

MVL3 13m 26c Moorgate Halt LC:
Additional Information to support an
application to extinguish or divert footpath
209SADD over Moorgate Level Crossing

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1. **Introduction**

- 1.1. On the 4th of August 2023 an application under s.118A Highways Act 1980 was submitted to Oldham Council for the proposed extinguishment of footpath 209SADD between its junction with Moorgate Street and Ladcastle Road. The application proposed no replacement footbridge and footpath 244SADD was identified as an alternative route to safely cross beneath the operational railway. It was recognised that some improvement work may be required.
- 1.2. After confirming receipt of the application, the Public Rights of Way Officer asked for a meeting to discuss the application, and this was held on 14th August 2023 (via Teams with PROW and Liability Negotiations Adviser). The Officer stated there was not enough information within the application and supporting documents, to enable him to decide whether to make an Order.
- 1.3. The Officer had shared the application and supporting documents with representatives of local user groups including, The Ramblers, The Wednesday Walkers and the Peak and Northern Footpath Society. These groups expressed some concerns over the reasoning given by Network Rail on why they did not propose to replace the crossing with a footbridge. The provision of a footbridge had been previously proposed by NR in earlier consultations.
- 1.4. A further meeting was arranged on site for Friday the 25th of August and those in attendance included:
 - Liam Kennedy – Rights of Way Officer Oldham Council
 - Kevin Lawton – Representative of the Wednesday Walkers
 - John Walton – Representative of the Ramblers
 - Vicki Bentley – Liability Negotiations Adviser Network Rail
 - Stephen Sherlock – Senior Project Engineer Network Rail
 - Calum Gardner – Scheme Project Manager Network Rail
- 1.5. The result of this meeting was that Network Rail were asked to provide some further information to support their claims that a footbridge cannot be installed. This requirement revolves around the following areas of concern:

- Why Network Rail have changed their minds about building a footbridge.
 - The matter of a bridge blocking new signalling arrangements – as expressed in the s.118A application.
 - The added requirement of platform to protect any structure and the escalation in costs associated with this design – as expressed in the s.118A application.
 - Lack of exploration as to a possible diversionary route beneath underbridge 30 to the north of the crossing.
 - The details of geographical complexities that are referred to in the s.118A application.
- 1.6. The purpose of this report is to address the concerns raised and to provide the additional information that has been requested. The content has been collated from various individuals that have been and still are involved directly in the ongoing project and will explore the history of the investigations and decisions made in relation to the crossing.

2. National Level Crossing Risk Reduction Programme (NLCRRP)

- 2.1 This programme pre-existed prior to the Transpennine Route Upgrade Project (the current project that will affect the crossing) and was an agreed programme with the Office of Rail and Road that sought to achieve a 25% risk reduction at level crossings. This was to be achieved by way of closures and replacements with either an Extinguishment/Diversion of the PROW or the installation of footbridges where appropriate.
- 2.1 In 2015 Moorgate Halt Level Crossing was identified as a high risk crossing that fell within the remit of the of the NLCRRP and feasibility study was undertaken to explore the options for closure at Moorgate Level Crossing. It incorporated a Diversity Impact Assessment and also explored the alternative routes through Bridge No.30 to the North and Bridge No.29 to the South.
- 2.1 The conclusions of the feasibility study were that the construction of a replacement footbridge at this location would be extremely complex. It concluded that the alternative routes should be explored

further, but it is not known if the conclusion was followed through, but clearly the level crossing remained.

3. The Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU)

- 3.1. The TRU Project covers the railway between Manchester and York and aims to improve the service by upgrading the line, signalling, and stations. By 2017, the Project had been established and another feasibility study was conducted into the construction of a footbridge to replace Moorgate Level Crossing.
- 3.2. The conclusions of this feasibility study were that the TRU Project should pursue the installation of a stepped footbridge to replace Moorgate Level Crossing. The development of this option then took place, which explored the solution in greater detail.

4. Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA)

- 4.1. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 for any public sector organisation to consider the impact of any proposed work that would affect people, to ensure they don't discriminate against those people with the protected characteristics as defined in the Act. NR discharges this duty by the provision of a Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA).
- 4.2. In 2021, a DIA was undertaken by the TRU Project, and this was sent out to various groups for consultation including Oldham Ramblers, Oldham Council public rights of way team and their planning officers. Many groups did not respond, but Oldham Ramblers and Oldham Council both agreed that in the interests of public safety a replacement bridge would be the most appropriate solution. The Ramblers went further with their preference for a ramped structure.

5. The Narrative Risk Assessment (NRA)

- 5.1. In 2022, an NRA assessed various mitigation measures and whether they could be deployed at the crossing, to make the crossing safe. This document is produced by the Level Crossing Manager (LCM) who is the Safety Risk expert within Network Rail for managing the

risk at level crossings. The NRA was used by the TRU Project team as part of their optioneering process at Moorgate LC.

- 5.2. NRAs are produced by the LCM to assess the risk at the level crossing, but they do not consider related factors such as adjacent land ownership, geographical or environmental complexities, ancillary costs for the construction of a bridge or the engineering difficulties that may hinder construction etc.
- 5.3. The LCM explored various mitigation measures which included the installation of Miniature Stop Lights, which would allow the crossing to remain whilst providing a visual indicator to users that it was safe to cross. These could reduce the risk by circa 76%, and they must either be integrated into the signalling system or overlaid onto the signalling system where permitted.
- 5.4. Integrated MSL's cost circa £1.2Million, but despite the obvious safety benefits, this option did not perform well in the cost-benefit analysis (CBA) conducted by the LCM. The cost incurred, significantly outweighed the realised benefit.
- 5.5. Overlay MSL's cost circa £250,000 and performed much better in the CBA and the LCM recommended that this option be considered as part of the larger TRU Project. However, as the TRU Project developed and the proposal for bi-directional lines emerged, it became apparent this recommendation could not be delivered. Overlay MSL's cannot be used on bi-directional lines where there is a train turnback, or where a train may be signalled to stop over a level crossing.
- 5.6. The LCM also referred to the possibility of alternative diversionary routes, which again scored well in the CBA, but these would need to be explored further by the TRU Project team where they fall outside of the NRA remit.
- 5.7. Although the LCM also considered the installation of a footbridge to replace the crossing, this too did not score well on the CBA. Again, the LCM recommended the option be explored further by the TRU Project, where any alternative diversionary routes would not be feasible.

- 5.8. The TRU Project, in line with the DIA, decided that the most suitable option that could be delivered, would be a stepped footbridge. Planning permission for the proposed structure was granted in August 2022 (FUL/349203/22). Drawing 151667-TSA-26-MVL3-DRG-T-LP-040003 Revision PO3 was submitted as part of the planning application and shows the arrangement of the proposed footbridge.
- 5.9. However, prior to the DIA being signed off and published, as they moved through the Design stage, the TRU Project identified some major difficulties in delivering the construction of a bridge. These difficulties could not be overcome and resulted in the option being discounted. These are now explored in the following sections.

6. Signalling

- 6.1. Near Moorgate Halt, there are new crossovers being installed on the track which will allow trains to pass from one line to the other, so that both lines become bi-directional. This requires new signalling to be installed to protect the train crossovers.
- 6.2. Signal SL4701 on the downside and signal SL4703 on the upside will be situated approximately 20 metres from the crossing, meaning that when trains stop at either, they will straddle the crossing. This was one of the main drivers for the installation of a footbridge and formed part of the safety case that has been put forward for the closure of the crossing, where it is unacceptable to have a train straddling a level crossing.
- 6.3. The signals cannot be moved for the following engineering reasons:
- They are required in these specific locations to protect the track crossovers.
 - The crossovers cannot be moved because of the curvature of the track.
 - The line bends to the left on approach to signal SL4701, and if it was moved further towards Stalybridge, it will not be seen by the driver.
 - Railway Signals need to be regularly spaced and moving them would make them non-compliant with Signalling Standards.

