

**APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL  
(SUFFOLK LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION) ORDER**

---

**SUMMARY TO**

**PROOF OF EVIDENCE:**

**ANDREW WOODIN – RIGHTS OF WAY AND ACCESS MANAGER**

Bachelor of Sciences Honours degree in Ecology

---

## **Introduction**

1. My name is Andrew Woodin, I am employed by Suffolk County Council (the Council) as the Rights of Way and Access Manager and have held this post since 2003.
2. I have been very heavily involved in Network Rail projects for some years now, both individual crossing-specific projects and, more lately, this Transport and Works Act Order (the Order). The Council has committed an immense amount of resource to assisting Network Rail where it considers Network Rail's proposals are in Suffolk's interests and, in this regard, Network Rail has benefitted a great deal from the Council's expertise and local knowledge, free of charge.
3. Where Suffolk County Council has objected to specific level crossing closure proposals in this Order, it is because it believes the negative impact of the proposal is greater than the public benefit to be derived from it.

## **Objection to Closure of Weatherby S22**

4. This proposal seeks to close the level crossing and divert users along New Cheveley Road (B1103). The grounds for the Council's objection to the closure of this crossing are reproduced in my full proof, and are based on the high level of usage of the crossing and the circuitous nature of the alternative route.
5. The Council is not persuaded that Network Rail has explained persuasively why the crossing needs to be closed and why a bridge or other mitigation measures have not been provided. Ms Noonan, Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough council's' Principal Growth Officer covers the lack of closure justification in more detail in her evidence.
6. I inspected this crossing on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and then on 12 December 2017. On both occasions I have observed people using the crossing and doing so in a safe manner. Often they have been pulling a shopping trolley. The use of the route is primarily as a direct and convenient means of getting to the town centre for

residents in the vicinity of The Drift and further afield, and of course to access the football club.

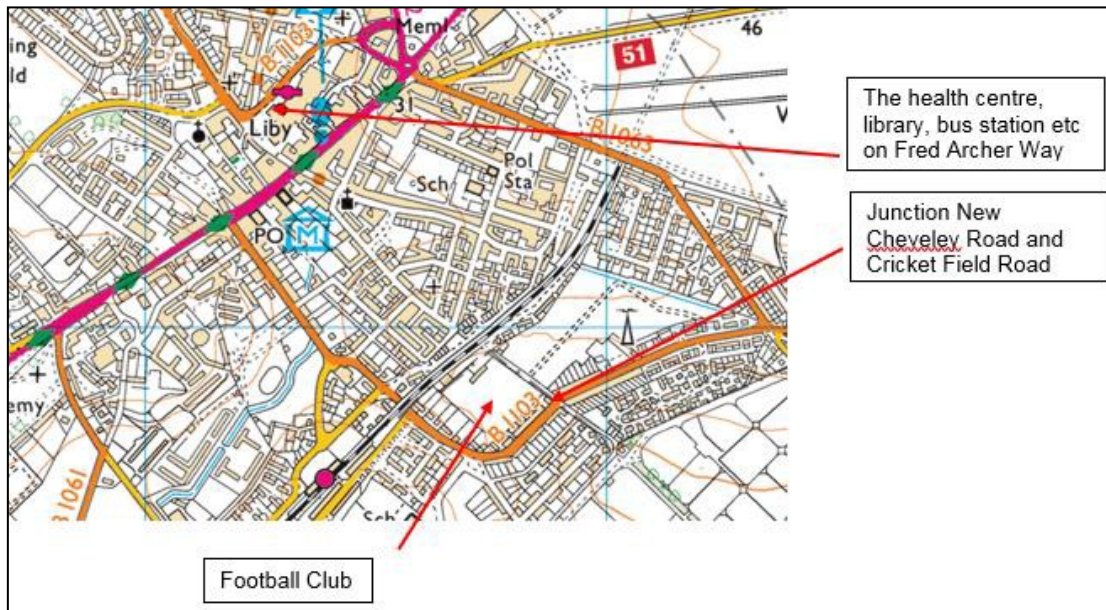
### **Added Length, Reduced Amenity and Accessibility**

7. As Mr Kerr has noted in his proof, the test to be applied to whether an alternative route provided by Network Rail is adequate is whether it is “convenient and suitable for existing users” (TWA Guidance Annex 2, p.105). The 2011 edition of the Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines suitable and convenient in the following way:

*suitable meaning right or appropriate for a particular person, purpose, or situation; and convenient meaning fitting in well with a person’s needs, activities and plans involving little trouble or effort. The length, amenity and accessibility of a route are all relevant factors when considering if that route is suitable and convenient for existing users.*

