

Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited

HINCKLEY NATIONAL RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

The Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange Development Consent Order

Project reference TR050007

Appendix 3 - Narborough Level Crossing Report

Revision: 01

December 2024

Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
Regulation 5(2)(q)

RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

RE LETTER 10th SEPTEMBER 2024

PARAGRAPHS 72 -75

HINCKLEY NRFI NARBOROUGH LEVEL CROSSING REPORT

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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This written response relates to Narborough Level Crossing referenced in paragraphs 72 – 75 inclusive of the Secretary of State’s letter of 10th September 2024. It seeks to provide the Secretary of State with further information and evidence as well as respond to the invitation to comment, as set out in paragraph 75.
- 1.2 The first aspect raised relates to the period the barrier is down in an hour; and the potential for overlapping trains leading to an extended closure beyond 4 minutes, which the ExA perceived increased the chance that the traffic queue would not dissipate.
- 1.3 The second aspect relates to the impact of additional barrier closing on ambulatory impacted pedestrians, who are unable to use the stepped bridge over the railway.
- 1.4 The modelling work undertaken regarding the vehicular movements demonstrates that in the time available between barrier downtimes, the queued traffic would dissipate. The detail is set out below.
- 1.5 In addition, the Applicant has worked with Network Rail, as the infrastructure owner, and East Midlands Railway, as the operator of Narborough Station, to identify what proportionate actions could be taken to improve the current position of those ambulatory impacted pedestrians, who cannot utilise the step bridge over the railway. The consideration given and conclusions reached, including as to funding, are also set out below.

2. LEVEL CROSSING VEHICULAR MOVEMENTS

- 2.1 The Applicant was advised by Network Rail that the Office for Road and Rail (ORR) required a level crossing assessment if the barrier down time exceeded 45 minutes in an hour. The barrier down time is significantly less than this, (identified as a maximum in the ExA’s report as 25 mins 22 seconds between 15:00 and 16:00, with HNRFI traffic - ER 3.3.558).
- 2.2 The increase in barrier downtime due to HNRFI trains is only 2.5 minutes in the whole AM peak between 07:00 and 10:00; and 5 minutes in the whole PM peak, between 16:00 and 19:00.
- 2.3 Notwithstanding this and in response to consultation and representations, the Applicant commissioned two 24/7 surveys, each one weeklong. These were analysed as set out in the report submitted during Examination – Narborough Level Crossing Traffic Modelling (Doc Ref 18.6.8A, REP4-118)
- 2.4 Surveys were undertaken to understand barrier uptime and downtime and associated traffic queues. In addition to the queue surveys, video footage for the surveyed periods was obtained.

- 2.5 The survey results on Wednesday 11th October 2023 were found to provide the highest traffic flows, number of downtimes and average downtime per period. Hence, it was adopted as the surveyed assessment day. The busiest times on this day for road vehicles were found to be 08:00 to 09:00 and 16:00 to 17:00.
- 2.6 The assessment found that the effect of the 'With Development' scenario would be negligible on road vehicles throughout the day. The modelling indicated that the largest increase in queue of 11 PCU (Passenger Car Unit) being between 08:00 and 09:00 hours adding 32 seconds to traffic clearance time.
- 2.7 The total time to clear with the additional 11 PCUs, was found to be 298 seconds (5 minutes). This is well within the barrier uptime of 506 seconds (8 minutes 26 seconds). It should be noted that no additional HNRFI trains are proposed during this time period and the resultant increase in queue is due to increased traffic flow forecast using Leicestershire's Pan Regional Traffic Modelling (PRTM).
- 2.8 During the time period of 16:00 to 17:00 there would be an additional 9 PCUs which adds 23 seconds to traffic delay, equating to an overall clearance time of 239 seconds (4 minutes) again well within the 506 seconds (8 minutes 26 seconds) of barrier uptime that allows the traffic to clear.
- 2.9 This detailed modelling included allowing for the anticipated 20 additional train paths and growth in traffic locally indicated by the PRTM 2.2 traffic model. The use of PRTM 2.2 was agreed by the Transport Working Group which was made up of the relevant highway authorities. Any pedestrians including ambulatory impacted pedestrians waiting when a barrier lifts, have ample time to cross before the next closing.
- 2.10 The 'With Development' modelling included allowing for some HNRFI trains to overlap with existing stopping passenger services. It is the stopping passenger services which lead to the longest barrier down time, at 4 minutes. There is only one passenger train an hour each way that stops at Narborough. For through passenger services, the barrier down time can be 2 minutes 12 seconds.
- 2.11 The Applicant confirmed with Network Rail that an intermodal freight train to and from HNRFI should have a barrier downtime of 2 minutes 31 seconds. The ExA agreed that the 2 minutes 31 seconds was correct for freight trains at [ER 3.3.557], this is subject to it not coinciding with a barrier closure associated with another passing train.
- 2.12 It is possible that a freight train could pass a stopped passenger train within the 4 minutes, meaning no additional barrier down time is incurred at all for an HNRFI train; and vice versa - it could pass just as the passenger station has left, extending the barrier downtime up to a maximum of c7 minutes, allowing for a short gap between departing and arriving services. (4 minutes + 30 seconds gap + 2 minutes 31 seconds).

