

APPENDIX

Committee	PLANNING COMMITTEE C	
Report Title	Grove Park Railway Station, Baring Road SE12	
Ward	Grove Park	
Contributors	Kirstin McCartney	
Class	PART 1	17 July 2014

Reg. Nos. DC/14/86845

Application dated 10 March 2014

Applicant Network Rail

Proposal Prior Approval under Part 11 Class A of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 in respect of the part demolition and replacement of the connecting walkway providing access to Platforms 4 & 5 with a new enclosed level walkway incorporating a access lift to platform level, the demolition and replacement of an existing non compliant platform footbridge that links platforms 1, 2 & 3, and 4 & 5 with a new compliant footbridge with lift access to both platforms 1 and 4 & 5 and future passive provision to platforms 2 & 3 at Grove Park Railway Station Baring Road SE12, together with enabling works associated with the scheme will include the installation of shallow and piled foundations and the part removal of the platform canopy of platform 1.

Applicant's Plan Nos. AFA RED LINE PLAN; DS03122-212 REV P2; DS03122-213 REV P1; DS03122-217 REV P3; DS03122-218 REV P1; DS03122-219 REV P2; DS03122-220 REV P6; DS03122-222 REV P2; DS03122-230 REV P2; DS03122-231 REV P2; DS03122-232 REV P1; DS03122-240 REV P2; DS03122-250 REV P2; DS03122-251 REV P1; DS03122-270 REV P2; DS03122-370 REV P1; DS03122-371 REV P1; DS03122-500 REV P1; DS03122-501 REV P1; UN12398/GRP/P/800 A; UN12398/GRP/P/801 A; UN12398/GRP/P/802 A; UN12398/GRP/P/803 A; UN12398/GRP/P/804 A; UN12398/GRP/P/806 A; UN12398/GRP/P/807 A; UN12398/GRP/P/805 A; GROVE PARK RAILWAY STATION - AERIAL VIEW

Background Papers

- (1) Case File LE/302/K/TP
- (2) Adopted Unitary Development Plan (July 2004)
- (3) Local Development Framework Documents
- (4) The London Plan

Designation

PTAL3
PTAL4
Green Corridor
Local Open Space Deficiency
Flood Risk Zone 2

Screening

18 December 2013

1.0 Property/Site Description

- 1.1 The subject site is Grove Park Railway Station which is situated to the east side of Baring Road. It is bounded by Amblecote Meadows to the north east and Pullman Mews to the south east. At present, the station can be accessed via Baring Road. The station has five operational island platforms that sit beneath the main station booking hall within a railway cutting. Access to the platforms is via ramps and stairs, which are connected to the ticket office.
- 1.2 Platform 1 is 225 metres in length and is accessed via both a walkway and staircase. It serves the Bromley North branch line that provides a direct connection between Grove Park and Bromley North Station.
- 1.3 Platforms 4 & 5 are 266 metres in length and are accessed via a ramp. They are on the South Eastern Main Line which runs from Charing Cross to Hastings.
- 1.4 Platforms 2 & 3 are 266 metres in length and are accessed via a ramp. They are also on the South Eastern Main Line which runs from Charing Cross to Hastings. These platforms are not currently utilised on a daily basis and have no regular services scheduled. They are used when regular maintenance work is carried out along the operational railway.
- 1.5 The site is not located in a conservation area, there is no Article 4 Direction and the buildings are not listed.
- 1.6 The station is immediately surrounded to the north and south by a predominately residential suburban environment. Amblecote Meadows to the north of the station runs the entire length of the station immediately parallel to platform 5 and consists of 68 terraced houses that sit between five to seven metres from the operational railway. Pullman Mews to the south of the station also runs the entire length of the station immediately parallel to platform 1 and consists of 20 semi detached houses that sit between nine and fifteen metres from the operational railway.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 DC/13/82353: Prior Approval for the siting and design of works to install lifts at Grove Park Station. The works would include the part demolition of the existing walkway and staircase leading to platform 4 and the installation of a new level walkway and enclosure with incorporated lift to platform level. Works would also include the demolition of the existing footbridge that links platform 1, 2 & 3, and 4 & 5 and the installation of a new footbridge with lift access to platforms 1 and 4 & 5.
- 2.2 Prior approval was granted under delegated powers. This was subsequently challenged by Judicial Review and the Council consented to judgement on the

basis that the decision was issued without lawful authority. The application was subsequently withdrawn on 15 October 2013.

2.3 DC/13/85736: A Screening Opinion under Regulation 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 for the part demolition and replacement of the connecting walkway providing access to Platforms 4 & 5 with a new enclosed level walkway incorporating a access lift to platform level, the demolition and replacement of an existing non compliant platform footbridge that links platforms 1, 2 & 3, and 4 & 5 with a new compliant footbridge with lift access to both platforms 1, 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 and future passive provision to platforms 2 & 3 at Grove Park Railway Station Baring Road SE12, together with enabling works associated with the scheme will include the installation of shallow and piled foundations and the part removal of the platform canopy of platform 1.

2.4 The screening opinion concludes that the Council considers that the works proposed by Network Rail in relation to Grove Park Train are not EIA development.

3.0 Current Planning Applications

The Proposals

3.1 The present application is for prior approval for the siting and design of works to install lifts, stairs and a replacement bridge at Grove Park Station.

3.2 The works include:

- Part demolition of the existing ramped walkway to platforms 4 & 5 and replacement with a level walkway and lift down to platform level.
- Demolition of the existing footbridge that links platforms 1, 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 and the installation of a new footbridge with lift access to platforms 1 and 4 & 5

3.3 No works are proposed to the walkway and stair access to Platform 1 or to the current ramp access to Platforms 2 & 3.

