PROOF OF EVIDENCE

**Chris Mitchell
On behalf of Croxley Green Parish Council**

Croxley Link Public Inquiry

1. **Introduction.** My name is Chris Mitchell. I am a resident of Croxley Green and have been for 33 years. I am a chartered civil Engineer, and have had experience with infrastructure projects. I have been a Parish Councillor for just over a year, and am the vice chairman of the Planning and Development committee. This committee has the delegated powers to act on behalf the Parish Council on this matter.

2. **Background.** As a general statement, the Parish Council do not have an overall objection to the proposed rail link. We believe that the new Croxley Rail Link would prove to be very beneficial to residents and businesses alike in providing for the first time since 1996, when British Rail closed the Croxley Branch Line, a direct rail link to central Watford and main line services at Watford Junction. It is believed also that the proposed Rail Link would result in a reduction of local traffic levels to and from Watford shopping centre. However there are concerns about the design of the viaduct which is something very obtrusive that we will have to live with for generations. Also there are severe effects on some organisations and some residents. We wish to ensure that they are being treated fairly and reasonably by the project team. The construction period will be very disruptive to the local traffic and potentially to pedestrians using the two bridges area.

3. **The design of the viaduct.** Given the potential size of the viaduct, at Two Bridges, that will be necessary to accommodate the Rail Link and its visual impact, the Council wish to ensure that its quality of design is both appropriate and sympathetic to the environment. The Parish Council have desire for the viaduct to be of an exemplary design and something to be proud of, something lasting and visually appealing upon entering Croxley. We have a concern that once the TWA was granted things may move very quickly and if the thinking was not done up front it would not be done at all. The Parish Council do not have firm opinions about the specific design, but want to ensure that there is a process by which we can be involved in the final look of the design of the viaduct. Accordingly, the Parish Council wish to have direct input into its design and be a named authority in the Croxley Rail Link Order, Rule 10(6) Request for Planning Permission, Schedule 2, Section 12 in regard to design approval in addition to the local planning authorities (Three Rivers District Council and Watford Borough Council). We also wish to see some form of public consultation over this very important issue.

4. **The effects on local organisations and residents.** The Parish Council is concerned that the impact of the viaduct on local residents and local community groups both during construction and on completion is minimised. Accordingly, the Parish Council would wish to see provision in the Croxley Rail Link Order, Rule 10(6) Request for Planning Permission, Schedule 2 appropriate documentary measures that residents and community groups are pro-actively consulted. In particular we want to know that the Sea Cadets and Morris Minors Nursery are being consulted with and that their concerns will be alleviated. We understand that Liaison Officers would be available to deal with enquires and a strong communications team will continue to be available. The Parish council want to ensure that all public and organisational concerns will be dealt with quickly and effectively during the design and construction phase.

5. **Construction impact.** The A412 east/west trunk road through Croxley Green is very busy, particularly at rush hour. This is added to by school traffic to/from Watford Boys Grammar School and Westfield Community Technology College, (just outside the Parish boundary), Rickmansworth School (which is within Croxley) and local primary Schools. The A412 is also used by motorists as an alternative route in the event of traffic congestion and/or incident on the M25. Very careful consideration will need to be given to realistic traffic control measures during construction to minimise traffic disruption. We also have a concern about potential traffic and road safety implications especially for school children and we suggest that the 6 week school summer holidays would be the least disruptive time for the main road works. It is essential that the contractor will need to provide safe routes for pedestrians. The Parish council wants to see a full consultation process about the pedestrian routes, along the road and the canal, and traffic measures during the period of construction. Accordingly, the Parish Council would wish appropriate wording included in the Croxley Rail Link Order, Rule 10(6) Request for Planning Permission, Schedule 2, Section 11 to this effect.

6. **Long term changes to Road Layout.** The Parish council wish to understand the long term changes, and want to see the final layouts for consultation before they are finally decided upon. We understand that there would be minor alterations at the entrance into Cinnamonds to ensure they could continue with their business and discussions are ongoing. Also the pedestrian crossing at Watford Road would need to be repositioned to accommodate the central viaduct support. Again we wish to be consulted on any long term changes that will be made. . Accordingly, the Parish Council would wish appropriate wording included in the Croxley Rail Link Order, Rule 10(6) Request for Planning Permission, Schedule 2, Section 11 to this effect.

7. **Summary.** The Parish Council support the principle of the project. However, the visual appearance of the viaduct at Two Bridges is very important to the local residents and the Parish Council. Also the effect on residents and organisations is potentially serious, as well as the possible disruption to the road network during construction. We therefore request that appropriate wording is included in the Croxley Rail Link Order, Rule 10(6) Request for Planning Permission, Schedule 2, Section 11 to cover the issues raised.

<u>END</u>