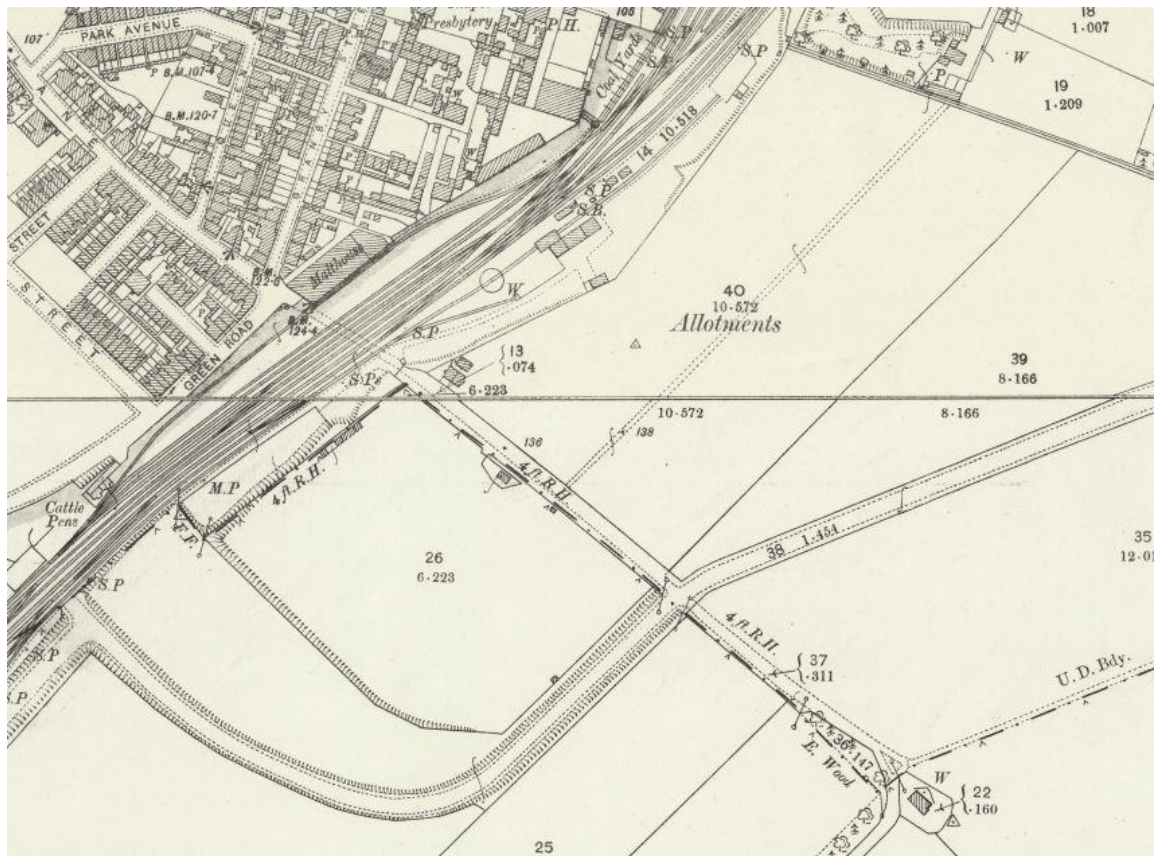
The present proposal

3. The Ramblers objects to the proposal to close crossing S22 Weatherby.
4. The Weatherby crossing has, surely, been in existence since at least fairly shortly after the advent of the railway. At any rate it is shown on the 6-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1901 which was revised in 1903. It can be established from other sources that the railway arrived in Newmarket in 1848.

This (1:10560, but not to scale here) comprises the Cambridgeshire XLII.NW and Cambridgeshire XLII.SW sheets published in 1903 from a revision of 1901 (sourced from the National Library for Scotland map collection)—



This (1:2500, but not to scale here) comprises Cambridgeshire XL11.10 and Cambridgeshire XLII.6 from 1901/1902. (Sourced from the National Library for Scotland map collection)—



5. My personal recollection of the crossing goes back only as far as the mid to late 1940s. I recall being taken to a fête or the like, at the Newmarket Town Football Ground, only a few metres to the south of it, perhaps to celebrate the end of the second world war. I have clearer memories of the crossing from the 1950s, when I was a pupil at the town's Grammar School and we held our annual sports day at the football ground. Pupils transported the equipment for this, on foot, using the Weatherby crossing.

