

**From:**  
**To:** [Joanna Vincent](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Northumberland Line Public Inquiry [GATELEY-GHAM.FID57603]  
**Date:** 10 November 2021 20:54:12

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I FIRMLY OBJECT to the planning of an underpass which is due to be sited at the side of our property, added to the fact that a lot of elderly and vulnerable people live in the surrounding estates (Darnley, Chillingham and Roseneath Court) leaving us all at risk and vulnerable in our own homes.

I have looked at the plans and cannot understand the rationale as to siting it where you are suggesting. The metres people need to walk to enter the underpass is much greater than there is now and takes you out metres from where the train station is to be. Why have an underpass at all there and waste money? It isn't necessary due to people still have metres to walk through the underpass. The argument for those with mobility issues is irrelevant as a result and those in wheelchairs / mobility scooters etc have never been able to use the current crossing due to the steep incline on the exit of Chillingham Crescent.

Out of all the options given by NCC 69% of people supported an idea of a bridge not an underpass so why have they been ignored? Have you asked people whether they would use an underpass, NO, and I believe few people will use this due to a rise in anti-social behaviour that we are already experiencing. Fires being lit on the lines or by the fences, bottles / eggs / stones being thrown at houses, rubbish everywhere, cars being broken into or damaged, motorbikes using the current crossing as a cut through, drug addicts lying unconscious in the back lane, the list goes on. The police cannot cope as it is and will never be able to cope with incidents occurring as a direct result of this, because they will and I god forbid no one is hurt but the likelihood is someone will be and it'll be on you! There has already been one assault on the crossing in recent years, a murder at a similar underpass in Cramlington, assaults in an underpass at Newcastle and by the railway at Kenton all within recent months. No amount of CCTV will prevent this and as a result of covid people have an excuse to wear masks to conceal their faces. Therefore, none of us residents would feel safe let alone want it there. If one had to go ahead (although bridge would be a much better option over any underpass as no one wants this) it would be much better being sited by the station whereby it will be more open and have people around more. Here it is very very isolated. As a female I would not walk through this nor would I walk through with my young children, one of whom is disabled. We are seeing a huge increase in protecting women as a result of Sarah Everard's death this certainly goes against it as it does anybody because they will all be at risk.

After studying the plans, this is even more so with concrete walls with metal fencing on top surrounding the path, no one will be able to see through, making it a key area for crimes to occur. Added to this the visual look of it being ghastly and looking very prison like, making the environment look hideous. As for

planting etc to reduce visual impact, no amount of this will block the view from my windows whether this be of the underpass itself or out the front of my property with concrete walls and bollards (subject to design) which will also become a meeting place for people. I will also not be able to access the side of my property.

No groundwork has also been undertaken in the location and this is a key concern for me and my neighbours. The area also liable to flooding on both sides. This is also shown up on land searches, meaning the chances of the underpass flooding very high. In the plans it mentions the water going into the drains, when in fact you have stated otherwise.

I am concerned about the increase in noise from the underpass, echo's from people shouting in it etc, smells from people urinating in it. NCC cannot tackle the weeds or bins in the area let alone keep an underpass clean and tidy, including graffiti free.

In summary, I believe that putting an underpass here, if at all in the town will have a detrimental impact on crime rates, peoples safety and residents mental well-being. No one should be afraid of where they live and this is inevitable. I deplore you to not go ahead with these plans and look for an alternative. Whilst I am firmly in favour of the line and what it will bring to Ashington, you must also see the adverse effects of this proposal.

I am objecting to the proposed underpass at the side of Darnley Road due to the many concerns that I have. I have seen a rise in antisocial behaviour in the area, from living on Green Lane and now Ashbourn Crescent. I feel this will only increase with an underpass and it will increase the perceived crime in the area such as cars being broken into or vandalised, drugs/alcohol, along with general antisocial behaviour like litter, graffiti, loitering and possible intimidating behaviour.

The current hospital crossing was put in for hospital pedestrian access. However, the hospital is no longer there and this crossing is no longer required. Therefore, I would recommend the public right of way be either extinguished or diverted. It can be extinguished on the grounds that it is putting people at risk especially school children if this was to be replaced by an underpass. It can also be diverted using the current pedestrian public right of ways going to Green Lane and Station Road, which add no real distance when walking even for those with

mobility issues, who can't access the current crossing as it stands. As I will not use the underpass and feel the crossing should be closed I forego my right of way and I will use an alternative such as the diversion mentioned earlier.

I do not believe over 500 people a day use this crossing and other figures readily available are more realistic showing 110 pedestrians / cyclist. Green Lane on the other hand was close to 800 and down by North Seaton was nearly 300. So how come they are only going to have barriers when they have more people crossing. Could these not be installed at the hospital crossing if it was not to close, instead of an underpass and will save money. All of these crossings have the same safety rating.

I am concerned for the safety of those living close by including the elderly and vulnerable. I have family members living very close to the location and I have concerns for my sister and her family, one of whom is a disabled child who's mental well-being could be greatly affected by this. He is also classed as extremely vulnerable. I am also concerned for anyone who would choose to use the underpass as I feel it is not safe. I have two daughters and I would be worried for their safety and I will not allow them to use this underpass and would encourage their friends not to either. There has been too many assaults, murders, rapes etc in these and I do not want this to happen on my doorstep in my town. The structure to me seems very unsafe and no amounts of CCTV will remove this concern. Also I do not believe it will be vandal free? How will this be maintained and who is paying for all of this?

