

## HIGH SPEED RAIL (LONDON – WEST MIDLANDS) 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 Finmere Parish Council

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 between Euston in London and a junction with the West Coast Main Line at Handsacre in Staffordshire, with a spur from Old Oak Common in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to a junction with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link at York Way in the London Borough of Islington and a spur from Water Orton in Warwickshire to Curzon Street in Birmingham; and for connected purposes.”
- 2 The Bill is presented by Mr Secretary McLoughlin, supported by The Prime Minister, The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Theresa May, Secretary Vince Cable, Secretary Iain Duncan Smith, Secretary Eric Pickles, Secretary Owen Paterson, Secretary Edward Davey, and Mr Robert Goodwill.
- 3 Your Petitioners are concerned with the detailed implementation of the Bill in Clause 1-36 setting out the Bill’s objectives in relation to the construction and operation of the railway mentioned above. And clauses 37-65 of the Bill dealing with a regulatory regime for the railway and a number of miscellaneous and general provisions. .
- 4 Your Petitioners are Finmere Parish Council, representing the inhabitants and Parish of Finmere. The Bill will result in a high speed railway line, cutting diagonally across the South Western edge of the village. A number of properties lie within 150M of the proposed line. The bulk of the village is at 700M distant. The village centre is approximately 1100M from the proposed line. The surrounding natural landform is flat and described by Planning officers as a plateau. To the south of the village the A421 runs East – West, crossing the proposed line within the parish boundary, at Warren Farm. Agriculture is the business in the area, which, apart from the A421, has a road infrastructure of poor quality. At night the parish is both quiet and dark, with the exception of 8 street lights near the village centre. The primary access to the village is via the A421, which will be affected by the construction phase. The agricultural businesses in the parish will also be affected by the rerouting of traffic consequent upon the construction activity at Turweston, Westbury, Featherbed Lane and Newton Purcell. This rerouting will also have an impact upon the day-to-day activities of the villagers as they go about their normal business. The proposed work on the A421, at the point it crosses the line, will impact the access to both Warren Farm and Widmore farm. Once operational, there will be increased noise from both the elevated A421 and the passing trains. There will be a loss of all barn owl breeding populations within 1.5Km of each side of the proposed line. Your petitioners have raised these issues in their response to

the Environmental statement and passed the same to HS2 Ltd in order to initiate discussion over further mitigation. To date, no response has been received.

- 5 Your petitioners are mindful of the statement by the Rt. Hon Patrick McLoughlin in the foreword to the Draft Environmental Statement – “.. we must ensure that everything possible is done to mitigate the impacts of HS2 on people and the landscape”.
- 6 Your petitioners believe that the mitigation proposed in the Environmental Statement can be improved to reduce the impact of HS2 on the people and landscape of Finmere Parish.

## 7 Local Issues

### i. The Consultation Process.

Your Petitioners have resorted to this submission after failing to obtain the additional mitigation necessary for the village.

### ii. Road closure during construction

Your petitioners are concerned about the disruption HS2 construction will cause to Featherbed Lane, which is proposed to be used under the Bill as a route for construction traffic, and will be closed to through traffic for up to 12 months for bridge construction.. The proposed diversion will result in increased traffic on the A421 and A422 at a time when they are the subject of additional HS2-related activity, and are themselves major construction routes, as well as an unacceptable burden of extra traffic through the village of Finmere, whose roads are totally unsuitable for HGVs or large agricultural vehicles.

The condition of the rural roads around Finmere is consistent with a small village in a rural environment. They are subject to wear and tear and require regular repair. The consequence of a significant rise in traffic will serve to increase the rate of attrition to an even greater level.

Your petitioners request that the nominated undertaker provides a temporary alternative solution that will allow Featherbed Lane (Fulwell Lane) to remain open to through traffic during the entire construction.

If that is not possible, your petitioners request that, at the end of the construction phase, all of the roads used in the diversion are resurfaced. The standard of resurfacing (not repair) should be appropriate to the subsequent anticipated usage.

### iii. Construction Traffic.

Your petitioners are concerned about the impact of construction vehicles on the village and surrounding roads. The Rural road network is unsuitable for the heavy increase in construction traffic predicted in the Environmental Statement. In particular the single track Featherbed Lane (Fulwell Lane) is unable to accommodate a large number of HGV movements, and both the A421 and A422 will be restricted by HS2

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engineering work as the line crosses them. Your petitioners are also concerned about the increased traffic movements along the A421 and A422, the latter stated as upwards of 2000 a day. HS2-related HGV movements can be restricted to specific roads through a Routing Agreement. This will concentrate additional traffic along specific, major, roads. The result will be that general road traffic (unconstrained by such Routing Agreements) will have the opportunity to divert through the rural road network thereby increasing accident rates, congestion and yet further attrition to the road surface already described above.

