

Audit of Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton stations and nearby village settlements in relation to those stations

The aim of the audit is to enable the Meldreth Shepreth Foxton Community Rail Partnership to have a clearer understanding of

- how the stations cope with existing traffic levels;
- how the stations may cope with considerably more traffic in the future;
- how more users can be attracted to the three stations to improve the sustainability of travel in the district.

There is no doubt that the outcome of the Greater Cambridge City Deal plus the predicted new train service level/ new trains to be provided by Thameslink in 2018 will further drive growth.

Footfall recorded for the year ending 2014 show a footfall at:

Meldreth	267,218	+29.3% since 2010	+9.7% in 2015
Shepreth	105,802	+33.8% since 2010	+11.4% in 2015
Foxton	94,080	+30.5% since 2010	+7.9% in 2015
Total	467,100		

This figure shows that the three stations as providing a considerable service to the district.

The normal train service on 'Weekdays' is every 30 minutes at the peak travel to work times morning and evening in each direction and at 60 minute intervals at all other times. On Saturday, Sunday, Public Holidays, the train service is at 60 minute intervals.

Fast trains also pass through the station non-stop at frequent intervals.

The audit/survey of the station and its environs took place on Friday March 25th 2016.

This day being a Public Holiday, the train operator was running a 'Saturday Service'.

Each station consists of an up and down platform. The up platform is on the south side of the station and serves trains running to Royston, Stevenage and London. The down platform is on the north side of the station and serves trains running to Cambridge.

1 Meldreth Railway Station

Meldreth/Melbourn station directly serves the adjoining villages with their joint population of 8000. These villages lie within the South Cambridgeshire District of the County of Cambridgeshire.

Their station is entirely within the parish of Meldreth.

In the 2011 census the population of Melbourn was 5,610 and is made up of approximately 51% females and 49% male

In the 2011 census the population of Meldreth was 2,551 and is made up of approximately 51% females and 49% males.

Total population directly served by the railway station is 8161.

1.1 Meldreth Railway Station Audit

Meldreth station has two platforms connected by a concrete footbridge.

The up platform is on the Melbourn side of each station and serves trains running to Royston, Stevenage and London. The down platform is on the Meldreth side of the station and serves trains running to Cambridge.

1.1.1 The Up Platform

Users to/from Meldreth village have to use the footbridge, as do those using cars.

Users from Melbourn who walk or cycle can arrive at the platform by using the public footpath across the adjacent field. There is a short flight of steps up to the platform from this footpath thus there is no step free or level access.

The platform is just 4 cars long. It has tactile strips but no yellow line/hatching.

The shelter is adequate but without side panels for complete shelter from rain. There is very limited seating.

There is no directional signage on the platform to indicate walking, cycling or driving routes to Melbourn or Meldreth.

There is no ticket machine.

There are no cycle stands.

1.1.2 The down platform

Users to/from Melbourn on foot or cycling have to use the footbridge. There is no step free access unless using the longer route along the main road that links the two villages.

Users accessing to/from Meldreth can use the station road entrance or a footpath to High Street from the centre of the platform at the foot of the footbridge but though step free it is not obstacle free.

There is no clear signage indicating the best way to either Meldreth or Melbourn nor the main possible businesses such as Meldreth Manor School or Melbourn Science Park by a walking or cycling route.

There is a ticket machine on this platform.

For a limited period each day during the morning the station is staffed and tickets may be purchased from a ticket office. During this period a waiting room is available as are toilet facilities. From about 11.15 none of these facilities are available and there is no cover from the elements at all.

A very limited number of metal benches are provided along the platform...2 only.

Tactile strips are in situ along the entire 4 car long platform but there is no yellow line/hatching.

The platform is extremely narrow at one point near the car park end.

1.1.3 Entrance

The main station entrance is via a car park at the south west end of the down platform.

The well maintained car park has 40 bays and 2 disabled bays.

