



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

IN PARLIAMENT
HOUSE OF COMMONS
SESSION 2005-06

CROSSRAIL BILL

Against – on Merits – Praying to be heard by Counsel, &c.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

THE HUMBLE PETITION of the Honourable Robert Wilson MP

SHEWETH as follows:-

1 A Bill (hereinafter referred to as “the bill”) has been introduced and is now pending in your honourable House intituled “A bill to Make provision for a railway transport system running from Maidenhead, in the County of Berkshire, and Heathrow Airport, in the London Borough of Hillingdon, through central London to Shenfield, in the County of Essex, and Abbey Wood, in the London Borough of Greenwich; and for connected purposes.

2 The Bill is presented by Mr Secretary Darling, supported by The Prime Minister, Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Margaret Beckett, Mr Secretary Hain, Secretary Alan Johnson, Secretary Tessa Jowell, and Derek Twigg.

3 Clause 1 and schedule 1 of the Bill detail the proposed network route and clauses 21 to 44 discuss CrossRail’s operation as part of the rail network.

4 Your Petitioner is the Member of Parliament for the Reading East constituency, of 12A South View Park, Marsack Street, Caversham, Reading RG4 5AF.

5 Your Petitioner and his constituents are injuriously affected by the Bill, to which your Petitioners object for reasons amongst others, hereinafter appearing.

6 The CrossRail project as currently configured is likely to be a huge disappointment to businesses and the travelling public to the west of London. For the project to succeed it should be amended and upgraded. This involves CrossRail achieving the following: (1) improved linkage into a national and integrated transport and rail infrastructure, with an improved rail hub at Reading; (2) a fast or semi-fast direct link to Heathrow Airport from the west; (3) a change from a predominantly slow, stopping, Metro service, to a fast and semi-fast commuter service between Reading and London; (4) additional and improved access for freight.



7 These changes would necessitate additional investment to include such items as electrification of the line to Reading and a substantial upgrade of the signalling and platforms at Reading station.

8 It is understood that Crossrail is a metro scheme, not a regional commuter scheme, which exists to support the Mayor for London's transport strategy, but this should be the case west of London. Crossrail's scope should be much more ambitious — a regional service linked to major transport hubs, which would make economic and environmental sense. Crossrail will not serve new and growing population centres, so the projected additional revenues barely cover the projected additional operating costs. A potential nightmare scenario involves more traffic on regional roads outside London as freight is pushed off the tracks and passengers decide that they cannot and will not accept a slow stopping service.

9 It is puzzling that a railway that will serve so much of east London will not include a link to London City airport, which has poor transport links. Neither does Crossrail integrate with the south-east's airport network—both London City airport and Heathrow have poor transport services, and Crossrail will not serve Stansted at all.

10 The powers conferred by the Bill appear to require the rail regulator to favour Crossrail above all else. That could have an enormous impact on freight and commuter passenger services.

11 The project's slogan—"Crossing the capital, connecting the UK"—will certainly not be believed in Reading East. It is proposed that Crossrail should go through the relatively small communities of Iver, Burnham and Taplow, terminating at Maidenhead, while ignoring Reading, a town with a population of more than 130,000 that lies only a short distance to the west. If the project really were to connect the UK, surely the fact that Reading railway station is already served by no fewer than four different franchises—First Great Western, First Great Western Link, South West Trains and Virgin Trains—would make it an attractive candidate for inclusion. Outside London, only Birmingham New Street is a busier station than Reading.

12 The Secretary of State said that the extension of the scheme to Reading comes with a price tag. For approximately £300 million, the line between Reading and Maidenhead could be electrified—a small additional expense on a project estimated at £10 billion, but one that would bring many more passengers, and therefore revenue, with it. However, that would not be the end of the story for Reading. In addition to the electrification of the line between Reading and Maidenhead, the station would require resignalling, rebuilding to cope with the extra capacity required, and remodelling of the east and west junctions. The cost would be significant. However, the money should be provided by Network Rail, whose duty should be to upgrade Reading's platforms, signalling and junctions because it is already a bottleneck. Severe constraints on the First Great Western main line are placing serious capacity constraints on current and future rail operations on the regional and national rail network.

13 With the UK's version of silicon valley based around Reading, local businesses strongly require a direct link to Heathrow airport in addition to an existing direct link to Gatwick. The lack of such a link is a barrier to the future development of Reading and the wider economy. Those wishing to travel to Heathrow via the existing rail service are forced to endure a wasted trip



travelling from Reading to Paddington and then westward again on the Heathrow Express. Given such a significant and diverse business presence in my constituency and the surrounding area, the failure to provide such a link is, frankly, unacceptable.

14 It is extremely important to the regional economy that an upgrade at Reading is included in an improved version of Crossrail, whether now or in future. The route as far as Reading, as a minimum requirement, should be subject to safeguarding. This would give some comfort that an improved scheme may be designed to improve Reading at some point in the future.

15 The CrossRail Bill as presented represents a missed opportunity to bring south-east rail transport into the 21st century and provide a significantly improved service. It fails business, commuters and the environment.

16 For the foregoing and connected reasons your Petitioners respectfully submit that, unless the Bill is amended as proposed above, it should not be allowed to pass into law.

YOUR PETITIONER therefore humbly prays your Honourable House that the Bill may not be allowed to pass into law as it now stands and that they may be heard by his Counsel, Agents and witnesses in support of the allegations of this Petition against so much of the Bill as affects the property, rights and interests of your Petitioners and in support of such other clauses and provisions as may be necessary or expedient for his protection, or that such other relief may be given to your Petitioner in the premises as your Honourable House shall deem meet.