

Railway Embankment

I worked over 30 years for a railway infrastructure department, restoring, building new and maintaining 40 miles of railway.

The engineer who built the Huddersfield and Sheffield railway line in the late 1840's knew of the poor ground around Honley and towards Brockholes. They built wide embankments to spread the load on the poor ground, that's the reason for the long bridge for the height of the embankment in Gynn Lane. The wing walls of the bridge to the south have later been extended and material added to the toe of the embankment. The movement of the poor ground has left the bridge with a wonky arch. Network Rail monitor this to this day.

The middle band coal under the site and railway embankment will have been mined before the railway was built that will account for the poor ground. Almost all of the mining in Honley stopped after 1850 as better and cheaper deep mined coal was brought in by rail.

About 10 to 15 years ago Network Rail built a gabion wall to the west of the railway line to stabilise the embankment as it was slipping, 160 years after construction.

At the end of June 2025 Network Rail had a ballast drop between Brockholes and Honley on the valley side rail. After tamping it should restore this rail to the correct height so they must think the embankment is still moving.

Network Rail is very unlikely to allow houses to be constructed on land only 14 to 16 metres over worked coal (PH05 - PH07) so close to an unstable embankment and definitely not retaining walls built in the projected toe of the embankment on top of worked shallow coal.

Network Rail may need to widen the embankment to lay double track to modern standards. It is planned to run 2 trains each way per hour and as there is always a train on the single line between Huddersfield and the dynamic loop at Stocksmoor the line from Springwood junction will need doubling which may require the embankment widening especially if they think it is weak.

The railway boundary is at least a metre from the fence as railways always place boundary stones so that they can maintain the fences from their own property.