3.4 These works will provide an Equality Act compliant lift to platform 4 & 5 and a Equality Act compliant footbridge with lift access to both platforms 1 and 4 & 5 and future passive provision to platforms 2 & 3.

4.0 Consultation

4.1 This section outlines the consultation carried out by the Council following the submission of the application and summarises the responses received.

4.2 There is no obligation on the part of the Council to undertake any consultation on "Part 11" applications and it is not normal practice to do so. However for the application at Grove Park Station the Council have recognised the local interest and have undertaken to consult those residents directly affected by the application by letter and posting site notices.

4.3 A total of 114 consultation letters were sent out to local residents on 13 March and the 31 March. These were sent second class mail. The Council also consulted

English Heritage, the Environment Agency, Grove Park Residents Association and Grove Park Community Group.

4.4 Four A3 size site notices were also put up on the 10 April 2014. These were placed in the following locations:

- Directly outside the station entrance
- On the corner of Chinbrook and Baring Roads
- On the corner of Chinbrook and Amblecote Roads
- On the corner of Baring Road and Pullman Mews

4.5 The initial consultation period ran to 21 April 2014 but due to issues with viewing the application drawings on the Council's website this consultation period was extended to 30 May 2014.

4.6 New site notices were put up the 28 April and a further set of letters were sent out the 29 April 2014 to advise of this extended date.

4.7 15 objections have been from Local Residents and Organisations. A summary of the key points is provided below:

- Taking out ramps and putting in stairs and a lift will hinder access for the majority of station users who travel with a pushchair. At the moment the ramps are easy to use. Steps and a lift will be much more inconvenient.
- The station is only partially manned and any failure of the lifts after hours could result in difficult entering or leaving the station.
- The design of the footbridge linking the platforms will adversely impact my home. It will restrict light, increase noise and reduce privacy.
- The old footbridge should be left as it is. There is precious little heritage in Grove Park.
- The slopes currently available to access the main platforms are perfectly adequate.
- Grove Park functions perfectly well although would be enhanced with a better/cleaner waiting room and a little action in the flowerbeds.
- Ticket barriers in place to avoid the inevitable holdups caused by ticket inspectors.
- The design of the footbridge linking platforms 4 & 5 with platform 1 will adversely impact 31 Amblecote Meadows. The tallest part of the lift shaft will be directly behind this property and, as it looks to be taller than this property it will restrict light, increase noise levels and reduce privacy.
- The project will involve overnight work for over 12 months resulting in significant disruption to residents.
- Despite assurances from Network Rail, I do not believe that they will be able to undertake such a major development overnight without causing significant disruption from floodlights, dozens of workers on site and the use of heavy machinery.
- As outlined in the application, platforms 2 & 3 are not regularly used; Network Rail should be able to use these platforms during the works facilitating day-time development.

- Request Network Rail to consider a subway in place of a bridge linking platforms 4 & 5 with platform 1.
- Place a restriction on noise levels overnight so the use of heavy machinery (e.g. used to drill foundations) is limited to day times.
- Provide residents a mechanism to object if noise levels become unacceptable that would result in Network Rail ceasing work at unsociable times.
- Despite assurance to the contrary from Network Rail, there still has not been a consultation with the residents impacted by the plans.
- The project is billed as an “Access for All” project; however this multi-million pound project will at best only result in a 20% improvement in accessibility. The proposed lift-shafts will be situated metres from the rear of the properties in Amblecote Meadows.
- The structure itself will be taller than the houses, the walkway and steps will be on a level with bedrooms and bathrooms adversely affecting light, privacy and noise levels.
- This is a very high price to pay for a project with little actual benefit.
- This proposal does not give access for all, it destroys local heritage assets and it ruins the historic appearance of the station.
- There has still been no consultation with the residents impacted by the plans, in fact it appears that Lewisham Council is intent on acting in an entirely undemocratic manner. Furthermore the consultation groups mentioned on the planning application do not necessarily represent the views of the residents that will be adversely impacted by this development.
- The primary reason for ruling out the most viable alternative of a subway tunnel as opposed to a footbridge is disruption to the residents and the railway service but given last year’s petition along with this year’s concerns raised by residents only recently, I can confirm that the local residents take a long-term view on this situation. We would much prefer a prolonged construction period in the present day in order to build a subway tunnel which gives more long-term benefit to all concerned rather than the proposed bridge which will give less benefit for commuters, is more environmentally unfriendly and has considerable opposition from the community.
- The question now appears to be why Lewisham Council does not want to act in the interests of its residents and I am confident that in an election year the voters are entitled to know what is going on here. I for one do not expect my council taxes to be spent supporting any attempt to undemocratically push forward an unbeneficial project which threatens our heritage.
- Travelling with suitcases will become more difficult.
- The bridge being higher in height than our own homes and only eight meters away it will over shadow the adjacent houses. In addition there will be a loss of light to the rooms in our homes, a loss of privacy with the walkway being on level with our bedrooms and bathrooms and there will be considerable additional noise pollution. Given these points this does constitute an injury to our amenity and if Lewisham Council ignores this and fails to refuse the prior approval application then the council is once again acting unlawfully.
- Hinder access for the majority of station users who travel with young children in pushchairs.

