

## **Urgent Update Report – Wateringbury Level Crossing – 18/502380/FULL**

Network Rail has submitted the following additional information in support of their case as follows:

*“As part of an on-going programme to enhance safety at all level crossings, Network Rail is intending to replace the current Manned Gated Hand Worked Level Crossing at Wateringbury, with the following equipment;*

- *Manually Controlled Barriers (MCB) type x 4;*
- *One 10m high steel column supporting a 20 lux LED luminaire;*
- *4 road traffic lights;*
- *Yellow box and Stop Line road markings;*
- *Drop kerb and tactiles; and*
- *Installation of anti-trespass guards*

*The proposed upgrade is to improve the safety of all users and the level crossing operator with further benefits including a reduction in the road closure time improving the continuous flow of vehicle traffic across the level crossing and safeguarding the future of the adjacent Grade II listed signal box.*

### **Safety**

*Following the upgrade of Wateringbury Crossing to an MCB operation, the crossing will continue to be operated and monitored by the Signaller from the existing adjacent Signal Box. The key difference will be that the Signaller will be able to carry out crossing operation from inside the Signal Box and will not be required to enter the public highway to complete the level crossing open/closure sequence.*

*The proposed level crossing has been designed to achieve modern safety standards in accordance with Network Rail and the Office of Rail & Road and Regulation (ORR) policy. Concerns that have been expressed with regard to the design of the Crossing have been addressed as follows;*

- *The proposal of 4 barriers prevents misusers from zig zagging around the barriers when lowered, they are of a standard therefore should the barriers become damaged new parts are much easier to resource than non-standard gates;*
- *the skirting beneath the booms will prevent misusers from crawling underneath the barriers when the barriers are lowered, the skirting is a standard design and therefore should the skirting become damaged new parts will be easier to resource;*
- *In the unlikely event of and to prevent trespass onto the railway during the time the level crossing is open occurring, trespass guards will be installed either side of the road. The guards will extend to the full length of the crossing between the boundary fences for a distance of 2.6 metres from the edge of the carriageway in accordance with ORR policy;*

- *the proposed painted yellow box gives clear warning to road users not to enter the area unless the exit is clear as per the highway code; and,*
- *the lighting attached to the 10m column will enable the crossing to be visible to users during the hours of darkness.*

*The current operation is for the Signaller to enter the public highway to manually open and close the four gates to oncoming road vehicles, Traffic levels are now substantially higher than when the gates were first introduced and it is unreasonable to require the retention of manually operated gate crossings however historically authentic it maybe. The proposed works will therefore remove the Signaller from entering the public highway while operating the crossing within the safe environment of the listed signal box and providing assurance to users that personnel will remain on site.*

### **Road Traffic Lights and Warning Alarms**

*The provision of road traffic lights and warning alarms is a statutory requirement to alert crossing users (both pedestrians & road vehicles) that the barrier lowering sequence is about to commence. The road traffic lights and associated alarm is required to sound for approximately 20-25 seconds during lowering of the proposed barriers.*

*The proposed new arrangement comes with the ability to adjust the volume of the audible warning generated at the time of barrier lowering and this will be given due consideration during the installation of the new equipment. The flashing lights are to a ORR set standard and will be same intensity days and night.*

*While freight/engineering trains will use the railway during the night, the volume of audible alarms will be kept within statutorily permissible levels.*

*A 10m high lighting column will be installed with a 20 lux luminaire, this lighting is to enable the crossing to be visible during the hours of darkness.*

### **Highways and Level Crossing Sequence**

*As explained above, the removal and upgrade of the wooden gates at Wateringbury with manually controlled barriers will remove the requirement for the Signaller to continually exit the signal box to complete the level crossing open and closing sequence. The Signaller will be based within the adjacent signal box, therefore should a problem occur a Signaller will be present to ensure the safe operation of the crossing.*

*Upgrading of Wateringbury Manned Gated Hand Worked Level Crossing to MCB will remove the existing requirement for Signaller to continually exit the Signal Box to complete the level crossing open/closure sequence, the present manual opening and closure sequence takes circa 1m 40 seconds to undertake. The proposed arrangement is expected to reduce the road closure time by circa 30 seconds, having a positive impact on Wateringbury level crossing by reducing road closure times and enhancing safety”.*

*Kent County Council who manage Highways at this location were consulted as a statutory consultee by Maidstone Borough Council and have raised no objection.*

### **Conservation and Heritage**

*The replacement of the gates at Wateringbury involves the loss of a structure associated with the station environment which serves some functional and historical purpose, their loss however will not cause any physical harm to the stations listed structures or their setting. The overall character and appearance of the conservation area will remain largely unchanged.*

*Salvage of the gates will be undertaken in line with Network Rail removal of assets policy which firstly investigates whether the asset will be required in another area of the business and be put to use. In the event the asset be confirmed as redundant, it is Network Rail policy to tender the gates to local heritage groups thus giving a fair opportunity for all intrusted to place a bid within a two week consultation period. Should no party bid for the asset and the tender process exhausted, Network Rail would look to gift the asset."*

#### Officer comment

I would reiterate the application relates solely to the demolition and removal of the existing level crossing gates in the Conservation Area and the justification for their removal.

#### **Recommendation Remains Unchanged**