
Environmental Statement Consultation for London – West Midlands HS2 Route

Response of the Rt Hon.
David Lidington, Member
of Parliament for
Aylesbury

David Lidington MP February 2014

Executive Summary

In November 2013 the Department for Transport deposited the Hybrid Bill for Phase One of HS2 and launched a consultation on the Environmental Statement which details the mitigation measures HS2 Ltd are proposing to put in place as well as the impact HS2 will have on areas it passes through. I have responded at length to this consultation to ensure that the Department for Transport is well aware of my views and more importantly those of my constituents many of whom will be significantly affected by the scheme.

A fundamental principle of any mitigation measures that are eventually put in place should be that any citizen who is impacted by the HS2 scheme, which is meant to be in the national interest, should be provided with the best possible mitigation.

Although the length of the consultation was extended by the Standing Orders Committees of the House of Commons and House of Lords (as a result of 877 pages of the Environmental Statement not initially being included in the documents on the consultation website). I remain deeply disappointed at the brevity of the consultation period which did not allow those with an interest in what is being proposed sufficient time to consider the documents and submit a full response. I am also concerned by fact that HS2 Ltd frequently does not provide a full explanation when they decide not to include in the scheme an idea proposed by the local community. I hope Sir David Higgins is able to improve the manner in which HS2 Ltd communicates with those affected by the scheme.

Environmental Groups have also expressed their concerns to me about the failure of HS2 Ltd to provide them with the necessary information they feel they need to respond to the consultation.

It is important that a solution is found to provide better mitigation to those communities which are affected by HS2 between the Wendover Dean and Small Dean Viaducts. I was disappointed HS2 Ltd have rejected the local community's suggestion for the route to be enclosed between the two viaducts without having a suitable alternative to suggest. I also expect HS2 Ltd to fully consider the proposal from residents of London Road in Wendover to realign the A413 in this area.

HS2 Ltd need to ensure that local services including healthcare facilities are not adversely impacted by the inclusion of accommodation at the Small Dean Construction Compound. While residents of Wendover have told me they do not object to people living at the compound during construction they quite rightly expect HS2 Ltd to ensure the impact on the village is minimal.

I welcome the decision of HS2 Ltd, following a local campaign, to reinstate Bacombe Lane over the green tunnel once it is constructed but am extremely disappointed that HS2 Ltd are yet to provide suitable mitigation measures for either St Mary's Church or Wendover House School. HS2 Ltd need to treat this issue with the utmost priority.

The inclusion of the Stoke Mandeville by-pass in the scheme is welcome as is the removal of the construction compound at Marsh Lane. However, it is unfortunate that due to construction of the bypass a property on Lower Road is scheduled to be demolished. I am aware the owners of 30 Lower Road have proposed alternative alignments for the bypass and I expect HS2 Ltd to engage with the owners of 30 Lower Road, Buckinghamshire County Council and Stoke Mandeville Parish Council to find an acceptable solution.

Stoke Mandeville residents have said they expect HS2 Ltd to provide the best possible mitigation to ensure that the impact of the maintenance loop on their lives is limited as much as is technically

possible. It is important HS2 Ltd listen to local residents regarding issues surrounding lighting and security and provide appropriate mitigation that local people want.

A solution needs to be found to provide either better mitigation or generous compensation to property owners affected by HS2 in Hawkslade, Walton Court and West Aylesbury. HS2 passes within 125m of Aylesbury and I have been told HS2 Ltd are out of ideas on how to provide adequate mitigation in this area. I hope this is not the case. If it is not possible to include the necessary level of mitigation in this area, all property owners who suffer a loss that could be attributed to HS2 should be provided with full compensation for this loss.

The residents of Fairford Leys are keen that the mitigation measures put in place are in keeping with the local area and want HS2 Ltd to ensure that the Thame Valley viaduct is aesthetically suitable for its location. I was pleased HS2 Ltd said they were happy to speak to Coldharbour Parish Council to discuss mitigation for this area further.

The CRAG proposal for a bored tunnel through the entire Chilterns AONB has been controversial in my constituency. Residents of Wendover Dean, Dunsmore and Wendover strongly support the proposals. Residents of Stoke Mandeville, while supporting the principle of an extended tunnel, oppose a northward extension to the Wendover tunnel, bored or otherwise, towards their village. I support the principle of additional tunnelling in the Chilterns AONB. It is important to continue to seek local agreement on where the portal north of Wendover should lie.

HS2 Ltd should reconsider their decision not to include a land bridge as detailed in the National Trust's proposals for mitigation between Stoke Mandeville and Waddesdon. The National Trust are of the view that the short term pain of increased land take is more than outweighed by the long term environmental benefits a land bridge provides.

One of the biggest fears of my constituents is the noise that HS2 trains will make as they pass. The fact that Volume Two of the Environmental Statement did not make reference to the existence of peak noise or detailed baseline data in Volume Five does nothing to allay the main fear of my constituents. I am also concerned by the contradictory information I have been provided with by HS2 Ltd and one of their noise experts regarding whether peak noise information can be shown on a noise contour map.

HS2 Ltd also need to ensure that their Code of Construction Practice is of "Exemplar Standard" like the Code of Construction Practice that was put in place for construction of London 2012 venues. I would expect them to engage with both the local NHS Trust and Ambulance Service to ensure that construction of HS2 does not impact on Ambulance response times in Buckinghamshire.

Delivery routes to construction sites also need to be devised to ensure that they do not adversely impact on the local economy and a community fund to provide benefits to each Parish that is affected by Phase One HS2 should be established.

I hope that the Department for Transport listens to what those responding to this consultation say on their proposed measures and make changes accordingly.

David Lidington
February 2014

Introduction

1.01

As currently proposed the High Speed Two train line will have a significant impact on many areas of my constituency, including the villages of Wendover Dean, Dunsmore, Wendover and Stoke Mandeville, the town of Aylesbury and the parish of Fairford Leys. The town of Aylesbury is the largest population centre outside London or Birmingham to be affected by HS2, with the proposed route passing within 125m of the town. The only section of the route in The Chilterns AONB not to be in either bored tunnel or deep cutting is in my constituency, with an 18m high viaduct being proposed close to Wendover Dean and Dunsmore, while another 14m high viaduct crosses London Road in Wendover. The residents of Stoke Mandeville have been informed that an 850m long maintenance loop will be located close to the village. The Environmental Statement says that people living in Wendover will potentially have to endure a minimum of four and half years of disruption while HS2 is built.

1.02

Understandably since the Government confirmed in January 2012 that it intends to go ahead with HS2 my postbag has been dominated by concerns relating to mitigation and especially the noise impact of HS2. My relief that HS2 Ltd has finally produced noise maps which show the predicted impact on individual properties is tempered by the fact that the peak noise information is only included within Volume Five of the Environmental Statement, which HS2 Ltd has claimed is not required to allow an individual to respond fully to the consultation. I do not believe the Community Forum Area Reports (Volume Two) provide local residents with enough information on which to come to an informed judgement about the probable noise impact of HS2 on their homes.

1.03

Almost 1500 constituents have contacted me about HS2 and only ten have expressed support for the project. Almost all have argued for HS2 to be cancelled because of weaknesses in its business case and the damaging impact it would have on the environment. I addressed those issues in my response to the 2011 consultation about the principle and route of HS2.

1.04

Nearly every constituent who has contacted me has said that he or she expects the Department for Transport to put in place the best possible mitigation should HS2 go ahead. I agree. It is a matter of basic justice that those areas affected by HS2 should receive the best mitigation possible if this scheme eventually goes ahead.

1.05

Many local action groups and individual constituents have also expressed their disappointment and anger to me at the short length of the consultation. Many of my constituents believe that because of the length of the Environmental Statement and the fact that the consultation has taken place over the Christmas period the consultation should have been at least 14 weeks long. In addition, HS2 Ltd has made mistakes when distributing the consultation material and I have found two mistakes in the documents relating to my constituency.

1.06

In my response I have largely focused on issues that will directly affect my constituents like noise and visual mitigation and I have left it to expert groups, including the Chilterns Conservation Board and Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxford Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), to respond on environmental issues like water and soil quality. However, I will make some general comments on environmental

issues based on comments I have received from the National Trust, Chilterns Conservation Board and BBOWT.

1.07

Since the start of this consultation I have held meetings with local action groups, parish councils, elected representatives and constituents to understand their views on the proposals.

The views expressed in this consultation reflect those expressed to me by my constituents as well as my own.

General Observations

2.01

Before I comment more specifically on the Environmental Statement I want to make some points regarding the Environmental Statement process and the administration of the consultation.