- The station is only partially manned. Any failure of the lifts afterhours could result in difficulty in entering or leaving the station.
- Understand maintenance and upgrading the station to incorporate modernisation and safety measures.
- There is the risk of damage to the structure of our properties and there will certainly be adverse affects to light, noise and privacy in the long-term.
- Concerned about potential damage to properties from piling foundations.
- Pullman Mews will be used for heavy machinery which it is not designed for and could cause damage and restrict access for emergency vehicles.
- There is a nice, structurally sound footbridge already. The proposal is ulgy with huge concrete towers. Hold on to what we have.
- It would appear from your plans that actual step free access to platform 1 will only be possible by using three lifts, a bridge and walking round the entire station literally in a circle which is completely unreasonable.
- A simple solution would be to add one lift to the platform 1 walkway, keep the ramps to the remaining platforms and to efficiently link the platforms create an underpass whilst retaining the existing bridge for heritage.
- The heritage of Grove Park Station, home of the railway children, appears to have been completely ignored. Grove Park Station forms the gateway of a heritage driven neighbourhood plan supported by the princes foundation and the National Railway Museum York and the station sits opposite the locally listed Baring Hall Hotel and lies within the area of the heritage driven neighbourhood plan. The Edward VII heritage bridge, the ramps and other station features retain the architectural integrity of the station and town centre and local resident Edith Nesbit based her book The Railway Children on this station, the Network Rail one size fits all plan is therefore totally unsuitable for this area and any plans should reflect our heritage.
- The Princes Trust worked with the local community to development plans for the area. This proposal is not in line with the Princes Trust work.
- Access For All should be about reducing/removing steps not actually installing more. Access to this station is already good and it would be best served by retaining the ramps to all platforms and then linking the platforms by means of an underpass.
- The proposed bridge and lift-shafts linking platforms 4 and 5 with platform 1 will come at a significant cost to residents as it will be situated just 8 metres from the rear of the properties and the structure itself will be taller than the houses. Furthermore the walkway and steps will be on a level with bedrooms and bathrooms causing significant and permanent impact on light, privacy and noise levels. The rear side of almost all of our houses being no more than a few metres from the edge of platform 4 and 5 and being small 1/2 bedroom houses means that residents will have no option to relocate within their house to escape the impact of this development either during the work itself or after completion.

4.8 Conservation

4.8.1 Grove Park station was built in 1871. It consists of a simple but attractive brick station building containing the ticket office fronting Baring Road and two island

platforms with platform buildings and canopies. The platforms and station building are linked by long ramps and lattice-girder footbridges and walkways.

- 4.8.2 The station is a good and - with five platforms - a substantial example of its period. Its contribution as a catalyst for the development of Grove Park and its architecture, notably the characteristic lattice-girder footbridge and walkways, make it a heritage asset to the local area. The NPPF defines heritage assets as 'a building (...) identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.
- 4.8.3 The proposals involves a significant degree of intervention into the existing fabric notably loss of the ramp to platform 4/5 and its replacement with a walkway, stairs and lift to serve these platforms. The proposal involves further the replacement of the lattice-girder footbridge at the south-eastern end of the platforms that links all the five of them. The latter is an attractive feature that greatly adds to the character of the station.
- 4.8.4 The previous conservation officer dealing with the case was involved in pre-application discussions for this proposal and had requested the applicant to consider alternative options to the new footbridge i.e. the creation of an underpass to enable the retention of the historic structure. The 'Grove Park Station Footbridge Briefing Note' explains why the creation of an under-pass is neither practicable nor feasible.
- 4.8.5 Design wise the new footbridge appears to be of a standard design used elsewhere although the brick plinth detailing appears to respond to the local context. Due to its location to the south-east of the canopies, the impact of the new footbridge on the town centre of the neighbourhood as defined by the Grove Park Station building at Baring Road and the Baring Hall Hotel is somewhat mitigated by the distance and change in level. It is however very visible from the properties lining the railway tracks to the north-east and south-west.
- 4.8.6 The new footbridge would be in scale and mass significantly larger than the existing footbridge, notably due to the nature and height of the three solid lift shafts. I am not convinced that there are no other solutions to the external treatment of the lift towers available that would give a more aesthetically pleasing and light-weight appearance as opposed to the proposed Kingspan cladding. I would question the statement that 'glassed lift shafts are also considered to be unsuitable for external use given how it is affected by weather and exposure to the elements' in view of these being a common choice in other European capitals. In this respect I feel that the design of the lift shafts is reasonably capable of modification and you can consider attaching a condition to granting prior approval that would require improved design solutions for the lift shafts.

4.9 Highways and Transportation

- 4.9.1 Currently Grove Park Station is inaccessible to disabled people and those with reduced mobility, and the existing ramps are not compliant with DDA standards. The proposed Access for All works to Grove Park Station will improve access for disabled people and will provide disabled people the same opportunities to travel as other people. The proposed footbridge and lifts will provide disabled people with an accessible route to all operational platforms at the station. In addition, throughout the proposed works the station will remain open to customers and the

railway will remain fully operational. As the proposed works will improve accessibility to the station, the proposal is unobjectionable.

4.10 English Heritage

4.10.1 We do not consider that it is necessary for this application to be notified to English Heritage

4.11 Environment Agency

4.11.1 We have no objections in principle to the proposal but we would recommend you ask the developer to submit further information with respect to groundwater protection and contaminated land prior to determination.

4.11.2 The site is located in Source Protection Zone 3 for a public water supply borehole that abstracts groundwater from the deep chalk aquifer. This aquifer lies beneath a layer of clay rock which protects it from direct contamination by any pollution present in soils near to the surface. We therefore consider there is no need to investigate for the presence of historic contamination for groundwater protection reasons beyond that required to create a suitable piling risk assessment, or to investigate any unsuspected contamination encountered during site work.