I also believe that the environment will be impacted due to the loss of trees and natural plantation. Instead replaced with concrete walls and steel work, which will make the area look industrialised and out of keeping with the town and its history. Prison structures come to mind. I also think it is ironic that Northumberland County Council do a plant a tree scheme when you are going to remove trees that are already there and do not need to come out because an underpass is not needed, especially when the exits are so close to the station.

I hope that you take my comments into account and look for an alternative to this, even a bridge would be safer.

Grahams

I hereby OBJECT to the proposed underpass 21/03780/CCD. As a resident that resides in close proximity to the area designate I have strong valid reasons to support my objection.

VISUAL AMENITY – Looking east on Darnley Road the rail line is screened by a green natural embankment. The boundary fence whilst not being hidden does blend into the surrounding backdrop and does not protrude the rail line. A

proposed concrete structure has a 2 metre fence standing at 1.8 metres above the rail line and will make it unpleasantly dominant. This will change the appearance of the street view and have a significant impact on residential amenity. Has a residential visual amenity assessment (RVAA) been carried out and if so what were the findings?

**NOISE AND DISTURBANCE RESULTING FROM USE** – currently the path adjacent to my property (Darnley Road) has antisocial behaviour problems. Motorbikes use it as a shortcut and an underpass will only amplify the noise from a bike's engine and funnel towards my home due to the tunnel's location. The same can also be said for the youth that congregate down the path, taking drugs and consuming alcohol. With an underpass being a recognised attractant for ASB, noise levels will certainly increase.

**On DESIGN APPEARANCE** – Having looked closely at the plans the design of a concrete structure certainly will not be attractive to the area. With the proposed design it will look like prison walls with high perimeter fencing sited on-top. Concrete walls are a known magnet for graffiti and a series of questions have already been asked “who will be required to fund and maintain the cleaning of the underpass” when it becomes vandalised like the one at Cramlington under the A189. The underpass entrances and exits will be enclosed and hidden due to the location. Therefore it makes no difference whether it has the 45 degree entrances its whole position is in a secluded area and the lengths of the walkways means it is impossible to see who is in the underpass before you go through it. Deeming unsafe. The lengths of the walkways leaving the underpass are considerably long and take you more or less to the Esendene site reinforcing there no need for this underpass as people will be walking further than they are now.

**FEAR OF CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR** – Already well documented with Ashington Police Force, the area is a known hot spot for ASB, drug users, underage drinking, objects being thrown at properties and fires are just a handful of issues residents are having to cope with. Sadly, the police are already understaffed, and response times are somewhat poor, if they turn up. Having an underpass in this already problematic location will attract the wrong type of people and draw fear upon residents. We have to live here and the tragic loss of a young life in a Cramlington underpass only adds to the woes. I find Public Protection's comment to the portal within an hour of the application going live very disturbing and lame. It is a disgrace for them to add the comment “Hi, Public Protection have no objection or comments to make on this consultation” whoever thought to write that should be investigated.

**LANDSCAPING** – With the path running alongside 1 Darnley Road being permanently closed I raised questions in an online consultation as to how they plan to plant “a native hedgerow” against my boundary fence and privet hedge. NCC planners could not answer this and the question of how I would maintain my boundary hedge (something I do 4/5 times a year) and also paint/preserve my fence was also met with silence. During a telephone call with Stuart McNaughton / Strategic Transport Manager, I again asked the same questions and when I would I be given clarity on the issue, I still await 4 months later as

no body knows the answer! Yet, they are the ones who submitted the plans. It is my view a hedgerow will not be maintained regularly and will become a tangled eyesore and a unsightly backdrop to the front elevation of my property. It is quite ironic and hypocritical that NCC are promoting a plant a tree schemewhen trees are to be removed to accommodate the underpass and infrastructure which is not needed.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY – I feel strongly that the best option would be to extinguish the hospital crossing right of way under the Town and Country Planning Act to allow the development of the actual rail line to go ahead and not to be mistaken for the development of an underpass, which I strongly object to. There are already alternative routes that can be used across the line, North and South of Hospital Crossing and distances would not a great amount of time onto journeys. I strongly question the figures claimed on the pedestrian usage to be somewhat inflated and recent surveys indicate only 110 pedestrians and cyclists used this crossing in October 2020 a day.

CONSULTATION – I feel as a community we have been severely let down by NCC and the planning team for such a large project which will have a considerable impact on the lives of residents and have done the bare minimum legal requirement which they are required to do to inform the general public and those living close by. Like previously said many questions have been avoided and brushed under the carpet and the standard lines fired back. Many of the local residents are elderly and do not have internet access, therefore were not aware of the proposal and conducting it in such a way during a pandemic where local facilities i.e. libraries, council offices etc were closed limits the awareness of this proposal for others. Even Ashington Town Council were not aware of the compulsory purchase order until they were contacted. I am also aware that people who initially opposed the compulsory purchase order and initial objections to an underpass were missed off receiving up-dates whether this be via email or letter. The concerns from residents during an online Teams meeting were also dismissed. I would also like to express my disappointment on how underhand NCC have been throughout the whole consultation period.

Had a thorough consultation been carried out you would have been made aware that the elderly reside by the proposed underpass location, as well as families with disabled children/young adults and looked after children all of who are classed as extremely vulnerable. Therefore, putting these people and their families at risk.

While I am against the underpass, I would like to point out I am for the line reopening and the benefits that it will bring to the people of Ashington. It makes complete sense to relocate the crossing further North to an area it will not impact.

Sent from my iPhone

On 10 Nov 2021, at 18:55, Joanna Vincent  
<Joanna.Vincent@gateleyhamer.com> wrote: