

PETITION against the

High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill

**THE PETITION OF THE SOMERS TOWN
NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

Declares that:

1. *The petitioner is specially and directly adversely affected by the whole Bill.*
2. *Your petitioner*

The petitioner is Somers Town Neighbourhood Forum, constituted and approved by LB Camden to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan as set out under the Localism Act 2011.

The petitioner's neighbourhood boundaries include land safeguarded by HS2 that will directly and specially impact on your petitioner's members' homes, livelihoods and health. Somers Town has a unique and diverse community. At 14.4%, the proportion of school-aged children is higher than the Camden average of 10.1%. It has a higher proportion of residents who are Bangladeshi (18.8% compared to 5.7%) and Black African (10.7% compared to 4.9%) than Camden as a whole. Unemployment is at 10.9% for the Somers Town CIP area and the average household income is some £10,000 or so below the Camden average. Life expectancy is 10 years less than in wealthier parts of the Borough. It is a designated 20mph Home Zone. Within the boundary area are two nurseries, four primary schools (three with attached nurseries) and two secondary schools.

The boundary area includes Amptill Estate, and the petitioner supports the concerns raised by Amptill Estate Tenants and Residents Association.

The following outlines a range of significant negative impacts facing residents both in the wider area and those faced by Somers Town residents specifically.

3. *Your petitioner's concerns are*

GENERAL

Promoter assurances

The petitioner feels that the assurances set out by the promoter in a letter to LB Camden dated 23 February 2016, fall far short of what is required to adequately tackle a range of major issues. Flowing from these assurances, the promoter undertook to carry out a number of studies into transporting construction materials and spoil by rail rather than road, into air quality and into altering the height of Hampstead Road Bridge. None of these studies is available to the petitioner at this time, so that it is possible that our 'asks' may need review once the contents and implications of the studies have been assimilated.

Euston Station design

The petitioner will be severely impacted unless a solution for the design of Euston Station is embraced that integrates high speed and classic rail, as well as Crossrail 2. Without this integrated approach, a new station for Crossrail 2 will be built in Somers Town, thereby destroying around 130 homes and 17 businesses and making life for hundreds of residents unbearable. Community facilities in the area would also be destroyed. It is essential for the health and wellbeing of Somers Town residents that an integrated station design is embraced.

Old Oak Common

To ease construction and limit disruption at Euston for all stakeholders, the petitioner urges a full independent investigation of Old Oak Common as a temporary terminus.

Dispute arbitration

The petitioner supports the appointment of an Independent Assessor funded by, but totally independent of, HS2 Ltd. Access to dispute arbitration with the power of enforcement to adjudicate fairly is vital. Recruitment of such a post should be undertaken prior to the beginning of any work and continue throughout the project.

Air quality

The petitioner echoes the concerns articulated by the House of Commons HS2 Select Committee in their February Report:

'We want monitoring of air quality to feed into an assessment of whether re-housing should occur in cases where air quality deteriorates. This should keep in mind an aspiration of improving the baseline air quality in Camden. The current position is clearly unsatisfactory'. (p.60, para 232)

The agreements between HS2 Ltd and Camden Council on air quality make no provision for any residents' involvement. Dozens of petitions to the House of Commons included mitigation concerns about air quality and they remain unaddressed. The petitioner asks for resident groups to be accorded a formal interface with HS2 Ltd (separate from Camden Council's) over the location of air quality monitoring stations, an obligation of public access to the output data in real time with community groups empowered, given serious exceedances, to stop demolition/construction work until acceptable remedial measures have been put in place.

Spoil and construction materials

Spoil removal, plant, machinery and construction material should be transported by rail to reduce traffic congestion that further deteriorates air quality. This in turn increases risks of respiratory disease. The petitioner understands results of a study commissioned by HS2 Ltd to assess the viability of transporting spoil and materials by rail are imminent and may be publically available before the petitioner is called to give evidence. These conclusions may alter what is requested.

Traffic congestion

Road and lane closures, bridge demolition and traffic diversions will increase congestion giving rise to deterioration of air quality and increased risk of road traffic accidents.

HGV routes

HGV haul routes should be significantly reduced and kept to a minimum and limited to main roads unless demonstrably impossible. Because of the serious associated health risks all HS2-generated traffic must meet the most up-to-date standards for low emissions.

Traffic Management Plans

The petitioner believes that a joint TfL, HS2 Ltd and LBC Traffic Management Plan will be published shortly. However, there remains a high degree of concern that the area could well suffer terminal gridlock. To reassure local people and test the worst-case scenario, the petitioner requests a simulation to mimic the situation when roads and bridges are put under most stress to demonstrate viability of the plan with emergency service input.

Compensation

The petitioner concurs with the contents of the LB Camden Petition with regard to compensation and agrees that the current situation is totally unsatisfactory. We draw attention to the statement made in their final report by members of the House of Commons HS2 Select Committee that:

'Camden is exceptional and needs special treatment. Many residents are going to have to put up with disturbance on a scale beyond the experience in most other locations.' (para 237)

The petitioner would urge therefore that at least the equivalent compensation proposals are available to residents in Camden as are available to residents in rural areas. The petitioner concurs with LB Camden that compensation should not only be limited to property owners but also all those who will be badly affected by the works.

