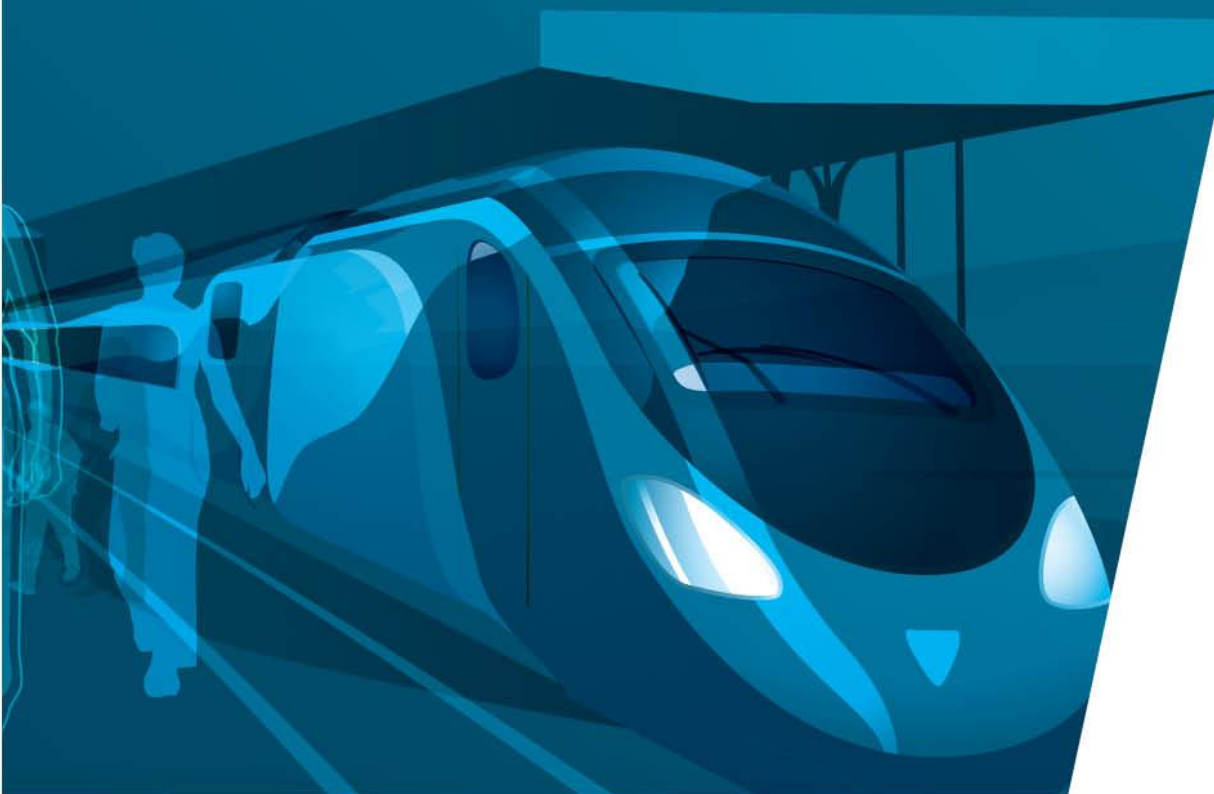


New Footbridge at Lady Ann Level Crossing, Batley

*Planning Application Reference:
2021/62/93311/E*

Supplementary Information

Date: 14 January 2021



Rationale for closure of the level crossing

Level crossings represent one of the principal public safety risks on the railway. It is Network Rail (NR) policy to seek removal of level crossings wherever possible for safety reasons. In addition, the modernisation of the railway line as part of the Manchester-Leeds Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU) project means that the crossing needs to be closed and removed. This is because the signalling, which is currently operated from the signal box at the level crossing, will be taken over by the York Rail Operating Centre as part of the TRU programme. Therefore there will be no Signaller situated at the crossing to operate it.