The cycle parking is very limited with the provision of only 4 Sheffield stands which have been poorly installed.

There is no designated 'kiss 'n ride' drop off point nor a designated turning circle/place for medium sized vehicles.

1.1.4 Signage to the station

The team inspected the immediate environs of the station at Meldreth and walked the footpath to Melbourn.

The footpath off the down platform is a short and safe exit to the village of Meldreth. It is partly paved and wide enough for buggies and wheel chairs but not for two of them to easily pass. It is a step free platform exit but it is also blocked by an anachronistic kissing gate at the High Street end.

There is a tiny 'footpath' sign pointing off the High Street pavement towards the station but no reference to the station.

The vehicular entrance off the High Street is marked by a small railway provided sign on a post that is blocked from view by foliage. If travelling from the Melbourn direction an additional railway provided low level sign has been erected.



Photo 1: More assertive signage required

Once in the station carpark entrance, the footpath off the High Street is partially blocked by an overgrown hedgerow.

The footpath off the up platform is the shortest and most safe walking route to Melbourn.

This is not step free off the platform, see Photo 2 below.

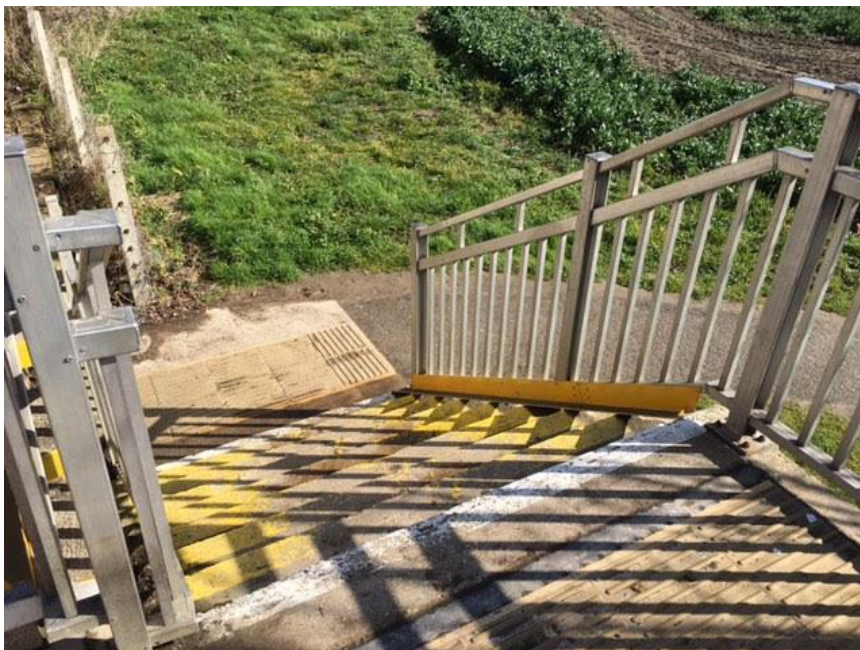


Photo 2: Access to the up platform

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There no signage indicating Melbourn, Melbourn attractions, Melbourn science park.

The footpath is narrowly paved. It is not lit at night. It has a paved/unpaved width that is on average 8 feet wide that is in fair to good condition but overall is not particularly good as a mixed walking, cycling and wheelchair route. The footpath is not lit. It has a mixed paved/unpaved width of about 8 feet, in fair to good condition but overall suited for mixed walking, cycling, pushchair and wheelchair use.

At the Melbourn end along the section off the field, it is lit and eventually joins Melbourn's Station Road and becomes a part of Station Road pavement. The latter is narrow and badly surfaced.

At the junction of Station Road and the station footpath there is no signage indicating the modally best route from Melbourn to the station nor for the opposite direction is there walking/cycling route signage indicating the Science Park, Village College, Melbourn Science Park, Melbourn Village College and other amenities.

