

IN PARLIAMENT
HOUSE OF COMMONS
SESSION 2013–14

HIGH SPEED RAIL (LONDON – WEST MIDLANDS) BILL

Against – on Merits – [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 FRIENDS OF THE EARTH (BIRMINGHAM) LTD.

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 Water Orton in Warwickshire to Curzon Street in Birmingham; and for connected purposes”
- 2 The Bill is presented by Mr Secretary McLoughlin.
- 3 Friends of the Earth (Birmingham) Ltd, object to the proposed provisions to minimise pollution and congestion from the road closures proposed in the Digbeth area of Birmingham. These closures, and the associated construction work, will have a negative impact upon our viability as both a campaigning organisation and as the operator of rented office space. We urge consideration for traffic, access, and the correct use of Environmental Impact Assessments. We also urge consideration for provision for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 4 Your Petitioners are Friends of the Earth (Birmingham) Ltd, an organisation that exists to advance the principles of sustainability and positive environmental change. We own and operate out of The Warehouse in the centre of Digbeth, a site of major proposed construction. In addition we rent office space in The Warehouse to local shops, activist groups, a vegetarian café, and local businesses.
- 5 Your Petitioners and their rights, interests and property are injuriously affected by the Bill, to which your Petitioners object for reasons amongst others, hereinafter appearing.
- 6 **Construction Phase**

The closure of Park St during the construction phase is of significant concern to The Warehouse. Passing and direct trade is picked up from those coming into and out of the city via Shaw’s Passage and Park St. Blocking off Park St will divert pedestrians down Digbeth High Street. They will not pass, discover

or use our services if this happens.

We are also seen as a destination for the city's environmental and vegetarian community. Blocking off Park St will add considerably to peoples journey time and put many people off.

The construction phase is 10 years, and if passing and direct trade is lost during this time then our tenants businesses will fail.

Pedestrian access through Park St is essential to maintain the viability of our tenants and ultimately us.

The width, lighting, materiality, breathability, maintenance and attractiveness of this pedestrian access to be taken into consideration.

Width - Hoardings are typically 8ft tall, reducing a pedestrians vision of what might lurk round the corner, therefore reducing the perceived safety of the path. The only way of tackling this is to ensure that the width of pedestrian access is kept suitably large. We would suggest a single lane road as a minimum width, ideally a double lane road width where possible.

Lighting - Hoardings will also reduce the amount of available light, which must be compensated by artificial lighting.

Materiality - Thought needs to be given to the pedestrian route and the hoardings that encapsulate it. Contractors commonly use plywood for this, but the material is prone to splitting and cracking with age. The lifespan of the materials chosen need to reflect the long term nature of the construction phase.

Breathability - Construction traffic and the construction process considerably increase local air pollution, which will have a health impact on the residents and workers in the area. Any pedestrian route will need to address this by using materials to reduce air pollution. We suggest suitable planting as a way to do this as artificial pollution control (titanium oxide) has been shown to increase airborne ozone.

Maintenance and Attractiveness - An area that is attractive and well maintained is perceived as safer. Planting, artwork, regular maintenance and reacting quickly to anti-social behaviour are all necessary to ensure the pedestrian route is seen as being safe.

There is no Environmental Impact Assessment for Shaws Passage and Allison Street.

HS2 has designated both Shaws Passage and Allison Street as routes for construction traffic, but has not carried out an assessment on how this will affect residents or businesses on this route.

Shaw's Passage is a single lane road that significantly decreases in width half way along its length. It is not physically wide enough to accommodate construction vehicles, which should find alternative means of access.

The street is built up on both sides, leaving little room for any air pollution to be blown away. Construction traffic is predominantly made up of very large diesel vehicles, which are well known for emitting air pollution that leads to respiratory illnesses. It also has an incline with a high potential for traffic to have to stop and start.

As diesel vehicles emit the most air pollution when accelerating on an incline, Shaw's passage is a demonstrably poor choice for construction traffic.

Allison Street has been marked as a construction traffic route, whilst traffic speeds are slightly higher, it still has the potential for lots of stop starting, particularly on the cobbled street under the Moor St archway; when vehicles are turning onto Shaws Passage and Coventry Street; when the police commandeer both sides of the road for parking; and when HGVs are stopping to make deliveries to Brett's, Casper Stores, Meriden Papers and Pegasus Imports.

Air pollution monitoring should be installed along Allison Street and Shaws Passage. If pollutants breach EU limits then traffic should be diverted away and buildings should be offered air filtration systems.

