



HS2 PHASE 2b: CREWE TO MANCHESTER DRAFT HYBRID BILL

Representations of Pickmere Parish Council in relation to the ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT relating to the scheme

March 2022

Please tell us whom the organisation or group represents and, where applicable, how you assembled the views of members.

Pickmere Parish Council is the democratically elected local authority for the village. It represents the interests of the residents and businesses within the parish.

We regard our primary responsibility as being to protect the health and wellbeing of our community. HS2 Phase 2b passes through our rural parish and negatively impacts the village, so we have historically sought the views of our parishioners by holding several open meetings to solicit local concerns and to share HS2 news and decisions as they have been made public.

We have been a leading member of a cluster group of similarly affected neighbouring and nearby parishes and have lobbied and met with representatives of HS2 Ltd on issues of engagement, engineering and environment. In parallel we have close links directly and through our Ward Councillor with Cheshire East Council and Esther McVey, MP for Tatton, with whom we have raised our concerns.

News about HS2 is communicated by us via our website, noticeboards, social media, the village newsletter and word-of-mouth to some 650 residents comprising approximately 350 households all of whom are directly and profoundly affected by the construction and operation of HS2 (2b).

QUESTION 1: PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR COMMENTS ON THE NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY (NTS).

In this area – MA03/Pickmere to Agden and Hulseheath - the Proposed Scheme will require

- The demolition of 10 residential properties.
- The demolition of 7 commercial properties (including farm outbuildings).
- Permanent closure, realignment or diversion of 11 roads and 9 public rights of way.
- One main construction compound and 14 satellite construction compounds.
- 3 of these compounds will be retained for railway systems following civil engineering works
- The main compound will provide temporary accommodation for 155 workers.

It is evident that the primary proposed mitigation measures (woodland habitat creation to replace ancient woodlands and to provide connectivity between habitats; and a provision to maintain vehicle and pedestrian access to Cheshire Showground during construction of the proposed scheme, fall woefully below the measures that will be required to minimise the impact of the massive and extended construction impacts on a predominantly rural and tranquil part of the Cheshire countryside.

We are concerned at the lack of easily understandable information, at this stage, to enable non-technical people to make a full and comprehensive assessment of the impacts and mitigation required in many areas associated with the proposals. It is inexplicable that, for example, information regarding construction traffic movements, environmental issues, and construction noise impacts is so hard to find amidst the plethora of documentation.

If the NTS is intended to reassure, it fails on every level. It makes fatuous claims such as HS2 will be powered by 100% renewable energy when operating in 2041. Without any viable action plan to augment the capacity of the national grid, this claim looks ludicrous within the context of the energy crisis of March 2022.

What the NTS fails spectacularly to do is to omit any easily accessible reference to the carbon cost of construction and the concurrent destruction of woodlands and the impact on delicate ecosystems. HS2 Ltd and the DfT is, we feel, belatedly scrabbling to claim some degree of carbon credibility on construction, but the bottom line is that massive amounts of steel and concrete will add inexorable pressure onto our climate emergency. We cannot see how the project is compatible with Paris 2015 and Cop26 commitments.

HS2 logically cannot be simultaneously ultra-high speed and low carbon. More speed will always require more energy.

‘High Speed Rail’ is a real misnomer. North of Crewe, HS2 Phase 2b has to cross the unstable brinefields between Middlewich and Northwich, which means that trains **cannot** travel at high speed as they approach Manchester Airport around Rostherne Mere, nor as they leave the [fictional] airport station to travel to Manchester Piccadilly. Scant notice has been taken of the massive local impacts of this project – we feel that it is a government-led national infrastructure project with no proven need nor business case.

QUESTION 2: PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR COMMENTS ON VOLUME 1 – INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY.

It is surprising that the “Notable community facilities within the village of Pickmere include the Pickmere and Wincham Methodist Church and the Red Lion public house” fail to mention the Village Hall or Grade 2 listed buildings.