4.11.3 Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods can result in risks to potable supplies from, for example, pollution / turbidity, risk of mobilising contamination, drilling through different aquifers and creating preferential pathways. We would therefore like to see evidence to demonstrate that the proposed piling will not result in contamination of groundwater.

4.11.4 Please ask the developer to provide a piling risk assessment to determine if this work will create any pathways that could allow contamination to migrate between any existing pollution sources and vulnerable receptors such as the groundwater in the deep chalk aquifer. With respect to any proposals for piling through made ground, we would refer you to the Environment Agency guidance document "Piling and Penetrative Ground Improvement Methods on Land Affected By Contamination: Guidance on Pollution Prevention". NGWCL Centre Project NC/99/73. We suggest that approval of piling methodology is further discussed with the Environment Agency when the guidance has been utilised to design appropriate piling regimes at the site.

4.11.5 Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods should not be used except in those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater.

4.11.6 We would further advise that if, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development should be carried out until the developer has submitted a remediation strategy to the local planning authority detailing how this unsuspected contamination will be dealt with.

5.0 Policy Context

The application is for prior approval not planning permission. It is not considered against the Development Plan but the relevant legislation. This is provided below.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended)

PART 11, DEVELOPMENT UNDER LOCAL OR PRIVATE ACTS OR ORDERS
Class A,

Permitted development

A. Development authorised by—

- (a) a local or private Act of Parliament,
- (b) an order approved by both Houses of Parliament, or
- (c) an order under section 14 or 16 of the Harbours Act 1968 (orders for securing harbour efficiency etc., and orders conferring powers for improvement, construction etc. of harbours) which designates specifically the nature of the development authorised and the land upon which it may be carried out.

Condition

A.1. Development is not permitted by Class A if it consists of or includes—

The erection, construction, alteration or extension of any building, bridge, aqueduct, pier or dam, or the formation, laying out or alteration of a means of access to any highway used by vehicular traffic, unless the prior approval of the appropriate authority to the detailed plans and specifications is first obtained.

Prior approvals

A.2. 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.

Interpretation of Class A

A. 3. In Class A, “appropriate authority” means—

- (a) in Greater London or a metropolitan county, the local planning authority,
- (b) in a National Park in England, outside a metropolitan county, the county planning authority,
- (c) in any other case in England, the district planning authority⁴⁹,
- (d) In Wales, the local planning authority.

Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845 (“the RCCA 1845”) SECTION 16
Works to be executed

Subject to the provisions and restrictions in this and the special Act, and any Act incorporated therewith, it shall be lawful for the company, for the purpose of

constructing the railway, or the accommodation works connected therewith, herein-after mentioned, to execute any of the following works; (that is to say,).

They may make or construct in, upon, across, under, or over any lands, or any streets, hills, valleys, roads, railroads, or tram roads, rivers, canals, brooks, streams, or other waters, within the lands described in the said plans, or mentioned in the said books of reference or any correction thereof, 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;

Provided always, that in the exercise of the powers by this or the special Act granted the company shall do as little damage as can be, and shall make full satisfaction, in manner herein and in the special Act, and any Act incorporated therewith, provided, to all parties interested, for all damage by them sustained by reason of the exercise of such powers.

6.0 Planning Considerations

6.1 The Development that is the subject of the present application is authorised under RCC ACT 1845 subject to the prior approval of the detailed plans and specifications by the LPA. However the as set out in paragraph 5 of this report the LPA can in the current circumstances only refuse such prior approval or impose conditions where they are satisfied that :

- (a) the development **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.

Development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land

6.2 The proposal consists of two separate elements. These are independent of each other and are considered separately.

1. Part demolition of the existing ramped walkway to platforms 4 & 5 and replacement with a level walkway and lift down to platform level.
2. Demolition of the existing footbridge that links platforms 1, 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 and the installation of a new footbridge with lift access to platforms 1 and 4 & 5. There is provision to install lift access to platforms 2 & 3 at a future date if required.

6.3 In designing this scheme Network Rail have advised they need to comply with the certain standards and constraints. These include:

- Department for Transport design codes and standards,

- Relevant British Standards
- Relevant European standards

- 6.4 Network Rail has to consider the impact the length of construction for the different options in order to minimise disruption to the operational railway and rail passengers. Additionally, long-term maintenance costs have to be considered.
- 6.5 The evaluation of the options followed the Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) process which is accepted as the standard method of project delivery within the railway industry.
- 6.6 A summary of the different options considered by Network Rail are provided below.

New Walkway and Lifts to Platform 4 and 5

- 6.7 The test under part A.2.(A) is that prior approval is not to be refused by the appropriate authority nor are conditions to be imposed unless the development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land.
- 6.8 The proposed walkway and lift cannot be located elsewhere on the land as it connects the station hall to the platform. Therefore there are no grounds to refuse prior approval for the walkway and lifts to platforms 4 & 5 under part A.2. (A).

Retaining the footbridge and modifying to be Equality Act compliant

- 6.9 The proposed scheme is for the demolition of the existing footbridge that links platforms 1, 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 and replacement with a new bridge. The new bridge will be a fully compliant Access for All footbridge with lift access between platforms 1 and 4 & 5. Given that platforms 2 & 3 are not in regular use, the proposal allows for future provision of a lift to these platforms if required at some future point.
- 6.10 A number of objections have been received regarding the proposed demolition. Local residents and interested stakeholders would like the existing bridge to be retained on historic grounds, particularly in regards to links with The Railway Children.
- 6.11 The Conservation Officer has provided comments in relation to the proposal and the heritage implications. The full text of the comments are provided above. In summary the officer has concluded that while the proposals involves a significant degree of intervention into the existing fabric of the station the 'Grove Park Station Footbridge Briefing Note' explains why the creation of an under-pass is neither practicable nor feasible.
- 6.12 Network Rail advises that, due to the design and construction of the existing bridge it is not possible to modify it to incorporate Access for All requirements.
- 6.13 The existing bridge is constructed in such a way that there is no room within the existing structure to install a lift on platform 1 or platforms 4 & 5.
- 6.14 The bridge walkway does not extend to platform 1. Instead, the stairs have been placed at a right angle to the platform and reach over the railway line to join the bridge walkway. This leaves no place for a lift to be installed.

