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Amersham Town Council

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your ref:

my ref:

date: 01 October 2015

Dear Sirs

**HS2- Petitioning Parliament
Amersham Town Council
23 September 2015**

I write further to our recent appearance before the Select Committee on 23 September 2015 and the conclusion of the phase of petitions dealing with the issues in relation to tunnelling in the Chilterns AONB.

Thank you for your instructions to represent the Parish Councils before the HS2 Select Committee and to advise in preparing the presentation for the Committee.

Summary

I am sure you will have followed the recent phase of petitions from various local councils, community action groups, businesses and individuals within the Chilterns AONB who will be adversely affected by the construction and operation of HS2.

The 'asks' along the route through the AONB have, broadly, been the same, listed in order of preference:

1. Fully Bored Tunnel, edge to edge through the Chilterns
2. Extension to the existing Tunnel and the Green Tunnels through the Chilterns
3. Additional noise and visual mitigation measures effective in the operational phase; and
4. Construction phase mitigation measures, such as traffic control and air quality

In summary the broad concerns and arguments throughout the Chilterns which the Committee have been addressed on are:

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Construction Impacts

- Noise Blight
- Visual Blight
- Property Blight
- Congestion, in particular along the A413
- Air quality
- Hydrogeological
- Tourism and Business
- Removal of Spoil by Road or Rail

Operational Impacts

- Noise Blight
- Visual Blight
- Ongoing Property Blight

At the end of the summer phase of petitions the Chair of the Committee announced, on 21 July 2015, that the Committee would recommend an extension of the tunnel at South Heath. This has been known as the C6 extension and will form part of Additional Provision 4 which will be announced by the Promoter in due course.

Draft AP4 proposals formed part of the evidence which the promoter released prior to the recent phase of petitioning. In particular were Exhibits U and V which dealt with various AP4 proposal issues associated with the C6 extension such as traffic flows, link and haul roads as well as revised vent shaft locations and cross-section views. These exhibits can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-speed-rail-in-the-chilterns-promoters-exhibits>

Under the AP4 proposals a large increase in HGV traffic is predicted for the A355 Gore Hill. There will also be an increase generally in traffic along the A413¹.

A413- Congestion and Traffic Numbers

One of the consistent key themes throughout the recent phase of petitions has been the potential congestion impacts HS2 construction traffic will have in the Chilterns, particularly along the A413. Dr Jim Conboy, of the Chesham Society, has been the driving force behind this challenge to the promoter's case. As I am sure you are aware Dr Conboy used his own petition to challenge the promoter's evidence relating to traffic flow and numbers through the roads in the Chilterns and his work has helped to inform other petitioners through the Chilterns.

Following Dr Conboy's petition the promoter admitted that the traffic data was incorrect and that it would be working with the Highway Authority to produce new traffic data for the A413 and surrounding routes. This work is being undertaken and we await the outcome of the revised traffic counts.

The promoter's response to the request for a fully bored tunnel has been that a fully bored tunnel is not justified. It is also the promoter's case that any extension to the length of the fully bored tunnel would increase traffic on the A413 and other roads

¹ p.24 Promoter's Chiltern Evidence, Exhibit V

during the construction phase as more spoil will be produced during the tunnelling phase, ergo, more HGVs will be required to remove the spoil.

Hydrogeology

On 15 July 2015 the Committee heard Wendover and Halton Parish Council's concerns over the lack of a full hydrogeological survey. This issue was briefly raised again in their presentation on 07 September 2015 and Mr David Johnston, the Hydrogeologist instructed by Wendover and Halton Parish Councils, further addressed the Committee on this issue on the afternoon of 08 September 2015. The Committee asked Mr Johnson and the promoter's Hydrogeologist to discuss the issues between the parties and to try and agree and narrow these issues. Mr Johnson was instructed by Wendover and Halton Parish Councils in relation to a particular concern they had on the impact of HS2 on the local springs in the Wendover area, the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal and the SSSI designated reservoir at Western Turville.

It was agreed by Mr Johnson that the ground water level assessment and the water quality assessment completed on behalf of the promoter were correct. The promoter accepted that the flow assessments had to be reviewed. The disagreement between the two hydrogeologists was over when this review should take place. Mr Johnson's position being this review was required straight away and the promoter's position being that this review can happen at a later date. The Committee are fully aware of the Kildare Project and have an understanding on the potential cost implication of getting this issue wrong from the outset.

HS2 agreed that Mr Johnson's assessment of flow was technically correct in terms of approach. It appeared that the only mitigation would be to pump the water from the bottom of the cutting.