Furthermore, under “Recreation, leisure and open space” there is a reference to the Cheshire Showground, but no mention of Pickmere Lake, which is an important local wildlife site that attracts thousands of visitors annually.

Our critique continues with the over-abundance of paperwork: 370+ documents to review and cross-reference for our short (10.6km) section of track. And every library and stakeholder has received their own copies?! Not only must we sadly reflect upon the number of trees sacrificed to produce this profligate amount of paper, we also want to highlight that the sheer volume of information and the forensic work that needs to be undertaken to make any sense of it, is a masterclass in the ‘drown with information, hamper meaningful consultation’ engagement strategy.

Overall, we found this volume to be high level, vague and non-specific. The platitudes about engagement, mitigation and liaison are insultingly patronising and generally non-existent. Little notice has been afforded to local knowledge and geological experts about ground conditions and the disastrous ecological, environmental and community consequences can never be adequately mitigated. HS2 Ltd’s approach to mitigation could effectively be summarised as ‘we plant trees’. Put just as simply, this is not good enough.

QUESTION 3: PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR COMMENTS ON VOLUME 2: COMMUNITY AREA (CA) REPORTS AND MAP BOOKS. YOU ARE WELCOME TO COMMENT ON ONE OR MORE OF THE CAS LISTED BELOW.

PLEASE TICK THE COMMUNITY AREAS YOU WISH TO COMMENT ON BELOW:

MA01 - Hough to Walley's Green

MA02 - Wimboldsley to Lostock Gralam

MA03 - Pickmere to Agden and Hulsheath X

MA04 - Broomedge to Glazebrook

MA05 - Rislely to Bamfurlong

MA06 - Hulsheath to Manchester Airport

MA07 - Davenport Green to Ardwick

MA08 - Manchester Piccadilly Station

Local impacts

Local people and businesses will be greatly inconvenienced by the unnecessary stopping up of Budworth Road and several other significantly long and time-consuming diversions along wholly unsuitable country lanes such as School Lane and Frog Lane which are also to be shared with heavy plant and construction traffic. Leisure will also be affected by the diversion of local footpaths used by locals and visitors alike. The rural tranquillity and open green aspects will be irreversibly damaged for generations to come. The entire community will be impacted. The embankment carrying the trains will be up to 11m high and 2.5kms long compounded by major engineering works to build it, divert a 900mm high pressure gas pipeline and another 300mm one to Tata Chemicals. The loss of visual amenity and sound transmission caused by running trains on a raised embankment 2.5kms long will be profound. During construction and operation, the ambient noise pollution will be a significant negative impact. There are other major road realignments to Chester Road, Pickmere Lane, Flittogate Lane and School Lane, all of which will cause significant diversions, inconvenience and re-routing of traffic on unsuitable roads.

The necessary 'improvements' (i.e. widening) to our rural network of country lanes, most of which have a 7.5t weight limit, in order to accommodate HGVs and construction vehicles, will permanently blight our rural character by urbanising the character of our roads.

The impact on the mental health and wellbeing of living amidst such major works over an extended period of time should not be underestimated:

- The construction of Pickmere Embankment will take 2 years 6 months to complete
- Footpath Tabley Inferior 1/1 realigned through accommodation underbridge – 1 year 6 months to complete
- Permanent diversion of 900mm high pressure gas line – 1 year to complete
- The construction of the Arley Brook Viaduct - 1 year 6 months to complete
- The construction of Footpath Pickmere 9/1 underbridge which will take 1 year 9 months to complete
- Permanent realignment of School Lane 1 year to complete.
- Temporary realignment of Footpath Tabley Inferior 3/1 for 1 year
- Temporary realignment of Footpath Pickmere 9/1 for 1 year 6 months
- The construction of the foundations and building of the Pickmere Telecommunications site - 1 year 6 months.
- Permanent diversion of Tata 300mm gas pipeline - 9 months
- To manage civil engineering (3 years 3 months) and railway operations (1 year 3 months).
- The construction of Arley Brook Viaduct - 1 year 6 months to complete

- The construction of Restricted Byway Tabley Superior 4/1 accommodation underbridge - 1 year 6 months to complete.
- Temporary realignment of Flittogate Lane for 1 year 6 months
- Permanent realignment of Frog Lane for 6 months
- 1 year to build an auto-transformer station on Budworth Road and installation of equipment a further 1 year 3 months.

