1. I am the Route Enhancement Manager for Network Rail’s London North East Route. I am responsible for the promotion and management of enhancement projects on the route. This involves being accountable for the development of external investment into the rail industry.

2. My evidence explains the need for this project in the context of the Government’s policies and plans to increase rail services across the UK. The proof is set out in four sections:

3. Network rail owns and operates the heavy rail infrastructure of Great Britain and its purpose is to deliver a safe, reliable and efficient railway.

4. Network Rail is primarily responsible for the operation, maintenance, repair renewal and enhancement of track, stations, signalling and control equipment. Train services on the network are operated by train operating companies.

5. The activities of Network Rail are regulated by the Office of Rail Regulator by means of a network licence granted under the section 8 of the Railways Act 1993.

6. The enhancements of the railway network in the region, including the forward plans to extend and enhance the facilities at Leeds station and specifically the Southern Entrance at Leeds, flow directly from Network rails general requirements to ‘improve, enhance and develop’ the network as required by this licence condition.

7. Network Rail is a company limited by guarantee; it is a private company operating as a commercial business. We are directly accountable to the members and regulated by the Office of Rail Regulation. The High Level Output Specification from the Department for Transport specifies the enhancement outputs funded for 5 year Control Periods.

8. The Government’s strategy for the railways was illustrated in the March 2012 Command Paper ‘Reforming our Railways: Putting the Customer First’. The paper set out how the passenger and freight railway supports the Government’s overall transport vision.
9. In July 2012 the Government published the High Level Output Statement (HLOS) which forms part of the Railways Act 2005. The HLOS sets out what the Government wants to achieve in the next funding period from April 2014 to March 2019. The HLOS statement sets out four strategic priorities the government wants to achieve:

a) a central England “electric spine”,
b) increased capacity and accelerated journey times between key cities,
c) Improved commuter travel into major urban areas, helping to expand the effective labour market, and helping people to access a wider range of jobs. By boosting rail capacity and capability in west and south Yorkshire, enhancing North-Eastern connectivity and completing the Northern Hub, this investment is expected to unlock major economic benefits in the economies of the northern cities and conurbations; and
d) Improved railway links to major ports and airports.

10. Network Rail is also required to establish Rail Utilisation Strategies (RUS’s) and the relevant study for Leeds is the Yorkshire and Humber RUS. This strategy details some of the main reasons why the Leeds Southern Entrance is required; largely due to the growth of passenger numbers using Leeds Station. The growth that is forecast by 2019 is 40%.

11. Network Rail develops internal five year Business Plans to manage its business following the publication of the HLOS. These plans match the 5 year control periods that we are contracted to run the railway for, in the Control Period ending March 2014 (CP4) we identified £60m for the enhancement of Leeds Station and the Leeds Area.

12. The station master plan has been developed and this acknowledges the need for a Leeds Station Southern Entrance to support the growth of the station and the expansion of the city to the south. It also supports the capacity enhancements that are planned for Control Period 5 which starts in April 2014. The master plan highlights the need for improvements to Little Neville Street and Dark Neville Street and we are working with partners to improve these areas prior to the opening of the new entrance.

13. Leeds Station is situated on an extensive brick railway viaduct which straddles the River Aire. The station transects the entire city centre and impedes traffic and pedestrian circulation around the city. The existing main station entrances are to the north of the city and passengers that are wanting to enter or exit to the south have no option other than the indirect route though Dark Neville Street. With the new developments to the south of the railway, especially Holbeck Urban Village, Granary Wharf there is a need for a new southern entrance.
14. The detailed rationale for the siting of the southern access and the pedestrian flow analysis which underpins the decision process is set out in the document "The Leeds Railway Station (Southern Entrance) Order scheme Location and Design Rationale". (Ref LSSE.A18). Key finding summarised in the executive summary detail two broad options. The first being the Sovereign Place and the second being the preferred option in the River Aire location. Key reasons for this location were:

a) The western footbridge already accommodates 59% of the passengers at Leeds Station.
b) It provides the optimal location for the hourly safety and security checks using the existing station operations staff.
c) The preferred option is the least disruptive from a construction perspective, as most of the construction is remote from the existing network operation.

15. This section explains how Network rail manages and operates the current station through processes and procedures which will be adapted to accommodate the new Southern entrance.

16. Leeds Station is a Network Rail Managed Station it is managed under the policies outlined in the Safety Development Plan. The Safety Development Plan covers the key risks presented by known residual hazards both within and outside the station and, describes the actions that will be taken by the station management team to eliminate or reduce such risks to an acceptable level.

17. Rail services are increasing across the region and passenger demand is also increasing. Leeds station and the network are being enhanced to meet that demand and respond to the government’s policies to encourage growth. Leeds Station southern entrance is essential to accommodate the forecast additional passenger demand and flows. It has been demonstrated that the entrance is in the right location both for the operation of the station and to meet the needs of passengers moving across the city.