- Moving the signals would have an operational impact for trains changing direction and would delay junction times, impacting the proposed timetable and making it unworkable.

6.4. It was originally thought the construction of a footbridge would block the train drivers' view of the signals. This was one of the reasons that a footbridge had been discounted in the s.118A application. However, it has now been confirmed that this is no longer the case. The construction of a new footbridge would not have a detrimental effect on the new signalling at this location, but there are several other issues which are still relevant.

7. A unique design for the bridge

7.1. There are some environmental constraints that make the design of this footbridge unique. The site footprint for the footbridge is limited and pushes the footbridge to sit within the required 4.5 metre collision protection zone. This means a more robust design is required to ensure that the bridge columns are sat outside of this zone, so the footbridge is protected in the case of a derailment.

7.2. To mitigate this a raised platform would need to be constructed, designed to resist robust kerb loading. The alternative to this is a mass concrete bridge structure which would be more expensive, more intrusive, and even more difficult to construct in the limited space available.

7.3. This issue was raised on the 25th of August meeting and was a point that the user groups asked for more detail on. It was suggested by them that this platform had not been discussed before and that it was not detailed on the design drawing that have seen. However, this platform can be seen on the Drawing 151667-TSA-26-MVL3-DRG-T-LP-040003 Revision PO3 that was included in the application for planning permission. This leads us onto the issues that have since arisen since the first proposals were put forward.

8. Building Requirements

8.1. In brief, the construction of a footbridge on the site of Moorgate LC consists of the following:

- The construction of a reinforced in-situ concrete ring beam along with a precast L-Wall robust kerb platform and precast concrete stairs (South Side) 32 no units between 2-9 tonnes each.
- The construction of a mass-fill in-situ foundation dug systematically to avoid possible collapse of the existing drystone retaining wall (North Side).
- The installation of 21no 13m deep 300mm diameter in-situ reinforced concrete bored piles (case).
- In-situ pile caps and a 12m steel footbridge structure and approach staircases.
- 3no GRP/ Steel Staircases, Hand railing (circa 30m).
- Stonework cladding of concrete L-Walls.
- Installation of GRP Palisade fencing.
- Infilling of the ring beam structure.
- Assumed craneage is AC55 Rail mounted Crane.
- Surfacing and drainage outlets.

9. Ground Conditions

- 9.1. Ground investigations were conducted in the vicinity of where the proposed footbridge was to be constructed. The result of these complex investigations has shown that there would be a need for piled foundations for any bridge. As discussed under access, this is a difficult location to access with a piling rig, driving night-time working, and extending the construction programme.
- 9.2. In addition, to the Ladcastle Road side of the bridge, there are concerns over the stability of the existing stone walls which line the foot path. This drives the needs for temporary support to the walls and more complex construction sequencing to install the foundations.

10. Accessibility

- 10.1. Moorgate footpath level crossing is in a remote location north of Uppermill Village. It is accessed via public footpaths from Den Lane and Ladcastle Road. Both of these roads are narrow with limited access for construction vehicles. The footpath is narrow and in poor condition, and the area of works is cut into an embankment, with limited access to where the structure would be.
- 10.2. The key aspect to this works is logistical planning in order to transport materials from the nearest access points onto Road-Rail-Vs and Trailers (1.8km West) with plant and equipment along the railway. Access is limited to rail due to the constraints on the road network, the topography, and the distance from the road networks. This drives all construction to be completed at night, during railway closures known as possessions, which incur additional costs.
- 10.3. The materials required for the construction of a footbridge include wet concrete, piles, precast concrete sections, and steel bridge sections. For wet concrete, there is no feasible location to deliver concrete other than by rail or by using a concrete pump under road closure sited on Ladcastle Road. This will require long pipelines to reach the foot crossing, plus the requirement to install pipes running

under the railway. This creates risk due to the requirement of line blockages which makes the method undesirable.

