

**Witness Statement in relation to Glebe Way Level Crossing**  
**PINS REF: 3226477**

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**Witness Statement of Mrs Sonja Amos**

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1. I Sonja Amos, am 70, retired, and formerly worked for Boots the Chemist as a sales assistant.
2. I live at [REDACTED] Whitstable CT5 4LY (220m from Glebe Way). As a child I holidayed with family annually at Whitstable's West Beach (quite close to the CW80 crossing) and have lived in Whitstable permanently since 1969.
3. I make this statement because I object strongly to the proposed and, I believe unwarranted, extinguishment of the Glebe Way Level Crossing.
4. I have used the crossing since childhood. I have suffered disabling orthopaedic problems since an unrelated NHS treatment in 1976, which are worsening steadily despite multiple hips, knees, and spinal procedures. Moving from our two-storey house at (nearby) Millstrood Road (steep hill) became necessary in 2011. My husband and I chose and moved to this bungalow property on a level site to satisfy my long-term needs for convenient step-free access to near-distance local shops, buses, and much-loved beach facilities via CW80. I/we use this beach route regularly, including as gentle and safe exercise within my limited mobility capabilities. Beach access by car is not a good or viable alternative as convenient parking provision is extremely limited, such vehicle use is against current transportation policies and is bad for the environment.

The subject Victorian railway construction divided the coastal area of Whitstable from the sparsely populated area to the south with just three crossing points in the central area. Namely, Glebe Way footpath (CW80) to the west, Canterbury Road rail bridge, and Church Street road bridge to the east. (Glebe Way/Portway formed the coastal end of the ancient 'salt way' trail across to the river Stour and English Channel for shipment of Seasalter salt).

The subsequent 170 years has seen huge residential development to the southeast of Glebe Way/Canterbury Road (where I live and beyond) which accounts for much of the current large pedestrian use of the CW80 crossing.

5. CW80 closure would effectively end my/our pedestrian access to the beach as detailed in our referenced (and attached) objection letters of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018. Noting my prevailing mobility issues, the principal grounds therein are that a) I/we do not find the crossing to be unsafe, and b) that neither of the proposed alternative routes are within my capabilities. In summary:

Regarding a): I believe that Network Rail's (NR) own analysis confirms the crossing meets their safety requirements for pedestrian users. However, I am appalled that NR has for years failed to substantially improve the safety aspects of this clearly neglected and much-used Victorian pedestrian crossing. Plus, I am aware that in 2018 NR contracted development of the 'Meerkat' safety system for such crossings, which I believe would be an obvious better strategy than permanent closure of this convenient and popular crossing.

Anecdotally, I find crossing the terribly busy Canterbury Road to access Glebe Way and CW80 to be the dominant risk by far. (I/we Stop, Look, and Listen there, too)! (The same would be true for the proposed alternative routes).

Regarding b): The Glebe Way/Canterbury Road junction is my/our access point to Glebe Way for CW80 or either of the proposed alternative routes.

The route via Canterbury Road, under the rail bridge, Oxford Street and Clifton Road to Portway/West Cliff is about 945 metres longer than via the crossing. This diversion is too long for me to manage, is along the very heavily traffic and air polluted Canterbury Road with poorly maintained pavements, includes the dangerously sharp, narrow, uneven (and blind, southerly) pavement under the railway bridge. This corner is often clipped by long vehicles. The Clifton Road section is very congested, with poor paving frequently obstructed by parked vehicles.

The route via Canterbury Road, Alexandra Road and CW54/53 etc is of similar length as via CW80. However, it includes the dilapidated stepped footbridge which I struggle to manage, even with my husband's assistance, and certainly not safely. The latter end of this route is poorly lit during darkness, suffers anti-social behaviour, graffiti, and detritus at the footbridge, and so presents unacceptable risks to me/us.

In my opinion the permanent closure of the crossing would compound the division of Whitstable town residents either side of the railway, inconvenience or (for me, and others like me) make passage between the two residential areas impossible, and/or subject such users to the alternative highway routes' safety and pollution risks.

6. I do not feel able to give oral evidence at the forthcoming inquiry.

#### Documents

7. Associated documents for reference:

- 181204 CW80 Closure Objection Letter\_R&S Amos (signatures removed).pdf
- 181205 CW80 Closure Objection Letter (2)\_R&S Amos (signatures removed).pdf

#### STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: Mrs Sonja Amos

Date: 15 August 2020