Length of the Draft Environmental Statement

3.01

I am deeply disappointed at the length of the consultation period for the Environmental Statement which is a little over eight weeks and includes the Christmas period. The short amount of time given for this consultation does not allow those with an interest in what is being proposed time to study the documents and prepare a full response.

3.02

I wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport to ask him why he had made the decision to have such a short consultation period. The Secretary of State said that he felt taking into account the number of consultations that has already taken place on HS2 and the fact that the Environmental Statement had been structured in a way that made it easy to access, the consultation period was sufficient. I disagree. Individuals and action groups who want to respond to this consultation are likely to need to read and digest hundreds of pages to be in a position to give a detailed response. Local authorities, environmental groups and local action groups will also want to review the information contained within Volume Five which extends to tens of thousands of pages.

3.03

Despite HS2 Ltd's statement that those wishing to respond to the consultation will only need to read the Community Forum Area Report relevant to their local area, the reports often make reference to information provided in other Community Forum Area Reports. For example, information regarding the Maintenance Loop at Stoke Mandeville is included in Community Forum Area Report 11 but is likely to be of interest to residents in Wendover (CFA 10) and those living in the Central Chilterns (CFA 9). In reality it is likely that someone responding to this consultation will need to read, as a minimum, the Community Forum Area Report relevant to their local area as well as significant sections of the reports for the Community Forum Areas north and south of their location.

3.04

It should not have been left to the Standing Orders Committees of the two Houses to force the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd to extend the consultation period and this extension was only granted because of serious errors by HS2 Ltd. Although the extension is welcome the consultation period is still short of the fourteen weeks my constituents feel would be appropriate.

Lack of Detail

4.01

Several constituents have said to me that while they can understand HS2 Ltd will not accept every proposal put forward by the local community they are disappointed by the lack of detailed argument provided when a proposal is rejected.

4.02

The Community Forum Area Reports contain information on proposals for mitigation put forward by the local community and the reasons why HS2 Ltd have either included them in the scheme or for now decided to stick with the proposed design. The reasoning provided is very general and often refers to an increase in cost without providing a monetary figure for this increase. The lack of detail included in the reports has suggested to my constituents that HS2 Ltd has not thoroughly examined the proposals put to them by the local community; I hope this is not the case.

HS2 Ltd's Errors During the Consultation

5.01

In addition to the short length of the consultation, HS2 Ltd have made completely unacceptable errors in how it has distributed the consultation material. Due to the length of the Environmental Statement, HS2 Ltd provided Members of Parliament and local authorities who are affected by the HS2 scheme with USB memory sticks containing a full copy of the Environmental Statement. The entire Environmental Statement was also published online.

5.02

I was shocked to discover that almost 900 pages of consultation material were missing from both the USB memory sticks and the online consultation site. Although I was slightly reassured when HS2 Ltd informed me this information related to issues surrounding geophysical data for archaeological surveys, it is unacceptable for a public body to make such a serious error and I was pleased the consultation period was extended by Parliament to take account of this.

5.03

Whilst studying the consultation material I discovered and confirmed with Wendover residents that the two purple arrows showing the location of photomontage LV-01-190 is incorrect. Rather than being on Ellesborough Road the location is shown at being on a right of way several hundred metres away. I also noticed that, despite being referred to in the Community Forum Area Report for Stoke Mandeville and Aylesbury, photomontage LV-01-061 is missing from the accompanying map book. HS2 Ltd have confirmed these are errors in the consultation material but as far as I am aware are yet to issue a notice of correction.

5.04

Issues like these do not help HS2 Ltd's public image and compound the view among my constituents that HS2 Ltd is incompetent.

Noise Information

6.01

HS2 Ltd are well aware that the vast majority of those affected by the scheme have been asking HS2 Ltd to make available peak and baseline noise information for a considerable period of time. When I discussed the Draft Environmental Statement with HS2 Ltd I was told that both baseline and peak noise information would be included in the Environmental Statement

6.02

I was therefore disappointed by the fact that peak noise information is only included in Volume Five (technical appendices) while Volume Two (Community Forum Area Reports) only makes general observations regarding baseline data with the detailed information being included in Volume Five. HS2 Ltd have suggested Volume Two contains all the relevant information you need to respond to the consultation. However, the vast majority of my constituents affected by HS2 will want to study the noise information included within Volume Five before responding. Given HS2 Ltd know how important this information is to local people they should have stated in Volume Two that further information on peak and baseline noise data was contained in Volume Five and provided precise instructions on where to find it.

6.03

I was also extremely surprised when I met HS2 Ltd and asked them to confirm the location of the peak noise data within the Environmental Statement that they had to ask for time to confirm and check as they were unsure if it was included and if so where it was located. My impression is that HS2 Ltd are over relying on their external noise experts rather than developing expert in-house knowledge of noise. I hope this is something Sir David Higgins will urgently address.

Wider Environmental Issues

7.01

I have contacted local environmental groups to discuss the Environmental Statement and I wish to make some points here based on my conversations with these groups. While the issues listed here are illustrated by examples from me constituency I imagine there will be comparable examples along the whole Phase One route.

GIS Layer Data and No Net Loss of Biodiversity

8.01

In separate conversations with three environmental groups all with different priorities regarding HS2 there was unanimity that in order to respond fully to the Environmental Statement they require HS2 Ltd to release the GIS Layer data relating the scheme. The Chilterns Conservation Board went as far as to say they were unsure if they could fulfil their statutory obligations without this data.

8.02

As I understand, GIS Layer data allows an accurate calculation of the changes in the landscape caused by HS2 to be undertaken. I was also told that a HS2 Ltd employee committed to releasing this data within 20 days of the Hybrid Bill being published.

8.03

When I met HS2 Ltd they told me that they do not believe this data is required to allow environmental groups to respond fully to the consultation and that the data was still being verified by HS2 Ltd and their external contractors. The representatives of HS2 Ltd I spoke to could also not confirm or deny if a promise had been made to release this data within 20 days of the Hybrid Bill being published. HS2 Ltd eventually released the data on the evening of 23 January which would have been too late for environmental groups to use it to help them respond to the consultation had the Standing Orders Committees not extended the consultation.

8.04

A commitment from HS2 Ltd is that the HS2 scheme should result in no net loss of biodiversity. However, the report showing how HS2 Ltd will be achieving no net loss is not scheduled to be published until the Spring of this year, which is well after this consultation closes. I am surprised that this report is not ready as clearly the impact HS2 will have on biodiversity and the measures HS2 Ltd are proposing to use to minimise the loss will be a key consideration for environmental groups responding to the consultation. It is not good enough for HS2 Ltd to make a clear, public pledge that there would be no net loss of biodiversity yet omit from the Environmental Statement any details of how they intend to fulfil that promise.

8.05

HS2 Ltd should release the GIS layer data and the no net loss report as soon as possible, ideally before the consultation closes. Should it not be possible to release this information before the consultation closes HS2 Ltd should offer to meet with environmental groups to discuss the data and report as soon as it is available.

Replacement Woods

9.01

BBOWT explained to me that they are concerned by HS2 Ltd's approach to planting replacement woods an approach which they have described as "patchy". Clearly a replacement woodland cannot replicate the variety and complexity of the ecosystem provided by an ancient woodland. That makes it all the more essential that replacement woods are sited in places which will be best to for the development over the long term of a diverse flora and fauna. BBOWT in particular said that they were worried that some of the proposed sites for replacement woods would end up being ecological islands, with at best a tenuous connection to other rich habitat sites, and that they were too close to the railway . Such a wood might provide a home for bats and birds to breed in but would also be a deathtrap, with heavy losses of life as creatures flew into the path of high speed trains. BBOWT highlighted Jones' Hill Wood near Wendover Dean as such a potential environmental sink.

9.02

The Government has adopted an environmental policy which stresses the importance of considering the environment holistically and which has moved beyond the old notion of conservation being about preserving a relatively small number of protected sites. DEFRA's guidelines in "Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services" state on p20 *"we want a large number of high quality sites which contain the range and area of habitats that species require. We also want ecological connections that allow species, or their genes, to move between these."* HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport should embrace this approach to biodiversity, not try to get round what, after all, the Government has announced as its policy. I would expect HS2 Ltd where it is needed to connect a replacement habitat to existing ones through a variety of means, which could include land bridges and underpasses.

9.03

I was pleased to learn from HS2 Ltd that once the consultation on the Environmental Statement has closed they would be happy to discuss their approach to planting replacement woods with BBOWT. The National Trust's suggestions for design changes along the section of the route between Stoke Mandeville and Waddesdon incorporate the same approach to the environment and conservation while at the same time incorporating measures that would significantly reduce the noise impact and visual intrusion of HS2 on the lives of my constituents. I support the Trust's proposals. Many of the ideas from the National Trust and BBOWT have been included in the "Buckinghamshire Blueprint"

prepared by Buckinghamshire County Council with the support of Aylesbury Vale District Council and others.