In Melbourn at the junction of Station Road and the High Street there is a small traditional finger board that points to Meldreth and the railway station.

From the Shepreth direction a road sign does point to the station. At the same junction, from the northern approach there is a road sign pointing to the station. There is no indication from the opposite direction nor from Mortlock Street.

1.2 Meldreth Railway Station Recommendations

1.2.1 Up platform

1.2.2 Provide a ticket machine*.

Provide clear signage at platform exit of best routes to Melbourn and Meldreth amenities.

Provide a step free ramp to the Melbourn footpath.

Provide modern compliant seating along the platform.

Provide yellow safety line/hatching.

Plan to provide step-free access to down platform, for example a new footbridge with ramps or lifts.

*** Observation...the station was busy at the time of the survey. There was a constant flow of people walking the footpath from Melbourn for the station including a lady with a large suitcase on wheels which had to be carried with difficulty over the footbridge to the ticket machine at the down platform car park end and then back again via the footbridge to the up platform. We also witnessed a young couple with a child and pushchair struggling to negotiate the footbridge from the downside to the up platform. The man had to carry the pushchair which looked to be an extremely dangerous act on steep stairs.**

If common courtesy for users cannot be observed think "health and safety" implications of these moves.

1.2.3 Down platform

Provide shelter along much of the platform.

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Provide modern compliant seating along the platform.

Provide clear signage on platform of best routes at all platform exits to Melbourn and Meldreth amenities.

Provide clear safe step free and other impediment free route from base of footbridge to Meldreth High Street.

Provide clear signage to Meldreth and Melbourn at the car park exit.

1.2.4 Signage along Meldreth High Street

Provide a larger and clear sign indicating the footpath to the down platform and footbridge.

Remove or modify the ancient kissing gate to allow bicycles, buggies and wheelchairs to move along it. Clear path leaves each year and plan to widen and repave to full width.



Photo 3: Remodel historic gate blocking easy access to down platform

The sign on a pole indication of the station should be replaced with a larger version. Branches and foliage removed at the appropriate time of year.

Provide large clear motorist signage along all three roads that converge near the station entrance.

1.2.5 Meldreth station car park area

Cut back the hedge blocking the footpath into the station.

Provide a large covered cycle park on the lawn along-side the takeaway restaurant.

Remove current Sheffield stands and other nearby/surrounding impedimenta to create a clear space to provide vehicle turning space.

Remove the two disabled parking bays. Convert two new disabled bays from three existing bays next to the step free ramp onto the down platform.

Move the large bins to the paved area next to restaurant wall.

Convert current disabled bays, area where bins currently rest and Sheffield cycle stands to turning circle/turning space for midi-bus, rubbish collection vehicle and railway servicing vans to turn more safely and easily.

Convert the white-hatched area behind the parking payment sign to two additional parking bays. This should mean that only one parking bay will be lost in the rearrangement to create a turning point for workplace bus links. See Photo 4.

Work to use large area of open concrete standing in front of disused factory to additional car parking.



Photo 4: Part of Area for more bike parking and turning space; move bins to paving to right



Photo 5: Adapt this area to turn small buses and the bin lorry

1.2.6 The footpath from the up platform to Melbourn

Provide 10 Sheffield stands at base of steps that lead up to the platform/ footbridge.

Widen and pave the entire width of the footpath and clearly indicate its use for walking and cycling.

Use low-level and modern hi tech methods of lighting the path for its entire length.*

***Observation - we spoke to an elderly lady who told us that she was happy to use the footpath during daylight hours but did not feel safe to use it at night.**

Note that the Melbourn end of the path is already lit so a power source is available.

Provide clear signage to places in Melbourn at the Melbourn end where other paths join and the path joins Station Road.

Provide clear signage appropriate for mode of travel to the station at the point where the path leaves Station Road for the A10 underpass and station.

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Remove dead trees/ branches and repave the path along its fenced section.

