

Catherine Wright – Proof of Evidence

Public Inquiry: Brookfields / Mill Lane / Archer Street – Temporary Construction Compound & Access Route

29 April 2026

0. Disclaimer

This Proof of Evidence is based on the *original* plans submitted for Brookfields, Mill Lane, and Archer Street. Revised plans were only made available to me two days before the statutory deadline, and therefore I have been unable to comment on them. All evidence presented relates to the documents accessible at the time of submission.

This evidence is supported by photographic exhibits, witness statements and references to Network Rail's own documentation.

1. Introduction

My name is **Catherine Wright**, and I am a resident of Archer Street. My Proof of Evidence focuses on two core areas:

1. **The proposal's adherence to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**
2. **Environmental factors and justification for the proposed use of Mill Lane, Archer Street, and Brookfields as a secondary temporary construction compound and access route**

These are only areas directly relevant to my objection and to the lived experiences of Disabled and vulnerable residents I am representing.

The issues I raise are not hypothetical. They relate to real people, real vulnerabilities, and real risks that have not been acknowledged, assessed, or mitigated by Network Rail.

My fellow resident Rob Muir will be concentrating on issues faced by residents of Mill Lane and Archer Street as a whole.

2. Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Having researched the Equality Act in depth, and having reviewed Network Rail's Statement of Case, it is clear that the applicant has only addressed the most basic elements of the Act — largely in relation to station accessibility and general development.

What is *not* demonstrated anywhere in regards to residents is an application of the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**.

- **No reference** to the Equality Act in relation to vulnerable residents
- **No evidence** of “due regard” being given to the requirements of PSED
- **No evidence** of steps taken to prevent unlawful discrimination
- **No evidence** of advancing equality of opportunity
- **No evidence** of removing barriers for disabled or vulnerable residents
- **No Equality Impact Assessment** relating to this proposal
- **No anticipatory duty** demonstrated
- **No mitigation** for protected characteristics

The Equality Act requires public authorities to have *due regard* to:

- Eliminating discrimination
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations

Network Rail has not demonstrated due regard in any of these areas.

The absence of an Equality Impact Assessment within my case is particularly concerning. This is not a minor omission — it is a fundamental failure to comply with statutory duties.

3. Impact on Disabled & Vulnerable Residents

The proposed use of Mill Lane, Brookfields, and Archer Street for construction traffic would have severe and disproportionate impacts on disabled and vulnerable residents.

3.1 Loss of Access to Homes

Residents of Archer Street and Mill Lane would be unable to access their homes safely or consistently. Disabled and vulnerable residents with mobility issues cannot simply

walk-up steep gradients such as Mill Lane or Brookfields. These are not minor inclines — they are physically demanding routes that many residents cannot navigate.

Any independence that transport provides would be removed. This includes:

- Access to essential services
- Ability to attend medical appointments
- Ability to shop for food
- Ability to maintain social contact
- Ability to live safely and independently

(Exhibit CW1 Photographs of Mill Lane gradient and Brookfields incline)

3.2 Isolation and Mental Health Impacts

Removing vehicle access risks:

- Social isolation
- Decline in mental health
- Increased anxiety
- Loss of independence
- Reduced quality of life

Disability, age, and vulnerability are **not temporary conditions**. Residents do not live their lives according to school drop-off and pick-up times.

Network Rail has done **nothing** to mitigate these factors. There is **no anticipatory duty** shown. This is **indirect discrimination** against protected residents.

4. Emergency Access Failures

There are **no provisions** for emergency services or for vulnerable residents who rely on vehicle access.

Network Rail's reasoning is that the proposed plans are a "temporary" measure. But temporary disruption does not remove legal duties.

In their response to my objection, Network Rail stated that they "have and will engage with emergency services." This is not mitigation. It is a **generic blanket statement** that does not address the specific risks raised.

(Exhibit CW2 extract from Network Rail's response to my objection)

4.1 Personal Medical Vulnerability

I suffer from **unstable epilepsy**, sometimes resulting in several seizures a week. I rely on car access for:

- Emergency hospital treatment
- Immediate help from family
- Safe transport when I am unable to stand or walk after a seizure

Stress and fatigue are known seizure triggers. This proposal would significantly increase both.

This could jeopardise my health, my safety, and even my ability to work.

5. Noise, Vibration & Human Health

Network Rail's Environmental Report states:

“No technical studies have been undertaken for materials and waste; population and human health and climate change as no potentially significant effects were anticipated.” Exhibit CW3 (*NR14 Environmental Report Vol 1, p.20*)

This raises serious concerns.

The “potentially significant effects” of dust, spoil movement, and construction waste can be **catastrophic** for:

- Residents with breathing difficulties
- Elderly residents
- Disabled residents
- Vulnerable adults
- The 220 children attending Milton St John's Primary School on Mill Lane

How can Network Rail claim there will be no significant effects when **no studies were carried out**?

This appears to be **procedural compliance**, not anticipatory duty.

There is also:

- **No vibration impact study**
- **No structural risk assessment**
- **No liability arrangements** for damage to early-1900s houses

Noise and vibration alone can severely disrupt daily life, particularly for residents with mental health conditions.

5.1 Witness Evidence – Vicky Pearson

(Exhibit CW 4)

This is evidenced in the personal witness statement of **Vicky Pearson**, who has asked for her statement to be submitted with no redactions.

Vicky suffers from severe mental health issues. Brookfields is her lifeline — a quiet, enclosed, safe space where she can regulate her emotions, prevent escalation, and manage her wellbeing.

She knows that noise, construction vehicles, and vibration will worsen her anxiety and set back her recovery. The thought of losing Brookfields terrifies her.

6. Brookfields – Ecology, History & Community Value

Brookfields has been the focus of repeated development attempts over recent decades. Every attempt has been rejected due to:

- Unsafe infrastructure
- Flood risk
- Environmental significance

Brookfields is home to:

- Bats
- Deer
- Badgers
- Protected wildlife
- Endangered plants and flowers

In 2025, a **Tree Preservation Order** was granted, recognising its ecological and community value.

Brookfields is not just a piece of land. It is a sanctuary, a habitat, and a vital green space for residents.

7. Flooding & Land Instability

Brookfields has a history of:

- Dangerous flooding
- Land movement
- Potential bedrock instability
- Two landslides, 1 directly affecting the railway

Network Rail has previously attempted to stabilise the land. In 2021, heavy machinery was driven across Brookfields, leaving the ground churned and barely walkable.

Despite these efforts, Brookfields remains:

- Soft
- Waterlogged
- Vulnerable to erosion
- At risk of further landslides

A construction compound would significantly worsen these risks.

(Exhibit CW5) photograph of Brookfields ground damage 2021)

8. Reasoning & Justification

Given that:

- Multiple planning applications for Brookfields have been rejected
- Mill Lane has repeatedly been deemed unsafe for development access
- Brookfields is environmentally sensitive
- Vulnerable residents would be disproportionately harmed

Why is this proposal now considered justifiable?

If houses had been built on Brookfields, Network Rail would have been forced to find an alternative access route.

That alternative already exists:

Manchester Road, on the opposite side of the track, where construction activity is already planned.

This proposal is:

- Not ethical
- Not safe
- Not legally compliant
- Not environmentally responsible
- Not justified

9. Conclusion

For all the reasons outlined in this Proof of Evidence, the proposed use of Mill Lane, Archer Street, and Brookfields as a temporary construction compound and access route must be rejected.

Thank you.

