OBJ/026 – C07 – 1 Proof of Evidence No 37 (Harston)

THE PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION) ORDER

PUBLIC INQUIRY: 28 NOVEMBER 2017

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT REFERENCE: TWA/17/APP/03

OBJECTION BY **THE RAMBLERS** TO CLOSURE OF C07 No 37 CROSSING, PARISH OF HARSTON

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF JILL TUFFNELL OF 62 Beche Road Cambridge CB5 8HU

- My name is Jill Tuffnell and I am a long-term resident of Cambridge. I have been a keen walker since 1976 when I joined Cambridge Rambling Club and a member of the Ramblers for over 30 years.
- 2. This statement supplements the holding objection to the closure of C07, No. 37 at Harston, already submitted on behalf of the Ramblers. It is primarily concerned with evidence to show the inadequacy of a significant section of the alternative pedestrian route proposed by Network Rail. However, we do greatly value the section of Harston FP4 north of the railway line which runs through a tree-lined track and adjacent woodland, with many informal paths leading off it. Cambridgeshire has such little woodland open to walkers that every copse is to be protected.
- 3. The diversion of Harston FP4 alongside an existing well-used informal path following the ditch/field edge from TL 432509 northeast to TL 435513, at the junction with London Road, is not the subject of objection, *provided* that a safe, readily accessible off-road pedestrian route is available to link to the current

1

junction of FP4 with London Road/Cambridge Road (TL 437507). At this point a good off-road hoggin path runs on the wide verge south to Newton village where there are links with other PROWs.

- 4. However, we contend that the proposals for such a footpath link are neither safe nor convenient. In fact, the incorporation of two steep, long flights of steps effectively makes the new route unusable by many walkers with even slight physical disabilities and totally unusable by anyone pushing a buggy.
- 5. The first section of the route alongside London Road from TL 435513 to the junction with the Byway to Hauxton (The Lane) at TL 436512 can make use of quite wide verges on either side of the road see photos 1 and 2¹. However, on the east side of the carriageway there are several cross drains in the grass. Network Rail's proposals involve crossing London Road which carries significant amounts of traffic travelling at speeds up to (or above) 60 mph.
- 6. Major problems arise with the new route to the south of the junction with the Byway. Network Rail proposes a footpath is created alongside the field east of the road from TL 436512 to TL 437510. As the road itself rises to form a bridge over the railway line, the adjacent field remains 'at level'. This means that there is a significant difference in height between the field and the bridge at TL 437510. Network Rail proposes to erect a flight of steps next to the bridge. In fact such a flight already exists, provided for NR's access to the

2

¹ See OBJ/026 – C07 – 2 – Appendix to Proof C07.

bridge for maintenance purposes (See photo 3). As far as I can see, this involves 20 individual steps. This presents a major obstacle to many pedestrians.

- 7. Once back on London Road, walkers are expected to cross it (west) and then proceed south over the bridge. Once on the south side of the bridge the new pedestrian route is to go down a new set of steps to the field on the west of Cambridge Road (assuming that the railway is the division between London Road (north) and Cambridge Road (south)). The difference in levels between the road and the adjacent field is difficult to gauge as there is a thick hedge (Photo 4). However, it is likely to involve at least 20 steps, presenting another set of obstacles to anyone with balance problems or with a buggy. The thick vegetation will require regular cutting back if it is not to encroach on the proposed steps. It is not possible to tell at present whether there are any issues with a new field edge path running south to the current junction/exit of Harston FP4 on Cambridge Road (TL 437507).
- 8. What are the alternatives? On the north side of the railway bridge the verge on the west side of London Road is very narrow in places (see photo 5, taken at TL 437511, looking south). Beyond the hedge the land falls away very steeply to the west, so it is not an option to move the hedge to increase the verge width. With fast traffic and a blind summit over the railway bridge, this is not a viable option. The verge on the east of London Road, north of the railway bridge, is a trifle wider (see photo 6 looking south at TL 437511), but this involves making a double crossing of a road with fast traffic. South of the

3

railway bridge the verge on the west of Cambridge Road is also very narrow (see photo 7 looking south, taken at TL 437509).

- 9. In summary, Network Rail's proposed diversion to Harston FP4 involves a dual crossing of the busy, fast London Road/Cambridge Road route, with two steep and long flights of steps and on-going maintenance issues relating to verges and hedges. It would be much easier to construct a flight of steps at an easier gradient over the existing level crossing at TL 432508.
- 10. We suggest that current safety issues with Harston C07, No. 37 level-crossing would be far more easily dealt with by provision of warning lights, such as are provided at Shepreth (TL 395483). See photo 8 (looking north) and photo 9 (looking south), together with the non-slip boarding across the rails (photo 10, looking south).

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

JILL TUFFNELL 20 October 2017