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29/01/2026

Wokingham Borough Council,

APPLICATION FOR PRIOR APPROVAL UNDER PART 18 (CLASS A) OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2015

REPLACEMENT OF STATION FOOTBRIDGE – EARLEY STATION

I write to inform you that Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd (Network Rail) proposed to replace the station footbridge at Earley Station, Station Road, Earley, Berkshire, RG6 7DY (Easting: X: 475344, Y: 171883).

Network Rail seeks to apply for these works via a prior approval application under Part 18 (Class A), Schedule 2, of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (GPDO) 2015. Prior approval is required as the proposed works consist of the reconstruction of a footbridge.

More detail regarding Part 18 of the GPDO is given within section 4 below.

1. Project Context

Network Rail is the statutory undertaker for maintaining and operating railway infrastructure of England, Scotland and Wales. As statutory undertaker, Network Rail is under license from the Department for Transport and Transport Scotland and regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to maintain and enhance the operational railway and its assets, ensuring the provision of a safe operational railway.

This scheme forms part of a cyclical programme of operational property repairs/renewals, which will ensure that Network Rail meets their safety, statutory and contractual obligations.

Following a comprehensive site survey, it was apparent that Earley station footbridge had many corrosion defects which require refurbishment/repair.

A further Structural Assessment of the footbridge concluded that there is a need for a deck replacement as follows: New steel deck (designed to provide capacity for 5kPa live load and 1.5kN/m parapet load and wind load), New U- frame, new plan cross bracing on main span, larger sections for cross girders/outriggers, new steel stringers.

As a result, replacement of the structure was considered the most appropriate option to address the issues whilst providing an opportunity to improve safety.

2. Site Description

The subject site comprises a stepped footbridge within Earley Station, which serves the town of Earley in Berkshire. The station is located approximately 66 miles from London Charing Cross Station on the Waterloo to Reading line. The footbridge spans over two tracks connecting platforms 1 & 2.

The footbridge consists of a warren truss at the main span with staircases at either end. The deck of the footbridge consists of timber planks and parapets are infilled with solid GRP panels above the tracks and steel mesh panels elsewhere.

The site is bounded by operational railway on the east and west boundaries. There is vegetated land with trees to the north. There are residential properties along the southern boundary.

The land in which the bridge is located is operational railway land wholly within Network Rail's ownership. Earley Station is leased to and managed by the train operating company, South Western Railway.