- 6.15 On platforms 4 & 5 the stairwell has two flights of stairs and a landing. The stairs turn the corner at the landing before reaching the bridge walkway. This configuration results in no room for a lift to be installed.
- 6.16 In order to modify the existing bridge to accommodate lifts, new walkway would need to be constructed to platform 1 and extended over platform 4 & 5 while the stairs on both platform 1 and platforms 4 & 5 would need to be moved or reconfigured. This would result in new/reconfigured stairs in different locations to existing, new lifts and new bridge walkway with the only original bridge span left in the middle over platforms 2 & 3.
- 6.17 Network Rail has advised that this would result in an awkward design and significant difficulties in construction. Additionally, there would be significant new structure required.
- 6.18 The existing footbridge is neither nationally nor locally listed as a heritage asset by English Heritage, nor is it located within the curtilage of a listed heritage asset or within a Conservation Area as defined within the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.19 Officers agree with this analysis regarding the difficulties of incorporating lifts into the existing bridge and consider it is not a reasonable alternative to the current proposal.

Retaining the footbridge and providing the new bridge as well

- 6.20 An option to locate a new footbridge south of the existing footbridge (further away from the ticket hall) was assessed. However, this is restricted due to platform 1 being at an angle from the other platforms. A bridge in this location would result in people having to travel further to reach the footbridge whilst the stairs would also be required to point away from the prominent direction of travel due to platform constraints.
- 6.21 A new footbridge to the south would also be required to increase in height (based on the currently proposed design) to ensure it did not interfere with or block an existing signal. Additional works would be required to alter the position of key railway infrastructure such as switches, crossings, and associated signalling.
- 6.22 An option to locate a new footbridge to the north of the existing footbridge (closer to the station) was also assessed. This would result in loss of the existing station platform buildings as well as a significant proportion of the station canopy which would again leave passengers exposed to the weather.
- 6.23 Having two bridges rather than one would result in additional impact on the amenity of adjoining neighbours. Both options require substantial additional work to the platforms compared with the current proposal.
- 6.24 It is considered, on balance, that neither option is a reasonable alternative to the current proposal.

Providing a subway tunnel

- 6.25 A subway/tunnel that links platforms 1, 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 with both stepped and lift access was assessed.

- 6.26 A number of objections suggested retaining the existing footbridge and providing a subway tunnel as well.
- 6.27 Network Rail has advised that the construction of an underpass would increase both the cost and the construction time by between 2.5 to 4 times that of the current proposal.
- 6.28 As with the current proposal, operationally the most convenient location would be within the footprint of the existing bridge (refer above for analysis). Therefore the underpass option would also mean the existing bridge would need to be demolished.
- 6.29 In terms of construction of an underpass, the existing footbridge would need to be demolished prior to works beginning. This would complicate station operations and inconvenience station users. This is because the existing bridge would need to be removed in order to begin works on an underpass, unlike the current proposal. Much of the work for a replacement bridge can be undertaken off line adjacent to the existing bridge, prior to its removal. The benefit of the replacement bridge solution is that passenger-walking routes will be disrupted for shorter periods and it would result in less disruption to local residents.
- 6.30 The disruption to the railway/station would be immense under this option. There is no space to push/jack a tunnel through, so an underpass would have to be tunnelled by hand. This cannot happen with trains running on top and therefore would result in considerable disruption. Alternatively, the underpass could be dug out and then covered over.
- 6.31 An underpass would need to be deep to avoid the track bed and drainage. This would mean having to dig down deeper than the height of the proposed bridge (9m), which would result in a significantly larger footprint for stair wells and lifts, taking up large areas of platform, construction would be very disruptive to local roads, line side neighbours and not least the station and would require significant closures of the railway.
- 6.32 Furthermore, Network Rail is unsure how this level of excavation would impact on groundwater sources and the natural drainage of the area.
- 6.33 The construction of a subway would require the railway line to be closed for the immediate construction phase due to excavation immediately below the track bed. There would also be need for speed restrictions after, during which adjacent construction activity would take place. Any such closure of the railway would require significant pre-planning for the routing of trains and carrying of passengers. This pre-planning and advance notice period would have serious effects on the project programme, as disruptive track access has to be agreed with Train Companies significantly in advance of the proposed construction programme.
- 6.34 There would be significant additional costs incurred by the industry for the provision of the replacement bus service, and substantial inconvenience and disruption to the travelling public.
- 6.35 The ongoing speed restrictions would have an impact on train performance, and potentially our ability to recover from operational incidents. By imposing speed restrictions for a long period of time there could be implications for key

performance indicators that the Office of the Rail Regulator uses to measure train performance and that of the network.