- 10.4. To deliver concrete by rail, means we need to open concrete batching plants over night at additional costs, and use specialist plant to transport the concrete. This also requires additional time due to the limited working windows within possessions.
- 10.5. With regard to the required piles, the piling rig will also need to be delivered to site by rail. This is difficult due to the size of the required rig, and again it would only be able to work under possessions, driving the need for noisy piling works to be completed over night.
- 10.6. For precast concrete, – again deliveries must be made by rail and again this drives the need to work at night so that it is in line with line possessions and blockages. It is the same for the delivery of steel bridge sections, which will need to be carried on specialist trailers by track.
- 10.7. The methods described here for the delivery of materials to the site with limited accessibility has contributed towards the escalation in costs because it is more complex and prolongs the programme significantly.
- 10.8. In addition, the footprint of the footbridge takes up all of the available space and drives the need to remove the existing boundary between the adjacent house and the railway. Access to the garden will be required for construction, with the boundary wall reinstated on completion. Also, during construction, the footpath will need to be closed to the public for a minimum of 8 months.
- 10.9. Overall, access must be via track for all of the construction, resulting in a longer than normal programme, and a large amount of night working. Due to limited rail access points in the vicinity, access will need to be created off Oldham Road, near Greenfield Station and this will involve a prolonged road closure.

11. Construction Costs

- 11.1. A footbridge to replace a foot crossing normally has a budget cost of circa £1.8Million. The additional constraints and design issues discussed above result in this footbridge being estimated to cost circa £3.5Million.
- 11.2. A breakdown of costs that was drafted during the detailed design stage for the proposed footbridge, estimated the costs for labour, plant, subcontractors, and materials at approximate total of circa £2.3M and estimated to rise to more. This can be broken down as follows.
- 11.3. The labour costs consist of the use of specialised persons such as machine banksman, lift supervisors, skilled operatives, and several other supporting functions, over approximately 80 shifts, at an estimated cost of £771K.
- 11.4. The works will involve a selection of specialist equipment as described previously as well as site cabins and associated facilities at a total estimated cost of £467K.
- 11.5. The site and works would also require the use of various subcontractors to supply items such as scaffolding, security and the removal of waste materials, which was calculated to cost approximately £930K. However, it was estimated that this was likely to rise significantly due to the added requirement of a specialist piling technique that allows for the process in restricted access sites and the location of the proposed bridge at Moorgate.
- 11.6. The materials required for the bridge include pre-cast concrete, steel, rebar and type 1 MOT, at a total estimated cost of £216K.
- 11.7. These estimated costs do not include the costs of the required temporary occupation of adjacent land or its possible permanent acquisition. Therefore, the total will be significantly higher and when these are costed in, the total costs will be circa £3.5M.

12. Managing Public Money

- 12.1. As well as promoting safety, as the operator and owner of the national rail infrastructure, Network Rail as an 'arms'-length Government body, has a statutory duty and a critical role to play in improving railway efficiency, whilst giving due consideration of spending public money in operating the railway. Under its operating licence Network Rail is required to act in accordance with the duties and responsibilities in running, maintaining, and developing railway infrastructure. This would include the provision of bridges to replace level crossings where enhancements affect the safety at a crossing. This licence is granted under Section 8 of the Railways Act 1993.
- 12.2. It incorporates a series of codes, protocols and guidelines under which Network Rail must operate, which in part relates to operational efficiency and public expenditure. Operational efficiency incorporates the justification of spending public money against the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the railway. It is therefore reasonable for Network Rail to scrutinise the cost-efficiency of any proposals and have due regard for the need for railway operational efficiency.
- 12.3. At this location, the initial proposals for the construction of a pedestrian bridge, seemed perfectly plausible as a suitable solution and one that was concluded to be the most suitable option in the Diversity Impact Assessment. However, as the optioneering process has progressed and a more in-depth design has been sought, it has become apparent, that the construction of a bridge at this location would be extremely complex, and unfortunately this has increased the costs significantly.
- 12.4. Disproportionate expenditure is contrary to Network Rail's financial and efficiency objectives under its Licence, and we are therefore strongly of the view that it is no longer feasible to construct a pedestrian bridge in place of Moorgate Level Crossing, and that other alternatives must be explored.