As the upgrade will introduce faster, longer and a greater number of trains along the route, including the introduction of 25,000 volts of Overhead Line Equipment (OLE), this would increase the risk at the crossing to an unacceptable level with no means of making the current crossing sufficiently safe. The potential for an additional large residential development in the vicinity from the allocated development site adjacent to the rear of properties on the east side of Primrose Hill would also unduly increase risk to public use.

Therefore NR is proposing to close the level crossing and divert the current PROW over a new footbridge in close proximity to the crossing.

Retaining a Level Crossing

The Council Planning Officer raised the question as to why a level crossing could not be retained at Lady Ann. Network Rail has considered this and there are a number of reasons and justification as to why a level crossing cannot be retained at Level Crossing which are summarised below:

1. Keeping a Manned Signal Box

To retain a manned signal box would create additional significant capital expenditure (CAPEX) costs in the region of £10million(plus) as well as a delay of 12-18 months to the TRU programme. This would not only impact on the W4 Dewsbury to Leeds Electrification scheme, but would also impact on the Huddersfield to Westtown scheme. This would delay and potentially put at risk the benefits these schemes deliver not only for Kirklees, but also West Yorkshire but the wider Northern Region.

Further, the signal box would be required to be manned creating on-going operational expenditure costs (OPEX) in the region of £250k / year (4 signallers plus a % for a relief signaller). This would be an ongoing expenditure for the railway, adds to the cost base of operating the railways and does not represent value for money for the taxpayer.

Control of the signalling would still transfer to the York Regional Operating Centre (YROC). The signaller at YROC would have to contact the signaller at the crossing to confirm the crossing and for the passage of trains each time a train was signalled past the crossing. This would be for 16 trains per hour (8tph in each direction).

2. Keeping the Crossing with gate controlled from YROC

As with a manned box, allowing control from YROC would result in major rework and delay to the whole TRU project approximately 12 – 18 months as detailed above. This would result in significant additional CAPEX costs to the project of £10 million (plus).

To deliver an automatic level crossing would require an additional signalling work station as the Huddersfield work station (YROC) would not be able to cope with adding this additional Gate function. The Signaller would have to unlock/lock the gate and check that the crossing is clear before setting a route through the crossing. This would therefore require additional workstations and additional costs of keeping this new work station manned. This would result in additional OPEX costs to the railway through continuing to employ 4 x signallers & relief signaller at £250,000 a year to control the new panel. Also, to deliver a safe crossing would require lighting & CCTV as well as audible & visual warnings this would lead to nuisance in a residential area and impact on local residents.

3. End user experience if crossing was to remain

As detailed above, the delivery of TRU will allow capacity on the route to be increased from the current 8 trains per hour to 16tph, resulting in 16tph passing over the crossing. Today the signaller locks the gates at least 2 minutes before the train arrives and 30 seconds after the train has passed. The additional changes would mean the gates would be locked out of use for a greater amount of time, resulting the crossing being unavailable to users. This could result in the crossing being misused due to the inability of members of the public being unable to use the crossing and potentially increase the safety risk at the crossing. Also, there would be the additional hazard of the electrified lines above the crossing. Therefore, footbridge access would provide continuous access to members of the public and remove the hazards of crossing a railway line with overhead lines.

In summary Network Rail has considered continuing to provide a level crossing either manned or automatic. However, the CAPEX & OPEX costs are significant and put at risk delivering the benefits of the TRU Programme. Also, the additional capacity will result in users being unable to use the crossing during each hour given the increase in frequency of trains on the route as such the proposed footbridge delivers the best solution at this location whilst allowing the benefits of the scheme to be realised.

Alternative options considered

The TRU West design process initially considered five different options for the footbridge and associated PROW diversion, which went through a formal assessment and scoring process. A summary of these options is as follows:

- Option 1 – New footbridge to the south of the level crossing with steps and ramps to Primrose Hill
- Option 2 – New footbridge crossing the tracks at the same location as the crossing with ramped and stepped access from both Rutland Road and Howley Street (4 no. accesses).
- Option 3 – New footbridge approximately 75 metres to the north of the level crossing, accessed by a new path leading to the footbridge from Sunny Bank Road,

to stepped and ramped access at the footbridge location, with a stepped access leading to Howley Street via a new path following the railway.

