

THE NETWORK RAIL  
(ESSEX AND OTHERS LEVEL  
CROSSING REDUCTION ORDER)

ROBERT HUTLEY

REBUTTAL OF PROOF OF EVIDENCE

OF

SUSAN TILBROOK

NR32/4/7 CROSSING E48

#### E48 Wheatsheaf

Susan Tilbrook states;

##### 2.36.2

‘There are 25+ steps up to the level crossing at a steep gradient, a hand rail is provided on the left hand side for users to hold on to. On one side the path leading up to the crossing is made of narrow wooden boards, this surface is likely to become slippery during times of heavy rainfall. The fields on either side of the crossing are overgrown in some places and at a moderate gradient. Access to the level crossing also involves the use of kissing gates. The crossing is therefore unsuitable for use by wheelchair or pushchair users and is likely to present a number of challenges to any users with mobility impairments’

This crossing is used and enjoyed by able bodied adults during good weather as the footpath becomes boggy when wet and consequently uneven when dry. So is safe and convenient for those users. There are plenty of footpaths and tracks in Wrabness which are accessible to wheelchairs, pushchairs and mobility impaired users. The suggested diversion along station road is not suitable for Wheelchair or pushchair users due to poor visibility, lack of verges and being too narrow and steep sided.

##### 2.36.8

‘The total additional length of the diversion to the East is approximately 725m however, the origin and destination points will affect the overall diversion length for many users.’

The proposed diversion would mean that anyone using the route from the South West would walk 1000m on road as well as the long diversion around the field in order to access the estuary footpath network.

#### 2.36.12

‘There are wider footpath links and in particular the estuary area which lies to the East of the level crossing. The proposed diversion is considered to provide a more direct link to this area.’

No links are improved for existing users of the footpath, for whom the diversion is required.

#### 1

#### 2.36.13

‘Pedestrians wishing to access the long distance footpaths with estuary views, say Footpath 3 Wrabness from the West of the level crossing (Footpath 19 Wrabness) would have the walking distance reduced by approximately 480m and by approximately 180m to reach Footpath 5.’

No walking distances are reduced by the diversion for existing users of Footpath 19. Other pedestrians will not be starting a walk from that point so that those distances are not relevant.

Footpath 3 and Footpath 5 are readily accessible by 3 alternative East/West routes ;

1. Wheatsheaf Lane/Church Road
2. Along the estuary/foreshore
3. Along the Essex Way

A 4<sup>th</sup> East/West route is not required.

#### 2.36.15

‘It is noted that the coastal public right of way route from Bradfield towards Ramsey is approximately 6500m in length and the majority of footpaths in the area form part of long distance walks.’

As well as the long distance walks there are at least 8 circular walking routes accessible from Wheatsheaf Lane/Church road. These range in distance between a few hundred metres to approximately 12 miles and include footpaths, tracks, woodlands and nature reserves.

2.36.16

‘The alternative route maintains the connectivity to both sides of the railway via rural walking routes of a similar nature to those that already exist on routes in the area.’

The proposed alternative route is not similar in nature to the one being lost and is significantly less convenient to current users wishing to access the estuary from the Southwest of the village.

2

2.36.17

‘The proposed route was subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit carried out in line with HD19/15 and by an independent team remote from the option development design team. The RSA concluded that there were no issues associated with the proposals.’

The RSA did not consider any Agricultural traffic during harvest. Station Road is barely wide enough to accommodate tractors, trailers and combine harvesters which use the road when recreational walking is at its peak, creating risk to walkers.

2.36.23

‘It is considered that rural road walking is undertaken at present within the area to access the network of footpaths and Station Road is a suitable diversion route. The ATC figures do not indicate that traffic issues are likely to require mitigation measures and therefore the proposals were considered appropriate.’

Rural road walking is undertaken and popular along Wheatsheaf Lane/Church Road for reasons already stated.

Station Road does not offer any amenity value, does not offer connectivity to the wider footpath network and is not as safe or pleasant to walk as Wheatsheaf Lane/Church Road.

2.36.25

‘Considerations were given following consultation as to whether the use of private land could be justified to remove road walking but it was concluded that road walking was safe and suitable.’

It is illogical to conclude that it is not justified to use private land to the South of the crossing to remove road walking but is justified to use private land to the North of the crossing where road walking is popular, safe, facilitates access to all amenities and is wheelchair/pushchair friendly.

The diversion takes pedestrians away from the very amenities they seek to access and offers no connectivity to the wider footpath network.

Any diversion to the South over private land would only impact one land owner and would not be close to any residential property.

The proposed diversion adversely impacts 2 residential properties, the Land Owners and equestrian users none of whom were consulted adequately.

#### 2.36.27

‘Following consideration of use of the existing routes across the level crossings and the assessment of the proposed alternative in terms of impacts on the environment, users and other impacted parties, I am satisfied that the proposed route is suitable and convenient when considered in the context of the purpose and characteristics of the existing route.’

People walking to Wrabness North from the Southwest to access the estuary and amenities will want to access the nearest footpath.

There are 4 possible alternative routes;

1. Retain Footpath 19 (390m on road walking to nearest footpath)
2. Close Footpath 19 (840m on road walking to nearest footpath)
3. Diversion as proposed (1000m on road walking to nearest footpath)
4. Diversion retaining Brakey Grove (380m on road walking to nearest footpath)

4 maps enclosed to show routes.

This clearly demonstrates that the proposed is not suitable or convenient to existing users and does not fulfil the purpose and characteristics of the existing route.