Recover the remains of the kissing gate to use on a modernised kissing gate at the junction of path and Meldreth High Street.

Resurface and widen the pavements along Melbourn Station Road.



Photo 6: Pave entire width over entire length; provide lighting, clear dead wood

Continue the signage in Melbourn indicating best routes to Science Park, Village College, other places of interest for walkers and cyclists from the station.

Along the High Street add a sign on the reverse of the existing signage that points the way to the station. This will ensure that drivers coming into Melbourn from Royston are reminded of the station in the same way as those driving in the opposite direction.

Provide a station sign when arriving from along Mortlock Street.



Photo 7: Resign all routes leading to station within Melbourn and Meldreth

2 Shepreth Railway Station

Shepreth station directly serves the village of Shepreth.

This village lies entirely within the South Cambridgeshire District of the County of Cambridgeshire.

The station lies entirely within the parish of Shepreth.

In the 2011 census the population of Shepreth was 594.

The total population served by Shepreth station is 594*.

***Note that** this station may better serve parts of Barrington, Fowlmere and Meldreth.

2.1 Shepreth Railway Station Audit

2.1.1 Station Description

The station has two four-coach platforms. The platforms are narrow and the curve in the track increases the distance between platform and train. There are no tactile strips or yellow lines to denote the edge of the platform.

Access to the up platform is through an arch in the original station building, although the building itself is not used and the station is unstaffed. The down platform is accessed via a footpath and ramp adjacent to the level crossing. The entrance is not obvious to a casual user. The down platform has a slightly larger waiting shelter than Foxton and would keep a few people dry in poor weather conditions.

A passenger help point and ticket machine are located on the up platform, but there are no equivalent facilities on the down platform.

CCTV coverage of the platforms is limited. A public address system is provided.

Outside the station building there is free car parking for 11 cars plus two cycle parking facilities, one of which is covered. One of the cycle stands is in the shape of a car, to show that 10 cycles can be parked in the same space as one car.

On the north side of the station, idle Network Rail-owned land is used as an unofficial parking area and can accommodate about 20 cars.

Adjacent to the down platform, an area has been allocated for a community garden. The original planting was accidentally treated with herbicide by Network Rail and the ground is currently being treated to restore the garden, although Network Rail has now fenced off and provided 'Memorial Garden' signage in the wrong area, giving the impression that the community garden is not looked after.

A half-barrier level crossing abuts the station. Passengers requiring a platform change must exit and pass over the crossing.

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2.1.2 Station Access

A local area map is provided at the entrance to the up platform, although it does not contain much information. Fortunately, the Shepreth Wildlife park, where many arriving passengers were seen to be heading during the visit, is adjacent to the station and has a large sign.

The station itself has a low profile when seen from the road. The station entrance totem is obscured by trees and very dirty. There is nothing on the station building to suggest that this is a station.

Possible improvements

1. Improve passenger facilities on the down (Cambridge) platform to include a ticket machine and help point, with suitable CCTV coverage.
2. Provide handrails on the ramp to the down platform
3. Clear vegetation in the unofficial car park to improve capacity. In the longer term, the area should be paved.
4. Better local map showing village facilities.
5. Improve profile of station with better entrance signage.



Photo 8: Is this a station? Improved external signage would give the station a higher profile



Photo 9: The station sign is obscured by this tree



Photo 10: The entrance to the down platform would not be obvious to a casual user

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Photo 11: Access to these information boards is obstructed by the new card reader

3 Foxton Railway Station

Foxton station directly serves the village of Foxton and also the close-by villages of Fowlmere*, Harston and Barrington*.

These villages lie entirely within the South Cambridgeshire District of the County of Cambridgeshire.

Their station is entirely within the parish of Foxton.

In the 2011 census the population of Foxton was 1232 and made up of approximately 50% male and 50% female.

The total population served by Foxton station 5212.