- Option 4 – New subway at the existing location of the level crossing, accessed via ramps/steps.
- Option 5 – New footbridge crossing the tracks at the same location as the level crossing, at a skew using the existing disused abutments of the former Batley-Bradford railway line.

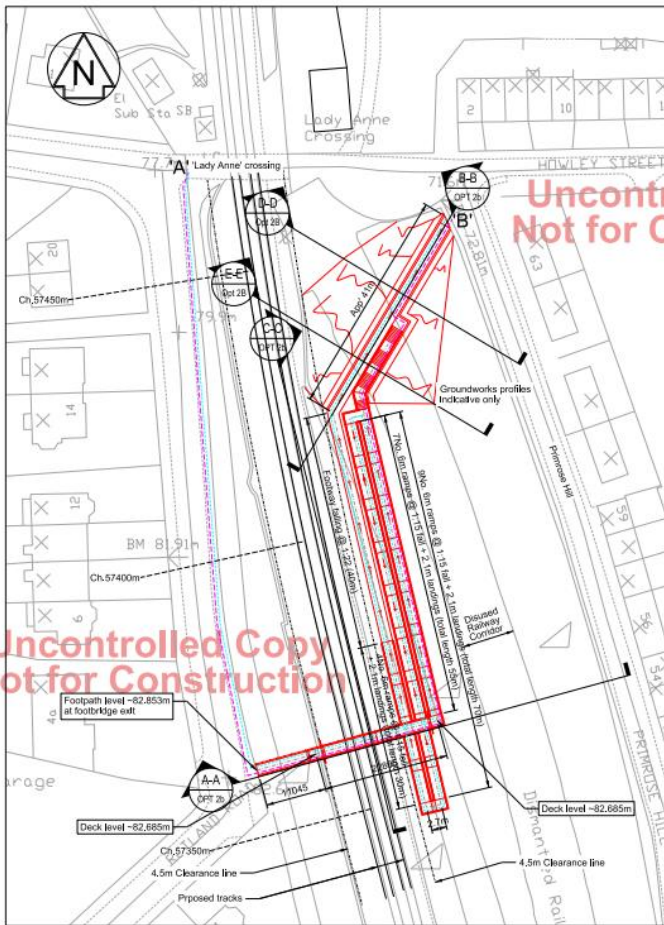
Following the assessment of these five options, the recommended option to be taken forward was Option 1 – a footbridge to the south of the existing crossing. A further four sub-options for the design and alignment of a footbridge to the south were then considered, and are summarised as follows:

Option 1a

As shown in Figure 1 below, the deck of the bridge is located at the southern corner of Rutland Road (western side of the rail corridor) and is proposed to be at the same level as the road at this location. All subsequent sub-options have the deck in the same place and at the same level.

Steel ramps, supported on piers, are utilised to allow step-free access down to the level of Primrose Hill / Howley Street on the eastern side. This option requires a 40 metre long, 10 metre deep cutting through the disused embankment adjacent to the old abutments to exit at Howley Street.

