



Cambridge Resignalling Project

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership Response

Introduction

This document contains the response of the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership to the proposed upgrade of the Meldreth Road Level Crossing from half barriers to full barriers.

Our objection to the project is based on four factors, outlined in greater detail in the following sections:

- The consultation has not been properly publicized
- The upgrade proposal fails to provide key information
- The consultation makes a misleading assertion concerning a central feature of the proposal, i.e. barrier down time
- Applying an upgrade to Meldreth Road Level Crossing will create a number of new problems including new risk in the surrounding environment

The consultation has not been properly publicized

- There is no public notice of the consultation at the Meldreth Road crossing.
- Residents living in the vicinity of the crossing, including properties immediately adjacent to the crossing, have not been directly notified of the consultation, except for one property where Network Rail requires land acquisition.
- The C3R consultation hotline number has now been 'closed', before the end of the consultation period.
- No local consultation event has been offered.

The upgrade proposal fails to provide key information

- Where is the detailed information on projected downtimes?
- Will the Meldreth Road crossing be controlled from Foxton Signal Box or from Cambridge? The consultation doesn't specify.
- Where is the analysis of current risk at the level crossing?
- Where is the record of trespassing and accidents? The Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group, founded in 2009, is aware of no accidents or trespassing at this level crossing. In contrast, its observations of trespassing incidents at Foxton, Shepreth and Meldreth Stations have been assiduously reported to the Train Operating Company and to Network Rail.
- Where is the analysis of knock-on effects and transference of risk to the highway?
- Where is the comparative analysis of risk to rail and road as a system?
- Where is the analysis of the impact of the increased traffic waiting time on air quality?
- Meldreth Road Level Crossing sits very close to the Wildlife Trust L-Moor, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Where is the analysis of environmental impacts of the upgrade? Has the Wildlife Trust been consulted?

The consultation makes a misleading assertion concerning a central feature of the proposal, i.e. barrier downtime:

*“Upgrading these crossings to full barriers will also mean that the barriers will be down for longer periods **which is likely to increase the waiting time for road users** except for Dullingham, where the amount of time the crossing is closed is expected to stay the same.”*

In fact, the proposed changes at Meldreth Road will **certainly and profoundly** alter the waiting time for road users, which in turn will increase risk on the highway as eagerness to avoid the longer downtime will cause road users to speed up to get across. We know this to be the case having experienced the dramatic increase in downtimes at the Shepreth Station level crossing which was ‘upgraded’ in 2018, with much longer downtimes than had been publicly understood, due to ambiguity by Network Rail during the consultation period. Previously at Shepreth Station, downtimes had averaged about 30 seconds and traffic was able to flow. Now, waiting times of 10 minutes are not uncommon and waiting times have been recorded at 17 minutes, and new traffic conflict around the station and adjoining roads has become a problem.

At the Meldreth Road Level Crossing, on one side of the crossing is a densely populated residential area with a 30mph speed limit and a series of junctions in close proximity, and therefore multiple road safety issues.

Applying an upgrade to Meldreth Road Level Crossing will create a number of new problems

- Full barriers and associated downtimes will box in Shepreth residents who will now be constricted by two full barriers within about ¼ mile – between two of the four entry/exit points in the village, both oriented south/west.
- Meldreth Road is a key conduit road for traffic flows in all directions: at present traffic is able to flow because the barriers are down for a short period (under 30 seconds). A full barrier will create significant queueing in what is a narrow road in a densely populated area – as we have seen at Shepreth Station. What mitigation measures have been proposed and how would these be funded?
- Long downtimes risk introducing a new trespassing problem at Meldreth Road, which is a popular walking/cycling area. We note that in spite of the new full barriers at Shepreth Station, trespassing there has not been eliminated.
- Crossing control: Shepreth Station Level Crossing is manually controlled by the Foxton signal box, in addition to controlling the Foxton Station Level Crossing, double the job it once was for a one-person signal box. Is the proposal to add a third Level Crossing to the same single responsibility? If so, what are the implications for safety and for down times?

Conclusion

The Community Rail Partnership are opposed to this upgrade due to the lack of evidence to justify the proposal, and the introduction of new risk and problems to the surrounding environment that the proposal would trigger. There is a general paucity of information and the consultation itself has been extremely poor in terms of communication with the local community. We note that when

Shepreth Station level crossing was upgraded in 2018, the intention was to upgrade Meldreth Road Level Crossing at the same time. However, that decision was reversed, because the Meldreth Road Level Crossing environment works well with no known accidents or trespassing. We look forward to a response to concerns raised in this document.

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