

## REPORT TO PICKMERE PARISH COUNCIL

4<sup>th</sup> July 2023

### AGENDA ITEM 9.9      HS2B – REPORT BACK ON APPEARANCE BEFORE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE 26 JUNE 2023

#### 1.      REPORT

1.1      As Council is aware, former parish councillors Sarah Flannery and Chris Tarrant, were, with the agreement of the current Parish Council, set to appear before the House of Commons Select Committee to discuss the Parish Council’s petition of objection to the proposed scheme on Monday 26th June 2023.

1.2      This appearance did take place, but whereas the House of Commons Programme Officer had agreed to reserve a **1hr30min** slot for Pickmere’s appearance (each participant was asked to suggest what time slot they believed they would need), in the event the previous petitioner appearance (which in fact related to objections in the area of Hoo Green) substantially overran, the Chair of the Select Committee failed to control the situation, and the slot left for Pickmere was reduced to about a half-hour, since the Committee effectively ended its session at 7.00pm.

1.3      The Parish Council’s representatives did admirably seek to boil down their submissions to fit this timescale, but at the same time made it known to the Committee that being put into this situation was unreasonable and unsatisfactory, meaning that comments had to be rushed and their submission edited. It also did not permit PC representatives to respond to the somewhat misleading and broad statements made by HS2’s legal counsel, nor for members of the Select Committee time to question either the PC representatives nor HS2’s Counsel.

1.4      The recording of the Pickmere session can be found at (copy and paste the link):

<https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/2f0d2234-9a6f-4356-b990-d4f059ebfffc?in=18:18:09>

1.5      It is recommended that all members, and indeed all residents of Pickmere, should watch this session, which lasts about 45 mins in total, so that they are aware of the work that has been done, and the issues that have been raised, on behalf of the parish as a whole.

1.6      It should be noted that during the course of the various consultations on the HS2 project in Pickmere, the Council has secured:

- A substantially improved arrangement where the proposed railway crosses Pickmere Lane – the current proposal will still have considerable visual impact in that area but the previous solution would have been far worse.
- HS2’s agreement to seek the retention of Budworth Road and not its permanent closure; HS2 Ltd are in discussion with CEC about this but a successful outcome is apparently anticipated. Keeping Budworth Road open means that there should be no need for the HS2 proposals to widen School Lane and to both widen and divert part of

Frog Lane, which would have substantially compromised the rural nature of these roads.

- Some additional landscaping of the proposed line.

1.7 Nevertheless the impact of the proposed scheme – in particular its lengthy construction processes – will have a very substantial and detrimental impact on the lives of all Pickmere residents.

1.8 The Parish Council’s representatives were asked by the Chair of the Select Committee to send in a list of the Parish’s ‘asks’ in relation to the current scheme, since that is the focus of the Select Committee’s work. This has been done and the list sent to the Select Committee, copied to Esther McVey MP, is as follows:

1. Our first ask is that the Select Committee, for reasons of fairness and transparency, requests that the Promoter identifies all material that has been specially prepared and presented for the petitioning process.
2. Regarding the Promoter’s response regarding water quality/Holfords Brinefield, that the Promoter is required to provide definitive confirmation as to whether or not the consented Springbank Farm extension to Holford Brinefield could result in significant residual effects with respect to sterilisation of the salt resources associated with the Springbank Farm extension to Holford Brinefield.
3. HS2 says that the proposed route does not affect gas storage expansion at King Street. The owner, NPL Group, disputes this. We request in the interests of national fuel resilience that the Promoter is required to explain the disparity of the two positions at the earliest opportunity.
4. We request that in the interests of safety and cost, the Select Committee takes the opportunity to use its powers to make the appropriate amendments to the Bill to recommend that at least no further work on Phase 2b should be undertaken until the Promoter has completed and reported on the ground investigations upon which everything depends: Parliament and the people need confidence in the claims that the proposed route can be safely and affordably built across a landscape of ongoing ground movement. Publication of ground investigations would do much to repair public confidence in this regard.
5. Pickmere Lane Satellite Compound: we request that the Select Committee requires the Contractor to provide a transport service for staff, based on well-established site traffic management protocols. A coach service to/from the compound will eliminate hundreds of vehicle movements, reduce congestion and reduce pollution.
6. We request that the Select Committee requires HS2 to propose constructive mitigation measures to offset the impact on community isolation and well-being, and to make an undertaking to engage with our community to ensure these measures are appropriate and relevant.
7. Loss of visual amenity and noise impacts - we request that the Promoter be required to:
  - a) propose additional mitigation measures to provide effective sound acoustic barriers; and

- b) propose more creative and extensive planting designs to lessen the visual impacts of the line; and
  - c) Provide noise insulation and ventilation from the construction phase, not operational phase, for those 45 dwellings identified in order to ensure that significant noise and air quality impacts are minimised from the outset.
  - d) Confirm that 45 households affected by noise impacts will be contacted individually with notification of the Parish Council.
8. Community compensation – given the profound impact on Pickmere, we urge the Select Committee to explore faster funding for Pickmere and similarly-afflicted communities other than the Community and Environment Fund and again, as a minimum require HS2 Ltd to include Pickmere Parish Council directly as a key stakeholder on mental health and community wellbeing issues.
  9. Environment and Wildlife: can HS2 Ltd confirm that it has 100% confidence in the methods it has used to calculate the value of nature affected by Phase 2b and that it hasn't not missed watercourses, ponds and trees out of the data in our area? We request that HS2 is mandated to provide a binding undertaking that it will upgrade its mitigation plans to include protection of wildlife corridors and work in collaboration with Cheshire Wildlife Trust in order to achieve the best possible outcome for wildlife and the natural environment.
  10. Community Relations: some formal dedicated liaison arrangement needs to be established that guarantees a minimum level of engagement between Pickmere Parish Council, HS2 Ltd and their contractors, Cheshire East Council and other stakeholders. A nice diagram will not suffice.

### **Next steps**

- 1.9 The process is that the Select Committee will consider all the petitions submitted to it and will in due course prepare a report which will be considered by Parliament. Parliament will decide whether the proposed scheme should be amended as a result of any of the petitions. If such amendments to the scheme are proposed, they will have to be published again for public consultation/potential petition purposes as so-called 'Additional Provisions' to the scheme.
- 1.10 It is therefore hoped that, if the scheme proceeds at all, there will be at least one set of Additional Provisions in relation to the Parish Council's petition, in relation to the retention of Budworth Road and consequential works required, but hopefully in respect of other aspects of the scheme.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the report be noted and the former parish councillors responsible for the submission of objections to HS2, and in particular the submissions to the Parliamentary Select Committee, be thanked for their work on behalf of the Parish.

**Jack Steel**  
**Acting Clerk to the Parish Council**