Noise pollution has been noted on the aforementioned streets, but no means of addressing them has been offered. As a very minimum, buildings along the route should be offered improved glazing. This will not help in summer though, when workers and residents will need to open windows to ventilate. This should be acknowledged, traffic moved away from these streets and ventilation systems should be retrofitted.

Traffic will need to be co-ordinated on all routes to the construction site, ensuring that queues of revving vehicles do not line up on the surrounding streets. A maximum quota of construction vehicles should be set for each street at any one time.

The building of HS2 will have a massive impact on the future of Digbeth. Get it right and the city will have an exciting and vibrant creative area which will rival the Kings Cross development in London. Get it wrong and Digbeth will be marginalised and this incredible opportunity will be lost to the city for ever.

The renaissance of Digbeth is dependent on ensuring that good pedestrian, cycle and public transport routes are created through to the city centre and neighbouring Eastside and Southside. The current plans for Curzon Street Station sever three of the four main routes into Digbeth from the city centre, Fazeley Street, Bordesley Street and Park Street, leaving the only access via an already restricted Digbeth High Street and the tortuous new route through the 70-metre New Canal Street Tunnel under the new station. This will be heavily used by diesel-belching taxis and will eventually take the new tram route to the east of the city, hardly an appealing route for pedestrians and cyclists.

The new Birmingham Curzon HS2 Masterplan for Growth, produced by the city council, proposes a major public square between Moor Street and the new Curzon Street Station. This will give a direct, wide and attractive link between

the city centre and Digbeth, maintaining the Bordesley Street/Fazeley Street access and creating a new route through Coventry Street to the Custard Factory, Fazeley Studios, South and City College, the Bond, and numerous small businesses historically located in Digbeth.

This imaginative proposal will partly cover over the West Coast Main line leading into New Street and will take the name of Paternoster Place from a former street obliterated by the 1960s ring road development. Currently, all that HS2 is offering is the potential of a three-metre wide alleyway between Park Street and Moor Street that may also be used by taxis, which again will be intimidating to both pedestrians and cyclists.

There needs to be a clear commitment to the Paternoster Place proposal from HS2 and it needs to be constructed before the work starts on the new station so that these essential links are maintained throughout the build period.

Speaking at the launch of the Masterplan, Lord Deighton, chairman of the HS2 Growth Taskforce, recognised the huge potential for Birmingham to benefit from the wealth and jobs created by the building of HS2. Build Paternoster Place now and Digbeth will flourish in readiness for HS2, if not the huge opportunities for business and jobs that Digbeth offers will be on hold until the station is complete and may not happen at all. It is vital that HS2 sign up to the Paternoster Place concept now and commit with the city council to the earliest possible start.

Operational Phase

CFA26 - 2.2.35 There will be public realm space created around the Park Street taxi pick-up and Shaws Passage. This public realm will be located on the south side of the west entrance on Park Street across the Rugby and Birmingham line. This area will provide a pedestrian route known as the on the axis from Shaws Passage to Moor Street.

Despite this statement, the available plans appear to show no permeability across the Rugby and Birmingham line between Shaws Passage and Moor St. The public realm space mentioned in the statement would go some way to addressing the lack of permeability across the station into Digbeth if it is combined with a bridge between Moor St and Shaws Passage. HS2 needs to demonstrate that it is serious about not becoming Birmingham's second concrete collar.

Instead the plans show a public realm space funnelling people into Digbeth along what is currently Paternoster Row. A small staircase and lift has been mooted. To avoid this staircase becoming an area for antisocial behaviour (like the former staircase from Station Street into New Street Station), it needs to be suitably wide with ramped access for wheelchair users (as lifts are prone to failure). We recommend a minimum width of a two lane road.

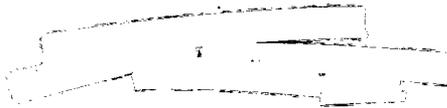
The plans show that Fazeley Street and Park Street will be cut off. The only effective way of compensating for this is to open up the route for pedestrian track over the Rugby and Birmingham line.

There doesn't appear to be an acknowledgement of the additional traffic caused by the taxi rank. We would like to see both the assessment and suitable mitigating features e.g. shared space streets to encourage pedestrian and cycling movement into Digbeth.

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

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.



PHILIP BURROWS

IN PARLIAMENT
HOUSE OF COMMONS
SESSION 2013-14

HIGH SPEED RAIL (LONDON - WEST MIDLANDS) BILL
PETITION OF FRIENDS OF THE EARTH (BIRMINGHAM) LTD.

Against the Bill - On Merits - By Counsel &c

Mr. Philip Burrows

[Redacted signature block]