8. The distance from the junction of New Cheveley Road and Cricket Field Road via the level crossing and along Park Lane to the Rookery Health Centre on Fred Archer Way, which is also near to the library, Newmarket Day Centre and the Forest Heath District Council offices is 1000m. I have used this location as a likely destination for many users. At an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (the pace used by Network Rail), this would take just under 15 minutes.
9. It is difficult to know which alternative route walkers and cyclists might take should the level crossing be closed, but the distance to and from the same points via The Avenue is 1400m. (The distances are much the same on any alternative route.) This would take nearly 21 minutes on a less attractive route along The Avenue on a footway immediately abutting the carriageway and involve gradients not present on the existing route. This adds an extra 6 minutes (12 minutes both ways), or 40%, to the journey, which is a significant extra time on a short, utilitarian, journey and I consider enough to deter some sections of the community from walking to and from the town centre, which is close to this crossing. For example, those in poor health, the elderly, people with mobility restrictions and parents with children, whether in a

pram or buggy or walking independently. The map below shows key locations referred to in this proof:



Ordnance Survey Crown Copyright

10. I have attached images representing the different nature of the existing and proposed routes below:



New Cheveley Road Proposed Route Looking North



Existing Park Lane Route Looking North images courtesy Google Earth

11. I believe strongly that especially when walking and cycling people are naturally drawn to use desire lines to get to their destination and will use those lines even in preference to routes in better condition, as the following images from Google Images vividly demonstrate. In other words people will always want to use the most convenient route to walk and cycle from the town centre and may be deterred if they are denied that route.



### **Network Rail's Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) – Scoping Report**

12. Network Rail commissioned a DIA for the Order from Mott MacDonald. This report is dated August 2016. This has been shared with the Council but it does not appear to have been provided in Network Rail's application documents. I have been informed that, for purposes of considering this scheme, the Secretary of State will need to be satisfied that he has discharged his public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. The Council, therefore, requests that the relevant DIA materials are disclosed to the Inquiry. The DIA Scoping Report is 196 pages long and I have attached the relevant extracts from the report as appendix 3.

13. The purpose of the report is to identify potential issues related to the closures and gather evidence on the potential impacts on people with different protected characteristics in order to make an assessment about which crossings require further consideration through a full DIA (1.4 of report).

14. The report uses a Red-Amber-Green rating for each site (2.3). Red means a level crossing requires a full DIA to proceed.

15. The report gives more explanation on the impact of closing level crossings on walking distances and community severance this is highlighted in my full proof.
16. The scoping report gives the Weatherby crossing a red rating and it is recommended that given the number of users and the location of the crossing further exploration into alternative solutions to the closure is recommended.
17. I would like to know therefore whether Network Rail commissioned a full DIA for this crossing and do not see how the Council can properly consider the impact of this closure without that work being done.

### **Further Support for Objection**

18. Suffolk County Council's Public Health department has submitted evidence to the inquiry to support the objection to the closure of this crossing and giving expert public health-based evidence. This evidence is attached as appendix 1.
19. Cambridgeshire County Council also object to the closure of this crossing, because of the impact on residents in the communities of Cheveley and Woodditton, supported by their county councillor Mathew Shuter. This objection is attached as appendix 2.

### **Conflict with Relevant Policies**

20. In his evidence, Mr Kerr highlighted those local and national policies which relate to encouraging and promoting walking. I am not an expert in all aspects of relevant evidence but consider the proposal at Weatherby is contrary to the following policies. These are expanded upon in my full proof.

- (i) Suffolk's **Local Transport Plan 2011-2031**,
- (ii) The Department for Transport's **Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2017**,
- (iii) The Suffolk Walking Strategy 2015-2020,

- (iv) The **Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006 to 2016**,
- (v) The draft **ROWIP II 'Policies and Action Plan'**.

## **Conclusion**

21. To conclude, in my professional opinion, this proposal is neither suitable nor convenient, and will have a significant negative impact on people's enjoyment of the rights of way network. The Inspector cannot, therefore, be satisfied that an alternative route has been provided pursuant to section 5(6) of the Transport and Works Act 1992. Furthermore, the proposal goes against both local and national policies that are meant to encourage walking and cycling.
22. The Council is not persuaded that Network Rail has explained persuasively why the crossing needs to be closed and why a bridge or other mitigation measures have not been provided
23. Furthermore, the absence of any evidence from Network Rail to counter the DIA red rating given to the crossing urgently needs further explanation.
24. On this basis, I ask that the Inspector recommends the removal of this level crossing from the order.

END

Signed: .....  
Andrew Woodin

Dated: 10 January 2018