

NETWORK RAIL (CAMBRIDGE RE-SIGNALLING) ORDER

OPENING SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF NETWORK RAIL

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of the draft Order before this Inquiry is to provide Network Rail with the powers it requires to deliver the Cambridge Re-signalling, Relock and Recontrol Project (the “**Project**”).
2. It involves: re-signalling the Cambridge station interlocking area; the upgrade of 7 level crossings from Automatic Half Barriers or Manned Gate Barriers to Manually Controlled Barriers;¹ and, the construction of a Relocatable Equipment Building at a further level crossing.²
3. The draft Order sought is but one part of the consenting regime adopted by Network Rail, as demonstrated in the following table:

REGIME	WORKS/MATTERS AUTHORISED
The Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stopping up of streets in connection with the works required to construct and operate the Project.• Acquisition of land, and rights over land, and to use land temporarily in connection with the works required to construct and operate the Project.
Planning Permission	Planning permission under the 1990 Act granted by the relevant local planning authorities in relation to the installation of full barrier solutions and Relocatable Equipment Buildings, including any works and operations incidental or ancillary to such works.
Permitted Development	The works which include the installation of full barrier solutions and Relocatable Equipment Buildings and are located within NR's land ownership and operational boundary or within the Limits of Deviation set out in the relevant Railway Acts.

¹ The level crossings at Milton Fen, Dimmocks Cote, Six Mile Bottom, Dullingham, Croxton, Waterbeach and Meldreth.

² Foxton/Hauxton level crossing.

4. Assuming the relevant consents are granted, Network Rail intends to finish the works and commissioning by the end of 2025.
5. The two resources that best display the Project visually and will be of assistance in understanding its detail are:
 - a. The Deposited Land Plans (Updated) (**NR10**), showing the Project broken down into the 8 relevant level crossings; and,
 - b. The photos of each level crossing set out in the Narrative Risk Assessments, to be found at **APP43/4** (Milton Fen), **APP44/4** (Dimmocks Cote), **APP45/2** (Six Mile Bottom), **APP46/2** (Dullingham), **APP47/2** (Croxtan), **APP48/3** (Waterbeach) and **APP49/4** (Meldreth).

II. NEED FOR AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

6. The need for the Order Scheme is based on the following matters:
 - a. The Cambridge interlocking is now deemed life expired, having been installed and commissioned in 1982. It suffers from obsolete components, severe wire degradation and the Dullingham, Chippenham and Bury St Edmunds Signal Boxes have reached the end of their useful lives. The effect is a decrease in asset reliability.
 - b. Without the Order Scheme, there would be reduced capacity on sections of the railway where increasing signalling failures would have the effect of putting certain routes or assets out of use.
 - c. The 7 level-crossings proposed to be upgraded are considered to pose significant safety risks for users of the crossing as well as Network Rail staff.
7. The key objectives of the Scheme are as follows:

- a. To improve the performance, reliability and maintainability of the signalling infrastructure. The life of the system will be extended by a further 35 years and will reduce equipment failures. For example, the three existing mechanical boxes at Dullingham, Chippenham and Bury St Edmunds will be decommissioned and replaced with a digital visual display unit at Cambridge station.
- b. To renew existing assets to enable safe operation of the railway. The selected signalling option is a full renewal of existing interlocking and lineside equipment. This is by far the safest option as the renewal includes lineside cabling. Moreover, the replacement of the existing track circuits with axle counters, which count the trains coming in and out of a section of track by using its wheels, provides a more reliable and robust system.
- c. To reduce the operational cost of the railway.
- d. To improve the safety of the 7 level crossings to a significant degree and enable compliance with the Office of Rail and Road's requirement to improve safety by moving away from automatic half-barrier crossings.
- e. To save costs and disruption to rail and road users by combining the re-signalling element of the Scheme with the upgrades to the 7 level-crossings.
- f. For future-proofing. The Order Scheme will enable the Ely area capacity enhancements and the re-signalling of Peterborough-Ely-Kings Lynn once funding is received. It will also enable schemes for freight enhanced operations and cross-country national services. It will further make this area of the route ready for digital railway to be implemented in future.
- g. To undertake all of the above as soon as possible. Funding has been agreed for the whole Order Scheme to take place now. Separating out the level-crossing upgrades into a different project would lead to unknown delays; it

is unclear when separate funding would be made available for the level-crossing upgrades if they were taken out of scope.

