

IN PARLIAMENT
HOUSE OF COMMONS
SESSION 2005-06

CROSSRAIL BILL

PETITION

Against the Bill – 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

MARTIN SALTER MP AND THE READING EVENING POST

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 promoted by Mr Secretary Darling in his capacity as Secretary of State for Transport (the "Promoter") 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.

Relevant Clauses of the Bill

- 3 Clause 1 of the Bill (construction and maintenance of scheduled works) authorises the nominated undertaker (a term defined in the Bill) to construct and maintain the works necessary for Crossrail as described in Schedule 1 to the Bill and shown on the plans and sections deposited with the Bill. Under those provisions the western terminus of Crossrail would be at Maidenhead in the County of Berkshire.

Your Petitioners

- 4 Your Petitioners are the Member of Parliament for Reading West and the Reading Evening Post newspaper, whose constituents and readers include the owners, occupiers and managers of commercial property, the owners of businesses operating in Reading in the County of Berkshire and residents of the area, many of whom are daily commuters between Reading and London. Employment levels and the economic health of the area depend in large part upon the decision of international businesses to locate their UK or European headquarters in and around Reading and of local or regional businesses to

start up and establish themselves there. That decision often reflects the regional, national and international transport links of the town.

- 5 Your Petitioners strongly support the principle of improved rail links and services in view of the strategic and economic benefits to be gained and the opportunities potentially afforded for regeneration and improvement. That support is dependent, however, upon satisfactory resolution of the issues set out hereinafter.
- 6 Your Petitioners have obtained expressions of support for this petition by means of a campaign in the pages of the Reading Evening Post. Readers of the Reading Evening Post were asked to sign and return a printed coupon to demonstrate support for the concerns expressed by Your Petitioners in the following terms:

"We the undersigned are concerned that the Crossrail Bill currently before Parliament includes provision for the western terminus to be located at Maidenhead rather than Reading and that no provision is made for a western rail link to Heathrow Airport. It is our view that these two measures would yield significant benefits to the Reading area and enable Crossrail to properly realise its objectives to "Connect the UK". We also urge Parliament to ensure that the final Crossrail scheme does not impede the current high speed rail services into Paddington from Reading and the West".

- 7 Support for a petition to voice those concerns was expressed by leading businesses and employers in Reading including Microsoft Limited, Foster Wheeler Energy Limited, Yell Limited and MCI. Expressions of support have also been received from Reading Borough Council, Reading Chamber of Commerce, Thames Valley (Central) Transport 2000 and from more than 230 small local businesses, residents and commuters.
- 8 Your Petitioners consider that if passed into law as they now stand clauses and provisions of the Bill will prejudicially affect your Petitioners and those who have joined the Reading Evening Post's campaign, their businesses, rights, interests and property.

Your Petitioners' concerns

- 9 Your Petitioners are concerned that the Bill makes no provision for the funding of Crossrail and observe that no firm target date has been set for the exercise of the powers sought by the Promoter, or for the commencement of the works to be authorised by the Bill. Your Petitioners are also concerned that in the absence of funding, and following the successful bid for the Olympic Games in 2012, the construction and completion of Crossrail may be postponed for an indefinite period.
- 10 Your Petitioners are concerned that if the Bill is passed into law as it stands then it would preclude or strongly militate against the development and active appraisal of alternative proposals for improved rail links. Your Petitioners consider that a western terminus at Reading rather than at Maidenhead, together with a direct link between Reading and Heathrow, would yield far greater strategic and economic benefits than the scheme proposed by the Promoter and to be enabled by the Bill. Your Petitioners' concern is heightened by the possibility that an indefinite postponement following enactment of the Bill might, for that indefinite period, sterilise debate on the vital question of improved rail links and services for the whole region.
- 11 Your Petitioners are concerned that the scheme proposed by the Promoter and to be enabled by the Bill would adversely affect existing high-speed rail services between Reading and London Paddington. High-speed rail services are frequently obliged to use the line designated for use by Crossrail. Crossrail would provide a frequently stopping service between Maidenhead and Paddington and so in the form currently proposed would have the potential significantly to impede high-speed commuter services between Reading and London Paddington.

- 12 Your Petitioners humbly submit that the scheme proposed by the Promoter and to be enabled by the Bill should be revised to provide for a western terminus at Reading in the County of Berkshire together with improved infrastructure so that services between Reading and London Paddington, and from there across London, are improved rather than impeded.
- 13 Your Petitioners also humbly request that the works to be authorised by the Bill should be augmented by the provision of a western rail link between Reading and Heathrow airport. Your Petitioners' view is that the provision of such a link would yield significant benefits to businesses in Reading and would generate significant opportunities for regeneration and sustainable development within the County of Berkshire and other parts of the region.
- 14 Should the amendments requested by your Petitioners be refused then your Petitioners respectfully seek a specific undertaking from the Promoter that feasibility studies and the safeguarding of a route leading to a possible future western terminus at Reading and for a direct rail link between Reading and Heathrow will proceed and that all necessary funding and support for those activities will be made available.

Conclusion

- 15 Your Petitioners submit that, in the respects mentioned and in other respects, the Bill fails adequately to safeguard and protect the interests of your Petitioners and those who rely upon your Petitioners for the provision of essential utilities and services.

YOUR PETITIONERS therefore humbly pray 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 their 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 their protection, or that such other relief may be given to your Petitioner in the premises as your Honourable House shall deem meet.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS WILL EVER PRAY, &C.

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