

OBJ/036/W7/1 S02 BRANTHAM HIGH BRIDGE

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 S02 BRANTHAM
HIGH BRIDGE CROSSING

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF **GEOFF KNIGHT** of 49 Bloomfield Street,
Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 5JH

Introduction

1. My name is Geoff Knight. I have lived in Suffolk since 1976. I joined the Ramblers in 1987, and I am the Footpath Secretary for the Ipswich Group of the Ramblers.
2. I have been leading walks for 28 years with the Ramblers and other, less formal groups. I have taken short courses in map-reading for walking for both the U3A and the Ramblers. I always carry a map and keep a note on the parishes where I have walked. So far that is 238 Suffolk parishes out of 477.
3. I have served on the Footpath Sub-Committee for 20 years or so and frequently contact SCC over Footpath issues. I am particularly interested in wild flowers and the habitat where they are found.
4. 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.

The present proposal

5. The Ramblers objects to the proposal to close crossing S02 Brantham High Bridge. I have over many years led groups of walker on the paths in this locality and the Ramblers is concerned about the effect the closure of the crossing will have on the network. In our view the alternatives are neither suitable nor convenient.

The existing paths

6. Footpath 006 leaves the A137 at grid reference TM114345. It used to head diagonally over the first field in a north-easterly direction, but some years ago a diversion order routed it around this field in a northerly then easterly direction, on two sides of a rectangle. So already a desire-line path has been turned into a somewhat unnatural zig-zag around the field, the effect of which will be compounded by the replacement path in the present order taking it along the third side of the rectangle to rejoin the A137 and use its footway. Going round not two but three sides of a rectangle for about 700 metres can hardly be called 'convenient'. (It might take 10–15 minutes depending on an individual's speed.)
7. Footpath 006 then passes a cottage at TM117346 and goes through a copse and under an electricity line. From this point there is an open view towards Dodnash to the north, and also one north-eastwards to Tattingstone. A slope

then takes you across sandy ground to the foot-crossing, temporarily closed at present.

8. The path, after crossing another couple of fields, comes out on to the A137 about 100 metres south of Brantham Bridge. There you are well-placed to take Bentley Footpath 1, which leads north by a small stream to a point 200 metres east of the level crossing on Station Road. You can also take Bentley Footpath 34 and the footpath from Brantham Bridge which takes you down a quiet valley to Stutton Bridge on the B1080 at TM133345.
9. Each of the routes I have just described gives a feeling of remoteness and a chance to see wildlife. It is partly the fact that S02 provides connection from the south, without any use of a road once you are on it, that makes S02 so valuable. It is more than unfortunate that so important a connection should be broken. The combined effect is a really attractive walk, with pleasure derived from wildlife, rural character, remoteness and open views.

The alternative route

10. The alternative uses the A137, quite a busy road, for much more than it has to be used at present. It has a footway, so we do not necessarily say that the road will be dangerous, though it should be noticed that it involves a lay-by whose entrance/exit will need to be twice crossed by walkers using this alternative route for them to reach the footway in the verge which separates the lay-by from the road. On the A137, the noise and fumes and possible danger will be a sharp contrast to the remoteness and tranquillity of the existing route.
11. In our Statement of Case, the Ramblers said that this proposal involved an extra 320 metres of road walking. NR in their response¹ say “you say the diversion requires 320m of road walking. This was indeed our initial proposal, however, it was discounted in in Round 1 Consultation raised by Suffolk County Council regarding the additional road walking distance.” I am afraid I do not follow that. Unless the proposal has altered from what is now shown in

¹ Letter dated 15 December 2017 to Eugene Suggett, Senior Policy Officer at The Ramblers, NR ref: Obj/36/SUFF/R001.

the design freeze drawing associated with the order, walkers will have to walk along the footway of the A137 from the southern end of Jimmy's Lane and eastwards to the private road that goes past Street Farm on which the proposed footpath is to run. That is a considerable stretch of walking along a road, and if we misunderstood about it being 320 metres, it now looks more like 480 metres.

12. The alternative then finds a way, the precise detail of which is not known to us (it is private land), close to the east of the railway line. This seems a much inferior route lacking both views and tranquillity. The first section of it will involve walkers negotiating private drives and access roads, encountering at least some movement of vehicles.
13. Altogether the alternative route is purely functional. It is this functionality, with proximity to vehicles for much of it and without views or tranquillity or remoteness, which makes it unsuitable as a replacement for a route used primarily for recreation.
14. For those reasons the Ramblers object to the proposal.

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

GEOFF KNIGHT

8 JANUARY 2018

Photographs follow . . .

1. *View from section of Footpath 6 to be closed—*



2. *Another view from section of Footpath 6 to be closed—*



A137 looking east (Google Earth image): lay-by, western end, where entrance/exit needs to be crossed to reach footway in verge which separates lay-by from carriageway—



A137 looking east (Google Earth image): lay-by, eastern end, where entrance/exit needs to be crossed to reach footway in verge which separates lay-by from carriageway—



OS map annotated to show location and camera direction of photographs numbered 1 and 2 above (3 is not reproduced here)—