Footpaths

10.01

Reinstated or realigned footpaths were also raised by BBOWT, who suggested that where possible these new footpaths should have a green element incorporated into them to allow animals to cross the railway. Clearly the introduction of green elements to footpaths could help prevent habitats becoming isolated and if the construction of HS2 does not take into account the movements of animals the environmental harm will be worse than it need be.

10.02

The principle that an interrupted right of way should be restored after construction is an important one, but so too is the principle that the character of a right of way should be restored. There should be a clear duty on the part of the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd to restore footpaths and bridlepaths, whether on their original alignments or on a diverted route, to their rural character.

Carbon Emissions

11.01

One of the justifications for HS2 was that it would reduce carbon emissions, but the Environmental Statement makes no reference to the impact HS2 will have on carbon emissions. This suggests to me that both the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd have come to the conclusion, as my constituents have consistently said, that HS2 will not reduce carbon emissions. If this is the case it is extremely disappointing that neither HS2 Ltd nor the Department for Transport have said so given this was originally used as a reason to promote the construction of HS2.

Balancing Ponds

12.01

HS2 Ltd have told me that there is no danger of contaminated water from HS2 entering the balancing ponds as none will be created by HS2. However, from the conversations that I have had with constituents, it is clear to me that there is a lot of scepticism about these assurances from HS2 Ltd. I believe that HS2 Ltd need to set out clearly the case for having balancing ponds, the evidence to justify their assertion that the water will not be polluted and provide local communities with clear evidence of measures to ensure that any pollution is stopped from affecting the groundwater.

Photomontages

13.01

I have already expressed my concerns regarding the mistakes HS2 Ltd have made regarding specific photomontages, however, I also want to express some general concerns about HS2 Ltd's approach to photomontages.

13.02

Stoke Mandeville Parish Council told me that they felt a photomontage taken from the point where HS2 passes closest to Aylesbury would have been useful to allow them to understand the impact the scheme would have on this area of Stoke Mandeville Parish. It has been suggested to me by several constituents that HS2 Ltd have deliberately not included photomontages from areas that are badly

affected by the scheme. To help allay these fears HS2 Ltd could have provided in the Environmental Statement details of how they decide which locations to use for photomontages.

13.03

I was concerned by that fact that in photomontage LV-01-051 which shows the southern portal of the Wendover Green Tunnel only sapling trees have been planted as visual screening. HS2 Ltd told me that they would be planting trees at different stages of development and it is extremely disappointing that this is not shown on the photomontage. HS2 Ltd should also consider planting mixed conifers and deciduous plantations, so that fast growing evergreens could provide rapid screening while the deciduous saplings grew. As the deciduous trees reached maturity the conifers could be felled.

Constituency Section

14.01

In this section I discuss issues that affect specific areas of my constituency and I will start at Wendover Dean and work north up the route to Aylesbury.

14.02

Before I begin I would like to make it clear that should HS2 go ahead Wendover Dean, Dunsmore, London Road and Wendover residents' first preference for mitigation is a fully bored tunnel through the Chilterns AONB and all other comments regarding potential mitigation measures should take this into account.

Wendover Dean, Dunsmore and London Road; Wendover

Introduction

15.01

This area is one of the worst affected areas of the entire phase one route with HS2 Ltd proposing an 18 metre high viaduct that will take two years to build which will result in just under 100 workmen being present during construction.

Wendover Dean Viaduct

16.01

The residents of Dunsmore and Wendover Dean have been very clear to me that their primary concern is noise rather than visual mitigation and this is why they have proposed an enclosed viaduct or a grass roof covering the line all the way to the Small Dean Viaduct. Therefore they were understandably extremely disappointed to learn that HS2 Ltd has made the decision not to enclose this section of the route. HS2's argument for not enclosing this section of the route is that it would create several significant issues during construction and operation of HS2 which would be problematic to solve. These include the need to create cross passageways between the north and south HS2 lines to comply with safety regulations. Although there are difficulties with enclosing this section of the route, it is not impossible and if enclosed viaducts and embankments are required to provide adequate mitigation then this is what should be put in place.

16.02

HS2 Ltd has said to enclose this section of the route would effectively be a scar on the landscape and the area needs to look acceptable not just for residents, but for those visiting the area as tourists. However, my constituents are of the view that HS2 itself will scar the Chilterns AONB in this area as

it is the only area of the AONB that is not in either deep cutting or tunnel. HS2's own photomontage shows a construction that is a long way aesthetically from the Ribbleshead Viaduct. I have seen no evidence yet to persuade me that the design proposed will be anything like as attractive as a structure created by Telford or Brunel.

16.03

HS2 Ltd are also proposing that there will be at least two years of construction while the viaduct is built, at times almost 100 construction workers in the area and over 80 lorry movements per day during peak construction periods. Although not related to this consultation, I would also add that no one in either Wendover Dean or Dunsmore under the compensation proposals that were recently consulted on would be eligible for automatic compensation and may have had to wait until the line had been operating for one year to receive compensation. I hope that the new compensation package once implemented ensures that all those who suffer a loss as a result of HS2 receive compensation in full for such losses.

16.04

Given this, if engineering concerns can be overcome, I think that the desire of local people to reduce noise and the overall impact of HS2 on them should rank above HS2 Ltd's worry that effective measures to reduce noise from the viaduct would be visually unappealing.

16.05

HS2 Ltd told me during the consultation period on the Draft Environmental Statement that they were examining the possibility of raising the 1.4m high noise barriers on the Wendover Dean Viaduct to see if increasing the noise barriers will provide further noise mitigation as Wendover Dean was identified as a location that would suffer from unacceptable levels of noise.

16.06

I was pleased that HS2 Ltd were examining further options but was disappointed to learn that the noise barrier height has not been increased. HS2 Ltd explained to me that they had conducted a cost benefit analysis and did not feel the benefit it would bring to a small number of properties in Wendover Dean justified the increase in cost. HS2 Ltd has provided no details of its costings. I am disappointed HS2 Ltd is applying a cost benefit analysis to its mitigation proposals especially in an area that HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport acknowledge as being highly affected by HS2 rather than introducing the best possible mitigation. HS2 Ltd also told me that they were unable to provide details on what the noise impact would be with increased noise barriers as this work had not been undertaken. It is unacceptable for HS2 Ltd not to be in a position to show the expected benefits of a mitigation proposal they have ruled out. My constituents have said to me that they do not believe HS2 Ltd can have looked thoroughly into what the benefits of increased noise barriers will be if no analysis of the impact of higher noise barriers is available.

16.07

Clearly in the absence of tunnelling options for mitigation in this section of the route are limited and I would urge HS2 Ltd to review their decision to reject enclosing the route between the Wendover Dean and Small Dean Viaducts or provide alternative mitigation measures as soon as possible.

Artificial Hill at Dunsmore

17.01

Residents of Dunsmore told me that at a bi-lateral meeting with HS2 Ltd they were told by HS2 Ltd that they were considering creating a large hill to provide both noise and visual mitigation. Although the residents of Dunsmore want HS2 Ltd to put in place adequate mitigation they did not feel this

proposal was suitable and I was pleased to learn from HS2 Ltd that they do not and have never intended to construct this artificial hill.

Rocky Lane

18.01

HS2 Ltd have identified that Rocky Lane will be significantly affected by HS2 with several properties due to be affected by operational noise. I am disappointed that HS2 Ltd have been so far unable to provide adequate mitigation for Rocky Lane as this is an issue I would have expected to have been resolved by now. Back in 2010 when the HS2 proposals were first announced, I highlighted Rocky Lane as an area which would need mitigation. It is disappointing that HS2 Ltd has not been able to plan adequate mitigation for residents of Rocky Lane despite being aware of the issue for almost four years. This needs to be addressed. If it is genuinely impossible to provide adequate mitigation, that should be reflected in more generous compensation arrangements for local residents.

Alternative A413 Alignment

19.01

The residents of London Road in Wendover have proposed an alternative alignment for the A413 which they believe will benefit both HS2 Ltd and London Road residents. From the representations made to me by constituents, I believe that most residents support this proposal but some, including local business owners, are concerned by the impact the alternative road plan could have on businesses that rely on passing traffic.

19.02

London Road residents have always said clearly to me that this road proposal is very much second best to a fully bored tunnel. However, Dunsmore residents have said to me they are opposed to this proposal because of the negative visual impact it would have on Dunsmore.