Recent history

6. Whilst the crossing is in the parish of Newmarket, Suffolk, it is very close to the boundary with Cambridgeshire. The football ground is actually within the Cambridgeshire parish of Woodditton. Until the 1960s, Newmarket had a two platform railway station on the Cambridge to Bury St Edmunds line, with a

branch to Ely, together with a substantial area of sidings, in the main associated with horse racing industry, well outside the station area. Whilst generally to the north-east of the crossing, these sidings were so extensive that users of the crossing had to negotiate several sets of lines. Since the 1960s the station has been reduced in size, with only a single-track line passing through it, and surplus land, including the sidings, sold for housing.

Existing situation

7. The railway line at the crossing is now only single-track and the margins on either side of it are bounded by chain link fencing. The crossing itself is surfaced and gated on both sides, with good visibility in both directions, and, it being only about 400 metres from the station, train speeds should be relatively slow. Whilst not on the definitive map, the crossing provides a very useful link for pedestrians and cyclists between the 'suburb', some of it on former railway land, that has sprung up to the south of the railway (in both counties), and the town itself, mainly in the 20th century.
8. The immediate approach to the crossing from the south is from New Cheveley Road, via Cricket Field Road, the latter serving two relatively recent housing developments, together with the football ground and a large block of allotment gardens, some of which will, undoubtedly, be tended by residents from the north side of the railway. A substantial area of land to the north of the line has been redeveloped with housing in recent years and a new spine road, Granary Road, has been provided, running parallel to the railway, with facility for pedestrians and cyclists, having used both the rail and spine-road crossings, to continue into town along the pavements of relatively quiet streets. In this urban environment, it is hardly surprising to learn that this crossing has the highest usage of all those in Suffolk under threat of closure, and its importance to the local community cannot be overstated.

Alternative route

9. The alternative route suggested by Network Rail starts immediately to the south of the railway and continues clockwise, via Cricket Field Road, New Cheveley Road and Green Road to reach Granary Road, all as shown on Mott MacDonald's drawing no: MMD 367516 S22. This route would be less pedestrian-friendly, being entirely on roadside footways, with steep gradients in both directions. It is almost a kilometre longer than simply crossing the line, as at present. The town centre would then be less accessible, particularly to the elderly and disabled, and this would encourage greater use of the car, if available.

Conclusions

10. Crossings in urban areas, such as this, are rather different to those in the countryside and require different treatment. It has been established that the Weatherby crossing is in constant use by a significant number of people going about their daily business including travel to work, school, shopping and leisure activities.
11. The proposed closure would result in a great deal of inconvenience, and expense, to many. It cannot be described as a *suitable* alternative. We ask the Inspector, therefore, to recommend that Network Rail be required to retain the crossing and to install an adequate warning system, if deemed necessary.

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

PHILIP PRIGG

8 JANUARY 2018

Photographs follow . . .

Photographs showing aspects of Network Rail's suggested alternative route, in order as walked, and the existing crossing

1. *New Cheveley Road, looking north-west (downhill) towards railway bridge—*



- 2 *Junction between New Cheveley Road and Green Road, looking north-east, (uphill), towards Granary Road—*



3 Continuation of footpath/cycleway towards town centre north of Granary Road—



4 Road crossing, Granary Road, looking north-east. Weatherby rail crossing is to the right—



5 Approach to railway crossing from Granary Road, looking south-east—



6 Looking south-west along railway (towards Cambridge); note good visibility



7 Looking north-east along railway (towards Bury St Edmunds); note good visibility—



8 Approach to crossing from Cricket Field Road, looking north-west—



9 View of crossing from Cricket Field Road, looking north-west—