- 2.13 There is only one HNRFI train path available in the AM peak (between 09:00 and 10:00) and two in the PM peak (one between 16:00 and 17:00 and the second between 17:00 and 18:00).
- 2.14 On the assessed day, 11th October 2023, an existing freight service run between 16:00 and 17:00 which, with an HNRFI train overlap, would have led to a combined barrier downtime of 5 minutes 05 seconds. The other two HNRFI trains would have passed with a barrier downtime of 2 minutes 31 seconds.
- 2.15 The Applicant agrees the ExA's conclusions that there is a chance that overlapping trains might lead to extended barrier downtime. However, given that only one train an hour each way of passenger stopping services and HNRFI services is permissible in any hour, the chance of this happening is very limited.
- 2.16 The chances of this also causing extended queuing with a failure to dissipate traffic between closures, sufficient to give highway delays moderate weight against the proposed development [ER 3.3 562], are also very limited. Hence the conclusion reached by the ExA on this issue is not considered to be reasonable on the basis of the evidence.
- 2.17 The Narborough Level Crossing Traffic Modelling Document (Doc ref:18.6.8A, REP4-118) concluded:

6.6 *The modelling demonstrates that the effect of the increased traffic or additional trains associated with HNRFI would be negligible throughout most of the day, with the largest increase in queue clearance being between 0800 to 0900 hours and 1600- to 1700 hours. However, the resulting clearance time is still well within the average available uptime during that period. Therefore, it is concluded that neither the traffic nor trains associated with HNRFI would materially exacerbate queuing at the Narborough Level Crossing.*

6.7 *An additional analysis using new traffic data was undertaken between Saturday 25 November and Friday 1 December 2023 at the request of Leicestershire County Council. The data recorded confirms that the assessment carried out was robust and therefore the conclusions of the assessment remain unchanged.*

3. THE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

- 3.1 The pedestrian bridge at Narborough Station was built c1864 and refurbished in 2020. It consists of two flights of steps, one from the platform and one from the highway, rising

to another flight at an angle, to reach the walkway over the railway. The bridge is sufficiently high for W12 gauge intermodal trains, but not sufficiently high to also accommodate Overhead Line Equipment when this line is electrified. This bridge will therefore have to be replaced when the line is electrified, at which point Network Rail have confirmed, lift access will also be provided, because of the increased height.

- 3.2 The bridge is a platform-to-platform access bridge for rail customers, which also has steps which can be used to access the adjoining highway footpath. Pedestrians using the public footpath can therefore cross the railway when the level crossing barrier is lowered, by using this bridge, should they be able, or choose to. At present a train ticket is not required to use the bridge as it has dual access.
- 3.3 The Department for Transport's Access for All programme (AfA) aims to provide an obstacle free, accessible route onto and between train station platforms. Narborough Station has been reviewed by East Midlands Railway and Network Rail on that basis. The level crossing is linked by ramps at the ends of each platform, and as such, the level crossing is itself the Access for All provision for railway passengers unable to use the bridge, as is the case for many stations.
- 3.4 The access across the level crossing is subject to up to 4 minutes waiting for stopping passenger trains, and longer with other existing services where they cross at a similar time. Two stopping passenger services currently lead to c7 minute barrier downtime.
- 3.5 As set out above, where an HNRFI train should happen to cross at a similar time to a stopping passenger service the combined maximum time of c7 minutes could in theory arise (4 minutes + 30 seconds + 2 minutes 31 seconds) but this would be exceptional. HNRFI trains will mostly pass through, at 2 minutes 31 seconds, as set out above.
- 3.6 The issue raised by the ExA is the extent to which one or two HNRFI services passing in any one hour, given an associated barrier closing period of 2 minutes 31 seconds, will adversely impact on mobility impaired pedestrians at the level crossing and the extent to which reasonable mitigations can advance equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics or disability defined by the Equality Act
- 3.7 Blaby District Council's own assessment on this confirms that:

