

# Proposal to re-open Cadishead Viaduct and the Cheshire Lines rail line



*The art of the possible!*

This document has been produced by Hamilton Davies Trust (HDT) to provide background and scope for the Cadishead Viaduct potential re-opening debate.

HDT has been heavily involved in the regeneration of Irlam and Cadishead since 2008, working with key local, regional and national stakeholders to make Irlam and Cadishead an even better place to live, work and enjoy.

As part of our regeneration agenda, the poor state and appearance of Cadishead Viaduct has been a topic of conversation for some time. Two years ago we started to investigate the possibility of improving its appearance and putting the bridge back into use.

This document summarises the history of the bridge and the compelling opportunities re-opening the viaduct would bring.

HDT has now adopted the project and is championing the reopening of the viaduct for multi modal use including a new section of the national cycleway, footpath and heritage railway amongst other options.

## Cadishead Viaduct

Built in 1893, Cadishead Viaduct is a magnificent structure which dominates the landscape across the Manchester Ship Canal.



Originally constructed to run the Cheshire Lines railway over the newly built canal, the viaduct helped to service the busy factories in the area, transporting raw materials and finished goods, as well as some passenger services.

Due to the decline in industry, the rail line closed to passengers in 1965 and eventually to freight in 1984 when coal exports ceased.

With the line no longer in use and the high cost of maintenance, the bridge was eventually closed and industrial containers positioned at either side to prevent access to the structure.

Over the years the viaduct has deteriorated and has turned into an eyesore in the area, overshadowing future plans for regeneration on the Partington and Cadishead canal banks.

## Affected Communities

The viaduct crosses the Manchester Ship Canal between the communities of Partington and Carrington to the east and Irlam and Cadishead to the west.

Partington has a population of circa 8,000, with Carrington being much smaller. However, under the Greater Manchester spatial framework there are plans to develop a new village in Carrington building around 9,000 houses.

With a community of circa 20,000 already, Irlam and Cadishead are also part of the Greater Manchester development plans with an additional 2,000 properties to be created on the edge of Chat Moss.

The planned increase in housing across these areas will undoubtedly bring about a greater need for connectivity improvements.

Whilst all of the towns have decent road links to the motorway network, Carrington and Partington are particularly isolated from a rail transport perspective with the nearest station at Flixton some 6km away.

## Opportunities

Re-opening the viaduct offers numerous transport opportunities, including improving the aesthetics of the area.

Communities on both sides of the ship canal would benefit from better connectivity and this would in turn help economic growth.

It would bring Partington's 8,000 residents to within 3km of Irlam Station, halving the distance they must currently travel to their nearest station at Flixton.

Partington, coupled with even a modest amount of house building in Carrington would increase Irlam Station's 3km catchment area population by 50% to around 30,000.

There would be obvious improvements to the aesthetics and environmental amenity for the proposed housing development by Peel Holdings along the canal bank in Partington and also planned developments in Cadishead.

Built as a four-track bridge, the viaduct has two spans and a considerable width of up to circa 20 metres and therefore has the potential capacity to become a multi modal transport route.

Just as excitingly, the multi modal project could potentially create a heritage railway, as well as developing cycling and pedestrian routes, amongst other options.

## Challenges

With any opportunity comes challenges.

The bridge which spans 137 feet has sat dormant for 33 years and within that time deterioration has set in.

The vast majority of the structure is built from high quality engineering brick, which remains in generally good condition. The central section however is made of 500 tons of steel, which is badly corroded.

The main structural piers are 192 feet high, 20 feet thick and 86 feet wide. The piers were built 17 feet below the bed of the canal. From this we can work out the approximate potential load the main piers can carry, which is substantial.

Network Rail have provided a survey, carried out in 2014, which shows some of the work that would be required to bring the viaduct up to specification. Whilst this task is significant it is by no means impossible to re-open this structure for duties lighter than it was originally designated for. The main focus for this project would be the repair the central steel structure.

The cost of would be significant and require a funding partnership consisting of a number of different key stakeholders.

## Multi Modal Possibilities

The social and economic value and sheer size of this crossing is such that a number of shared uses are being considered, which include the following:



### Cycling and Pedestrian Access

A footpath and cycleway could be constructed along the length of the viaduct, which as well as providing connectivity across the ship canal, could also bring with it health and wellbeing benefits.

HDT and Salford City Council have been working together to develop the Chat Moss Cycleway around Irlam and Cadishead, as well as a circular route around the expanse of Chat Moss. Chat Moss is a former bog and reclaimed agricultural area covering 10 square miles mostly within Salford.

This cycleway could add a much-needed north-south route across the Moss and connect to the Cheshire Lines Corridor across the viaduct, joining with the National Cycle Network at Routes 55 (at either Worsley or Tyldsley) and 62 (at Broadheath / Altrincham). This whole route would be 16km long and for most of its length off-road and through countryside.



## Heritage Railway – A platform for prosperity



One of the bold transport options is the possibility of a heritage railway. This could mean re-opening 9.5km (6 miles) of the former Cheshire Lines railway from Irlam to Timperley (near Altrincham), including a 1.5 km branch line from Irlam Station to Glazebrook East Junction. It would also require the rebuilding of train stations at Cadishead, Partington, and West Timperley.

This idea would build on the recent success of Irlam Station, which saw a 17% rise in passenger numbers on the main Liverpool to Manchester line in 2015, following the transformation of the Station House and surrounding grounds.

Heritage railways attract a significant following, help to drive tourism and re-open disused lines. A great

example is the highly successful East Lancashire Railway based in Bury, which operates on 20km (12.5 miles) of track and attracts circa 200,000 passengers a year.

Not surprisingly, heritage railways are an expanding sector nationally. They are often run by dedicated volunteers and supported by professional and experienced staff.

### Busways

Guided busways make efficient use of limited space. A two-lane guided busway can use as little as a 6.3m wide corridor although 8 metres is better. This is considerably less than standard carriageways.

The dedicated use makes journeys fast and reliable but excludes other use, except at pinch points where standard roadways are used. This principle could be applied across the viaduct.

### Metrolink

One of the options is also Metrolink.

The current Manchester Metrolink route follows the Manchester South and Altrincham Junction railway line from the city centre to Altrincham and passes Skelton Junction just east of Altrincham between Timperley and Navigation Road stations. Therefore, the possibility exists to extend the route from Altrincham / Timperley, servicing the Carrington development site, Partington, Irlam and Cadishead. It could also be possible to link the route into Irlam Station or along Liverpool Road, providing a total route distance of 9.5km.

Including this as one of the modes of transport across the canal also has the potential to link to Port Salford (via Irlam) and would complete a circular route taking in the west and south-west of Greater Manchester, opening-up the potential of the large Carrington site for development.

### Commercial Rail

Cadishead Viaduct was originally constructed for the Cheshire Lines railway. This corridor is still intact from Skelton Junction West Timperley near Altrincham to Glazebrook East Junction. The route beyond Skelton Junction to Stockport is still in use. Therefore, there is a possibility the crossing could still accommodate commercial rail if demand exists.

Network Rail have this is a reserved route but there are no firm plans to re-open it for commercial rail at this time.

## Partnership and Funding

Delivering this ambitious project would involve a number of organisations working together, including Salford and Trafford councils, Transport for Greater Manchester, Network Rail, Sustrans and HDT.

To date meetings have taken place between HDT, Salford City Council and Trafford Council. Both Councils are supporting the viaduct re-opening for multi modal use. Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM) have now accepted the project and have been facilitating meetings with Network Rail.

Funding requirements would be significant and it is assumed that this would need to come from a number of sources including both the public and private sectors.

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