Figure 1 - Photograph of Earley Footbridge

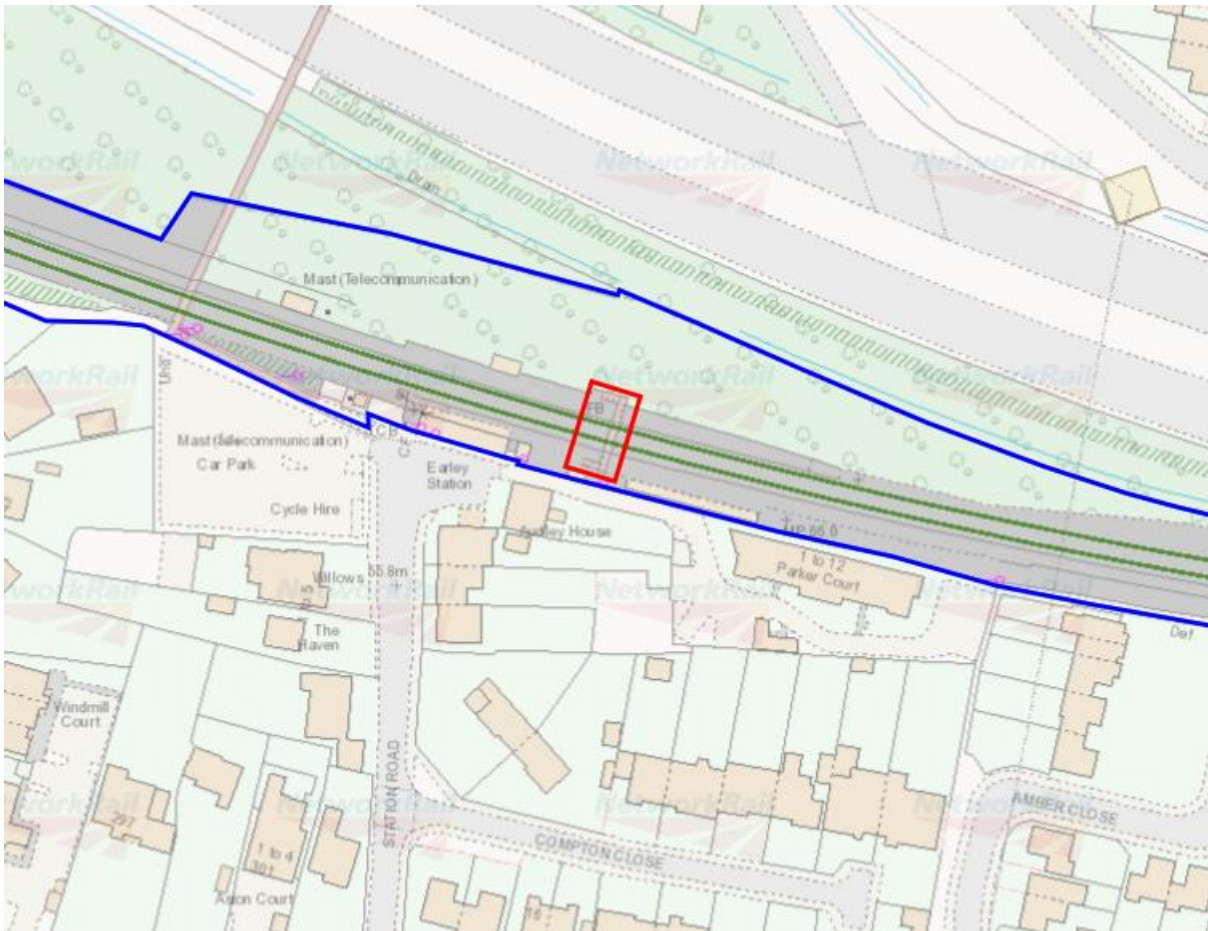


Figure 2 – Extract from Site Location Plan.



Figure 3 – Aerial photograph of Earley Station Footbridge looking east (January 2019).

3. Proposal

The proposal seeks to replace the footbridge at Earley Station. All elements of the existing structure will be removed with only the foundations remaining.

The replacement bridge will be positioned in the same location as the existing and of similar design in terms of arrangement and scale.

The replacement steel bridge will be to modern standards utilising modern materials. The main elements of the proposed bridge works are described below.

- **Deck replacement providing improved strength:** New Steel deck, top and bottom chords, truss diagonals, U- frames, cross bracing on main span, steel stringers, FRP decking and the introduction of cross girders/outriggers.
- **Replacement of staircase and landing:** Replacement of steel members forming the landing and staircases.
- **Trestle Columns:** Replacement of steel members and install new chemical anchors into existing foundation concrete.
- **Plywood Timber deck:** To be replaced with FRP with anti-slip finish.
- **Plywood Timber stair treads:** To be replaced with FRP with anti-slip finish (all nosings highlighted in yellow in accordance with SWR Design Guide).
- **Staircase Risers:** Even height and closed.
- **Handrails:** Install new warm-touch double height handrails coloured canary yellow.
- **Tactile Paving:** Installed at top and bottom of stairs (excluding intermediate landings)
- **Parapet Mesh:** Replace all parapet infill panels with new galvanised steel mesh or similar
- **Ground Level Surfacing:** Re-grade surfacing around base of staircases to leave the surface even and the bottom riser equal across the staircase width.
- **Fencing:** New fence to align with front of help point at bottom of staircases.

