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IN PARLIAMENT

HOUSE OF COMMONS

SESSION 2013–14

HIGH SPEED RAIL (LONDON - WEST MIDLANDS) BILL

PETITION

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 James Savage

SHEWETH as follows:-

1. A Bill (hereinafter referred to as "the Bill") has been introduced and is now pending in your honourable House entitled "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 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. Clauses 1 to 36 set out the Bill's objectives in relation to the construction and operation of the railway mentioned in paragraph 1 above. They include provision for the construction of works, highways and road traffic matters, the compulsory acquisition of land and other provisions relating to the use of land, planning

permission, heritage issues, trees and noise. They include clauses which would disapply and modify various enactments relating to special categories of land including burial grounds, consecrated land, commons and open spaces, and other matters, including overhead lines, water, building regulations and party walls, street works and the use of lorries.

4. Clauses 37 to 42 of the Bill deal with the regulatory regime for the railway.
5. Clauses 43 to 65 of the Bill set out a number of miscellaneous and general provisions, including provision for the appointment of a nominated undertaker ("the Nominated Undertaker") to exercise the powers under the Bill, transfer schemes, provisions relating to statutory undertakers and the Crown, provision about the compulsory acquisition of land for regeneration, reinstatement works and provision about further high speed railway works. Provision is also made about the application of Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations.
6. The works proposed to be authorised by the Bill are specified in clauses 1 and 2 of and Schedules 1 and 2 to the Bill. They consist of scheduled works, which are described in Schedule 1 to the Bill and other works, which are described in clause 2 of and Schedules 2 and 3 to the Bill.
7. Your Petitioner is an individual who although not residing directly adjacent to the route of the railway would nevertheless be adversely affected both during its construction and following its completion once it became an operational railway. The environmental concerns and recreational interests of your petitioner coincide geographically in relation to the areas of countryside between the Vale of Aylesbury, south Northamptonshire and the Warwickshire border with the West Midlands, much of which would be affected in some way by the route of the proposed line and the lifestyle of your petitioner as detailed below.
8. Your Petitioner and their interests are injuriously affected by the Bill, to which your Petitioner object for reasons amongst others, hereinafter appearing.
9. Your petitioner's leisure interests relate principally to the enjoyment of the countryside through walking and cycling and in particular through the tracts of country across the Vale of Aylesbury, north Oxfordshire, south Northamptonshire and Warwickshire. Taken together these areas could in fact be considered to provide the all important barrier to development between our first and second cities and the growing urbanisation of Milton Keynes which if not controlled in the future could swell to such proportions as to threaten the very integrity of our conurbations.

These areas are rich in agriculture and villages and small towns that are 'off the beaten track' not being on the main tourist trails and make for a delightful and tranquil escape from the hustle and bustle of suburban and city life. The areas provide a rich seam of interest for your petitioner and in addition to the rural nature of the areas provide endless historical interest with elements of medieval archaeology, sites of civil war battles, the unique nature of the 'green lanes' or droving roads especially in Northamptonshire with the Banbury Lane and Welsh Roads meeting in the centre of Culworth, only a very short distance from the course of the proposed railway, and the more recent industrial archaeology of the abandoned Great Central Railway and all overlaid geographically and geologically by the central watershed of England close by which gives rise to four of our significant Midlands rivers, the Warwickshire Avon, Leam, Cherwell and Nene. All of these factors have provided your petitioner with enormous interest over the years and continue to do so accessing these areas regularly and largely through Bicester, Banbury and Leamington Spa by use of the convenience of the Chiltern Main Line train service from London's Marylebone station.

Your petitioner regards the development of a new transport corridor, and especially for a railway whose speeds and thus gauge will be such that it will not resemble our normal notion of a railway as to be so out of scale with the areas outlined above that it would present a violation of the countryside through which it passes. The construction of both the railway and the inevitable collateral development that it would attract would create years of upheaval with devastating disruption to the life of the area and to its visitors, including the regular visits by your petitioner, and both temporarily and for the longer term change its very nature with access to the many minor roads, footpaths and bridleways severed and hazardous conditions created for their users who like your petitioner gain pleasure and recreation from accessing such tranquil and beautiful surroundings in these unique landscapes. The recreation and enjoyment of your petitioner's leisure time and lifetime cultural interests would become a lifestyle that was lost forever.

10. It is your petitioner's view that the route selected for a new transport corridor, and particularly for a high speed railway, through these areas is inappropriate and that an existing corridor should be utilised for the purpose.

Your petitioner believes that in the enormity of scale that is involved in such a project such a re-routing so as to avoid the sensitive areas outlined would be a relatively minor alteration and that given the recently publicised reduction in speeds for the new line entirely practicable to achieve within the overall objectives. For example there must surely be accommodation to be had alongside the existing corridors of the West Coast Main Line and or the M1.

The alternative solution, though less favourable to your petitioner as a frequent visitor to the areas under consideration, would be to extend the tunnelled sections of line through these affected areas; and preferably not of the cut and cover type of construction which despite the claims that the planting of new trees will help to offset the environmental loss cannot ever be a substitute for the construction of bored tunnels which leave the surface areas and visual landscapes intact. The issue of tunnelling is regarded by your petitioner as very relevant for such a development, given the extent of the mileage involved, the 'land take' and the fact that the project will by its very nature encourage a greater commuting community for the London area and with comparable journey times to existing suburban commutes it would surely not be at all inconsistent for those Midlands commuters to bear longer sections underground as is the case with the existing HS1 railway through the heart of Kent.

11. For the foregoing and connected reasons your Petitioner respectfully submit that, unless the Bill is amended as proposed above, so far affecting your Petitioner, should not be allowed to pass into law.
12. There are other clauses and provisions of the Bill which, if passed into law as they now stand will prejudicially affect your Petitioner and their interests and for which no adequate provision is made to protect your Petitioner.

YOUR PETITIONER 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 Petitioner 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 Petitioner will ever pray, &c.

Signed