13. Sustainability and the Environment

- 13.1. The site sits on the edge of a Special Area of Conservation on what is considered to be greenbelt land, and adjacent to Uppermill town which is also considered to be a Conservation Area. It is also just south of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) of Ladcastle and Den Quarries, although the proposed works did not directly affect this area.
- 13.2. In 2022 an independent Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) was commissioned which explored the impact of the proposed construction of a pedestrian footbridge on the immediate area around Moorgate Halt LC and the trees within it. It used the General Arrangement Drawing to assess the impact on the surrounding trees, the results of which were that four trees would need to be removed completely whilst a significant number of others would require extra protection during the proposed works.
- 13.3. The inclusion of Construction Exclusion Zones around some of the trees to be retained has an impact on the proposed works, where access by plant and machines is extremely limited. The assessment outlined how the smallest plant possible would need to be used in close proximity to any trees to avoid any damage to them or their canopies, with careful pre-planning required for any site operations.
- 13.4. Other precautions listed included the restrictions on the storing of materials beneath any trees, such as oil, cement or solvents that could be injurious to a tree, and that these should be stored at least 5m from the edge of the canopy of any tree. In addition, any permitted work carried out on any trees would have to be done at the appropriate times of year (outside of bird nesting season) and in line with any planning permission that would be required to fell trees.
- 13.5. All of these measures all have implications for the project and proposed works in terms of both time and the additional cost in fulfilling the recommendations as set out in the AIA.

14. Alternative Route through Bridge No.29 to the South of Moorgate Halt LC

- 14.1. This option has been heavily explored previously but at the meeting on 25th of August 2023, this option was discounted as being unsuitable.

15. Alternative Route through Bridge No.30 to the North of Moorgate Halt LC

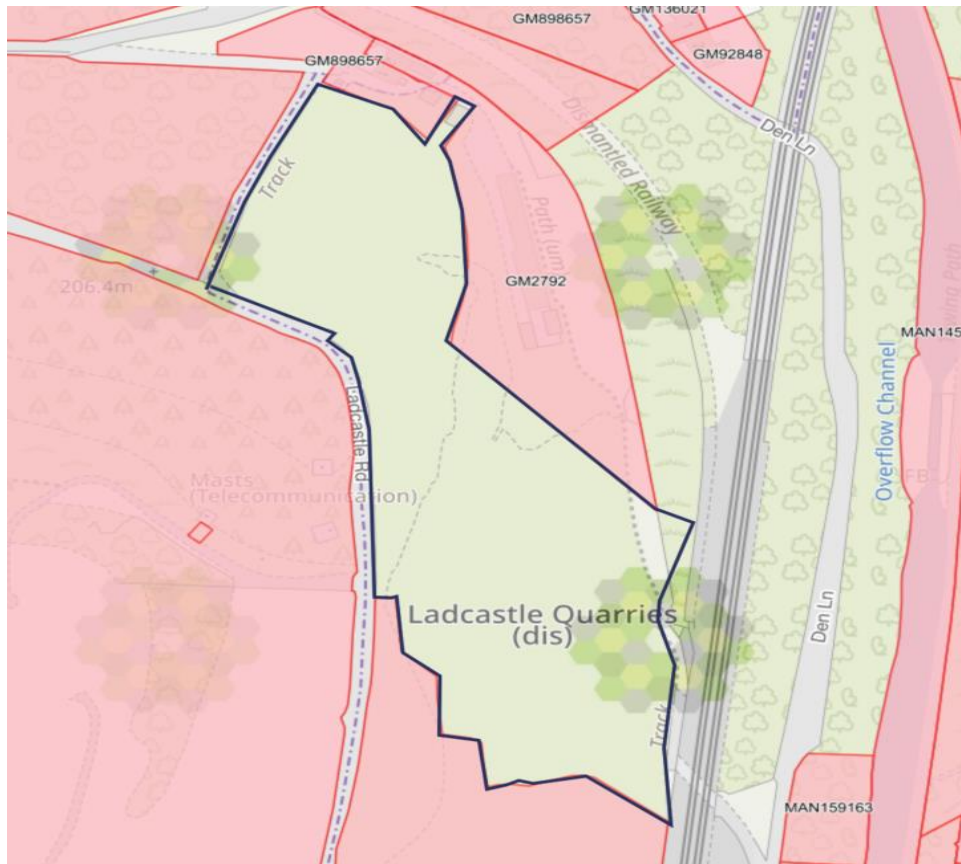
- 15.1. At the on-site meeting held on 25th August, the PROW Officer stated that he wished Network Rail to re-visit the possible diversionary route through Bridge 30 to the north of Moorgate LC. This seems like a plausible alternative should the level crossing be closed, but it is not without its own difficulties.

