

**APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL
(SUFFOLK LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION) ORDER**

SUMMARY TO

PROOF OF EVIDENCE:

ANDREW WOODIN – RIGHTS OF WAY AND ACCESS MANAGER

Bachelor of Sciences Honours degree in Ecology

Introduction

1. My name is Andrew Woodin, I am employed by Suffolk County Council (the Council) as the Rights of Way and Access Manager and have held this post since 2003.
2. I have been very heavily involved in Network Rail projects for some years now, both individual crossing-specific projects and, more lately, this Transport and Works Act Order (the Order). The Council has committed an immense amount of resource to assisting Network Rail where it considers Network Rail's proposals are in Suffolk's interests and, in this regard, Network Rail has benefitted a great deal from the Council's expertise and local knowledge, free of charge.
3. Where Suffolk County Council has objected to specific level crossing closure proposals in this Order, it is because it believes the negative impact of the proposal is greater than the public benefit to be derived from it.

Objection to Closure of Cattishall S25

4. This proposal seeks to close the level crossing and divert users 420m to the west alongside the railway to an existing underpass and thence on estate roads to re-join the route on Mount Road. The grounds for the Council's objection to the closure of this crossing are reproduced in my full proof and are based on the significant detour required by the proposal and the ongoing negotiation to replace the level crossing with a footbridge in the same location.

Current Situation at Cattishall

5. I have used and inspected this crossing on many occasions over the years, including for leisure cycling, and observed it to be well used, with users taking care to stop and look for trains. The crossing is on a road known as Green Lane. The route is also part of the National Cycle Network (National Cycle Route 13). The purpose of the route is mixed, including accessing Great Barton, Moreton Hall, the new Sybil Andrews Academy, local employment areas, the local countryside and of

course as part of the National Cycle Network.

Distances

6. The distance from the Great Barton side of the level crossing south to Mount Road via the level crossing is 240m. At an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (the pace used by Network Rail) this would take just over 3 and a half minutes.
7. The distance from the Great Barton side of the level crossing to the same point on Mount Road via the TWAO diversion is 1230m. At 2.5 mph this would take 18 minutes 20.57 seconds. This, therefore, constitutes roughly an additional 15 minutes, or 30 minutes on a return journey. The underpass can hardly be described as nearby (as referred to in para 106.2 of Network Rail's Statement of Case), which most people would take to mean a short distance away.
8. In short, the diversion from Green Lane to the railway underpass which forces people from their natural desire to take the shortest route between two points will deter them from their walking or cycling trip, whether it is being made for health reasons, leisure or utility.
9. On the matter of desire lines, I believe strongly that especially when walking and cycling people are naturally drawn to use desire lines to get to their destination and will use those lines even in preference to routes in better condition, as the following images from Google Images vividly demonstrate. In other words people will always want to use the most convenient route when walking or cycling Green Lane and may be deterred if they are denied that route.