Construction impacts

Specified limits should be agreed in advance of work commencing and must be imposed to reduce disruption and nuisance from a range of impacts including noise, air pollution, vibration, dust and particulates, hours of work, etc. All breaches should be dealt with swiftly and appropriate remedial action taken. Serious disruption over an extended period should attract monetary compensation.

Loss of open space

Assurances provided by the promoter to LB Camden do not go far enough in mitigating loss. There should be no overall loss of open space. We do not consider replacement proposals to be adequate in terms of accessibility, quality or quantity.

Loss of trees

Assurances provided by the promoter to LB Camden do not go far enough in mitigating loss. Current replacement plans are wholly inadequate in terms of replacement numbers, size and maturity.

Cumulative impacts

Most residents in the Euston area, including Somers Town residents, will be subject to multiple adverse impacts from the construction of the scheme. These must be fully taken into account so that compensation is commensurate with cumulative impacts

SITE-SPECIFIC

Maria Fidelis School

The petitioner supports LB Camden in its request that the consolidation of Maria Fidelis School onto one site at Drummond Crescent/Phoenix Road is done as quickly and smoothly as possible, to minimise the disruption to the academic lives of pupils and to limit the impacts on the health of students and staff.

The petition requests that the construction impact limits set for the HS2 works are matched by those for the Maria Fidelis works. The environmental impacts of the new school build – which is necessitated by HS2 – need to be included in HS2 figures.

Noise

Monitoring of noise levels needs to take place in those homes and schools that will be badly impacted by construction works and traffic. In addition to external monitoring, internal noise levels within homes and schools should not exceed safe levels. Should these be exceeded those impacted will need rehousing as excessive noise can cause permanent hearing loss.

Utility works

Main utility works are planned for Chalton Street and Phoenix Road. These utility works will disrupt businesses, including the Chalton Street market. The petitioner requests that measures are put in place to safeguard the long-term viability of the market.

Hundreds of pupils travel to school along Chalton Street and Phoenix Road every day. The petitioner requests that measures are put in place to maintain safe routes to school.

The petitioner requests that any accidental damage to utility services will be remedied immediately and timely financial penalties made payable to all residents who endure loss of any service.

Taxi rank

The use of Drummond Crescent and Doric Way as a temporary taxi stand is totally unsuitable for a residential area with already unacceptably poor air quality. The petitioner requests that that the promoter comes up with an alternative solution.

Phoenix Road

The petitioner is aware that as part of the assurances secured by LB Camden, a linear park is to be created along Phoenix Road, improving east-west links between Euston and St Pancras stations. While the petitioner welcomes “greening” opportunities in the area, the petitioner is concerned about the loss of parking, including disabled parking, along the route. The route includes a church, two schools and an organisation that protects the rights of people with disabilities. Proper access to these organisations, as well as to homes, needs to be maintained and residential parking needs to be reprovided in the area.

Loss of open space/playground

The petitioner notes the proposed loss of part of Lancing Street/Churchway Estate play area. Few homes in Somers Town have access to private gardens and this loss, when combined with the loss of the nearby Euston Square Gardens, will impact greatly on children in West Somers Town. The petitioner requests that during any construction works, and in addition to relocated play equipment to an adjacent area, the promoter fund opportunities for local children and young people to play and exercise in less polluted areas.

Damage to landscaping and environment

Any environmental damage must be made good in a timely fashion and shrubbery of equal quality provided as replacement in agreement with local community. There should be no loss of trees. In particular, every protection should be afforded to the trees along Chalton Street and Phoenix Road during proposed utility works.

Loss of parking bays

Plans by the promoter are likely to involve a significant loss of allocated resident parking bay facilities, including disabled parking facilities, in West Somers Town. The promoter must assume responsibility to identify suitable accessible replacement parking bays in close proximity to existing bays. Current plans also involve the loss of loading bays and pay and display bays in Eversholt Street and Lancing Street. The promoter requests that alternative provision be found so that local businesses can continue to function.

Pest control

Adequate pest control measures must be put in place and strictly monitored, not only to deter pests through good housekeeping around satellite compounds, but also to deal with displaced colonies of rats disturbed during excavation and construction. Local residents, businesses, schools and other organisations should not have to bear the cost of additional pest control measures.

Japanese knotweed

An effective plan to ensure the eradication, prevention and spread of Japanese knotweed known to be prevalent and arising from the cutting wall is urgently required.

Code of Construction Practice

Your petitioner has concerns that the use of modifiers, such as 'where reasonably practical', will exonerate the promoter from addressing problems which residents consider need adequate mitigation/speedy action. We request that these terms are clearly defined and a final arbitrator of "reasonableness" identified. Without clearly defined penalties for failure to comply with the CoCP we believe there will be no incentive to meet agreed terms and regulations that could therefore be breached at will.

Working hours

Blanket permissions for night working should not be granted. Given the health impacts on local communities, the Approved Undertaker must make specific application on a case-by-case basis for night working to LB Camden as the planning authority. The petitioner is particularly concerned about proposed 24-hour working at the Lancing Street compound. Out of hours working at the Royal Mail NW1 Delivery Office will also have an impact on residents and on the nearby St Mary's Church.

4. Your Petitioner

The petitioner therefore asks the House of Lords that they, or someone representing them in accordance with the rules and Standing Orders of the House, be given an opportunity to give evidence on all or some of the issues raised in this petition to the Select Committee which considers this Bill.

AND the petitioner remains, etc.

Slaney Devlin
Acting Chair
Somers Town Neighbourhood Forum