

**OBJ/036/W1/1          S69 BACTON**

THE PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (SUFFOLK LEVEL CROSSING  
REDUCTION) ORDER

PUBLIC INQUIRY, 13 FEBRUARY 2018

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT REFERENCE: TWA/17/APP/04

OBJECTION BY **THE RAMBLERS** TO CLOSURE OF CROSSING S69  
BACTON

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF **ROBERT BOARDMAN**, 8 Gardeners Walk,  
Elmswell IP30 9ET

**Introduction**

1. My name is Robert Boardman. I am the Ramblers Footpath Secretary for the Stowmarket Group. In this role my responsibilities cover 70 parishes in mid-Suffolk. I have held the post, together with a colleague, now retired, for 7 years. I have led walks for the Group as well as for the Suffolk Walking Festival. I also helped in the setting up of the Mid Suffolk Railway Walk which is shown on Ordnance Survey maps.
2. The Ramblers organizes itself through constituent parts known as “Areas”, loosely based on traditional counties. The Suffolk Area carries out the Ramblers’ objects through seven territorial Groups, together covering the whole county. Each Group has a Footpaths Secretary (in the case of one Group, two Footpaths Secretaries). These are authorised to make representations to the appropriate authorities concerning proposed changes to the rights of way network. They make these representations following decisions made by themselves with other suitably experienced members of the Group, usually as a committee. For county-wide strategic issues or issues affecting the territories of two or more Groups, reference may be made to the Suffolk Area Footpaths Committee which consists of an Area Footpaths Secretary, all of the Group Footpaths Secretaries, Access Officers

and, *ex officio*, the Area Chair or even the Area Council consisting of the Area Officers and delegates from each the Groups.

3. Stowmarket Ramblers have a good working arrangement with Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) who consult the Group at an early stage on any public footpath modifications. The Footpath Committee consult on these proposals and the conclusions are notified to MSDC's Rights of Way Communities Officer. The Group is a consultee with MSDC's planning department who notify the committee when a planning application may affect a right of way.

### **The present proposal**

4. The Ramblers objects to the closure of crossing S69 Bacton. This is a well-used path as evidenced in photograph A, which shows a well-trodden established line leading to the village sports field which is greatly used for recreational purposes at weekends. We notice that NR's census of use here was undertaken 25 June–3 July 2016, which is outside the football season. A main attractor for pedestrian use of this crossing is likely to be the football club, making it reasonable to assume that the survey does not represent normal usage at other times of the year.

*Photograph A, path leading to sports field—*

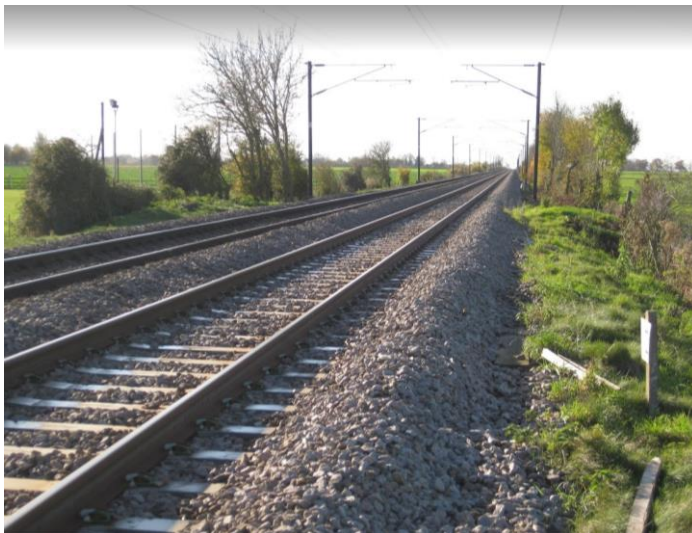


5. Also, it is an amenity path whose loss will cause hardship to the residents of Bacton. Its severance will have a significant adverse effect on the rights of way network.
6. The views at the crossing are unrestricted in both directions, as shown in photo B and C.

*Photograph B—*



*Photograph C—*



7. That people are aware of the need to take care in crossing the railway line is evidenced by the considerable use made of it by Bacton Football Club, the main users of the sports field. The use they make has resulted in no accidents despite the 87 high speed trains per day that use the line, as referred to in the club's notice warning people to take care, shown in photograph D.

*Photograph D, Bacton Football Club's notice about safety—*



8. The proposed diversion north along Broad Road B1113 is unacceptable as there is no footway, and either no verge or very little verge, to walk on. Though the speed limit (if obeyed) for vehicles is 40mph or 30mph, it is a busy through route with at times a considerable amount of fast moving traffic which can be seen in photos E, F and G.

*Photograph E, B1113, no footway—*





*Photograph F, B1113, no footway—*



*Photograph G, B1113, no footway—*



9. The route under the railway bridge is equally unacceptable, as again there is no refuge to walk on (photographs H and J). The railway bridge was built in the age when road traffic was horses-and-carts, and not many of them. There is hardly room for two vehicles to use the underpass at the same time and there is no scope for a proper footway to be built, so pedestrians will be in

danger, or at any rate in fear of danger. The underpass is well known to flood after heavy rains. This means that at best, pedestrians will be sprayed with water splashed up by vehicles; but it can get too deep in flood here to be used on foot at all, without being knee-deep in it. None of this is a proper substitute for the route to be lost.

*Photograph H, no footway or refuge for pedestrians on route under railway bridge—*



*Photograph J, no footway or refuge for pedestrians on route under railway bridge—*



10. The alternative route, green, as proposed by Network Rail will not amount to a suitable and convenient alternative. Neither the walk along the railway

line to Fords Green S13, which is subject to closure, nor a circuitous route to the farm crossing at Cow Creek, amounts to a suitable and convenient alternative.

11. When using this crossing a train can be seen for up to 20 seconds in either direction whereas it takes 6 to 8 seconds to cross.

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

ROBERT ROARDMAN

10 JANUARY 2018

*Ordnance Survey (not to scale) showing location of photographs and direction of camera—*