- 15.2. Bridge 30 is an underbridge approximately 360m from the crossing (directly north up the track) and is owned and maintained by Network Rail. It currently does not accommodate a public right of way, although it is clearly used by members of the public as part of a wider network of both recorded and unrecorded footpaths in the vicinity. Upon closer investigation of this route, it has become apparent that it is not possible to create a public right of way entirely on land within Network Rail ownership, and therefore any path would have to traverse at least 3 different land ownerships, and we would require landowner consent to dedicate a way over their land to accommodate a public right of way.

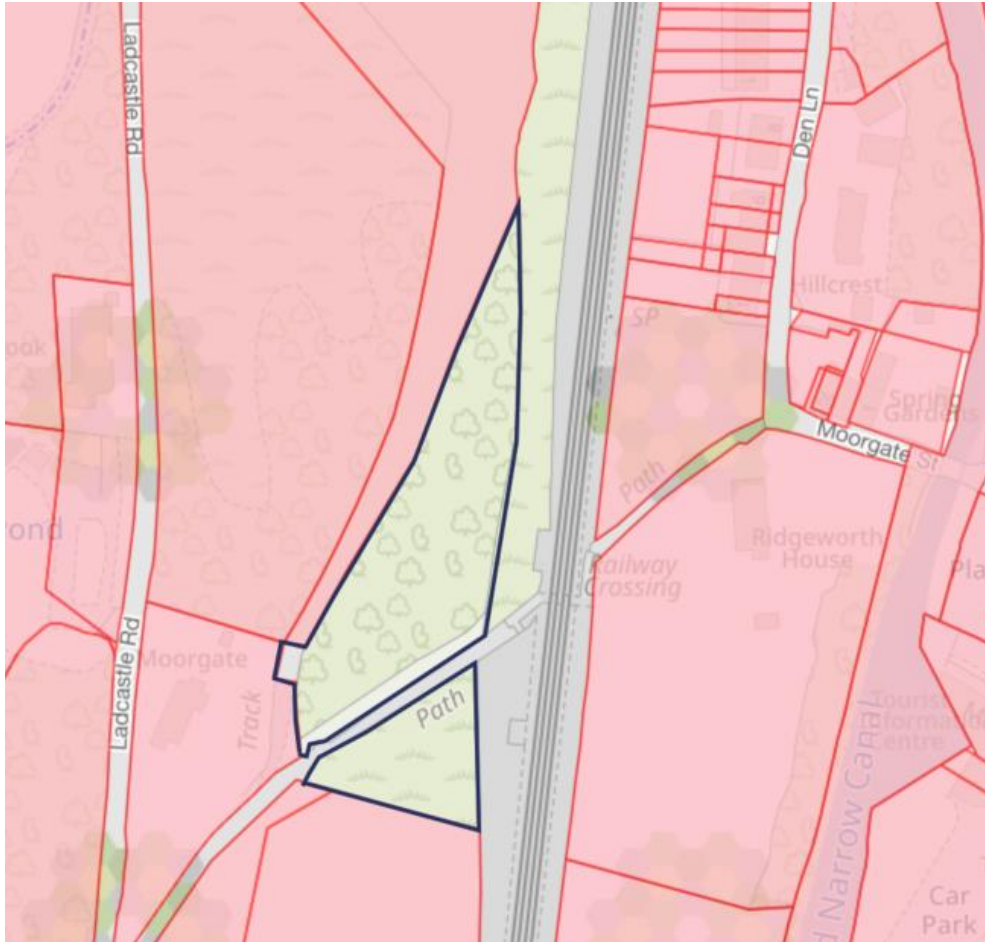
- 15.3. One of the parcels of land that would be affected is registered with the Land Registry, as MAN181042. Network Rail have spoken to the owner, who is potentially open to the idea of the diversionary route traversing his land, although further negotiations would be required in terms of upgrading the route and potential compensation payable etc.