19.03

The proposal involves constructing a new road to run from the roundabout at the Southern end of the Wendover bypass to the roundabout at the Northern end of the Missenden bypass. This road would run on the opposite side of HS2 to London Road and cross under the Wendover Dean Viaduct. London Road residents have suggested if this road is constructed before construction on HS2 begins it could initially be used as an access road by HS2 Ltd, so removing the need for construction vehicles to use the London Road section of the A413. London Road residents believe that the A413 is unsuitable due to its general condition and liability to flood. Once construction of HS2 had been completed the new road could be opened to non HS2 construction traffic which would reduce the traffic flow along London Road. HS2 Ltd are aware of this proposal and I hope they give it full consideration and if they decide not to include it in their design provide the residents of London Road with a full explanation of why this is the case.

Sustainable Placement Area at Hunt's Green Farm

20.01

The proposed location of the sustainable placement area at Hunt's Green Farm is within the Chesham and Amersham constituency which is represented by the Rt Hon. Cheryl Gillan MP. Residents of Dunsmore and the Chilterns Conservation Board have expressed their strong opposition to this proposal due to the impact it will have on the Chilterns AONB. I understand that the use of sustainable placement areas is common practice in large engineering projects and one is currently being used on Crossrail. However, to locate one in an area of outstanding natural beauty, by

definition and area of importance would need a lot of justification, and this proposal has only been made public very recently. If the plan goes ahead I expect HS2 Ltd to ensure that the rural character of the area around Hunt's Green Farm is maintained despite the introduction of the sustainable placement area.

20.02

A great number of constituents have also said to me that they would object in the strongest possible terms to any decision by HS2 Ltd to move the sustainable placement area out of the Chilterns and into the immediate vicinity of Wendover, Stoke Mandeville or Aylesbury. I strongly support my constituents' views on this matter.

Wendover

Introduction

21.01

Approximately 8300 people live in Wendover and currently they will experience at least four and a half years of disruption while HS2 is constructed. As different areas of Wendover have different concerns relating to HS2 I have split my comments on Wendover into various sections to take account of this.

Small Dean Construction Site

22.01

HS2 Ltd has confirmed that 170-240 people may be living on the Small Dean Construction site, an increase of 50-60 from the Draft Environmental Statement. When I asked local action groups and community representatives specifically if they objected to this they said they did not but expected HS2 Ltd to ensure the impact on the village was minimal. For example, they expect HS2 Ltd to undertake a risk assessment of the local area should construction workers be living in the vicinity of Wendover. Specifically the impact on healthcare and local amenities would need to be reviewed. While I was pleased to learn that basic on site medical facilities would be available, HS2 Ltd would still be relying on local hospitals in an emergency. Local residents also said it would be important for HS2 Ltd to ensure that those living on the construction site were good neighbours. One suggestion was that rules should be in place similar to those on a campsite with no loud music allowed after a given point in the evening and a curfew to be in place for returning to the site in the evening.

22.02

HS2 Ltd have told me that issues like this will be included in the Local Management Plans. It is important that HS2 Ltd engages meaningfully and extensively with not just local authorities but also local residents on issues surrounding accommodation at the Small Dean Construction Site.

Bacombe Lane, Ellesborough Road and Construction of the Green Tunnel

23.01

I was pleased that HS2 Ltd were able to confirm when I met them to discuss the Environmental Statement that they are planning to construct the green tunnel at Wendover using double faced working. The local community have been united in their view that should the HS2 scheme go ahead HS2 Ltd should complete construction in the local area as quickly as possible.

23.02

Residents of Bacombe Lane have said to me that they are pleased that, following a campaign by local residents, HS2 Ltd has decided to reinstate Bacombe Lane over the green tunnel once construction is complete. It is also welcome that HS2 Ltd have decided, in line with the views of local residents, not to leave the temporary road link between Ellesborough Road and Bacombe Lane in place following construction.

23.03

However, I am deeply concerned by the fact that properties on Bacombe Lane will experience severe noise impacts during construction of the scheme and ten properties will experience an increase in noise levels during operation. Twenty properties on Ellesborough Road will also suffer from an increase in noise levels. This needs to be addressed. If it is genuinely impossible to provide adequate mitigation both during construction and operation of HS2, that should be reflected in more generous compensation arrangements for local residents.

The London Side of Wendover

24.01

I have received numerous representations from individual constituents, Wendover HS2 and from civic organisations in Wendover regarding mitigation in this area of Wendover.

24.02

I am extremely disappointed that HS2 has still not been able to resolve the issues surrounding noise in this area. From the first announcement about HS2 in March 2010, it has been obvious that St Mary's Church and Wendover House School would be severely affected. I have myself more than once told HS2 and Department for Transport that this had to be addressed. I was relieved when HS2 Ltd explained to me that they are no longer predicting a significant noise impact for residential properties in this area of Wendover and that St Mary's Church has been highlighted as suffering from noise due to the nature of the activities, including church services and concerts, which take place there.

24.03

St Mary's Church as well as being a place of worship can accommodate over 250 people for concerts and other functions and is a key amenity for the village. It is the only venue in Wendover that is big enough for a relatively large-scale musical or dramatic performance. The Church has also recently undergone a £1 million refurbishment. It would be completely unacceptable for Wendover to be unable to make full use of St Mary's Church as a result of HS2. While I was pleased to learn that HS2 Ltd are keen to speak to the representatives of the Church about what more can be done to mitigate the situation, including the possibility of altering the working hours at construction sites in the Wendover area, this is the sort of engagement that should have been taking place much earlier. HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport have a duty to provide the best noise mitigation that is technically possible to protect St Mary's Church and its users.

24.04

Wendover House School is a behavioural, emotional and social difficulties school and I have seen evidence, which HS2 Ltd has also seen, that suggests the impact of HS2 on the pupils of the school will be significant. I would have expected HS2 Ltd to have identified places like schools and churches and prioritised these locations in their mitigation studies. I hope HS2 Ltd is taking the impact the HS2 scheme will have on the school as seriously as it appears to now finally be taking the issue of the impact on St Mary's Church.

24.05

The local community has universally said to me that if a fully bored tunnel through the Chilterns is not included in the final design they want to see the green tunnel extended to provide mitigation to this part of the village. HS2 Ltd has repeatedly said to me that this is possible in terms of engineering, however, they are concerned that the visual impact would be significant as the tunnel would have to be above ground and would create an artificial hill. HS2 Ltd also say in Volume Two Community Forum Area Report Ten of the Environmental Statement that this would have an increased cost to the project. Of course it is true that anything that is done to reduce the impact of noise on local residents or alternatively to compensate them is going to cost money. But I have seen no figures from HS2 Ltd to suggest that the cost of extending the green tunnel south from Bacombe Lane would be disproportionate.

24.06

I am disappointed that HS2 Ltd has ruled out extending the green tunnel while not having a suitable alternative in place. HS2 Ltd have told me that because HS2 as it leaves the green tunnel heading South is on an embankment and rising up it is difficult to include higher noise barriers to try and reduce the noise impact. This strengthens the argument for an extended tunnel.

24.07

Whatever measures are eventually proposed should be supported on the basis that they will provide the best possible noise mitigation for local residents. I do not believe that it would be acceptable to plump for a third best solution because it represented a (relatively small) cost saving. I urge HS2 Ltd to state that the extension of the green tunnel is a potential mitigation option at least until they can bring forward alternative proposals which the local community approve of. My constituents have said to me that it is not HS2 Ltd's job to construct an aesthetically pleasing railway at the expense of greater exposure to noise of communities along the road and I am sympathetic to this view. It is important that HS2 Ltd do not become preoccupied with providing mitigation that in their view looks good. HS2 Ltd needs to focus on providing effective mitigation that the local community want which will work in terms of cutting noise.

The Aylesbury Side of Wendover

25.01

Including a green tunnel in the design for HS2 has been a relief to many residents. However, people living towards the northern end of the green tunnel are worried that they will experience high levels of noise as trains emerge from or enter the tunnel. The residents of Lionel Avenue and Thornton Crescent along with Wendover HS2 have said to me that, should a fully bored tunnel to the Nash Lee Roundabout not be put in place, they want the green tunnel to be extended to the Nash Lee Roundabout. They have told me that this will give them greater noise protection from HS2. HS2 Ltd has ruled out this extension of the tunnel because they believe they can provide adequate mitigation without extending the tunnel which would increase the cost of the route. However, HS2 Ltd provides no evidence to support this assumption.

25.02

The onus must be on Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd to demonstrate that they can put in place alternative noise reduction measures which would be as effective as an extended green tunnel.

25.03

Residents in the Nash Lee Lane and Nash Lee Road area on the southern fringe of Wendover parish (the parishes of Wendover, Stoke Mandeville and Ellesborough meet here) live in homes very close

to the line of route. HS2 Ltd explained to me that they do not have any further mitigation solutions in the pipeline for this area and admit that their current mitigation plan does not provide adequate protection, despite the scheme including ten metre high noise barriers and a six metre cutting. If this is true this is an area where the Department for Transport need to look very seriously at introducing very generous compensation measures. HS2 and Department for Transport have a moral duty to resolve this situation as a matter of urgency.