- 6.36 Furthermore, there will be a significantly larger land area required during the construction period for a subway than for any other option.
- 6.37 To construct this scheme Network Rail need to meet the requirements of Railway Group Standards. Construction of an underpass would require a greater width of platform to be hoarded off to enable the ground to be excavated, potentially resulting in a constriction in the platform width. Although this may be able to be mitigated, Network Rail does not believe sufficient width could be maintained due to the significant footfall that uses the existing bridge.
- 6.38 The amount of spoil being generated from the digging means spoil may need to be stored on the platform then reloaded onto road vehicles. The work would result in a substantial quantity of spoil being removed from site and a very large number of lorry movements in and around the station environment.
- 6.39 The construction of an underpass would generate significantly more noise and disruption to local residents, because of the construction techniques that would need to be utilised, the additional construction traffic and spoil handling.
- 6.40 Network Rail employs competent contractors to undertake works of this nature; however excavations of this size carry greater risks to adjacent properties if something did not go as anticipated.
- 6.41 Construction of a bridge allows elements of works to be fabricated in factory conditions with elements delivered to site assembled into manageable sections and installed.
- 6.42 The construction of a new bridge will provide a higher degree of passive surveillance than an underpass, and would not be dissimilar to the current bridge in that sense. A new bridge would have lighting and CCTV coverage above the levels currently present on the existing bridge. Use of underpasses are not uncommon in certain environments, however careful consideration needs to be given to the security and environment being created.
- 6.43 Although a subway would be the least visually intrusive solution, the public often oppose using them, particularly at night, and they can present an invitation to people with criminal intent, and anti-social behaviour. A subway at Grove Park would not be overlooked and this would further exacerbate a perceived safety risk. Previous discussions with the accessibility steering group DiPTAC was that vulnerable people or people who feel vulnerable don't like using subways as they can be frightening places and make people less likely to use it.
- 6.44 The depth of an underpass would also mean people using steps would have to travel a greater distance than with the current replacement bridge proposal.
- 6.45 There are concerns regarding flooding/water in a subway, and the on-going maintenance of a structure like this. Waterproofing and tanking would add cost as well as increased maintenance liabilities.
- 6.46 Due to the space requirements, and likely length, Network Rail do not consider providing ramp access to the underpass as a viable option. Therefore it would need to have stairs and lifts if it could be reasonably constructed.

- 6.47 Considering the above information, officers agree that the subway option is not a feasible alternative to the current replacement bridge proposal. Additionally, even if it were feasible from a construction point of view, the ideal location would be where the current footbridge currently stands. Therefore it would still require the demolition of the current footbridge.

Summary

- 6.48 Based on the above analysis of the different options considered by Network Rail, it is considered that the proposed footbridge ought not to be and could not reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land
- 6.49 Therefore there are no grounds to refuse prior approval for the proposed footbridge under part A.2. (A).

Injury to Amenity of the Neighbourhood

- 6.50 Section A2(b) of the legislation states that prior approval is not to be refused by the appropriate authority nor are conditions to be imposed unless they are satisfied that the design or external appearance of any bridge would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury.

Level Walkway and Lift to Platforms 4 & 5

- 6.51 The current walkway is 41m long with a maximum height of 8.3m lowering to 2.3m where it joins to the platform canopy at platform level. The ramp has a 1:10 gradient. The existing walkway itself is 2.7m high with an obscured lower portion, an open upper part and a canopy.
- 6.52 The proposed walkway is 44m long with a maximum height of 9m. At 35m from the station building the height of the footbridge starts to lower and is 3.3m where it joins the platform canopy. The lift shaft is located at the end of the walkway. It is 8.7m high and 3.5m wide. However, due to level changes it is 1.5m higher than the footbridge. The proposed walkway itself is 3m high with an obscured lower portion, a clear upper part and a canopy.
- 6.53 The walkway is a minimum of 19m from the rear of the flatted blocks in Chinbrook Crescent with large screening trees between them. It is considered that the impact of the proposed walkway to Chinbrook Crescent is acceptable due to the screening effect of the trees.
- 6.54 The proposed walkway, at 44m in length will extend as far as the rear garden of no. 8 Amblecote Meadows but will not extend as far as the dwelling itself. The walkway starts to descend in height before reaching the rear boundary of this property. There are trees between the property and the railway line which offer a considerable element of screening. The lift shaft is approximately 10m from the side boundary of no. 8 Amblecote Meadows.
- 6.55 The existing platform roof canopy is adjacent to this property. While is considered that there will be an impact on visual amenity from the lift shaft, it is not considered a significant impact given the screening provided by the trees, the existing walkway and the existing station roof canopy.

New compliant ramp to Platforms 4 & 5

- 6.56 A number of objections were received regarding the loss of the ramp and replacement with a lift. Objectors felt the current ramp was acceptable and a lift would result in considerable delays in accessing the platform. However, Network Rail has provided a detailed assessment setting out why retaining the existing ramp is not a reasonable option in terms of disability access.
- 6.57 The existing height difference between the booking hall and the platforms is 4.2 metres. The existing ramp to platforms 4 & 5 is 41 metres in length. To make the ramps Equality Act compliant it would be required to extend the ramps considerably.
- 6.58 The current gradient of the ramp is 1:10 which is considerably steeper than allowed under the Equality Act. Network Rail has advised that in order to comply with modern gradient standards the length of the ramp would need to increase to approximately 83 metres in length.
- 6.59 The extended ramp would require a canopy (as is provided now) for the full length to shelter station users from the weather as well as works to the existing covered parts of the platforms 4 & 5. This is likely to increase the impact of the proposals on adjacent residential properties at Amblecote Meadows due to the significant increase in the length of the ramp and canopy.
- 6.60 Network Rail have also advised that under this option key operational infrastructure such as switches, crossings and signalling equipment would need to be relocated due to the platform alterations.
- 6.61 Lift access to platform level would still be required with this option. The only location possible for a lift under this option is at the end of the platform beside the ticket hall. Locating the lift here would create an isolated alleyway running alongside the ramp which would create a blind spot in station security. Officers do not consider this would create an acceptable environment and could result in anti-social behaviour and crime.
- 6.62 The Equality Act compliant ramp would increase the distance passengers would be required to travel to reach the platform and create a pinch point due to the ramp discharging people on to the busiest part of the platforms.
- 6.63 In Network Rail's view this option would require unnecessary additional alterations to the platform structures already in place as well as enabling works and would result in a significantly more expensive scheme than that currently proposed.
- 6.64 Officers agree with the analysis of Network Rail in regards to the ramp and consider that, given the constraints of the site as well as the design and operational requirements of a functioning train station the option of replacing the current ramp on platform 4 & 5 with a Equality Act compliant ramp is not as feasible as the proposed level walkway and lift option.