“the increased downtime of the barrier at Narborough Crossing is not considered to have an overall material impact on quality of life of residents. Nevertheless, there will be occasions when the effects will be noticeable and would likely to influence daily routines causing delays”. (Blaby District Council LIR. Appendix 4: Narborough Social, Health & Wellbeing Impact Report (Iceni)) Doc Ref; Deadline 1 Submission – Blaby District Council Written Representation: Appendix 4. At 5.10, REP1-050.

4 MITIGATION CONSIDERED

4.1 The Applicant has undertaken a review of potential mitigation measures, and these are set out below.

4.2 PROVIDING LIFTS

4.2.2 The fundamental issue with the provision of lifts is that for an ambulatory impacted pedestrian, the time taken during circumstances where there is no queue and both lifts are fully functional, to divert to the lift, call the lift, use the lift, cross the bridge, call a lift, use the lift and then divert back to the footpath on the other side of the level crossing, is going to be broadly commensurate with the 2 minutes 31 seconds taken for the HNRFI train to pass.

4.2.3 In practice, it would not materially alter crossing time or advance opportunity for equality. It would be easier to wait.

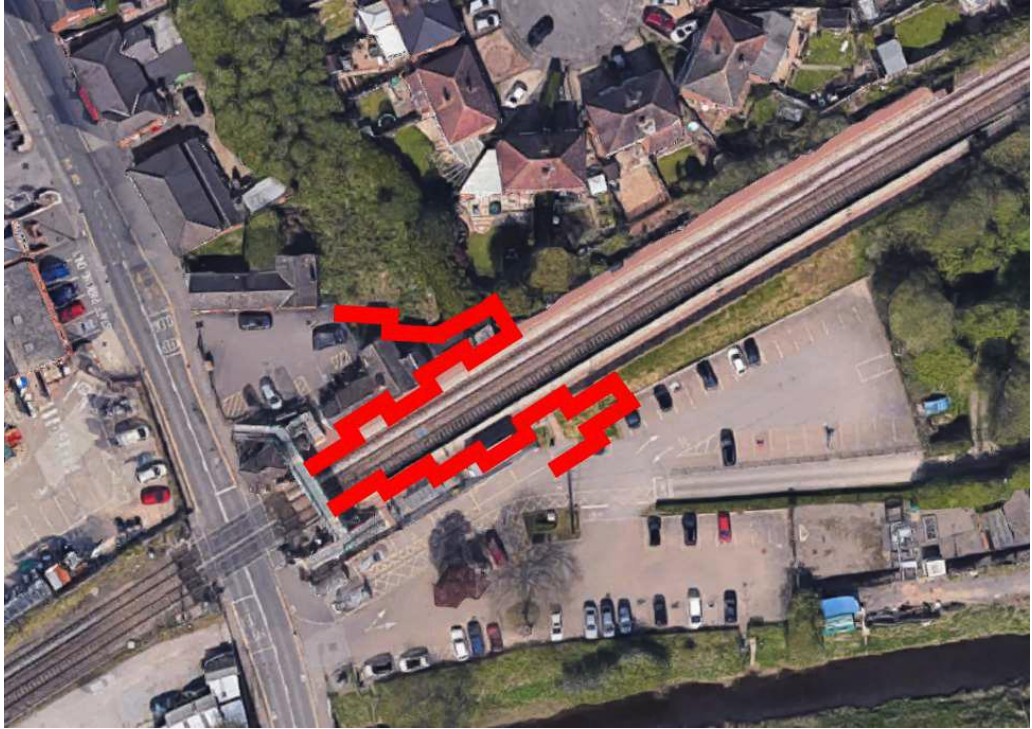
4.2.4 The Applicant has been advised that the cost of a new bridge with lifts would be in the range of £4.7m to £7.35m (see appended letter from Bentleys Quantity Surveyors) and clearly not commensurate with either the minor additional crossing delay time directly attributable to the proposed development, or the minimal benefit (if any) it might afford in terms of time saved to a person with protected characteristic. The bridge is due to be replaced when the line is electrified, as part of the wider rail improvements.