25.04

Wendover Cricket Club will lose its ground to the railway. There is no obvious alternative site. It is the responsibility of the Department for Transport and HS2 to provide an alternative site. I am aware that Wendover Cricket Club have concerns about the way HS2 Ltd has been engaging with them including basic administrative errors and I have taken this up with Alison Munro, Chief Executive of HS2 Ltd to ask her to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

Conclusion

26.01

The village of Wendover will be severely affected by HS2 and it is disappointing that HS2 Ltd has ruled out so many mitigation options that have been proposed by the local community without having credible alternatives and without providing any detailed justification for their position. The residents of Wendover want to see a fully bored tunnel through the AONB included as part of the final design. However, if this is not included as part of the final design it is important that HS2 Ltd quickly devises suitable mitigation options for Wendover and discusses them with local people as well as providing evidence to back up claims that the current mitigation in certain areas is sufficient. HS2 Ltd must also ensure local services are not severely impacted by the use of the Small Dean Construction Compound for accommodation for construction workers.

Stoke Mandeville

Introduction

27.01

The village of Stoke Mandeville will be severely affected by HS2 and I have met regularly both the Stoke Mandeville Action Group and the Parish Council to understand their concerns.

Marsh Lane Construction Site

28.01

In my response to the Draft Environmental Statement consultation I expressed serious concerns over the viability of Marsh Lane as a location for a construction site unless the delivery route to it was altered to avoid coming past Stoke Mandeville Combined School. The Stoke Mandeville Action Group, Parish Council and I were therefore pleased to see that HS2 Ltd have determined that they no longer require a construction site at Marsh Lane.

Alternative Road Plans

29.01

I am pleased that HS2 Ltd has decided to include the Stoke Mandeville by-pass in its design for the HS2 scheme. I have strongly supported this road plan since Stoke Mandeville Parish Council met me to discuss it as it is better than HS2 Ltd's original proposals, which were completely unrealistic.

29.02

However, it is unfortunate that the design put forward by HS2 Ltd for the by-pass results in the demolition of 30 Lower Road. I am aware that the owners of 30 Lower Road have devised alternative proposals and that Buckinghamshire County and Stoke Mandeville Parish Councils are working with them to see if an alternative route can be found.

29.03

I was surprised to read in a letter I received from Alison Munro, Chief Executive of HS2 Ltd, that the location of the roundabout where the new by-pass will join Lower Road was selected because it provides the option for a future road to the North. This hypothetical new road would not be built due to construction of HS2 and it seems HS2 Ltd are taking decisions that are the responsibility of the local highways authority. This reasoning also contradicts HS2 Ltd's justification for not having in its proposals included the second half of the Stoke Mandeville Road Plan put forward by the Stoke Mandeville Action Group and Parish Council. In that case HS2 argue that because the proposed road improvements were not made necessary by HS2, they could not include them as part of the final design.

29.04

I was pleased to learn that HS2 Ltd's community engagement team for the local area are already querying the location of the roundabout and I expect HS2 Ltd to engage fully with the owners of 30 Lower Road, Stoke Mandeville Parish Council and Buckinghamshire County Council to find an acceptable alternative.

Noise

30.01

Noise is an understandable concern of all those living along the proposed route and I am pleased to that at Community Forums HS2 Ltd have acknowledged this is the case. Although HS2 Ltd have identified some properties in Stoke Mandeville village as benefiting from a reduction in noise due to the new by-pass Mill House Farm is still identified as potentially needing noise insulation as HS2 Ltd will be unable to mitigate the noise effectively at source. Several properties on Old Risborough Road and areas of Stoke Mandeville village will also be severely affected by noise.

30.02

Stoke Mandeville Parish Council have expressed their surprise to me that HS2 Ltd feel some properties along Risborough Road will benefit from a reduction in noise because of the new by-pass. The Parish Council have said to me that these properties will still be along the main route into the village and they believe HS2 Ltd have overstated the reduction in noise these properties will see. It would be helpful when HS2 Ltd make statements surrounding noise they make the evidence on which they base their statements easily accessible. This is not yet the case.

30.03

The action group in Stoke Mandeville along with the Parish Council have paid for independent noise monitoring to be undertaken in the village in order to allow them to compare the findings to those of HS2 Ltd. The action group and Parish Council have told me that the baseline data they have collected is 5dBs lower than HS2 Ltd's baseline data. I am deeply concerned by this difference which casts doubt on HS2 Ltd's noise calculations and I hope HS2 Ltd arrange to meet both the action group and Parish Council as a matter of urgency to discuss this. It would be unforgivable if HS2 Ltd have produced detailed noise maps which identify the impact on individual properties from HS2 based on inaccurate noise data.

30.04

Residents of Stoke Mandeville have been clear with me that they want HS2 Ltd to prioritise noise mitigation over visual mitigation in the local area and I hope HS2 Ltd take this on board and do not become preoccupied with providing mitigation that in their view looks good. HS2 Ltd needs to focus on providing effective mitigation that the local community want.

A4010 Grass Embankment

31.01

I have received representations from a constituent who lives in Stoke Mandeville suggesting that to reduce the impact the Scheme will have on the village the landscape earthworks currently scheduled to end north of the A4010 Risborough Road should be extended south past the A4010. My constituent has also suggested relocating a balancing pond and access road.

31.02

I believe both the Parish Council and Stoke Mandeville Action Group will be commenting in greater detail on these proposals and I expect HS2 Ltd to examine them and if feasible include them in the Scheme. I have also included as an appendix a copy of a map my constituent has provided me with which shows the proposed changes in more detail.

St Mary's Church

32.01

The ruins of old St Mary's Church at Stoke Mandeville will be destroyed by HS2 and the Parish Council want to see the human remains and any artefacts that are excavated during construction moved to a vault within the village which is paid for by HS2 Ltd. I strongly support this proposal. It is vital that HS2 Ltd seeks to maintain the heritage of the local area as much as possible. Local people should not be expected to live with both HS2 Ltd and the destruction of local history.

Hawkslade, Walton Court and West Aylesbury

Introduction

33.01

Hawkslade lies within Stoke Mandeville parish; Walton Court and the rest of western Aylesbury within the area covered by Aylesbury Town Council. I do not believe anyone in the Department for Transport or HS2 Ltd would dispute that these parts of Aylesbury are among the worst affected areas on the entire phase one route. HS2 Ltd's noise maps show hundreds of properties being affected by noise from the line despite the introduction of five metre high noise barriers. Some homes are just 125m from the proposed route and I have continually raised with both the Secretary of State and HS2 Ltd the need for the best possible mitigation in this area of Aylesbury.

33.02

People in Aylesbury and Fairford Leys have asked why this section of the route cannot be put into a tunnel. I understand HS2 Ltd's argument that the flood plain to the West of Aylesbury would make such an approach both technically challenging and financially very costly, but that reinforces the need for the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd to bring forward alternative proposals on mitigation to persuade my constituents that their interests are not simply being ignored.

Mitigation and HS2 Ltd's Failings

34.01

I was extremely disappointed that despite HS2 Ltd being aware of the need to provide significant mitigation in this area for almost four years they have, as of yet, been unable to come up with adequate mitigation measures for this area.

34.02

In a recent meeting with representatives from Stoke Mandeville Parish Council, I was told HS2 Ltd had said to the Parish Council at a bilateral meeting that they had run out of ideas on how to mitigate the impact of HS2 in the Hawkslade area. I was astonished to hear this. It was the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd who decided to move the original recommended line of route closer to Aylesbury in order to protect Hartwell House. Lord Adonis, the then Transport Secretary, told me this in March 2010. I am all in favour of limiting the impact on Hartwell House, but I would have expected the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd to have done their homework on how to mitigate the impact on West Aylesbury before making that decision. For us to be almost four years into this project and have no adequate mitigation measures in place is unacceptable.

34.03

My constituents are now asking whether the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd have made a basic design mistake by routing a proposed railway line too close to a town for effective mitigation to be possible. If HS2 Ltd are unable to produce further mitigation measures which reduce the impact of the railway on this area of Aylesbury, this view inevitably will gain more support. If it is not possible to include further mitigation measures in this area all property owners who suffer a loss that can be attributed to HS2 should be provided with full compensation for this loss.

Fairford Leys

35.01

The residential estate of Fairford Leys is part of Aylesbury but is a parish (Coldharbour Parish) in its own right. The impact of HS2 would be felt particularly along the western edge of the estate. Residents there feel that their interests have been overlooked by HS2 Ltd and many people resent the fact that the route was realigned away from Hartwell to an alignment closer to Fairford Leys.