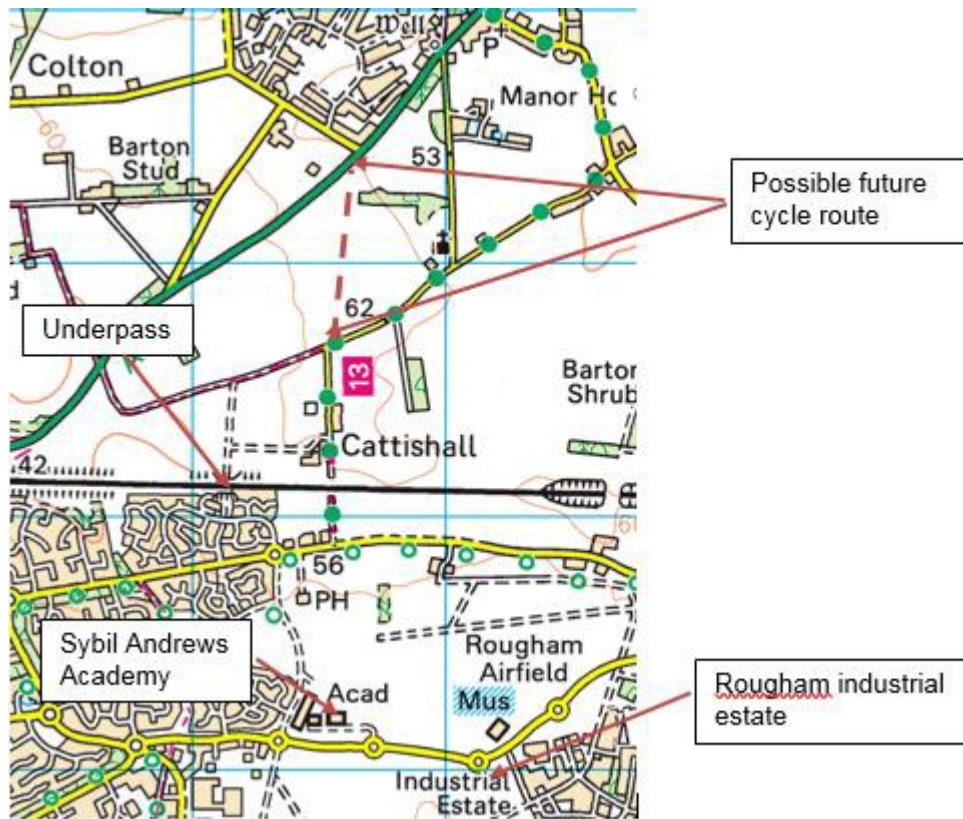


10. As Mr Kerr has noted in his proof, the test to be applied to whether an alternative route provided by Network Rail is adequate is whether it is “convenient and suitable for existing users” (TWA Guidance Annex 2, p. 105). The 2011 edition of the Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines suitable and convenient in the following way:

suitable meaning right or appropriate for a particular person, purpose, or situation; and convenient meaning fitting in well with a person’s needs, activities and plans involving little trouble or effort.

Those walking and cycling Green Lane, both now and in the future, on a generally north/south journey, or anywhere eastwards, will not find this alternative route fits their needs, plans and activities.

11. The map below illustrates pertinent locations:



Conflict With Relevant Policies and Local Development

12. I consider the additional distance to the underpass would be enough to deter people from walking this route from Great Barton and from the new housing envisaged in Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031 and the core strategy, and my full proof covers this in more detail.
13. Furthermore, West Suffolk Council have an aspiration to create a cycle path heading north along the existing field boundary from the junction of the byway and Green Lane to Great Barton (Vision 2031 p.105). This accentuates the importance of the north south access along Green Lane and the importance of retaining that linear access as the natural desire line.
14. Green Lane will be an important means of accessing the countryside for the development which is being built out east from the Flying Fortress (south of Mount Road). People living on that development will be deterred from accessing the natural environment by having to detour to the railway underpass.

15. West Suffolk Council have an aspiration to create walkable neighbourhoods which enable communities to meet their day-to-day needs without requiring them to drive. This aspiration is specifically included in the North-east Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement and the Council very much shares this aspiration.
16. Mr White, Principal Planning Officer Major Projects with Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough councils, will say more about current and future development in the area, and the negotiations to build a developer funded footbridge at the site of the level crossing, in his evidence.
17. The second of the two aims of the Suffolk Walking Strategy (Active For Life Suffolk Walking Strategy 2015-2020) is that walking becomes the 'default' choice for journeys of 20 minutes walking time or less. This is about the time it would take to walk from Cattishall to the Sybil Andrews Academy on the existing route, but the route proposed in the TWAO would significantly exceed this time.
18. Further, physical inactivity is a major issue for public health and this extra walking distance is especially likely to deter the elderly, people with restricted mobility and parents with children, whether in a pram or buggy or walking independently. The Council wants to encourage people to walk and enjoy the natural environment and Suffolk's Nature Strategy's 2020 vision for the natural environment includes seeking better access to enhanced enjoyment and a deeper understanding of Suffolk's natural environment's unique qualities. Recommendation 28 states *Suffolk County Council should seek opportunities to improve the connectivity of the public access network and the development and improvement of the public rights of way network.*
19. Suffolk County Council's Public Health department has submitted evidence to the inquiry to support the objection to the closure of this crossing and giving expert public health-based evidence. This evidence is attached as appendix 1.
20. In his evidence, Mr Kerr highlighted those local and national policies which relate to encouraging and promoting walking. I am not an expert in all aspects of relevant evidence but consider the proposal at Cattishall is contrary to the following policies.

These are expanded upon in my full proof.

- (i) Suffolk's **Local Transport Plan 2011-2031**,
- (ii) The Department for Transport's **Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2017**
- (iii) The Suffolk Walking Strategy 2015-2020,
- (iv) The **Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006 to 2016**,
- (v) The draft **ROWIP II 'Policies and Action Plan'**.

Conclusion

21. To conclude, in my professional opinion, this proposal is neither suitable nor convenient, and will have a significant negative impact on people's enjoyment of the rights of way network. The Inspector cannot, therefore, be satisfied that an alternative route has been provided pursuant to section 5(6) of the Transport and Works Act 1992. Furthermore, the proposal goes against both local and national policies that are meant to encourage walking and cycling.
22. Furthermore, the Council is not persuaded Network Rail has adequately justified the need to close the crossing at all, or as opposed to implementing other mitigation measures.
23. On this basis, I ask that the Inspector recommends the removal of this level crossing from the order, and that the ongoing negotiations between Network Rail, West Suffolk Council and the developer, who has agreed to fund the bridge, be allowed to proceed to conclusion.

END

Signed: 
Andrew Woodin

Dated: 10 January 2018