4.3 RETROFITTING LIFTS



- 4.3.1 The ability to retrofit lifts to the existing staircase at each platform has been considered. There is insufficient space around the stairs to fit a Network Rail standard lift and there would be a need to provide a cantilevered platform partly over the railway and also attached to the existing historic structure, into the bridge span, which has not been designed for this purpose.
- 4.3.2 The bridge staircase to Platform 1 would block the entrance to a lift and there is insufficient space to move this, without impacting the car park and the Access for All provision to this platform.
- 4.3.3 The same issue arises compared to a full bridge replacement, that for the limited number of times and short duration of HNRFI train barrier down time, there is no meaningful benefit in terms of time saved, compared to waiting for the level crossing to rise.
- 4.3.4 This bridge is due to be replaced when the line is electrified and as such, any lift installed at this point would have to be replaced, to reach the higher level required for an OLE height compliant bridge.

4.4. PROVIDING RAMPS



4.4.1 Installing ramps to the existing bridge would provide step free access across the railway but would involve over 200m of ramp to traverse in order to be Access for All compliant. The ramps would require some existing station structures on Platform 1 to be altered / demolished and would also need land outside Network Rail's ownership. Access would have to be through the car parks. This is not considered deliverable or seen as delivering an improvement over simply waiting at the level crossing.

4.5 STAIR LIFTS



- 4.5.1 The Applicant has discussed with Stannah Lifts the possibility of installing Inclined Platform Lifts at Narborough Station. Whilst these stair lifts are provided in some larger stations, they are primarily used as a backup to existing lift provision, should it fail. They must be operated by station staff, for safety reasons, and can only take one person at a time.
- 4.5.2 Narborough Station is only staffed part time. Even if the station was staffed 24/7, the staff member would need to be called from other duties to the lift to assist. This would add more time to crossing via the stairs, meaning it would not provide a better alternative than waiting for the level crossing barrier to rise.
- 4.5.3 Stannah would not install a lift of this nature at the Narborough station bridge. It would be too open and accessible by the public and from its experience, then prone to being vandalised.

4.6 WAITING & INFORMATION FACILITIES

- 4.6.1 The railway does not provide waiting facilities for the public to use at level crossings, directly accessible from the highway. They would have the potential to act as a congregation point and as such, a safety risk. This is both with people accidentally stepping back into the highway and, in making rash decisions to cross at unsafe times, having been distracted in a gathering with friends.
- 4.6.2 It is recognised that rail customers with the referenced protected characteristics use the level crossing as the Access for All route to the other platform.
- 4.6.3 It is understood from Network Rail and East Midlands Railway as the station operator, that there is scope and indeed requests that the waiting facilities at Narborough Station and the Customer Information Service (CIS) to be improved. CIS provides clear information on trains due.
- 4.6.4 This would provide better facilities and information for people with the defined protected characteristics to understand the potential for a wait at the level crossing; and afford them a better facility on the platform to wait.
- 4.6.5 These facilities can also be made available to ambulatory impacted pedestrians via the existing Access for All ramp to each platform, each side of the level crossing. Additional wayfinding signage from the public footpath would ensure that they are made aware of these facilities, which can be freely used in the event of a longer barrier down time, should they so wish.
- 4.6.6 In addition to the waiting facilities, new benches would provide seat height variation, to allow for different seating requirements.

4.6.7 As is standard practice across the rail industry, these facilities and signage would need to comply with the DfT's Access for All policies.

4.6.8 The Applicant has agreed with Network Rail, as the infrastructure owner, to fund a scheme of work based on the above, designed to improve the provision at Narborough Station for those with protected characteristics of age or disability defined by the Equality Act, as referenced by the ExA [ER 3.3.561 and 5.4.10], including both rail passengers and ambulatory impacted pedestrians seeking to cross the level crossing.

