

IN PARLIAMENT
HOUSE OF COMMONS
SESSION 2013-14

High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill

Against the Bill – on Merits – Praying to be heard by counsel, etc.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE LEE

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 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 Secretary Patrick 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, 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 compulsory acquisition, the extinction and exclusion of rights over land, the temporary possession and use of land, planning permission and deregulation in connection with, inter alia, heritage and environmental matters. Clauses 37 to 52 deal with railway matters, nominated and statutory undertakers, regeneration and reinstatement and further high speed rail works. Clauses 53 to 65 contain miscellaneous and general provisions.
4. The nominated undertaker (defined in the Bill and hereinafter referred to as “the nominated undertaker”) is authorised by the Bill to construct and maintain the works specified in Schedule 1 to the Bill being works for the construction of Phase One of High Speed 2 and works consequent on or incidental to such works. These works are called “the scheduled works”.
5. Your petitioner (hereinafter referred to as “the Petitioner”) is the Parochial Church Council (“PCC”) of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St John the Baptist,, The Lee, Great Missenden

Buckinghamshire. Your Petitioner is the governing body for St John the Baptist, the Church of England parish church located in the village of The Lee. There has been a church on the site since the thirteenth century and the additional new building dates from 1868. It has fixtures and fittings of the Arts and Crafts movement, thanks to the Lords of the Manor having been owners of Liberty's, the Regent Street store, and also an award-winning natural churchyard. It is a much-loved place of worship and community facility. Services are mainly, but not exclusively, on Sundays, and sometimes held outdoors. The church and churchyard are during the week a haven of quiet, and at weekends often visited by tourists drawn by the church in its unspoilt rural setting. Like many such churches it extends a welcome to these, combining outreach with fundraising from the provision of cream teas in the summer. The PCC body currently comprises ten individuals, being both members of the clergy and laity within the church. The PCC is responsible for the overall spiritual and practical wellbeing of the church, its congregation and its buildings, as well as having a duty to promote the mission of the church within the wider community.

6. This church plays a key role in the community and is used for both religious and community cultural and musical events. From a religious perspective, the church and churchyard are used for services each Sunday and occasional services during the week, plus weddings and funerals, and meetings of groups associated with the running of the church (including the PCC). Many church and PCC members come from outside the parish.
7. The bill would authorise the construction and operation of the railway through and near The Lee. The proposed line would run within 1100 metres of your Petitioner's church building.
8. Your Petitioner and his interests are injuriously affected by the Bill, to which your Petitioner objects for reasons, amongst others, hereinafter appearing.
9. Noise would be a problem for worshippers, wildlife and visitors. HS2 Limited appears to have little integrity or credibility on noise, having at one local roadshow tried to imply by posters that a High speed train was comparable to a hairdryer, and restricting all noise estimates to an average. This may be appropriate for a major road with continuous traffic with rubber tyres on sound-absorbing tarmac, but not for metal on metal (catenaries and wheels) with the intermittent passing of trains : intrusive noise might last only while a train was within a mile, say about half a minute every 2.5 minutes (with twelve trains an hour in each direction), so an average would understate the peak by a factor of about five. It is quite clear that both the construction and the operational phases of the planned HS2 project would adversely affect many of the activities that St John the Baptist supports (both in terms of worship and community activities). Such regular peak noise would adversely affect both worship and community events, in and outside the church itself.
10. Objection is taken to both the construction and operation of certain of the works proposed to be undertaken in and near The Lee. Your Petitioner's concerns about construction focus primarily on the Durham Farm viaduct, including ancillary works. Concerns include the lack of enforceable controls on working hours/days, use of local roads by construction traffic, and ensuring it does not use the A413 during commuting hours (6-9am and 4-7pm) which

would force normal road users to divert through the lanes of the village, of The Lee and Lee Common, South Heath etc. Such congestion, disruption and diversion would adversely affect all the functions and activities of the Church, and not just on Sundays. All such Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) issues should be determined and controlled by the Chiltern District Council via their Environmental Health Officers. Your Petitioner's concerns about operation of the railway focus primarily on the issue of noise and visual intrusion of trains operating along the same stretch of line. Your Petitioner is also concerned about the broader community impacts of the railway on the community that St John the Baptist serves, including those from outside the parish, some of which are from the other side of the track. The distinctive duty of Christians is to 'love God (and His creation), and love our neighbour as ourselves' : in a country that the Prime Minister has identified with Christian values it is questionable whether the Bill should continue to undervalue the merits of the environment at risk from the line or presume that neighbouring residents (except for those within 120 metres of the line) should suffer both amenity and property value loss without full compensation.

11. Mitigation of the noise and disruption of a surface line would require lowering the line into a cutting, and establishing mixed woodland for about 500 metres either side of the track in open country. Where it was not possible to avoid an embankment or viaduct, consideration should be given to using spoil to raise the surrounding ground level so that such woodland might more effectively mask the noise and visual intrusion in the landscape around your Petitioner's church, and the adverse effect on services and other events both in the church and outdoors. Even this mitigation would be only partly effective.

12. Your Petitioner's main purpose therefore is to persuade your Honourable House to lower the line into a fully-bored tunnel as it passes through the whole of the Chilterns as far as the north of Wendover. This proposal, known as the CRAG T2 Tunnel, has been confirmed by HS2 Limited to be feasible and has been costed at an addition construction cost of only £250-330M. This would not only meet in full your Petitioner's concerns and requirements, but has also been estimated to reduce the adverse impact on the environment by some £500-750M, thus not only meeting the values of a Christian nation but improving the project's benefit/cost ratio. (Your Petitioner is also aware of another suggested fully-bored tunnel on a very slightly different alignment, known as the Chiltern District Council (CDC) Green Route which would equally meet your Petitioner's requirements, and might, on further investigation, be preferable to the CRAG T2 Tunnel on cost and/or operational grounds.)

YOUR PETITIONER therefore prays your Honourable House that the Bill may not be allowed to pass into law as it now stands and that he may be heard by Counsel, Agent and witnesses in support of the allegations of this Petition against such of the clauses and provisions of the Bill as affect the rights and interests of your Petitioner and in support of such other clauses, amendments or provisions as may be necessary or expedient for his protection, or that such other relief may be given to your Petitioner in the premises as your Honourable House may deem meet.

AND your Petitioner will ever pray, etc.

Signed

Revd David Burgess, Chairman of the PCC, St John the Baptist, The Lee

Other members of The Lee Parochial Church Council

Rod Neal, Churchwarden

Trevor Pearce, Churchwarden

David Stephenson, Treasurer

Bill Pearce, Verger

Allan Whittow, Diocesan Synod

Gilly Hafner, Deanery Synod

Catherine Larmou

Richard Rolfe

Alice Stephenson

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HOUSE OF COMMONS SESSION 2013-14

HIGH SPEED RAIL (LONDON - WEST MIDLANDS) BILL
PETITION OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST. MARY THE
VIRGIN, WENDOVER

PETITION OF THE CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE LEE

Against the Bill - On Merits - By Counsel

Revd David James BURGESS, Vicar and
Chairman of the Parochial Church Council

AGENT

John Simon Thrane MORRIS