

CROSSRAIL

PETITION

Against the amendment of Provisions (May 2006) to the Crossrail Bill-
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
WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS
RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

SHEWETH as follows:-

1. Amendments to the Bill's provisions (hereinafter called "Amendment of Provisions") have been introduced into and are now pending in your honourable House entitled "Amendment of Provisions (May 2006)".
2. Part of the amendment to provisions is entitled "Realignment of siding and Footbridge at Westbourne Park" and includes amendments to Schedules 1,3 and 6 of the Bill. Table 1.1 of the accompanying environmental statement refers to the "Royal Oak Portal- Westbourne Park Sidings" and describes the "revised scheme" as follows.

3. “The revised scheme comprises an extension of the sidings to the east so that they are 350m long to enable a reinstated [concrete batching] plant to continue to operate at its current capacity. Additional land is required to do this which was outside the limits of the Bill, the railway retaining wall will be moved to the north, and Westbourne Park Passage footbridge will be extended to span the new sidings”.

4. Your petitioners are Westbourne Park Villas Residents’ Association, which represents the owners and tenants of properties in a conservation area whose northern boundary runs alongside the railway lines between Paddington New Yard and Royal Oak, in the City of Westminster.

Your petitioners object to this Amendment of Provisions in the following respects:

5. Creation of 350 m long sidings & Reinstatement of concrete batching plant

Your petitioners regard the permanent reinstatement of the ready-mix concrete batching plant as an unacceptable price for local residents to pay, in return for its temporary closure to enable Crossrail construction to go ahead. As freight is not part of the Promoter’s business case, and concrete required for the project’s construction will presumably be supplied by other batching plants during that closure period, your

petitioners believe the only beneficiaries of this proposal will be the giant corporation, Anglo-American of which Tarmac is a subsidiary, that owns the existing plant.

6. The company acknowledges that the plant is old, dilapidated and overdue for either closure or rebuilding at substantial cost in order to meet modern regulations and standards in terms of noise, pollution and safety. Your petitioners question how it can be justified to spend a large sum of public funds lengthening the sidings for the benefit of a commercial company when the costs to the local community are so clear. Your petitioners strongly support Westminster City Council's contention that this above-site development, if not rejected outright by your committee as your petitioners hope, should be controlled through the normal planning process, with its mechanisms for local accountability.

7. Your petitioners reiterate their objections to reinstatement of the plant as stated in their original petition, on noise grounds. Deliveries of aggregates to the site by heavy freight wagons are already intolerably noisy, they take place at night or in the small hours as they have to be fitted in before and after the passenger train services, and they literally shake residents awake. People living in the streets immediately to the south, and also in Maida Vale to the north of the plant, have also reported having their sleep disturbed. A proposal to lengthen the siding so that it extends substantially further eastwards alongside Westbourne Park Villas can only disturb even more residents.

8. Your petitioners share the concerns of Westminster City Council and PRACT about the permanent loss of some 790 sqm of land for the new Westminster Academy. The site for the school is already constrained in terms of playing fields, some of which would have to be sacrificed. In local consultation exercises at the school's planning stage residents near the site gave high priority to the need for safe space for the growing population of school-age children to play and exercise. This is in short supply at that location.

9. Your petitioners would also like to be sure that the anti-terrorism branch of the Metropolitan Police are consulted, as they are known to have worries about the potential for a suicide bomb attack on a major public transport facility by a suicide bomber using a cement mixer packed with explosives. This technique was used to spectacular and grievous effect in Baghdad to breach the defences of the Green Zone, and the police have since expressed their concern in security presentations at the concrete batching plant near King's Cross station. Anti-terrorist branch officers recently told a meeting of neighbourhood watch and local business representatives within Westminster that they believe that techniques proved successful in Iraq may later be used in London. Your petitioners fear that a concrete batching plant directly under the A40 Westway flyover, next to a school and immediately adjacent to one of the heaviest concentrations of railway lines in Europe could be a target, and that it is impossible to give the drivers of its cement mixers an adequate level of scrutiny in terms of security risk. Your petitioners respectfully point out that the promoters are a department of the Government.

10. Partial rebuilding of the footbridge, Westbourne Park Passage.

Your petitioners believe the proposals to be inadequate. The existing bridge is in poor condition and known locally as a muggers' paradise. It is nevertheless heavily used by local people, especially by children and parents for school journeys. Many have to negotiate the steps with pushchairs. They deserve a bridge that has proper disabled access, better lighting and maximum translucency at the sides consistent with railway regulations, and the need to avoid re-radiating noise, in order to improve security. Your petitioners believe the promoters should support a rebuild that embraces these aims and makes use of the normal planning process to meet local needs. It may be helpful to seek design input from those responsible for the attractive and innovative pedestrian bridges installed within the Paddington Basin redevelopment .

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE HUMBLY PRAY

Your Honourable House that the Bill may not pass into law as it now stands and that they be heard by themselves, 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 amendments as may be necessary or expedient for their protection and benefit, or that such other relief may be given to your petitioners as your Honourable House shall deem meet.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS will ever pray,
&c.

MARGOT BRIGHT
Agent for Westbourne Park Villas Residents' Association