III. PLANNING POSITION

8. Planning permission, whether by means of permitted development rights or following a full planning application, has been obtained for all but 2 level crossings as of today's date. In those cases for which planning permission has been obtained, there is manifestly no planning impediment.
9. In relation to the remaining level crossings at Hauxton/Foxton and Meldreth, South Cambridgeshire DC's target determination dates for the planning applications are 13 and 28 April 2023, respectively. For the reasons set out in Proof of Elliot Stamp, Network Rail is confident that planning permission will be obtained.
10. As for Hauxton/Foxton, Network Rail the remaining issue on ecology has been resolved to the satisfaction of the local authority's ecology officer.
11. As for Meldreth, although objections were initially made by the highways officer (but not in relation to the impact of the upgrade on barrier-down times) and in respect of landscaping issues, it is considered that these have now been resolved following further discussions and updated plans.
12. Network Rail will keep the Inquiry updated on the outcome of these determinations.

IV. IMPACTS ON CROSSING USERS

13. The impacts of the Project on crossing users have been considered in detail. In particular:

- a. The safety of the existing level crossing types (or lack thereof), and the improvements to safety offered by upgrading, have been assessed in the Narrative Risk Assessments: **APP43-49**.
 - b. The impacts of upgrading the level crossings on barrier-down times and the journey times of crossing users has been modelled in Modelling Group's "Performance Report – Level Crossing Study" (**APP39**). This report, as well as the methodology that was used to support it, has been accepted by the highways authorities without objection.
- 14. Overall, Network Rail has weighed the competing factors and decided that the overall safety benefits of upgrading the 7 crossings significantly outweigh the adverse impacts on users of the highway.

V. AREAS OF OBJECTION

- 15. The remaining areas of objection are very limited.
- 16. Network Rail understands that only four objectors intend to appear at the Inquiry: Fen Line Users Association (**OBJ/14**); Hugh Wood (**OBJ/17**); Shepreth Parish Council (**OBJ/25**); and, Meldreth Parish Council (**OBJ/27**). These objections concern two discrete issues, which are themselves very much related: the impact of the upgrades at Waterbeach level crossing and Meldreth level crossing on barrier-down times and, therefore, crossing users. In relation to both:
 - a. They misunderstand and wrongly downplay the safety case for the upgrade.
 - b. They wrongly criticise the methodology adopted by Modelling Group and its findings, either because they have misunderstood them or because their criticisms are misplaced. It is important to repeat the point that the highways authority has raised no objection to Modelling Group's work.

- c. They suggest alternative options which are not possible, unrealistic or which will not achieve the objective of improving safety at these crossings.
17. In relation to the remaining objectors who have not appeared at the Inquiry,³ almost all of them relate to the increased barrier-down time at Meldreth level crossing following the upgrade. Of the remaining three, two are statutory objectors (Kilverstone Estate - **OBJ/15** and P Woodley - **OBJ/22**) with whom terms have now been agreed and execution and completion of the documents are imminent. Terms have also been agreed with the final objector (A Parmee - **OBJ/13**) who owns land next to Meldreth level crossing.
18. The representation from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning⁴ (**Rep/05**) confirms that it supports the principle of the Project. It, nonetheless, raises a number of “*holding objections*”. These are without substance in circumstances where: on transport, the highways authority has confirmed it raises no objection; on safety, there is nothing unclear about the risk assessments; on air quality, this has already been assessed by Network Rail in its EIA Screening Opinion Requests and no air quality issues have been raised by Environmental Health teams; and, on other environmental impacts, these have also been assessed by Network Rail and are considered to pose no issue.

YAASER VANDERMAN
Landmark Chambers

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³ Cambridgeshire County Council (**OBJ/19**) and Norfolk County Council (**OBJ/20**) have withdrawn their objections.

⁴ Comprised of South Cambs DC and Cambridge City Council.