Impact on amenity of replacement footbridge and lifts (connecting all platforms)

- 6.65 In terms of amenity, the footbridge would be visible from Pullman Mews and Amblecote Mews. The ticket office and a large wall obscure much of the view from Baring Road.

- 6.66 The existing footbridge is located 13.2m from the rear elevation of Amblecote Mews and 16.6m from the front elevation of properties on Pullman Mews. The existing bridge is 7.2m at the highest point. The staircases are 3.7 long (running parallel with the platform) with a height of 3m at the lowest point, rising to 5.1 where it joins the bridge. The staircases join the existing canopies which cover the platforms. The canopies are 4m in height.
- 6.67 The proposed footbridge is located 13.8m from the rear elevation of Amblecote Mews and 17m from the front elevation of properties on Pullman Mews. It is 8m high. The staircases are 10.3m long (running parallel with the platform) with a height of 3m at the lowest point, rising to 7.6m where it joins the bridge.
- 6.68 The flank ends of the proposed footbridge are directly adjacent to nos. 26 and 27 Amblecote Mews and nos. 7 and 8 Pullman Mews. The proposal has one lift at each end (on platform 1 and platforms 4 & 5) The proposed lift shaft would measure 9.5m in height and 2.2m by 2m around the base.
- 6.69 The existing footbridge has a visual impact to the directly adjacent properties in Pullman Mews and Amblecote Meadows. It is accepted that there will be additional impact on the amenity of the directly adjacent properties in Pullman Mews and Amblecote Meadows by virtue of the increased height and massing of the bridge as well as additional bulk of the lift shafts at either end.
- 6.70 However, as residential properties run the full length of the railway line adjacent to the station, locating the footbridge elsewhere on the platform would not remove the impact on amenity, it would relocate it.
- 6.71 Additionally, Network Rail have provided justification in regard to alternative proposals and locations for the bridge. It is accepted that the bridge cannot be reasonably located elsewhere on the platform or an alternative, like a subway tunnel, be provided instead.

Modifying the materials or design

- 6.72 The current bridge proposal due to its bulk and mass will have a direct impact on nos 26 and 27 Amblecote Mews and nos. 7 and 8 Pullman Mews. It will have a visual impact on the other residents within these two streets. This needs to be justified in terms of design and materials within the context of the legislation.
- 6.73 It is considered that there is a minor impact on visual amenity to no. 8 Amblecote Meadows for the proposed lift shaft to platforms 4 & 5. The walkway element is screened an acceptable distance from the rear of Chinbrook Gardens and Amblecote Meadows to not have a significant visual impact.
- 6.74 The Conservation Officer has provided comments in relation to the proposal and the heritage implications. In terms of the design solutions, the conservation officer is not convinced that there are no other solutions to the external treatment of the lift towers available that would give a more aesthetically pleasing and lightweight appearance as opposed to the proposed Kingspan cladding.
- 6.75 Therefore, the Council requested Network Rail consider options to modify the materials to reduce the impact and create lighter weight structures.
- 6.76 Changes to the proposed materials and location for the lift shaft element are considered below.

The Bridge

- 6.77 The clearance height of the bridge is dictated by operational requirements and therefore cannot be reduced.
- 6.78 The current design has a solid parapet to approx. 1.8m high at both flank ends and along the walkway. It uses both steelwork and glass. Mesh is used at high level for security purposes (i.e. people throwing items onto the track/trains). This design reduces the visual impact and creates a lighter weight structure but does not address overlooking and privacy concerns from the ends of the bridge.
- 6.79 However, the proposed footbridge is 13.8m from the rear elevation of Amblecote Mews and 17m from the front elevation of properties on Pullman Mews. There is overlooking into the gardens of Amblecote Meadows from the existing bridge and, although higher, it is not considered that the proposed footbridge would make this materially worse. Overlooking into the windows of these properties would be minimal due to the distance although perceived loss of privacy for the residents is a reasonable concern.
- 6.80 In certain instances, primarily within statutorily listed stations, bridges have been constructed without a roof and with glass 'walls' to the appropriate height for safety purposes to mitigate the visual impact of the bridge.
- 6.81 Taken in conjunction with the staircase (see below) this option would reduce the impact to Amblecote Meadows or Pullman Mews. However, it would be at odds visually with the current design of the station.
- 6.82 Additionally, it is considered unreasonable to not provide protection from the weather at Grove Park Station by means of a roof as the existing bridge does so.
- 6.83 However, it is considered that the materials of the bridge could potentially be reasonably modified to create a visually lighter weight structure, perhaps with the use of a similar lattice to the existing.

