

Paget Rd.

On Tuesday 23rd and Wednesday 24th October the case for and against the closure of the Paget Rd crossing was heard at the Holiday Inn at Eight Ash Green.

The Tuesday was taken up with the case by Network Rail for the closure. It was the same case as before, based on the perceived danger of the crossing to users and the its impact on rail services. NR and its agents rely on strategic arguments on the intrinsic danger posed by all pedestrian and vehicular level crossings, and use an algorithm to prove that danger. It was possible to ascertain more information about the works required for the proposed alternative route via Philip Rd.

The Wednesday was taken up with further evidence and cross examination of NR's expert witnesses. Although tightly argued, there were some embarrassing moments when questioned about the road safety audits for the alternative routes across the High St and Anglesea Rd. These took place on Friday 22nd September 2017 starting at Bures at 11.40 a.m. then to Wivenhoe at 12.15 and then to great Gt. Bentley at 12.30 - the witness floundered!

Then it was the turn of the objectors. The Ramblers based their objections the healthy effects of access to the countryside, CBC only objected because the alternative routes are simply dangerous, Wiv Soc represented by Peter Hill objected to the loss of a community facility and the inadequacy of the alternative routes, WTC represented by Peter Kay objected likewise and that the evidence base provided by NR on sighting distances simply did not justify this particular closure. Ann Clark a resident of Anglesea Rd objected to the personal inconvenience caused by the proposed closure. I gave evidence on the impact of the closure on the connectivity which is essential for any community to thrive.

I also challenged the proposal to use Queens Rd as a safe alternative, by producing confirmation that a CBC recycling operative had suffered a minor injury by slipping on loose shingle at the junction of Anglesea Rd and Queens Rd. Fortunately, he was not seriously harmed.

Most alarming was the revelation that NR and Essex Highways had been in negotiation over alterations to the High St bridge to accommodate the alternative route. These would involve the widening the pavements to allow only one way traffic. The problem is that to accommodate the turns of the buses to and from Station Rd that widened footpath would have to narrow down to almost nothing, rather like the current layout! CBC made it clear it is unsatisfactory and could not support the closure of Paget Rd.

What do you think?