There was disagreement on the number of pumping stations which may potentially be required in this area. The promoter appeared to only be suggesting that one pumping station would be required at a cost of circa £18m for the 60 year life of the scheme. Mr Johnson suggested the need for four pumping stations, to deal with each of the springs in the area, with the cost therefore rising to circa £80m. The need for four stations and the cost were disputed by the promoter. Again we await further outcome of this issue and the cost implications.

The Committee also heard Little Missenden Parish Council's concerns in relation to the lack of hydrogeological surveys and the impact that HS2 would have on the river Misbourne and Shardeloes Lake. The substantive argument on the hydrogeological issue in the Little Missenden area was put forward by Roger Connor, in his presentation on the evening of 21 September 2015. Mr Connor also raised the issue of a possible breach of the dam which has created Shardeloes Lake and the potential flood risk associated with the breach.

Mr Smart, on behalf of the promoter, responded stating that the hydrogeological work carried out by the promoter was sufficient for the purposes of the Bill and the Environment Agency had confirmed the same. One issue Mr Smart stated which was holding back further hydrogeological work was access to land. Mr Smart indicated that subject to access to land further bore hole work would be carried out.

Removal of Spoil by Rail and Railheads

The promoter told the Committee that the option of removing the spoil by rail had been considered and that these did not form a realistic proposition. The promoter has considered a railhead at Stoke Mandeville, this being the only viable location for a railhead on this section of the line. The case put forward by the promoter is that even if a railhead is established at Stoke Mandeville, with a high degree of land take, spoil will still need to be transported along the A413 to the railhead and so would not resolve petitioners' concerns about traffic on that road.

Air Quality

In relation to air quality it is still the promoter's case that air quality in the area will not be adversely affected. The promoter was keen point out that if there are air quality issues now this should be addressed with the County Council and was no way caused by the HS2 project. Equally the promoter relies on advances in technology to conclude that by the time the project commences in 2017 air quality will have improved.

Amersham Specific Issues

At the presentation on 23 September 2015 we raised a number of issues with the Committee of which can be categorised as Chiltern generic issues, albeit these were presented from an Amersham specific point of view. These issues are business and tourism, congestion and public services.

The Committee has heard from a number of petitioners in the Chilterns on these generic issues. The case has been put to the Committee on behalf of specific towns and villages, such as your petition, on behalf of specific businesses, and on behalf of the area generally by groups such as the Chesham Society whose remit extended throughout the AONB. The Committee are now fully aware of these issues in the Chilterns and released a short statement on 24 September 2015 confirming their understanding of the general issues in the Chilterns².

The specific issues relating to Amersham were in relation to air quality in the area, congestion on the A413 and A355 and the removal of spoil by rail. A large portion of our presentation focused on the HS2 project within Chilterns from a strategic planning point, with a focus on compliance with Department for Transport guidelines as well as National and European Legislation.

Congestion is an ongoing issue. As set out above HS2 are working with the Highway Authority to produce new traffic data and we await the outcome of this work.

I have dealt with the issues of spoil, railheads and air quality above.

Highways Specific Issues

As you may be aware Buckinghamshire County Council, in their capacity as Highway Authority, will presenting to the Committee in the October and November round of petitioning. The County Council will be presenting to the Committee on a strategic

² <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/high-speed-rail-london-west-midlands-bill-select-committee-commons/news-parliament-20151/chilterns-issues/>

level and will not so far as we are aware, be seeking assurances in connection with any issues advanced by your Council unless they are specifically mentioned in the County Council's petition. Therefore if you have any specific asks which relate to highway issues in your area these can be passed to the representatives of the County Council prior to their appearance before the Committee.

Before you make any requests to the Highway Authority please do consider the consequences of the request. For example there has been much talk throughout the Chilterns about putting measures in place which will physically restrict HS2's HGV movements. Some of the measures suggested include barriers which restrict HGV access. Whilst this will have the desired effect of preventing HS2 HGV accessing the road it will also prevent non-HS2 HGV traffic from accessing the road. This may have a consequence for local businesses who rely on HGVs, for example for delivery of materials or stock.

If you do have any requests for the Highway Authority please send these requests to me and I will ensure they are forwarded to the appropriate Officer in the County Council. For the avoidance of doubt neither I, Jenny Caprio or James Burton are representing the County Council on this matter.

Further Assistance

You will of course have an opportunity to lodge another petition in connection with any of the additional provisions and may very well wish to do so when AP4 is announced. If you require any assistance with further petitioning or assistance once AP4 is announced please let me know.

If you require any assistance with any assurances which the promoter may offer you, again, please do let me know and I would be happy to assist.

Any further work in respect of this matter will be outside of the fee which you have already paid, however I would be happy to discuss a suitable fee structure for any additional work we undertake on your behalf.

Thank you for your instructions in this matter and I look forward to working again with you in the future.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'GNoble', is positioned above the printed name.

Gary Noble
Trainee Solicitor

