

TWA 1992 NETWORK RAIL
STALYBRIDGE TO DIGGLE (SADDLEWORTH) ENHANCEMENTS ORDER

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

SAM AL-HAMDANI
REP 04

Proof of Evidence TWA STALYBRIDGE TO DIGGLE (SADDLEWORTH)

Sam Al-Hamdani (Saddleworth Parish Council) REP 04

1. I am presenting this proof of evidence in my role as a Saddleworth Parish Councillor, and the vice chair of the Parish Council's Strategic Planning Committee.
2. Saddleworth Parish Council met with Network Rail on May 12 to discuss our initial statement of case, and the response given. Assurances were given on a number of matters, however, at the time of submitting this Proof of Evidence, the written assurances that were agreed have not been received, and therefore we have had to include all of these in this proof of evidence. The affected items are Diggle Access; the compounds at Armit Road, Friezland Church Hall car park, Saddleworth Rugby Club car park, and the carriageway off Oldham Road between Greenfield Station and Chapel Road. Should written confirmation of the positions be received, we would be happy to treat them as common ground; however, at the moment we would ask that the Public Inquiry consider including these as conditions of the TWA order.
3. However, no agreement could be found on a substantial number of issues, such as the A670 closure, Moorgate Halt, the land off Ladcastle Road, some of the objections to the use of the land adjacent to Uppermill Viaduct, and the provision of new facilities and services.
4. In particular, with regards to the consideration of the footbridge at Moorgate Halt, the failure to even address the concerns raised, never mind provide an explanation or rebuttal, seems so extreme that I struggle to see this as any attempt at negotiation in good faith.
5. With regards to the closure of the A670 our concerns remain that there appears to be no evidence provided to back up Network Rail's contention that there is no option to build a bailey bridge. We have been provided with no engineering analysis, cost analysis or any other documentation to demonstrate this, and there is no reference to it in the Traffic and Transport Proof of Evidence NR/PoE/JD/CC/5.2. Indeed, the proof of evidence simply states that it will necessitate a 17 week road closure with no evidence to show that it is necessitated (paragraph 4.3.2).
6. While Network Rail stated in their consultation meeting that there were reserves available to work on the road network for improvements should it be needed, there was no information provided on how much was available, and what level of delays would result in that money being made available. The alternative routes in the area are extremely limited, and in most cases limited to single lane traffic due to their narrow nature and parking. I would contend that without guarantees to limit severe disruption to the local schools, businesses and commuter traffic, and to guarantee the availability of funding to remediate existing highways issues

where these could mitigate the impact, agreeing the TWA order in its current form is signing a blank piece of paper and hoping for the best, and is in breach of the proposed Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan. Evidence is needed to demonstrate that there is not an engineering option to keep Oldham Road open for the duration, and guarantees are needed to ensure disruption is minimised.

7. At its meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council, Network Rail stated that as a result of road closures put forward in the TWA order, there would be no properties that would lose access as a result; that all properties that would be affected had been contacted; and that should anyone consider that their property was at risk of being affected that there was a process for contacting Network Rail to ensure that their concerns were properly addressed. We would ask that the Inquiry ask for Network Rail to supply the written confirmation of this information, as agreed at the meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council.
8. On Moorgate Halt, the response given by Network Rail in both the formal written response, and the consultation meeting simply did not address in any way the points raised about the footbridge. Our only common ground is that we accept that the current level crossing is not safe as it stands.
9. Network Rail seemingly fully accepted the need to provide a footbridge at this location, having progressed all works to get planning permission in place for a footbridge.
10. The costings provided for the footbridge in the information provided to the groups with concerns over this location do not seemingly have any justification. Despite providing a clear analysis of why these figures did not justify the decision to cancel the footbridge project, Network Rail have simply ignored the questions raised.
11. The analysis of the safety of the Level Crossing at Moorgate Halt acknowledges both the high level of traffic at this point, but also the high proportion of vulnerable users who make up that traffic.
12. In considering the egress of PRow 244, Network Rail's contention is that should this egress prove to be unsafe once use has been established, this should be dealt with by highways. The High Street at this location is narrow, and providing a safer egress at this location would be a major engineering work, which would have no funding available to it. Demonstrably, this is creating a situation where vulnerable users would be at a much higher risk, and there would be no realistic proposition to resolve this.
13. The lack of a Diversity Impact Assessment for the use of PRow 244 throughout the consideration of this application simply adds to the evidence that this part of the application does not seem to have been carried out in good faith.
14. We note that in the Traffic and Transport Proof of Evidence NR/PoE/JD/CC/5.2, the author states that he has "*not [considered] whether the volume or type of*

users should be diverted and not [considered] the case for alternatives such as a footbridge”.