35.02

For local residents the key issues are noise and visual intrusion which they believe would best be solved by the introduction of a tunnel past Aylesbury. As with Hawkslade and Walton Court, the priority here should be for HS2 Ltd to come forward with proposals for mitigation which will be both effective and command local support. Several constituents have said to me that they are concerned by how the Thame Valley Viaduct will look and I would expect HS2 Ltd to ensure that the viaduct is in keeping with the local area and is designed to the highest possible standards.

35.03

I am disappointed that HS2 Ltd are proposing to acquire the AVDC playing fields close to the A418 Oxford Road during construction and that the current plans show the playing fields being used for grassland habitat creation following construction of HS2.

35.04

These playing fields are well used by the local community and the permanent loss of this facility would be unacceptable. A significant number of constituents have contacted me to also express their concerns that the playing fields will be permanently lost. HS2 Ltd need to provide an alternative

site while the playing fields are unusable and should either ensure the playing fields are restored, in consultation with the local community, following construction, or else pay for an equivalent recreational facility in this part of the town.

35.05

In planning its planting, HS2 Ltd should work on the basis that residents will want and deserve relief from noise and visual intrusion as soon as possible. Semi-mature trees would be better than saplings. In some locations, fast-growing conifers or fences might be used in the short to medium term, with a plan for their removal once native deciduous trees had grown sufficiently behind them. When I met HS2 Ltd to discuss the Environmental Statement I asked them about the possibility of planting trees next to the proposed route rather than further away. This idea had first been raised with me by a member of Coldharbour Parish Council. HS2 Ltd told me that there is no engineering reason why trees could not be planted very close to the route and said they would be happy to speak to Coldharbour Parish Council to discuss any specific proposals they had. I hope a meeting can take place as soon as possible.

Constituency Wide Issues

Maintenance Loop

Stoke Mandeville

36.01

Stoke Mandeville Action Group and the Parish Council told me that they are concerned by the operational impact that the maintenance loop will have on Stoke Mandeville. Specifically they have said they do not want the maintenance loop to become an alternative maintenance site along the lines of the one proposed for Calvert. Having spoken to HS2 Ltd about this matter they have assured me this will not be the case and I hope this message is also conveyed to local people.

36.02

Quite rightly, both the action group and Parish Council have said to me that they expect HS2 Ltd to ensure that the residents of Stoke Mandeville are given the best possible mitigation to ensure that the impact of the maintenance loop on their lives is limited as much as is technically possible .

36.03

HS2 Ltd told the Stoke Mandeville & Aylesbury Community Forum that lighting would be required at the maintenance loop for security and safety reasons. Both the action group and the Parish Council accept the need for lighting, however, they were very clear when speaking to me that they expect this lighting to be low level and turned off during daylight hours. It should be designed to minimise the adverse impact on residents' ability to sleep and on the rural character of the area.

36.04

HS2 Ltd told me during a recent meeting that the maintenance trains operating on the line would not be high speed. However, clearly the introduction of a maintenance loop will result in increased noise pollution especially at night when the maintenance trains are due to operate. My constituents have said to me that they expect the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd to ensure that local residents are not adversely affected by noise. It is also important that excess noise is not caused unnecessarily by, for example, drivers of the maintenance trains leaving the train engines running in Winter before they set off. HS2 Ltd should put in place a plan for effective physical barriers, such as earth bunds and tree plantations to reduce noise impacts. They should also to put in place and enforce a rigorous code of practice to govern operating arrangements.

36.05

Maintenance of the HS2 track will take place at night. This places a particular responsibility on HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport to plan now how that can be done with as little disruption as possible to the lives of local people. It is important that reasonable hours of work are specified. For example, while maintenance on the track may be taking place at 3am I do not believe it would be appropriate for a shift to be starting at this time. The arrival and departure of people from the maintenance loop at unsociable hours would cause disturbance and concern in the local community. Given the noisiest period of activity at the maintenance loop will be when either a train or people are leaving or arriving it is important that both these events occur, where possible, in either the early evening or early morning rather than in the middle of the night.

36.06

HS2 Ltd have confirmed that the maintenance loop would not be in use every day and I am pleased that they have been able to provide this clarity to the local community. However, HS2 Ltd also said that the loop could be in use for several nights in a row. The operator of the maintenance trains should be required to inform local people when it is expected to be in use, perhaps through a notice outside the entrance to the maintenance loop and email notification to the Parish Council and residents living close by. Clearly such arrangements would need to include a margin for flexibility in case of emergency work being required, but most maintenance work will be carefully scheduled, and a duty to tell local residents about those plans ought not to pose any difficulty for a competent and responsible management.

36.07

The maintenance loop entrance will potentially give criminals wishing to vandalise or steal from the railway access to the HS2 track. However, it is important that security is maintained at the maintenance loop without affecting local people. Stoke Mandeville Parish Council told me they would not be in favour of rolling patrols or sentries near the maintenance loop. Whoever is responsible for security should consider installing CCTV and proximity detectors which when activated automatically alert the police.

Wendover

37.01

Wendover HS2, the Wendover Society and Wendover Parish Council have all said to me that they would like to see the maintenance loop moved from its current location to either Denham or Old Oak Common which they believe are more suitable locations. Wendover HS2 have produced a detailed paper on why they believe the maintenance loop should be and could be moved and I have included this in an appendix at the end of my response. I would expect HS2 Ltd to seriously consider this paper and respond to Wendover HS2.

A Bored Tunnel through the Entire Chilterns AONB

38.01

Since the previous Secretary of State announced the Department for Transport's intention to proceed with HS2, a group of local engineers from the Chilterns Ridges Action Group (CRAG) have developed a proposal for a tunnel through the entire AONB, aside from a small 500m gap at one of two locations, one of which is Durham Farm at Wendover Dean. Residents of Wendover Dean, Dunsmore and Wendover strongly support of the proposals in principle. Residents of Stoke Mandeville, while supporting the principle of an extended tunnel, oppose a northward extension to the Wendover tunnel, bored or otherwise, towards their village. I support the principle of additional

tunnelling in the Chilterns AONB. It is important to continue to seek local agreement on where the portal north of Wendover should lie.

38.02

My constituents have also highlighted a report produced by Peter Brett Associates which examines the non market effects of HS2 in the Chilterns AONB. The report states if the non market costs, including the impact the HS2 scheme would have on tourism, are taken into account constructing a fully bored tunnel through the Chilterns AONB could save hundreds of millions of pounds. It is important that all the costs and benefits of proposals for mitigation are considered and I am disappointed that HS2 Ltd have described the report as “guff and nonsense¹” This kind of offensive and dismissive language adds to the already widespread cynicism amongst local people about the seriousness HS2 Ltd is prepared to listen to their concerns .

38.03

The consideration of non market effects would be in line with the Treasury’s Green Book guidance which states:

Costs and benefits that have not been valued should also be appraised; they should not be ignored simply because they cannot easily be valued. All costs and benefits must therefore be clearly described in an appraisal, and should be quantified where this is possible and meaningful.²

Wendover, Wendover Dean & Dunsmore

39.01

Residents in Wendover, Wendover Dean and Dunsmore strongly support the CRAG bored tunnel proposal as they believe it will provide mitigation for the whole AONB without causing disruption to places like Stoke Mandeville which are just outside the boundary of the AONB.

39.02

However, the residents of Wendover Dean & Dunsmore have said to me that they while in principle they support an extended bored tunnel, they would want CRAG to provide them with further information about the impact a gap there would have, before confirming support for the CRAG scheme which includes a gap at Durham Farm.

39.03

Wendover residents have also said to me that while ideally they want the bored tunnel portal to be located at chainage 55.800, should a bored tunnel portal have to be located closer to Wendover there should be seamless transfer into a green tunnel until chainage 55.800. Wendover HS2, the Wendover Society and Wendover Parish Council have also all said to me that they would not support and would likely petition against any proposal that results in a open bored tunnel portal being located in close proximity to the village due to the impact this would have on Wendover both during construction and operation of HS2.

39.04

HS2 Ltd have rejected CRAG’s proposal on cost grounds originally claiming it would cost around £400 million more than the current proposal. However, this figure has now been revised down to around £350 million. What has rightly left local residents feeling angry and frustrated is that HS2 Ltd have said that cost is the sole reason for not proceeding with a tunnel, but have then refused to provide CRAG with a more detailed cost breakdown citing commercial confidentiality. I find HS2 Ltd’s

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/road-and-rail-transport/10485153/HS2-tunnel-through-Chilterns-could-save-money.html>

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220541/green_book_complete.pdf page 34

reasoning unpersuasive. I appreciate HS2 Ltd wants to ensure it does not disadvantage itself in the tendering process, however, the refusal to release this data suggests to local people that HS2 Ltd has something to hide as the tendering process is several years away. While releasing the data would not end opposition to HS2 in Buckinghamshire, it would help dispel the view that HS2 Ltd is withholding information from those affected by the scheme.