Stairwell

- 6.84 As with the bridge the roof of the staircase could be removed and glass walls could be provided. However, the existing stairwell has a roof and it is considered that the current proposed stairwell roof has a similar impact in terms of visual amenity. Additionally, no protection would be offered from the weather.
- 6.85 Alternatively the proposed roof can be retained and a glass design or a similar lattice to the existing could be used for the staircase parapets.
- 6.86 This would help to reduce the impact of the proposals of the adjacent properties as the proposed stairwells are longer, at 10.3m than the existing at 3.7m.
- 6.87 The space beneath the two staircases at either end of the structure houses the equipment for the operation of the lifts. Any area with headroom of less than 2.5m is required to be inaccessible. On the current proposal this space is walled in brick to match the staircase. An alternative is to use mesh or a similar lattice to the existing in this location. Network Rail felt that using brick in this location results in a more streamlined look rather than introducing a change in materials.

- 6.88 Officers consider that changing the material to mesh or another open style of material may result in a reduced visual impact in terms of bulk subject to details.
- 6.89 It is considered that the materials of the stairwell could potentially be reasonably modified to create a visually lighter weight structure, perhaps with the use of a similar lattice to the existing.

Lift shafts

- 6.90 The proposed lift shafts are constructed of brick on the lower half with cladding to the upper part.
- 6.91 Lift shafts can be constructed of glass to help reduce visual impact. Network Rail have advised that glass lift shafts are considered to be unsuitable for external use and would also not respond to the privacy concerns that have been expressed by residents. It would introduce significant maintenance liabilities to the industry and would be significantly more expensive.
- 6.92 Alternatively, lift shafts can be constructed with one or two glassed elevations (both perpendicular to the track) with brick work forming the elevation parallel to the track (like Clapham Junction). However, this option would not reduce the visual impact of the structure for properties directly adjacent to the structure.
- 6.93 Network Rail has advised they could consider constructing the lift shafts entirely of brick rather than utilising cladding at upper levels if preferred. This could be designed to include more of the details currently present within existing brickwork on the platforms. However, it would have no impact in terms of bulk and massing.
- 6.94 The conservation officer has noted that glass lift shafts are a common choice in other European capitals and sufficient justification has not been submitted to discount glass as a material.
- 6.95 It is considered that the materials of the lift shaft could potentially be reasonably modified to create a visually lighter weight structure.

The walkway and lift to platforms 4 & 5

- 6.96 The visual impact of the proposed walkway and the proposed materials are both considered acceptable.
- 6.97 The proposed lift shaft is located at the end of the walkway and is constructed completely of brick.
- 6.98 Officers consider that moving the lift shaft closer to the station building to minimise the visual impact would create an isolated area running alongside the ramp. This would create a blind spot in station security. Officers do not consider this would create an acceptable environment and could result in anti-social behaviour and crime.
- 6.99 As detailed above, Network Rail have advised that glass is not considered an acceptable material for external use and has significant maintenance liabilities.
- 6.100 It is considered that the materials of the lift shaft could potentially be reasonably modified to create a visually lighter weight structure.

Conclusion

- 6.101 Officers consider that Network Rail have provided sufficient justification as to why the existing ramp to platforms 4 & 5 can not be made Equality Act compliant and accept that the current proposal to provide a level walkway, stairs and a lift is the best option available. It is considered that there is no reasonable alternative. However, officers are not convinced that the materials and design solution cannot be reasonably modified to minimise the impact of the lift shaft.
- 6.102 Officers also consider that Network Rail have provided sufficient justification as to:
- why the existing footbridge can not be made Equality Act compliant;
 - why an new bridge can not be located elsewhere on the platform to retain the existing bridge; and
 - why a subway is not a viable alternative.
- 6.103 Officers consider that there is no reasonable alternative.
- 6.104 However, officers are not convinced that the materials and design solution cannot be reasonably modified to minimise the impact of the footbridge, stairwell and both lift shafts.
- 6.105 If Committee Members grant prior approval, a condition should be attached regarding further details of materials to be approved. Draft wording is provided at the end of this report.

7.0 Equalities Considerations

- 7.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”) imposes a duty that the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to:-
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics under the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 The duty is a “have regard duty” and the weight to attach to it is a matter for the decision maker bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality.

8.0 The Assessment

The proposals will provide compliant access for people with disability through the provision of lift access to platforms 4 & 5 and platform 1 with safeguarded provision for platforms 2 & 3. It is concluded that in this matter there is a positive impact on equality.

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 This application has been considered in the light of legislative framework set out above.

9.2 Overall, Officers consider that the proposed replacement footbridge, walkway and lift to platforms 4 & 5 are acceptable. Officers consider that there is no reasonable alternative in terms of location or alternative subway scheme. However officers are not convinced that the materials cannot be reasonably modified to minimise the impact of the footbridge, stairwell and both lift shafts.

9.3 Therefore, Officers do not believe that there are grounds on which to refuse to grant prior approval. However in relation to the external materials of the ramp, lift shafts and footbridge Officers recommend that the grant be subject to a condition that requires further details of materials to be approved.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

Grant prior approval subject to a condition relating to materials.

CONDITIONS

Prior to commencement of development a detailed schedule and specification of all external materials and external roof coverings to be used on the ramp, lift shafts and footbridge be submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Minutes

In light of further information received regarding the proposal, Councillor Bell moved the motion that a decision on this item be deferred until the next meeting of Planning Committee C pending further consultation with Network Rail on alternative proposals set forward by local residents.

Members voted as follows:

FOR: Councillors Bell (Chair), Coughlin, Hooks, Klier, Ogunbadewa, John Paschoud and Slater

RESOLVED: that in respect of town planning application DC/14/86845, that a decision be deferred for six weeks pending further consultation with Network Rail on the alternative proposals set forward by local residents.