Your petitioners request that a route to carry most of the heavy construction traffic is provided along the line of the proposed railway.

Your petitioners further request that the nominated undertakers liaise with the appropriate authority to temporarily restrict access from the A421 and A422 to the Rural roads as "village access only".

If the above are not possible, your petitioners request that all affected rural roads are resurfaced at the end of the construction phase in the manner described in (ii) above.

#### iv. Light pollution

Your petitioners are concerned about the impact of the overnight lighting at each of the four satellite compounds in the vicinity of Finmere. As mentioned in (4), the parish is both quiet and dark (with the exception of 8 street lights near the village centre). All of the proposed satellite compounds are at such a distance from the Village that the impact of these lights is indiscernible. The presence of four such compounds, each continuously lit for a period of time measured in years, will be severely detrimental to the surrounding area.

Your petitioners request that this lighting scheme be dropped. Your petitioners are presuming that the overnight lighting of an unoccupied compound is for the provision of security. If that is the case, manned security patrols could be used as a replacement.

If this is not possible, your petitioners request that consideration be given to providing the least intrusive system, with the emphasis on minimising visible radiation to the surrounding countryside.

#### v. Barn Owl population

Your petitioners are concerned about the loss of all breeding populations of barn owls within 1.5Km either side of the proposed line. There is also concern about the level of proposed mitigation defined in the Environmental Statement. It "*explores*" the opportunities for the provision of nesting boxes with local landowners who live at a safe distance. Should the landowners be reluctant to agree, there will be no mitigation.

Your petitioners request that, if there is insufficient acceptance by local landowners, the nominated undertaker makes an appropriate financial contribution to a suitable off-route facility so that the overall Barn owl population is not adversely affected.

vi. The profile of the proposed line

Your petitioners are concerned about the profile of the line and its consequences. The drawings show that the line will be set 5.1M below ground level, and that the surface of the road on the A421 overbridge will be 9.4M above the track. This will necessitate an artificial crest on the A421, raised by 4.3M, at the overbridge. The access to Warren Farm has to be revised as a consequence of the route. The new access and the access to Widmore Farm (on the south side of the A421, opposite Warren Farm) will be obscured to traffic as a result of the artificial crest. The new access to Warren Farm restores it to the position it occupied in 1988 when planning permission was granted for barn conversions. One of the conditions of that 1988 permission was that the access be moved to its current position and that the original access be "*... permanently stopped up and not used for any vehicular traffic whatsoever... in the interests of highway safety*". By reinstating the access to its original position, the proposed works restore and increase the risk to highway safety that these conditions sought to avoid. They also introduce additional risks in respect of the access to Widmore Farm.

The elevation of the A421 will lead to increased tyre and engine noise as vehicles (especially HGV) navigate the incline towards the artificial crest. This crest will be above the hedge-line of the intervening fields. As a result, very little sound adsorption will be derived from the hedges. Your petitioners, downwind from the crest, are acutely aware of vehicle noise from the landfill site across the road, even at its current low activity levels. There will be a significant increase in the vehicle noise experienced by your petitioners.

HS2 Ltd has confirmed that (1) the top of the catenary is 8.0M from the track; (2) the noise barrier at Warren Farm will be 4M above rail height. Given that the cutting is 5.1M in depth, the pantographs on the trains and associated equipment will be above ground level. The impact of the 4M noise barriers will be limited, since at their highest, they will be 1.1M below ground level. Your petitioners, downwind of the proposed route, will experience additional noise from this equipment as trains pass. This will be over and above the extra noise generated as a consequence of the artificial crest.

Your petitioners submit that the issues raise in the previous three paragraphs can be resolved by the lowering of the line by approximately 4M. Given the gradients that will be involved, this will have implications at both Newton Purcell and Mixbury, both of which would support the proposition.

If this is not possible, your petitioners request (1) that the A421, for a distance of 1000M each side of the artificial crest, be surfaced with a material that absorbs sound to the greatest amount possible, and (2) that the noise barriers along the route through the parish be extended above the height of the catenaries.

Your petitioners can offer no alternative to the issue of highway safety in respect of the access to Warren Farm and Widmore Farm, for which your petitioners believe a solution must be found.

8 Route-wide issue

Your petitioners understand that the cost of HS2 will be funded by borrowings over twenty years. The interest on this loan is not included in the current cost estimates for HS2 and, if so, may have an influence on the Business Case.

Your petitioners request that these interest costs are included in the HS2 proposals and that the Business Case is considered in the light of these additional costs.

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.

Signed:

Chairman, Finmere Parish Council

Dated: 16 May 2014