39.05

There are surely ways round this problem, such as requiring the members of CRAG to sign confidentiality agreements which could include a financial penalty in case of breach. The members of CRAG that I have met are reasonable and mature people, with considerable professional, business and technical experience of their own. I am certain that they could be trusted to abide by a confidentiality agreement.

Stoke Mandeville

40.01

Both the Parish Council and action group along with individual residents have made it clear to me that they would not support any extension of the tunnel (bored or green) at Wendover towards Stoke Mandeville. They argue that should the tunnel be extended, not only would Stoke Mandeville suffer from increased noise, due to the fact HS2 would be leaving a tunnel close to the village, but if the tunnel was bored they would also have to suffer from years of construction with no benefits for the area at the end.

40.02

However, both the Stoke Mandeville Action Group and Parish Council have told me that they are happy to support CRAG's proposal should the tunnel portal (bored or green) not move any closer to Stoke Mandeville and remains in its current location of chainage 55.050.

Conclusion

41.01

I support the principle of extra tunnelling. Subject to the point made at 40.02 above, there is firm local support for additional tunnelling south of Wendover. The CRAG proposal, while providing for a gap at Durham Farm, would also do away with the need for a viaduct and embankment at Wendover Dean. Where there is local disagreement is over the location of the tunnel portal north of Wendover.

41.02

My conclusion from a number of conversations with HS2 Ltd and Department for Transport Ministers is that their opposition to a bored tunnel under the entire AONB derives from their assessment of the probable cost rather than from any consideration of the differences between campaigners in Wendover and Stoke Mandeville respectively. If the question of cost could be overcome, I believe that any attempt to persuade both villages of a common approach would need to focus on detailed discussion of two issues. The first would be the noise impact of trains leaving the tunnel exit. Would the noise have the impact on Stoke Mandeville residents that they fear? The second issue would be the impact of construction work. I think it is accepted that a longer bored tunnel would mean a significantly longer construction period, of perhaps as much as eight years, and a much bigger area being required at the northern end of the bored tunnel as a construction depot and worksite. In the case of a tunnel that extended to Nash Lee Lane, that site would have to be in Stoke Mandeville. If the tunnel ended at the point now planned for the northern end of the green tunnel, the site would be in Wendover. Neither community wants such works.

The National Trust Proposals

42.01

The National Trust has devised mitigation proposals from Stoke Mandeville all the way to Waddesdon and I was encouraged by the comments HS2 Ltd have made on them in both the Draft Environmental Statement and in meetings with me and the local community.

42.02

Therefore I was disappointed to see that HS2 Ltd have not included a land bridge in their proposed design despite the encouraging comments they have made for well over a year on the National Trust's proposals. HS2 Ltd have decided not to include a land bridge because it would increase the land take from a 60 metre corridor to a 100 metre corridor. The National Trust have said to me that while this may be correct the short term pain of increased land take is more than outweighed by the environmental benefits provided by the land bridge once it is in place.

42.03

The National Trust has told me that the current mitigation proposals do not do enough to protect local heritage including Hartwell House or the ruins of St Mary's Church at Stoke Mandeville. It is vital that HS2 Ltd seeks to maintain the heritage of the local area as much as possible. Local people should not be expected to live with both HS2 and the destruction of local history as well.

42.04

The National Trust's proposals besides including land bridges, also include landscaping and tree planting for visual screening. When the National Trust came to brief me on their mitigation proposals I was impressed by the detail and realistic nature of their plans. This is exactly the kind of mitigation that HS2 say they are seeking to include in the final design as it could be included in the engineering phase of design work and so should not cause a significant increase in the overall cost of the project.

42.05

When I have spoken to the local community about the National Trust's proposals they are widely supported from Stoke Mandeville right through to Fairford Leys and I see no reason why HS2 Ltd cannot include them in the final design and I urge them to do so.

Noise

Peak & Baseline Data

43.01

My constituents were extremely disappointed that HS2 Ltd did not include in Volume Two of the Environmental Statement either peak noise data or detailed measures of current baseline noise levels. One of the biggest fears of my constituents is the noise that HS2 trains will make as they pass and the fact that Volume Two of the Environmental Statement did not make reference to the existence of peak noise or detailed baseline data in Volume Five does nothing to allay the main fear of my constituents

43.02

One of HS2 Ltd's noise experts told me at the Wendover Information Event on 29 June 2013 for the Draft Environmental Statement that HS2 Ltd is in a position to be able to produce peak noise contour maps. However, this information has now been contradicted by HS2 Ltd who have stated to me in writing that:

Maximum sound levels from a train will occur at a single point in space and time, which will change location with time as the train is moving. Hence, whilst it is possible to predict the maximum level for a train pass at a given point, it is not possible to represent this as a contour using an empirical prediction method. In contrast to the accepted procedures that exist for calculation of sound contours for equivalent continuous sound levels there is no established methodology for the creation of maximum sound levels contours from high speed trains.

43.03

Clearly the noise expert or HS2 Ltd is wrong and I am concerned by this contradiction which does nothing to convince my constituents that they should give any credit to reassurances provided by HS2 Ltd on the impact HS2 will have on the local area.

43.04

HS2 Ltd has explained to me that the way they have released the data in Volume Two of the Environmental Statement is accepted by organisations like the World Health Organisation as the best method of doing so. However, I agree with my constituents that highlighting the location in the Environmental Statement of the peak noise information would have been useful and provided a much more complete picture of the impact HS2 will have on the local area.

43.05

In addition, while the current noise maps are welcome it is difficult to compare them with the current noise level at a given location as the maps only show noise from HS2 and do not take into account background ambient noise. Without being able to compare before and after HS2 noise it is nearly impossible to determine what the true impact of HS2 will be.

Noise Limits

44.01

Wendover HS2 have suggested to me that once constructed HS2 should be subject to legally enforceable noise limits which, if breached, trigger a fine to be paid to the relevant local Parish Council. Wendover HS2 have suggested using the information provided by HS2 Ltd for how loud HS2 will be once it is operating as the noise threshold limit. If this noise limit was put in place it would simply enshrine into law HS2 Ltd's predicted noise impact of HS2 and therefore I see no reason why HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport cannot support this proposal.

Speed of HS2

45.01

Several constituents have suggested to me that HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport should consider reducing the speed of HS2 by around 40kph once it leaves the Wendover Green Tunnel until it passes the northern edge of Aylesbury. My constituents have said this would provide additional noise mitigation, as HS2 is travelling at a slower speed, but would not result in any additional cost to the project. I would be interested to know what noise assessments either the Department for Transport or HS2 Ltd have made on the noise impact of a train travelling on the proposed route at 320 kph rather than at 360 or 400 kph.

Day One Noise Level

46.01

HS2 Ltd have confirmed that the Environmental Statement noise maps show the predicted noise impact from day one of HS2 becoming operational, however, my constituents are concerned that this noise impact will only get worse over time as both trains and infrastructure age.

46.02

When I asked HS2 Ltd whether the noise impact of HS2 would increase during the operational lifespan of the railway I was concerned that they were unable to provide me with a definitive answer. While it is certainly the case that train and railway technology may improve while HS2 is operational, which may result in a lower noise impact, I would still have expected HS2 Ltd to have been able to provide me with an answer to this question on the working assumption that there would be no such technical improvements. I will be seeking further clarification on this matter.

Pantograph Noise

47.01

HS2 Ltd have said in the Environmental Statement that they will reduce the noise from the pantograph on HS2 by using technology that is already available in Asia. However, my constituents have said to me that HS2 Ltd has provided no further information (like what this technology is) to allow them to test and challenge HS2 Ltd's assumptions on this issue.

47.02

One constituent also said to me that from information he has obtained from Freedom of Information Requests he believes HS2 Ltd have not yet been able to mitigate the full impact of noise from the pantograph which on some sections of the line, due to the pantograph being located 8 metres above the railway, would not be mitigated by the mitigation measures that are currently proposed.

47.03

It is unacceptable for HS2 Ltd to make sweeping statements about reducing the noise impact of HS2 without providing the relevant evidence. I hope the appointment of Sir David Higgins results in a culture change at HS2 Ltd with regards to how they communicate with those affected by the scheme.