There is insufficient information about the impacts of construction traffic and HGVs on the local road networks and construction traffic routing plans: the number of HGV movements, the impact on existing traffic volumes, the anticipated delays of adding slow moving large vehicles to the road network, exacerbating existing congested roads and junctions, the potential additional mud and / or debris being brought onto the local road network by construction traffic exiting from construction areas. A robust plan to minimise construction traffic impacts and an assessment of the noise and air quality issues are significant omissions.

Serving the Community

HS2 Phase 2b will never 'serve the community' nor be of benefit to it. The construction impacts are shocking. During construction, the proposals are that our rural village is surrounded by six construction compounds which are in existence for up to 6 years and 3 months. There is no easy-to-reference data about the expected noise or planned nuisance mitigation throughout this long construction phase which will be even more disruptive, intrusive and troublesome to local residents than the eventual operation of the railway. The peacefulness and tranquillity associated with this area will be severely and negatively compromised by HS2 Phase 2b.

HS2 will not serve our community, it will destruct it – separating locals and while rail improvements are needed the consequential issues around logistics and road use create deficits for which we deserve full environmental, ecological and financial mitigation. The Environmental Statement does not even scratch the surface in this regard.

As a Parish Council we would support rail improvements for South Manchester and the North West in general. However, we strongly feel this would be better served by improving existing rail corridors and improvement to rural bus services.

We fear the plans so far will only create more congestion by reducing the flexibility of existing options to London in favour of limited options on HS2. Creating congestion at access points using satellite car parks, adding to full journey times.

HS2 is an enclosed system, if part of the line becomes inoperable (flooding will be a continued probability) London will in effect be cut off by rail from the North.

Levelling Up

Investment in our existing rail infrastructure would be of far more benefit in terms of levelling up the community and improving productivity and connectivity rather than building a single high-speed route with few stations going south. The North needs better East-West connectivity and enhanced commuter/short haul rail options. It is nonsensical that the journey from Manchester to London will be 1hr 11 mins whereas Northwich to Manchester, a very short journey, will still take more than an hour.

HS2 would do little to level up communities across the North, who would need better connections between them rather than enabling a large inflexible drain pulling individuals to London and the South East.

Value for Money

There are better options which would bring better returns for less money. In our view the current scheme does not represent value for money.

In 2017, the ground investigation and desk study hydrological and geological information for HS2 2b Environmental Statement was provided – where is the corresponding information for January 2022?

HS2 north of Crewe will involve navigating through the most challenging geology in the national project, due to the unstable salt district and the legacy of brine extraction. The true full cost of this remains very uncertain but we feel the current costs will prove to be a serious underestimate of the significant geotechnical challenges posed by the route choice.

The destruction of prime agricultural land and the effects on the Royal Cheshire Show will inevitably have a negative impact on the rural economy.

Climate and Environment

Despite its claims to be a key agent for change to net zero carbon transport and other marketing claims ‘a greener way to travel’ etc., it is beyond dispute that HS2 will have a disastrous impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Using HS2 Ltd’s own figures, even after 120 years, HS2 will produce a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions just in terms of operation, ignoring any carbon cost of construction. Even taking into account the carbon offset of 120 years of replacement woodland (174,000 tCO_{2e}) soaking up CO₂, HS2 still ends up being a net carbon contributor. After 120 years, the operation of HS2 is predicted to create 315,000 tonnes of CO_{2e}, against only 307,000 tCO_{2e} tonnes of benefits. More speed requires more power, which is why HS2 has such a high carbon footprint. The most recent estimates were that HS2 would require about two thirds of the electricity the current rail network currently uses.