4.6.9 This will be an enhancement which will be available for all barrier closing times, as well as for the additional services to and from HNRFI.

5. NETWORK RAIL AGREEMENT

5.1 The Applicant has contracted with Network Rail to fund the works outlined above with a Supplemental Framework Agreement, which binds it to pay a CPI indexed linked sum of £[350,000] on the commencement of the SRFI development, ensuring that these enhancements are funded to be in place before any HNRFI trains come into service.

5.2 Should Network Rail or East Midlands Railway fund these works in advance of the commencement of the SRFI development, then the sum will still be paid on commencement, effectively refunding the cost.

5.3 This is to ensure that HNRFI enhances the benefits set out above and does not hold back any implementation, should Network Rail or East Midlands Railway on Network Rail's behalf, want to proceed with the improvements sooner.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The Applicant has reviewed the ExA's concerns as referenced in the Secretary of States letter. It believes that considering the relatively short barrier down time caused by HNRFI trains, the conclusion of Blaby District Council's independent consultant is plainly correct and reasonable, namely "*the increased downtime of the barrier at Narborough Crossing is not considered to have an overall material impact on quality of life of residents. Nevertheless, there will be occasions when the effects will be noticeable and would likely to influence daily routines causing delays*".

6.2 Having reviewed the options to reasonably and practicably mitigate the impact of barrier down times on those with protected characteristics of age or disability, including ambulatory impaired pedestrians, the Applicant, working with Network

Rail and East Midlands Railway have identified appropriate enhancements which are deliverable and will be delivered. The Applicant has contracted with Network Rail and will provide the sum of £350,000, indexed linked to the Consumer Price Index, contingent only on commencing the development of HNRFI.

6.3 The applicant has also reviewed the ExA's concern with regard to the overlapping of HNRFI trains services with other services, potentially the ExA considered, to cause traffic queues which would not dissipate between a barrier opening and closing.

6.4 Based on two weeks of surveys of actual barrier down times and open periods, and subsequent modelling including HNRFI traffic, on the busiest day, as submitted during the Examination, a failure to dissipate is unlikely to occur.

END

Appendix A:
Bentley Cost Estimate for a new bridge

BENTLEY

5th December 2024

Mr A Lloyd
Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Ltd
Grange Park Court
Roman Way
Northampton
NN4 5EA

Narborough Station – Pedestrian Bridge Replacement

Dear Adam

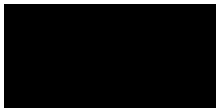
Further to our recent discussions regarding the Narborough Station pedestrian bridge replacement, we have set out below a cost range for the proposed works;

1. Cost range for a new Network Rail standard pedestrian bridge including lifts – Our initial estimate is **£3,500,000 - £5,500,000**;
2. Cost range for Possessions – Our initial estimate is **£100,000 - £150,000**;
3. Cost range for Demolition/Removal of existing Bridge – Our initial estimate is **£100,000 - £200,000**;
4. Cost range for Fees & Contingency associated with the works – Our initial estimate is **£1,000,000 - £1,500,000**.

In summary the estimated cost range for the removal of the existing Narborough Station pedestrian bridge followed by the installation of a new Network Rail standard pedestrian bridge (complete with lifts) is **£4,700,000 - £7,350,000**.

We trust all is in order, however should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Lee Owen MRICS
Director
For and on behalf of
Bentley Project Management (UK) Limited



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Appendix B:
Network Rail confirmation of agreement

Network Rail
Waterloo General Office
London
SE1 8SW

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Roman Way
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NN4 5EA

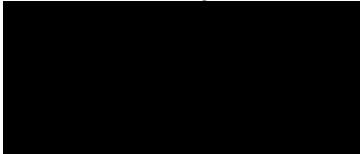
10th December 2024

Dear Sirs

I write on behalf of Network Rail in reference to the Secretary of State's letter dated 10th September 2024 extending the decision period for Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange DCO, and the Examining Authority's Recommendation Report.

Please find enclosed a copy of a letter from Network Rail written to the Secretary of State confirming our mutual agreement to a financial contribution of £350,000 from Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Ltd to Network Rail for improvements at Narborough Station.

Yours faithfully



Robert Russell
Senior Sponsor, East Midlands
Network Rail