Near miss at Norwich Road level crossing

At about 19:53 hrs on Sunday 24 November 2019, a 4-coach class 755 passenger train, operating the 19:45 Norwich to Sheringham service, was approaching Norwich Road automatic half barrier level crossing, to the north-east of Norwich. The crossing barriers were in the lowered position until the train, travelling at about 45 mph (72 km/h), was about 200 metres from the crossing. The barriers then lifted, the level crossing warning lights went out and cars began to cross the railway. The train driver applied the train's emergency brake and sounded its warning horn, but the train was unable to stop before reaching the crossing. No road vehicles were struck but a car passed in front of the train around a quarter of a second before the train went over the crossing.

The level crossing equipment was installed in 2000 and includes a predictor system which detects the speed of approaching trains so that the time interval between barriers being lowered and a train arriving is similar for all trains, irrespective of their speed. The train was part of a new fleet which had been operating passenger services on this line since 6 November 2019.

Since the incident, Network Rail has modified the settings of this and similar level crossings on the line to reduce the chance of a repeat of this incident.

Our investigation will identify the sequence of events which led to the incident. It will also consider:

- the design, implementation and operation of the predictor system, including any effects of rail head contamination due to fallen leaves
- the design of relevant elements of the class 755 train and the process for accepting it for use on this route
- any underlying factors.

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry, the Office of Rail and Road.

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

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