- 15.4. Network Rail have also identified three unregistered parcels of land that would be affected. The first is immediately south of GM2792 and adjacent to bridge 30. The owners of GM2792 are Petsville Cattery and Kennels have confirmed ownership of this parcel and are open to the idea of the current unrecorded path becoming a

public right of way should Moorgate Level Crossing close permanently. This can be seen edged blue on the plan below.



- 15.5. Two parcels of unregistered land, one of which may be affected by any diversion, are further south immediately either side of the path from Moorgate LC up to Ladcastle Road. The owner of Ladcastle Cottage (MAN49385) has confirmed that he owns both of these parcels of land and has no objection to this proposal. These parcels can be seen in the plan below edge blue.



- 15.6. The owner of GM942754 (Moorgate Cottage) has replied to the letter that was sent by stating that she would not agree to this proposal. She owns the land to the left of the 2 parcels highlighted above, immediately adjacent to the current right of way. Some further clarification has been sent to this landowner on how the proposal would directly affect her land and Network Rail are awaiting a response.
- 15.7. It may be the case, that if they are insistent on the already used path over their land not becoming a recorded public right of way, then Network Rail will need to liaise with the adjacent landowner on the possibility of a new path being constructed over his land to avoid that included in Moorgate Cottage.
- 15.8. A site meeting is required with the affected landowners the project team and the Rights of Way Officer, so this can be discussed in further detail and issues that they may have can be addressed. This is now confirmed as being the 25th of October 2023. It is worth

noting that in speaking with 2 of the landowners, none of them have expressed any objection to the closure of the crossing on a permanent basis.

- 15.9. In addition, the project would have to obtain permission from the Asset Owner – the North-West & Central Structures Team, as to whether they would be willing to permit a public right of way beneath the bridge. On occasion, asset owners are reluctant to do this because ordinarily a private bridge such as this one, can be infilled when life expired, but where there is a public right of way, this is not possible, or very difficult. However, the Senior Asset Engineer has now confirmed that he is happy for the bridge to accommodate a public right of way.
- 15.10. Some comments were also made at the site meeting on 25th of August that Den Lane is not suitable due to there being no footway, and it may be the case that a Road Safety Audit should be carried out in order to identify any issues. This could then inform the project as to what works may be required.
- 15.11. Some of the previous feasibility reports also identified that there may be some works that are required to Den Lane to upgrade and improve the route for pedestrians where currently there is no footway. This may require some permanent works in the highway, and Oldham Council may require an agreement under s.278 of the Highways act 1980 for us to carry out those works.
- 15.12. Such an agreement enables the Highway Authority to adopt any permanent works in the highway so that they can thereafter maintain them at public expense. Network rail do enter into these agreements where appropriate, and this would not pose a major hurdle in this scenario, but it is an added layer of complexity and cost.