15. I cannot see how it can be acceptable that an Order can be put in place which would close a thousand year old right of way, disadvantage vulnerable people in the so doing, with no clear method of resolution, when there is an alternative which has been planned, accepted, is almost without exception agreed to by all objectors, and would not have a significant negative impact on the overall costings of the project.
16. The need for the compound at the Land at Ladcastle Road is predicated on the closure of PRoW 209, and therefore should be treated in conjunction with that. Should the inquiry conclude that PRoW 209 be retained via use of a footbridge then the requirement for this would be removed.
17. The Local Plan for Oldham states that the Oaklands Road compound contains within it a site of ecological importance. As not all of this area is to be taken up by the compound, we are awaiting evidence from Network Rail as to whether the area of ecological importance will be affected by the works. Should it be affected, we consider that a full and detailed plan of mitigation for this would be required before the TWA order is granted.
18. The use of the Land adjacent to Uppermill Viaduct is in a location where bats have been identified in the area. While the analysis of the site has not identified the location of bat roosts in the area being worked on, it has not identified the location of the roosts at all, which clearly must exist given the evidence of the bats. There is a risk that the absence of evidence is being taken as the evidence of absence. We would request that the inspector carefully assesses the statements provided by Network Rail to ensure that this Order does not threaten endangered and protected species.
19. At its meeting with the Saddleworth Parish Council, Network Rail stated that the use of this area as a compound would be for the temporary laying down of materials while work was ongoing. They also stated that none of the areas being used would threaten the heritage assets in this area, or have any impact on the area's importance as a tourism destination. They stated that they would provide an outline of the areas which would be used, to demonstrate that it would have no impact on the heritage assets, and confirmation of the way in which it would be used, and how they would minimise the time that it would be in use for. We would ask that the Inquiry ask for Network Rail to supply the written confirmation of this information, as agreed at the meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council. Should this not be provided, we would ask the Inquiry to consider this as a condition of the works.
20. With regards to the provision of accessible parking at the station, these works will provide disability friendly access to both sides of the station, a long-term goal of all parties including Saddleworth Parish Council. However, to be increasing access to the station at the same time as limiting accessible parking

provision seems to be a contradictory approach. There are 11 parking spaces currently directly outside Greenfield Station. We consider that it would be appropriate for at least 4 to be given over for accessible parking, and 2 for families.

21. It was also the original contention of Network Rail that four named stations affected would have a drop off area, but this is now seemingly not part of the plans for Greenfield. We consider that this change at this stage to be a serious omission both from the public consultations, and from the final plans.
22. No agreement has been reached on the provision of additional train services at Greenfield Station as a result of these works. When considering any form of planning application, the job of those judging it is to consider the benefit delivered by the application and to contrast it to any adverse impacts.
23. With regards to the Diggle Access, Network Rail gave verbal assurances at the meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council that the mitigation work included returning the land to its original condition immediately following the completion of work. We request that the Inquiry ask for Network Rail to supply the written confirmation of this information, as agreed at the meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council.
24. With regards to the compound at Armit Road, at its meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council, Network Rail stated that this compound would not be used for construction traffic, but only as a relief area, and for accessible parking. They also offered a guarantee as to the maximum size of vehicles using the area. We request that the Inquiry ask for Network Rail to supply the written confirmation of this information, as agreed at the meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council. Should this not be provided, we would ask the Inquiry to consider this as a condition of the works.
25. With regards to the compound at Friezland Church Hall car park at its meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council, Network Rail stated that the compound would be required for the duration of works on the bridge at Oaklands Avenue, and subject to confirmation from contractors, would be for a period of 1–3 weeks; would take place in the school holidays to minimise disruption; and they would provide an alternative venue for organisations affected. We would ask that the Inquiry ask for Network Rail to supply the written confirmation of this information, as agreed at the meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council. Should this not be provided, we would ask the Inquiry to consider this as a condition of the works.
26. With regards to the compound at the Saddleworth Rugby Club car park, we understand that Network Rail are in the process of negotiating a direct agreement with the club for the use of the land. Providing that the Rugby Club are content with this arrangement, we would be happy to withdraw our concerns regarding this.

27. With regards to the carriageway off Oldham Road between Greenfield Station and Chapel Road, at its meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council, Network Rail stated that their intended works did not involve the removal of any mature trees. They stated that as there was no provision in the TWA order for trees to be removed, should this be required when work was taking place, they would need to seek the agreement of the planning authority (Oldham Council); and that any trees removed as a result of works would have to be replaced in line with the ratios stated in the forthcoming Oldham Local Plan. We would ask that the Inquiry ask for Network Rail to supply the written confirmation of this information, as agreed at the meeting with Saddleworth Parish Council. Should this not be provided, we would ask the Inquiry to consider this as a condition of the works.
28. Currently the works enabled by this TWA order would improve Greenfield station for those with accessibility needs – something required regardless of this work – but provide no extremely limited improvements for the wider population. Given this, I consider that it is essential for the disruptive elements of this scheme, both for the duration of the work (with particular reference to the closure of the A670), and permanently in the case of the closure of PRow 209, to be minimised or erased. This would mean clear limits on the disruption of traffic, guidance on the necessity of funding for mitigation should traffic problems exceed acceptable boundaries, and the provision of a footbridge at PRow 209.