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Subject: Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle TWA Order: formal objection
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Formal objection to Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle TWA Order

To: transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk

From: [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED]

I am writing to formally object to the **Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO)** application in relation to the proposed replacement of Mossley Station, specifically the designation and use of land at Brookfields, Mill Lane and Archer Street as a construction access and site works area.

My objection relates to the **principle, scale, location and long-term consequences** of using Brookfields and Mill Lane for construction access and site activity. This proposal represents a **disproportionate, unsafe and environmentally damaging approach**, when safer and less harmful alternatives exist.

1. Inappropriate scale and unjustified land take

The area defined within the red line boundary at Brookfields is exceptionally large relative to the stated purpose of station construction. No clear or proportionate justification has been provided for why such a substantial area of protected green space is required for access, compounds or site works.

Modern infrastructure projects routinely operate using just-in-time delivery, off-site fabrication and tightly controlled logistics, minimising land take and environmental harm. The assumption that an extensive green and woodland site must be given over to construction activity is neither necessary nor credible, particularly in a constrained residential and environmentally sensitive location.

2. Permanent risk of planning creep and irreversible harm

Although the use of Brookfields is presented as “temporary”, the impacts of construction activity on woodland are **not genuinely temporary**. Soil compaction, root damage, altered drainage patterns, loss of understorey and habitat fragmentation often result in **permanent ecological degradation**, even where land is nominally reinstated.

Brookfields has been **successfully defended by residents and the Town Council for over ten years** against development proposals, including a refused housing application in 2022 on traffic safety grounds. Allowing the land to be degraded for construction access creates a **serious risk of future planning creep**, whereby its altered condition is used to justify

further development.

Once access has been established and the land's character altered, future applications could argue that the site is no longer functional green space, undermining its long-term protection.

This risk is not hypothetical. It is a well-established pattern in planning history and is of profound concern to local residents.

3. Woodland Tree Preservation Order and ecological impact

Brookfields is now subject to a **woodland Tree Preservation Order**. The site functions as a vital green corridor and is widely regarded by residents as the "green lung" of Mossley.

The area supports established biodiversity, including mature protected trees, a confirmed badger sett, regular sightings of deer, woodpeckers and bats, as well as other wildlife reliant on this habitat. Tree removal "only where unavoidable" is not an acceptable mitigation within protected woodland, nor is prolonged disturbance from noise, vibration, lighting and heavy machinery.

Brookfields also acts as a **natural water drainage and absorption area**. Degrading this land materially increases surface water and drainage risk elsewhere in the town.

4. Japanese knotweed risk and biosecurity failure

Japanese knotweed is present on an area of the Brookfields site that borders the railway line. Despite previous treatment, significant growth remains visible, indicating eradication has not been completed.

Designating Brookfields as a construction access and site works area presents a **serious and foreseeable risk of knotweed spread**, through soil disturbance, vehicle movements, temporary surfacing and material storage. Japanese knotweed is classified as **controlled waste**, and its disturbance or spread carries legal, financial and environmental consequences.

The TWAO application fails to demonstrate how this biosecurity risk would be effectively contained or monitored. Given the proximity of residential gardens and public footpaths, this omission is significant and renders the proposal unsound.

In these circumstances, designating Brookfields for construction activity is both inappropriate and irresponsible.

5. Mill Lane is fundamentally unsuitable and unsafe for construction access

The proposal to route construction traffic via Mill Lane and Archer Street is wholly unacceptable.

Mill Lane is steep, narrow and physically constrained. Its lower section operates as **one-**

way only and is subject to a low bridge, which prevents safe passage of large vehicles. At its upper junction with Carrhill Road, there are **blind spots**, requiring vehicles to edge forward at the steepest point of the hill to gain visibility.

The road provides **no safe passing space**, meaning large vehicles would be forced to mount pavements or reverse on steep gradients. These physical constraints make it **impossible** for construction traffic to use the route safely. No amount of traffic management, timing restrictions or mitigation can overcome these fundamental limitations.

6. Safeguarding failure and statutory duty of care

Mill Lane runs directly past **Milton St Johns Primary School**. Public authorities and promoters have a **heightened statutory duty of care** where schoolchildren are concerned.

Introducing heavy construction traffic would:

- Conflict directly with school drop-off and pick-up times
- Endanger children walking, cycling or crossing
- Compromise established safe walking routes
- Increase noise and air pollution affecting classrooms and outdoor areas
- Risk obstructing emergency vehicle access

These risks are **foreseeable, unavoidable and unacceptable**, and the proposal fails to meet safeguarding obligations.

7. Public footpaths and rights of way

Brookfields public footpath and Mill Lane form part of established **public walking routes** used daily by residents and schoolchildren. Construction activity would severely disrupt these routes, reduce safety and accessibility, and degrade valued public rights of way. This impact has not been adequately addressed.

8. Reliance on future mitigation is inappropriate

The application relies heavily on vague assurances and future mitigation measures, such as impacts being managed “where unavoidable” or through later construction management plans. Where risks are this severe, particularly involving children, protected woodland and controlled invasive species, it is not acceptable to defer detail or rely on post-approval mitigation.

9. Precedent and planning history

Previous planning applications to develop Brookfields for housing have been refused, primarily on traffic safety grounds relating to Mill Lane access. That decision was made **before** the Tree Preservation Order was in place on the site, further strengthening the case against any intensification of use.

The current proposal disregards that history and seeks to achieve by temporary designation what could not be secured through permanent planning consent.

10. Failure to demonstrate the least harmful option

Access from the **Manchester Road side** represents a demonstrably safer, more appropriate and less harmful alternative. Manchester Road is a major route with greater capacity, visibility and resilience, and avoids protected woodland and school safeguarding risks.

The application fails to demonstrate that the proposed use of Brookfields and Mill Lane represents the **least harmful practicable option**, which is a fundamental requirement for infrastructure schemes of this nature.

I therefore object to the TWAO application insofar as it proposes:

- The use of Brookfields as a construction access or site works area
- Construction access via Mill Lane and Archer Street

The proposal is unsafe, environmentally damaging, disproportionate in scale, and creates unacceptable long-term risks to protected woodland space and public safety. It directly contradicts previous planning decisions, statutory safeguarding duties, environmental stewardship and the availability of safer alternatives.

I urge the Secretary of State to require the removal of Brookfields, Mill Lane and Archer Street from the TWAO boundary.

Yours faithfully,

Joanne Birtwistle

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