Code of Construction Practice

48.01

The universal opinion of my constituents is that the Code of Construction Practice needs to be similar to the one put in place for London 2012 often referred to as 'exemplar standard'. Although HS2 Ltd have told me that they intend to use London 2012 as their model and that they have employed the individual who wrote the London 2012 Code of Construction Practice to help create the Code of Construction Practice for HS2 their actual proposals seem to fall short of that high standard. Indeed, the term 'exemplar standard' has not, so far as I am aware, been used by HS2 Ltd.

48.02

The Chilterns Conservation Board have said to me that they are concerned by the terms "reasonably practical or otherwise permitted" which suggests in certain areas HS2 Ltd will not be implementing the best possible standards.

48.03

My constituents have expressed their concerns to me that while HS2 Ltd commit to working hours being between 8am and 6pm they then insert a series of exceptions to this time. For example, HS2 Ltd confirm that they will require a set up and close down hour either side of the core working hours and certain activities, including track laying, can even take place outside of this 12 hour window. HS2 appears to be planning longer set-up and close-down periods than were permitted for London 2012.

48.04

I was pleased to learn that HS2 Ltd does not intend to lay track at unsociable hours in places like Wendover or other populated areas and will also where possible avoid undertaking activities like concrete pouring through the night. HS2 Ltd told me that the precise details of working hours for each area would be included in the Local Environment Management Plans. However, these will not be in place until after the Hybrid Bill. Therefore, HS2 Ltd are asking people in places like Wendover, Stoke Mandeville and Aylesbury to continue to live with the uncertainty of when exactly construction will be taking place. I would urge HS2 Ltd to try and provide further details as soon as possible and to consult not only with local authorities but local communities when drawing up the Local Environment Management Plans.

48.05

When I met local action groups in my constituency the desire for independent monitoring during construction of HS2 was obvious. Contractors will presumably have financial penalty clauses in their contracts as an incentive to complete work on time. For that reason, they are not the people who should be in charge of supervising or enforcing the Code. There should be independent monitoring panels which should include at least one representative from the local community to ensure their voice is heard. It would also be important for the monitoring panel, as one of my constituents put it, to have teeth and to be able to force those constructing HS2 to stop work if they were found to be in breach of the Code of Construction Practice or Local Management Plan until the issue had been rectified.

48.06

In addition, there are many examples in the Code of Construction Practice where HS2 Ltd has said they will introduce ameliorative measures, for example to maintain existing irrigation. However, no specifics of how HS2 Ltd will do this are included. While I appreciate different measures may be used in different areas I would expect HS2 Ltd to be able to give some examples to provide greater clarity.

Delivery Routes to Construction Sites

49.01

As HS2 is not being constructed anywhere near any major transport corridors like the M40 the impact of construction traffic on the local area will be significant. HS2 Ltd will be using the A413 and A4010 extensively and this is clearly going to cause disruption. It is important that HS2 Ltd delivers to construction sites outside both the morning and evening peaks. I would suggest that precise delivery times to each construction site are detailed in the Local Environment Plans and that the local community are consulted on the proposed delivery times. Clearly the local community will have a better idea than HS2 Ltd, even after their traffic surveys, of traffic patterns in the local area.

49.02

One of my constituents has suggested to me that once construction of HS2 is completed either HS2 Ltd or the Department for Transport should pay for the A413 and A4010 to be resurfaced due to the damage that will be caused by the increased use during the construction of HS2. I fully support this

idea and will be lobbying on behalf of my constituents both the Secretary of State for Transport and HS2 Ltd to encourage them to make this commitment to the local community.

49.03

I was surprised to see that HS2 Ltd is proposing to have between 710 and 730 HGVs per day entering (and presumably leaving) the A418 Oxford Road Construction Compound during peak construction periods. Given the high level of traffic on the A418 I simply do not believe it will be possible for HS2 Ltd to achieve this without resorting to allowing deliveries to the compound at unsociable hours which I am certain would be resisted by the local community.

49.04

I was surprised to learn that HS2 Ltd has not yet decided whether to use the Chiltern Line in any way during construction. My constituents were also surprised and some have suggested that the use of the Chiltern Line would be one way of reducing the impact of building HS2 on the local road network. By contrast, residents of London Road, Wendover have said to me they do not want HS2 Ltd to use the Chiltern Line during construction.

49.05

I am aware from discussions that took place at both Community Forums in my constituency that HS2 Ltd have looked at the feasibility of using the Chiltern Line either for the delivery of materials or the removal of spoil. Therefore, I do not understand why HS2 Ltd are yet to reach a decision on whether to use the Chiltern Line. I hope HS2 Ltd can provide certainty on this issue as soon as possible.

Local Main Roads

50.01

HS2 Ltd's planned construction works would involve cutting across three of the main access roads into Aylesbury: the A413 at Wendover, A4010 at Stoke Mandeville and A413 Oxford Road near Sedrup. All three of these roads are very busy and congested at peak hours with long queues into and out of the town being routine. A very large number of businesses depend on both staff and customers being able to get access to their premises. HS2 Ltd should plan its construction work carefully to limit as much as is possible the adverse economic impact that construction will have, particularly on Aylesbury, but on Wendover and Stoke Mandeville too.

50.02

I was shocked to learn that the South Central Ambulance Trust are currently forecasting that the construction of HS2 could result in a significant delay to their response time due to the impact HS2 construction will have on the A413, A4010 and A418. I was even more surprised to discover that it appears HS2 Ltd are yet to seriously engage with either the local NHS Trust or Ambulance Service on this matter. It would be morally indefensible if construction of HS2 resulted in the death of an individual or individuals due to increased ambulance response times.

Electricity Pylons

51.01

I was pleased National Grid were able to confirm when I met them that there are no plans to demolish or compulsorily purchase any homes in my constituency as a result of the work they will need to undertake as a result of HS2 being constructed. HS2 Ltd's appalling communications with residents of the Willows, an area of Aylesbury where electrical cable work is required, had initially cast doubt on this matter and I am pleased to have received clarification from National Grid.

51.02

I have long argued with both the Secretary of State for Transport and HS2 Ltd that when electricity lines are replaced following construction of HS2 these should be placed underground. Therefore, I was disappointed to learn that HS2 Ltd plans to reinstate the lines on pylons. When I challenged HS2 Ltd on why they had taken this decision I was told that it was in fact National Grid that had taken the decision to reinstate the lines on pylons. However, National Grid told me that while there are issues surrounding placing cables underground, including increased land take and a longer construction period, it would be possible to place realigned or reinstated electrical cables underground. National Grid also told me that HS2 Ltd would be paying for all work they undertake on electrical cables as a result of construction of HS2 and that placing lines underground would cost around ten times more than reinstating them on overhead cables but if HS2 Ltd paid for the work they would be able to place the cables underground.

51.03

I am extremely disappointed that HS2 Ltd appears to have not provided me with the full picture on this matter and I will be raising this matter with HS2 Ltd and the Secretary of State for Transport at the earliest opportunity. HS2 Ltd have a responsibility to justify the decisions they make to Parliament, local authorities and citizens and it is unacceptable for HS2 Ltd to suggest that National Grid have made this decision when this is not the case. If I had not met National Grid to discuss this matter I wonder when the full picture would have become apparent.

51.04

However, it is important to state that while I and many of my constituents are in favour of these cables being placed underground we would not want this to take place at the expense of mitigation against HS2, which is clearly the priority.

Restoration of rural environment post-construction

52.01

Kent County Council told me that with hindsight one of the things they most regretted about HS1 was that they had not pressed the Department for Transport for an assurance that country lanes that had been widened to carry construction traffic or where bridges had been built over the railway would be restored to their original rural character after construction work was complete. As a result, many lanes were left far too wide for the local traffic that they carry, with ugly wide bridges over the railway line and a character overall that was appropriate for a main road but not a small lane. The Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd should do better in the case of HS2. Restoration would probably mean derogating from some of Department for Transport's usual standard practices but it would be the right and just approach to take.

Community Funds

53.01

In Kent, a small pot of money was allocated from which to fund community projects to benefit villages who had suffered from the building and operation of HS1. The same principle should be applied in the case of HS2 and in my view, a separate community fund should be established by HS2 Ltd for the benefit of each parish along the route. I have raised this matter with the Secretary of State for Transport and hope he introduces a community fund as soon as possible.

Conclusion

54.01

Clearly if the HS2 scheme goes ahead as currently proposed it will have a severe effect on my constituency. While the Environmental Statement is a welcome step in terms of introducing mitigation measures a large number of problems remain unresolved I expect HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport to take into account the views of local people that have been expressed in both my and their own responses and make changes accordingly.

Appendix

Item A

HS2 Maintenance Loop and a Chiltern tunnel – A Wendover perspective

Item B

Map provided by a constituent showing changes they would like to see made to the Scheme