16. Conclusions.

- 16.1. The terms ‘geographical complexities’ had been used in the application, and the Rights of Way Officer asked that this concept be more fully explained. This report has highlighted the restricted access to and from the site and is the narrow nature of the railway

corridor at this location. Ground investigations have confirmed that specialist equipment and methods are required for the construction of any bridge, and because of the proximity to the running rails, a unique bridge design is required.

- 16.2. This issue of bespoke platforms was specifically raised by one of the user groups, who asked why this element was absolutely necessary and what it involved and suggested that it had not been discussed prior to these recent conversations. The cast concrete platform is required because of the proximity of the bridge to the running rails and is designed to protect the bridge from potential train derailment. The platform design is included on the GA drawing that has been readily available and has been considered by the user groups, it is not a new feature of the bridge design but is an essential part of its design.
- 16.3. With regards to signalling, one of the user groups referred to other locations nearby where bridges had been built next to signals with no issue, and asked why it can't be done at Moorgate. As mentioned previously, it has now been confirmed that the signalling is irrelevant to any footbridge construction at this location.
- 16.4. All concerned parties asked why it is that Network Rail had initially promoted the construction of a pedestrian footbridge but have since changed their minds and have sought extinguishment of the footpath without the provision of a bridge. This report has attempted to explain how these projects are pursued internally and how the development of a project from inception to full detailed design develops and the obstacles that it may come across on that journey.
- 16.5. For this project, it is a combination of factors that have resulted in a huge escalation of costs for the construction of a bridge at Moorgate. The geographical complexities coupled with the unique design of the bridge have only fairly recently come to light during the detailed design and costing stage of the project. The estimated costs do not include other costs such as those associated with access and temporary land occupation and environmental protection issues, so in fact would be upwards of what has been recently quoted.

- 16.6. The Rights of Way Officer and one of the user groups asked that Network Rail carry out some further investigations into a possible alternative route. A considerable amount of time has now been spent on identifying landowners and speaking with them to determine what issues they may have with a public right of way being recorded over their land. In all, the result has been positive, but they do have some queries over items specifically linked to their land such as fencing and concerns around trespass etc.
- 16.7. A meeting has now been arranged for the 25th of October 2023 with those affected and the Rights of Way Officer and the project team to discuss these issues and to try and resolve them in way that suites all parties should Network Rail be successful in obtaining a diversion Order for the footpath. In addition, the asset owners of bridge 30 have confirmed that they would accept a public right of way beneath bridge 30.
- 16.8. Another point on which the user groups asked for further information was the cost implications of a footbridge. At this location the physical works are extremely difficult to execute, and this has contributed massively to those costs. This unique set of circumstances has led to an escalation in the costs associated with the installation of a footbridge that was promoted previously, and this is likely to be more when all of the other costs are factored in – as mentioned above.
- 16.9. Network Rail are fully aware that the reasoning for not constructing a bridge doing cannot be based on cost alone, although it does play a significant factor in decision making process when managing public money. Project teams consistently question whether what they are proposing is an adequate use of public money and could that money be better used elsewhere. Network Rail are bound by this under their operating conditions, and it does play a huge part in the decision-making process, as it has for Moorgate Halt.
- 16.10. The aims of this report were to highlight the difficulties and complexities involved in providing a pedestrian footbridge as a replacement for the footpath over the railway at Moorgate level crossing. Some significant concerns were raised in relation to the s.118A application that had been submitted by Network Rail, in that

it did not provide this information in enough detail, and also specific questions were raised by the user groups with regards to the construction requirements and signalling arrangements.

16.11. It is hoped that this document now provides all of the additional information as requested in sufficient detail, but Network Rail will endeavour to answer any further queries that may arise from this.