***Note that** sections of these settlements may be better served from Shepreth station.

3.1 Foxton Railway Station Audit

3.1.1 Station Description

The station has two platforms, each 4 coaches long. There are tactile strips along each platform, but no yellow lines. Access to each platform is from ramps at the end of the platform to the busy A10 road. The ramps are steep and may not be fully DDA compliant in terms of gradient. There are no handrails on the ramp.

The platforms are narrow. Not all the platform furniture has colour contrast bands and could be an obstacle to partially sighted passengers. The distance between the tactile strip and obstacles is less than 1m.

There is a ticket machine on the London platform only. Both platforms have shelters, but the one on the Cambridge platform is especially small. Anyone using the seat would not be kept dry in the event of rain. The London platform shelter is contained within the original station building and is substantial by comparison.

A help point with induction loop is provided on the London platform. The help point has CCTV which also covers the ticket machine. There is no other CCTV on the station.

Public address is provided on both platforms, but is difficult to hear due to the traffic on the A10.

There are scrolling train displays on both platforms. The display on the London platform is obscured by the ticket machine. It is located close to the end of the platform beyond where the train stops and is therefore easily visible for passengers waiting for a train. The display on the Cambridge platform is located in the middle of the platform.

3.1.2 Station access

There are some open Sheffield cycle stands on the A10 close to the London platform. A cycle was noted chained to the road railings close to the Cambridge platform.

Bus stops are located just to the north of the level crossing. There are no bus shelters, and a bus stop sign is only provided in the Cambridge direction. No timetable information was provided for the hourly Stagecoach 26 route. There is no station car park, but a layby is provided for 3 cars close to the crossing for passenger drop off.

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There is a footpath from the London platform to Foxton village and church around ½ mile away. The path is unmade. There is a faded sign close to the platform and a newer sign by the A10. The sign at the village end of the path indicates the route to the station.

The level crossing adjacent to the station has been the subject of studies to replace the crossing by a bridge. Pedestrians use gates either side of the road. These gates have magnetic locks for when a train is due. They are stiff and may prove difficult to open by disabled people.

3.2 Foxton Railway Station Recommendations

3.2.1 Possible improvements

1. Facilities on the Cambridge platform are poor compared with the London platform. There is an area of waste land behind the platform that could be used to provide space for:
 - Proper waiting shelter – to be built on back of platform.
 - Ticket machine – this would save some passengers having to cross the tracks twice to purchase a ticket.
 - Covered cycle storage facility.
 - Passenger help point.
 - CCTV for the above facilities
2. The customer display on the London platform should be relocated down the platform to make it visible to passengers waiting for a train.
3. The existing waiting shelter on the London platform is beyond the stopping point of the train which could cause delays whilst they walk to along the platform to board a train. Additional shelter along the platform would solve this issue.
4. There is currently no local information map at the station to highlight any local attractions, the footpath to the village or possible local walks.
5. Foxton station's location on the edge of the village, the busy A10 road to Cambridge, and 26 bus route, give it significant potential for development as a transport interchange, including high quality bus shelters, a much improved drop-off area, covered cycle racks, and car parking to allow the station to be used for Park and Ride.

3.2.2 Photographs



Photo 12: The London platform showing obstacles on the platform. Trains stop at the signal but the waiting shelter is beyond



Photo 13: The waiting shelter on the Cambridge platform would not keep you dry in the rain!



Photo 14: The new ticket machine obscures the view of the customer information screen



Photo 15: Cycle racks are provided on the road close to the London platform. They are not covered and could do with some new paint



Photo 16: There is a footpath from the station to the village – signage on the platform is limited and the path is not paved.



Photo 17: 'Access to Foxton station is inextricably linked with navigating the A10, including designated pedestrian gate crossings on both sides of the road

4 Further information

There is information about the Medreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group (MSFRUG) accessibility campaign here:

melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/accessibility/

Railfuture East Anglia www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia

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