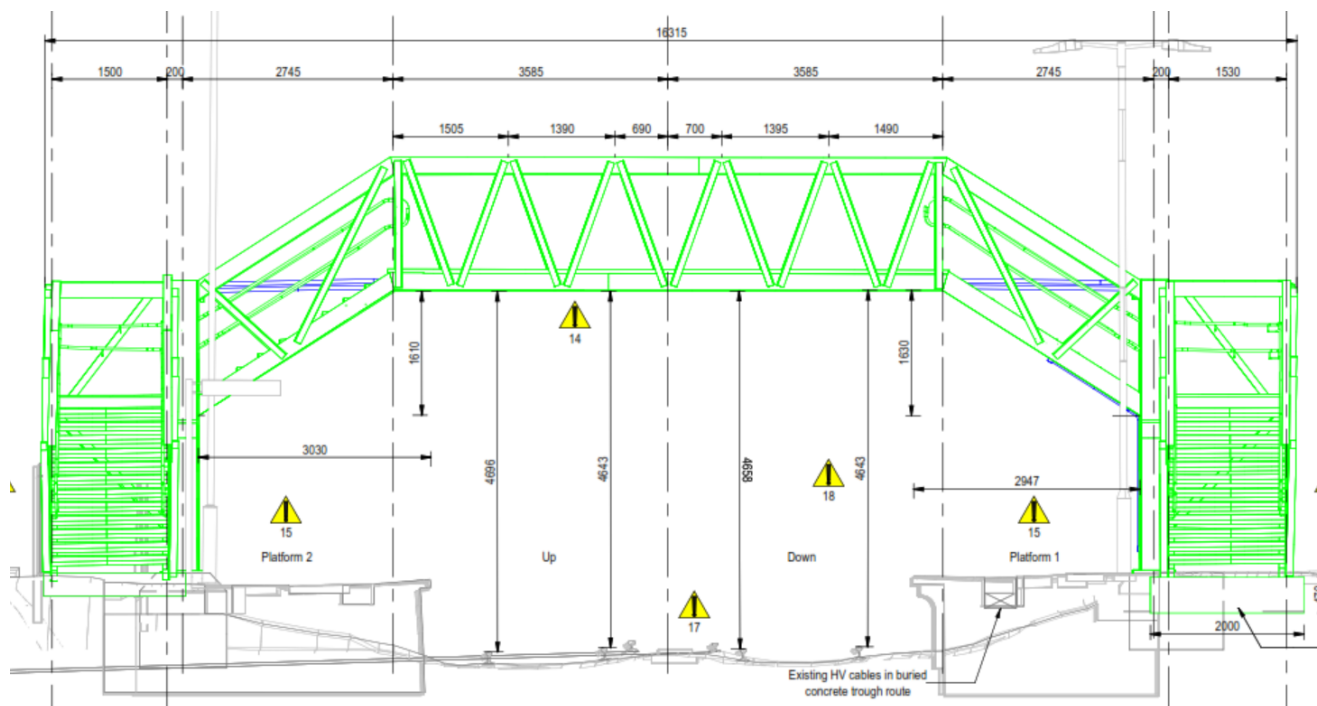


Figure 4 - Extract from Existing Elevation Drawing

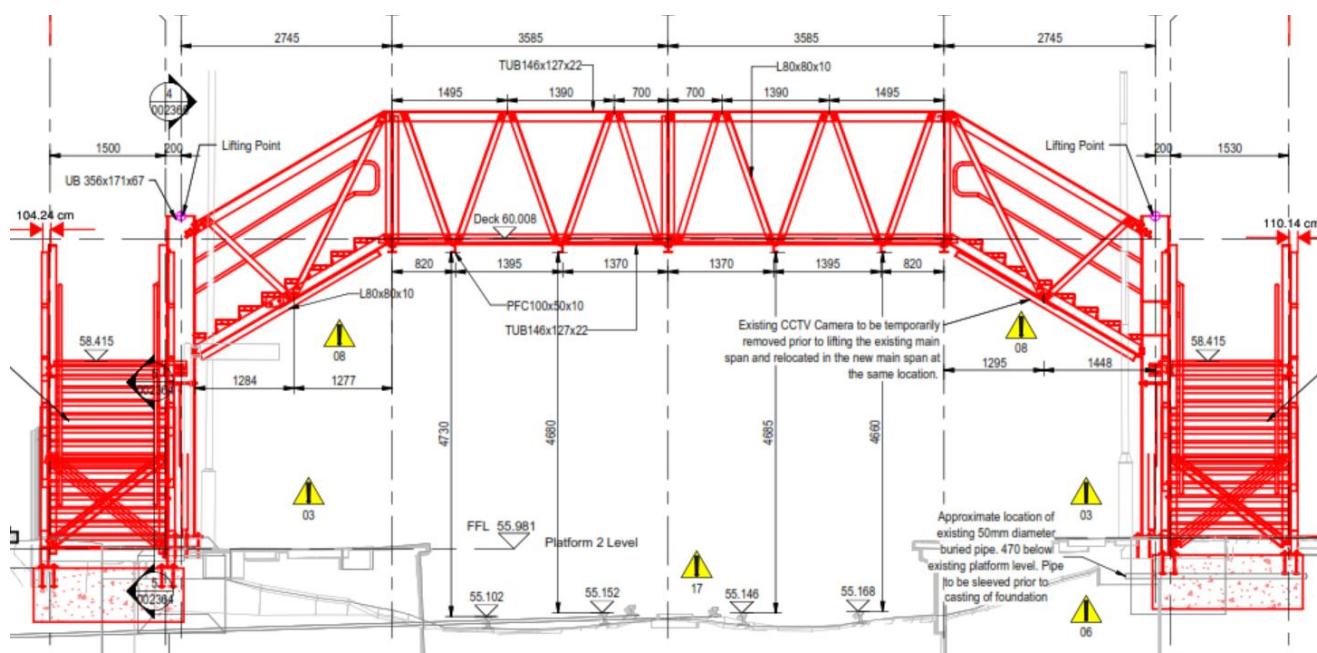


Figure 5 - Extract from Proposed Elevation Drawing.

For more information in relation to the proposed works, see the design section below and drawings submitted as part of this Prior Approval application.

4. Part 18 (Class A) of the GPDO 2015

The replacement of the station footbridge comprises a railway operational development for which Network Rail has statutory powers and planning permission is therefore granted by virtue of Part 18 Class A of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, which relates to development authorised by a local or private Act of Parliament.

The railway at this location was constructed with the authority of Parliamentary powers contained in the 'Reading, Guildford & Reigate Railway Act, 1846 (1846-C171)' authorised the construction of the railway at this location and is therefore Authorising Act for this section of railway.

Section 1 of both acts incorporates the Railway Clauses Consolidation (RCC) Act 1845. Section 16 of the RCC 1845 Act contains powers of alteration, maintenance and substitution.

Section 16 of the RCC Act 1845 enlarges upon the works which may be carried out and this includes the following powers; *"They may make or construct in, upon, across, under, or over any lands,... such temporary or permanent inclined planes, tunnels, embankments, aqueducts, bridges, roads, ways, passages, conduits, drains, piers, arches, cuttings, and fences, as they think proper;"*...

They may from time to time alter, repair, or discontinue the before-mentioned works or any of them, and substitute others in their stead; and...

They may do all other acts necessary for making, maintaining, altering, or repairing, and using the railway".

A copy of Section 16 of the Act is attached for your information.

All works lie within the Limits of Deviation of the Authorising Act on land within Network Rail's freehold ownership.

5. Assessment for Prior Approval

It is acknowledged that under condition A.1 of Part 18, Schedule 2 of the GPDO, it is necessary for details to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council for prior approval of the design and siting of the proposed works. It should also be noted however that under condition A.2, the prior approval cannot be refused unless you are satisfied that the development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land, or the design or external appearance would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification so as to avoid such injury.

Condition A.1 – Submitted Details

There is no prescribed application form or validation requirements for this type of prior approval application, and no fee is payable.

However, it is acknowledged that under Condition A.1 of Part 18, it is necessary for details to be submitted to the Council for prior approval of the detailed plans and specifications of the proposed works.

