

Network Rail Town Planning Advice Note

Planning Applications adjacent to/near the Railway

This briefing note serves to remind LPAs of their statutory obligations to consult Network Rail (NR) on certain planning applications and to highlight key risks and considerations associated with development near operational railway infrastructure.

Statutory Role of Network Rail

Network Rail is a statutory consultee under the Development Management Procedure Order:

- **Article 16:** For any planning application within **10 metres** of relevant railway land.
 - **Schedule 4 (J):** For any development likely to result in a **material increase in the volume or a material change in the character of traffic** using a **level crossing**.
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Consultation Objectives

Consultation with NR ensures that:

- The **impacts of development on the railway**—both during construction and as a permanent arrangement—are properly assessed.
 - **Mitigation measures** are considered and incorporated into planning decisions.
 - **Railway safety, infrastructure integrity, and operational access** are protected.
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Developments near level crossings can increase safety risks in several ways, including:

- Obstructing views or causing vehicle queues
- Changing the type of crossing users (e.g. adding cyclists or horse riders)
- Increasing traffic during construction
- Introducing noise that affects hearing approaching trains
- Blocking visibility of warning signs
- Attracting minors or vulnerable users (e.g. elderly, disabled)
- Increasing footfall due to nearby amenities or public rights of way
- Creating cumulative impacts from multiple developments

Types of Development of Concern

Certain construction and development activities near railways must be assessed by NR due to potential safety and infrastructure impacts. These include:

- Drainage and earthworks
- Piling, demolition, and heavy machinery use
- Scaffolding, cranes, and plant equipment
- Electromagnetic interference and reflective surfaces
- Solar farms, illuminated signage, and wind turbines
- Noise, vibration, dust, and hazardous materials
- Proximity of new buildings to the railway with future maintenance in mind
- Risk of bridge strikes from increased HGV traffic
- Open storage near railway boundaries
- Balconies and boundary treatments

Consultation Process

LPAs are requested to notify NR of relevant planning applications by contacting:

TownPlanningNWC@networkrail.co.uk

For clarification on whether a proposal may impact the railway, LPAs are encouraged to submit details to the above email. NR will review and respond accordingly.

Access Restrictions and Asset Protection

Access to NR land to facilitate development is not permitted, unless this is specifically agreed under an Asset Protection Agreement.