

Shepreth Automatic Half Barrier Level Crossing

This document briefly describes the Level Crossing by Shepreth Station and contrasts it to the crossing at Foxton which operates in a very different way.



Shepreth Level Crossing (photo: Royston Crow)

The crossing at Foxton is a full barrier crossing. The barriers are lowered well in advance of the train arriving block both sides of the road at the entrance and exit. A crossing keeper overlooks the whole barrier and gate closing sequence and the railway signals are only cleared to Green when all the gates are locked and the crossing has been observed to be clear of vehicles and pedestrians.

The crossing at Shepreth is an automatic half barrier crossing. The barriers are lowered automatically when a train is approaching and rise automatically when it has passed. Warning lights and sound indicate that the barriers are about to close. Nobody checks the crossing is clear before the train arrives.

Half barriers are typically closed for less than a minute so it is very dangerous to enter the crossing when the barriers are down as a train will be imminent, and there is nobody observing the crossing to stop the trains in this situation so it is the responsibility of the user to use the crossing correctly.

If a second train is approaching the barriers will stay down and the warning lights continue flashing.

Automatic Half barriers are often used on quieter roads and have an advantage that they are closed for a much shorter period of time than full barrier crossings. This is helped at Shepreth by a facility whereby the crossing closure can be delayed for a London bound stopping service until the train has arrived in the station. In this situation a railway signal on the London Bound platform stays at Red until the barriers are closed.

There are signals protecting the crossing which the Signal Box at Cambridge can set to Red in an emergency or when there is a fault with the crossing, although as mentioned earlier in normal operation there is no interaction between Cambridge Signal Box and the crossing.