Evidently this will have a major negative impact at a time when biodiversity and reduction in carbon footprints are needed. In our opinion, we feel that HS2 Phase2b fails to meet the UK’s commitments made under the Paris 2015 Agreement and Cop26. Post-COP26 there is universal understanding that this decade is critical in our attempts to limit temperature increases to 1.50C. HS2 will not help us to meet this commitment.

We are experiencing extreme weather events and an increase in sea levels that will affect the water table and consequently the incursion of water will present even more challenges for the unstable salt district geology. This will challenge HS2’s design and maintenance costs to a greater degree than anything envisaged thus far.

The current plans rest on a business case that is contingent on a station at Manchester Airport. Not only is there a well-publicised reluctance for ANY third-party funding, the entire principle of promoting air travel is a complete anomaly.

The current plans will increase car usage (as people will have to drive to HS2 stations), carve up the countryside, disrupt natural wildlife corridors and disrupt ancient woodland areas of natural importance. There will be well-documented biodiversity loss. Rural communities will be severed and blighted.

QUESTION 4: PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR COMMENTS ON VOLUME 3: ROUTE-WIDE EFFECTS.

In our opinion, a hub station at Crewe with integrated connections on existing and improved travel corridors to Manchester and the existing West Coast Main Line would far better serve the North West.

The highly topical decline in passenger numbers since the Covid pandemic further damages the wafer-thin and un-updated business case for a High Speed service. It seems optimistic in the extreme for the route to reference a station at Manchester Airport – without any guarantee whatsoever about ‘third party funding’ for the station and defying all allegations of promoting air travel (!) by providing a link to the airport. Clearly the construction and eventual operation of the railway will be directly in contravention of government pledges of Paris 2015 and Cop 26. The construction of HS2 in the same area as the recently proposed Hydrogen gas network Hynet seems contradictory and in further desecration of the greenbelt. It should also be noted that the proposed route of HS2 Phase 2b has had a direct impact on our strategic gas storage, which compromises our national energy resilience by reducing our strategic reserves.

QUESTION 5: PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR COMMENTS ON VOLUME 4: OFF-ROUTE EFFECTS AND MAP BOOK.

We are concerned at the lack of detail made available at this stage of the process: this prohibits our ability to enable a full and comprehensive assessment of the impacts and mitigation required that is crucial to a meaningful response. The photo montages represent a fairy tale image of the railway that tests credibility.

The vast extent of railway on raised embankments will have a major and widespread impact on land take, noise, visual and creation of vibration, in addition to environmental implications. Noise levels will be transmitted through the air to a greater extent than by being absorbed within the ground or screening to both sides of the track. This all comes at a huge cost to the communities and landscape over an extensive area, and we see scant acknowledgement of this fact. What we would like to see are mitigation measures that will successfully ensure integration of HS2 infrastructure within our landscape. This will require bespoke designs of exceptional quality.

QUESTION 6 PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR COMMENTS ON VOLUME 5: TECHNICAL APPENDICES AND MAP BOOKS.

- It is a matter of grave concern that we are unable to comment on the latest plans that have yet to be published or made publicly available. In particular, these include several cross-sectional ‘Interim Preliminary Design’ maps that are dated 20/01/2018 but marked ‘Fit for Acceptance’.
- The huge land grab during construction.
- No traffic management plans to deal with the disruption and speed restrictions on M6 J19-J20 for 3 years whilst the viaduct over the carriageway is built.
- No updated construction noise and vibration impacts information – the lack of this data (and any consequent mitigation information) is a glaring omission on a crucial matter during the long years of construction.
- No mitigation proposed for the loss of visual amenity and sound transmission as a result of the railway being on a raised embankment 2.5kms long.
- Nowhere does HS2 Ltd reference their history of a woeful lack of engagement with residents or provide a plan to step this up.
- Volume 5 reflects a complete lack of interest in benefitting from local and professional knowledge – farmers, local residents, geologists etc.

HS2 is yet another major project impacting the local community, on top of Runway 2, the UK’s largest waste incinerator at Lostock Gralam, recent M6 J19 re-engineering, the M6 widening and smart motorway programmes and the Hynet hydrogen pipelines.