Enclosed with this submission are the following plans and specification documents:

Table 1: Schedule of Drawings and Documentation

Drawing Title	Drawings Reference
Site Location Plan	TP001 Rev A
General Notes	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002359 B02
Existing GA – Plan	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002360 B02
Existing GA - Elevations	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002361 B02
Existing GA - Sections	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002362 B02
Proposed GA - Plan	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002363 B02
Proposed GA - Elevations	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002364 B02
Proposed GA - Platform 1	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002365 B02
Proposed GA - Platform 2	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002366 B02
Proposed GA - Platform 2	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002366 B02
Proposed Connection Details 1	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002367 B02
Proposed Connection Details 2	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002368 B02
Proposed GRP Details	S100264-RWT-1706-WSX_SEAR-DRG-ECV-002371 B02
Site Photographs	N/A
Railway Clauses Consolidation Act 1845 (Section 16)	N/A

Network Rail consider that the information provided within this application fulfils the requirements of condition A.1.

Condition A.2 – Location and design or external appearance

Condition A.2 of Part 18, Schedule 2 of the GPDO, states that the prior approval referred to in paragraph A.1 is not to be refused by the appropriate authority, nor are conditions to be imposed unless they are satisfied that—

“(a) the development (other than the provision of or works carried out to a dam) ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land; or

(b) the design or external appearance of any building, bridge, aqueduct, pier, or dam would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury.”

The following section provides an assessment of parts (a) and (b) in relation to the proposal:

a) Whether the development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land

It is considered that the location of the existing footbridge is in the optimum location to serve users of the station. Furthermore, as the proposed footbridge is of a similar scale to the existing, it can utilise the existing footbridge foundations which reduces the environmental impact. As a result, the replacement footbridge's location is determined by the position of the existing foundations and therefore could not reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land.

b) The design or external appearance of the building would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury.

The other consideration in determining this prior approval application is whether the design or external appearance would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood, and if it does, is it reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury.

The footbridge is of the hipped warren truss design, to replicate the existing footbridge. The scale of the bridge is similar to the existing, albeit a slight increase in height (35mm).

The new bridge structure is constructed from steel and finished in Holly Green, to replicate the existing footbridge.

The plywood timber deck and treads are to be replaced with FRP with an anti-slip finish.

Tactile pavement is to be located at the top and bottom of the staircases and all tread nosings are to be yellow to assist those visually impaired in accordance with SWR Design Guide.

The most notable change between the existing and proposed footbridge is the introduction of outriggers which adds strength and structural stability to the bridge.

As a result, the proposed bridge will provide a betterment on the existing situation by providing a modern equivalent of the existing footbridge with strength and safety improvements.

It is therefore considered that the location, design of the external appearance of the replacement bridge would not be cause further injury to the amenity of the neighbourhood when compared to the status quo.

For more information in relation to the proposed works please refer to drawings that have been submitted as part of this prior approval application.

6. Conclusion

This application seeks Prior Approval Consent under Class A, Part 18, Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 for the replacement of the footbridge at Earley Station, Berkshire.

The proposed bridge provides a modern equivalent with a similar design and scale to the existing. The new bridge reuses the existing foundations, therefore the location is fixed. The new bridge provides improved safety by providing a better non-slip surface, warm touch double handrails, painting yellow of staircase noggings and tactile pavement at top and bottom of staircases. The replacement bridge incorporates outriggers which will add strength and stability. The new bridge also removes the unsightly GRP parapet infills and replaces them with a steel mesh.

It is considered that the location and design are not further injurious to the amenity of the area when compared to the existing situation.

It is therefore considered that the two matters to be considered under Class A, Part 18, Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 have been satisfied.

Network Rail awaits formal correspondence confirming Wokingham Borough Council is satisfied with the proposed development and that prior approval has been granted. In the meantime, please acknowledge this letter upon receipt via email.

If you require any further information to process this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Nick Donoghue

Senior Town Planner | Property (Southern)