Figure 1 – Option 1a



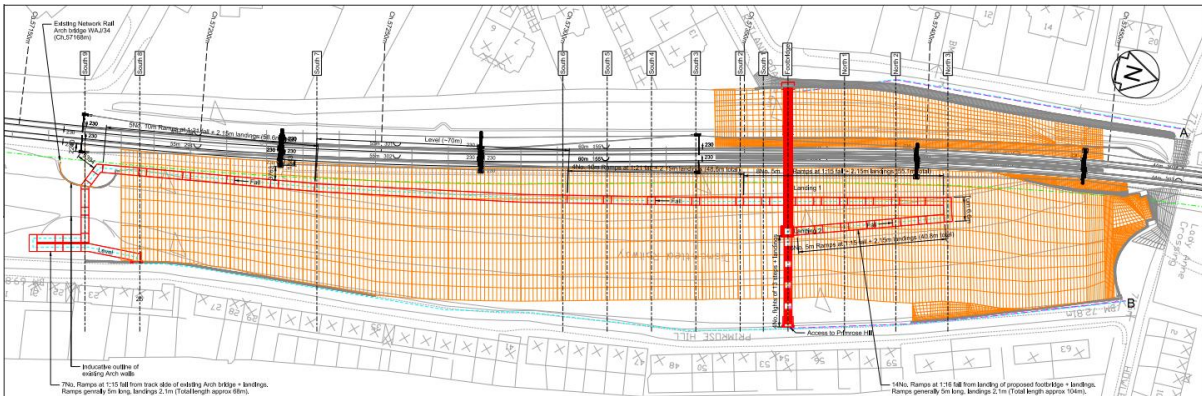
The diversion length from points 'A' to 'B' (as shown on the 'Plan Showing Diversion Routes' submitted with this application) would be:

- Footbridge, partial ramp and steps = 246 metres
- Footbridge and full length of ramps = 394 metres

Option 1b

As shown in Figure 2 below, ramped access would be provided from Primrose Hill approximately opposite number 23, and stepped access would be from approximately opposite number 54.

Figure 2 – Option 1b



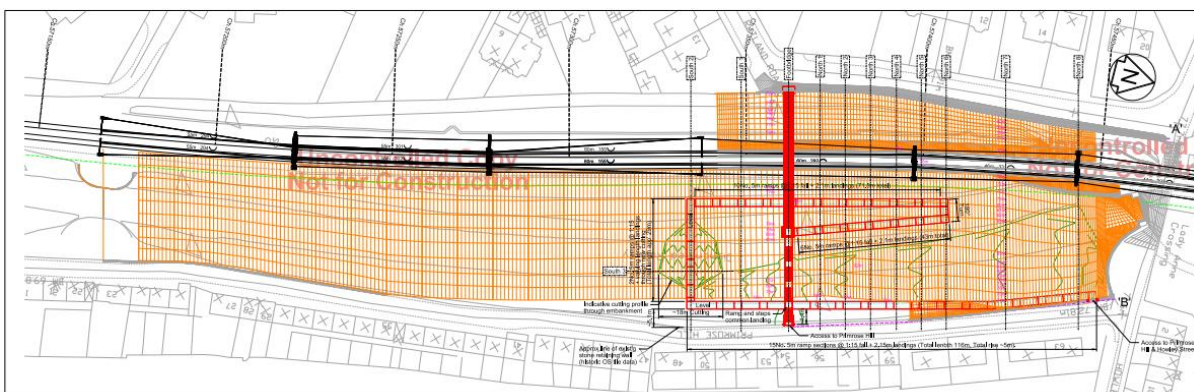
The diversion length from points 'A' to 'B' (as shown on the 'Plan Showing Diversion Routes' submitted with this application) would be:

- Footbridge and steps = 267 metres
- Footbridge and ramps = 773 metres

Option 1c

As shown in Figure 3 below, ramped access would be provided down to Primrose Hill just south of the deck requiring a cutting 20 metres long and 4 metres deep through the disused embankment opposite approximately number 54 Primrose Hill and remodelling of the embankment north up to Howley Street.

Figure 3 – Option 1c



The diversion length from points 'A' to 'B' (as shown on the 'Plan Showing Diversion Routes' submitted with this application) would be:

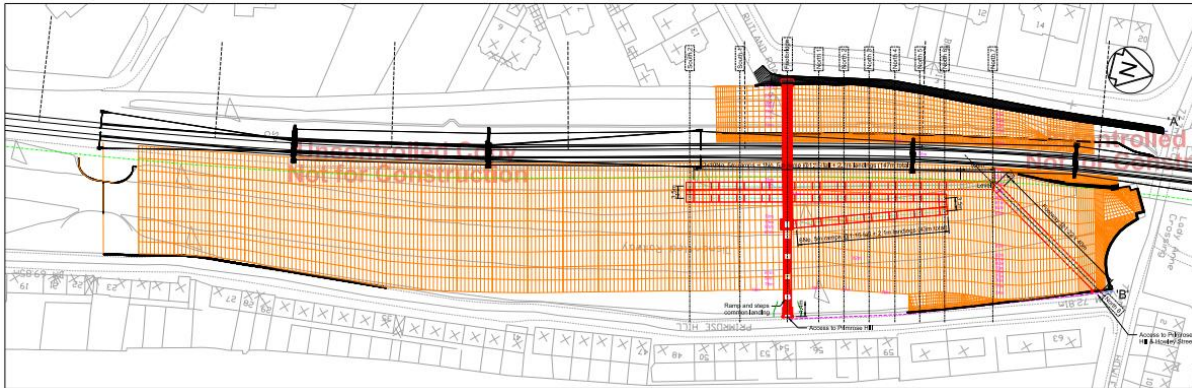
- Footbridge and steps = 267 metres
- Footbridge and ramps = 417 metres

Option 1d

This option is similar to option 1a (requiring a 40 metre long and 10 metre deep cutting through the disused embankment adjacent to the old abutments to exit at Howley Street) but also with access through a cutting as in Option 1c from opposite approximately number 54 Primrose Hill.

Figure 4 below shows this option.

Figure 4 – Option 1d



The diversion length from points 'A' to 'B' (as shown on the 'Plan Showing Diversion Routes' submitted with this application) would be:

- Footbridge and steps = 267 metres
- Footbridge and ramps = 405 metres

Following assessment of these sub-options by TRU West, none were deemed to provide a satisfactory solution for reasons including safety/appeal of the new route due to access through cuttings (all options), diversion length (Option 1b), and impact on Primrose Hill (Options 1b, 1c and 1d).

Public consultation

The public and local community have been consulted at various stages throughout the design development process.

In early June 2020, a survey was sent to local residents that asked for opinions and concerns regarding proposed works to Lady Ann level crossing. The survey included two options for level crossing replacements (one to the north of the existing crossing and one to the south) and received 179 responses. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, this public consultation period did not include an in-person event. A summary of responses received is as follows:

- 62% would welcome a new footbridge if the crossing was closed / 32% would not
- 40% marked accessibility as the most important consideration
- 56% preferred the option to the south which blends in more with the landscape

Key concerns raised in responses were privacy and impacts on the local environment/landscape.

Following analysis of the responses received from the survey, the design for the new footbridge was developed further to incorporate the concerns and opinions of the local residents. This meant moving away from 'standard' designs to a proposed structure that was more in keeping with the topography of the area to reduce visual intrusion, by sinking the ramps of the structure into the embankment. In addition, design development sought to respect the nearby Upper Batley Conservation Area by including pilasters to the bridge entry from Rutland Road and replacing the level crossing barriers with a section of wall, and will provide replacement landscaping to enhance the Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network.

Following relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions, on the 29th July 2021 a community information event was held within Batley to share the revised designs and artist's impressions. Around 35 – 40 members of the public attended across the 3 hour event.

For those who were unable to attend the in-person information event, a virtual information event was held a few days later on the 3rd August 2021 to again share designs and artist's impressions and provide an opportunity to ask any questions.

In light of the issues with option 1a-1d and taking account of consultation responses as set out above, a fifth option was developed. This fifth footbridge option is the subject of the current planning application pending determination and will carry the proposed PROW diversion.

As the above demonstrates, a wide range of options have been considered, and the option for which planning permission has been applied represents the best option in terms of safety, diversion length and impact on the residents of Primrose Hill.

Cost

The direct cost to Network Rail of the proposed footbridge, ramps and steps (infrastructure only – exclusive of construction, signalling and other project costs) is approximately £2.7m. This represents a significant investment into new infrastructure in Batley. In addition, although not part of this scheme, Network Rail is investing further into Batley with the provision of new lifts at Batley Station at a cost of approximately £4m.

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