

Introduction:

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present our petition on behalf of Pickmere Parish Council. It is the culmination of 10+ years of dealing with HS2 Ltd and is intended to be collaborative in seeking to provide the best solutions for our parish.

I am Sarah Flannery, a Pickmere resident for 21 years and a former Parish Councillor.

I am Chris Tarrant, a resident of Pickmere for almost 34 years and also a former Parish Councillor.

Having watched recordings of all the previous petitions, we've picked up on your preference for shorter, sharper submissions.

We recognise that the Select Committee has the remit to make amendments to the Bill, the power to produce reports on discrete issues or specific petitions and to request the Promoter to make undertakings, so we will be appealing to you to use these powers.

But rather than going through the minutiae of a point-by-point presentation of our 17-page petition – and the 70-page response it elicited from the Promoter – we want to paint a picture that you can identify with, even if you haven't visited our village.

Exhibit A87(1) (montage of Pickmere Lake / top of Clover Drive / IROS)

First, some context. Pickmere is a tranquil and pretty semi-rural village of some 300 households close to nearby Wincham, with the larger town of Knutsford some five miles away and Northwich three. You rarely see HGVs along our country lanes due to the 7.5 tonne weight limits on many of them, but you are as likely to see tractors, walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders as cars. Surrounding us is valuable green belt which is grassland with dairy and arable farming.

The beating heart of our village is Pickmere Lake, with the adjoining IROS (Informal Recreational Open Space), a treasured village asset regularly used by residents that is also a hugely popular attraction for visitors from a wide radius who come to walk, sight-see, swim and picnic in their thousands, particularly between April and September.

The showground for the premier agricultural event in the county, the annual Royal Cheshire County Show, is in the parish and also attracts thousands of visitors, exhibitors and competitors every June.

Because we have no school, no shop, no healthcare nor local employment of any scale, residents are wholly reliant on being able to travel to and from the village to adjacent locations for education, employment, shopping, healthcare and culture.

Frankly, we have felt like minnows during the entire process since proposals for Phase 2b were first announced. It seems to us that you, the Select Committee, are our only bulwark against mitigating the massive disruption that HS2 will bring to our village way-of-life. during construction and operation.

HS2 will bring us no benefits whatsoever – other than the tentative carrot of a bid to the Community Environment Fund in the distant future - to offset the destruction of our rural character, greenbelt and peacefulness; both the construction and operation of HS2 will be to the permanent detriment of residents and visitors.

The Promoter's Response has ameliorated one of our primary concerns but has added others. New information, previously unknown, has been provided, some assessments have been re-categorised from moderate to severe, but it is the over-riding blasé tone that is most concerning. HS2's specific figures for schedules, vehicle movements etc seem to us to be too precise, with no margin of error, to be credible across such a long timeframe. There are also numerous references to the Promoter 'noting' points with no further action described, and several references to issues being described as minor, moderate or significant without local context. These terms are subjective and unquantified or even, unquantifiable.

Whilst we get that HS2's position can broadly be summarised as having an answer, budget and plan for everything, our petition focuses on a real village with real people and their real concerns, who need to be confident that the Promoter truly understands – and cares about – the problems that this massive project brings to their doorstep.

One other thing we would like to say is that although the Promoter might imply that those who haven't petitioned can be regarded as broadly being in approval of their plans, that does not acknowledge that the petitioning process puts a huge onus on the Petitioner and the fact that it is such a daunting and adversarial

process might explain why some parties have simply not had the energy to participate in a process where they feel the odds are stacked against them. Without the benefit of proactive engagement with the Promoter until October 2022 – it would be churlish of us not to record the efforts of Ben Draper and his team from this date - and lacking a collaborative approach from our local authority, we have had to climb a vast data mountain without legal counsel or financial resources.

For example, Chris and I diligently trawled through thousands of pages of maps, data and information yet we still missed important details. Multiple links led down wormholes of impenetrable additional data sources that were almost impossible to cross-refer.

So 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.

It has been galling to realise that petitioners have been shown fresh tables, cross sections and maps (relating to traffic impacts in particular) that hadn't previously been made available. HS2 Ltd stated in a previous petition hearing that they hadn't adopted this format from the outset because 'local authorities had the data on road usage and because local authorities are the experts on roads' - but the same can't be said for small parish councils, residents and other stakeholders, who have been left to try to interpret the data themselves. No-one factored in the real problems for communities such as ours who were trying to understand the impacts on their locality without the active support or engagement from their local authority. Cheshire East Council effectively abandoned us when it withdrew its petition.

Even our appearance today (a modest investment costing two rail fares and refreshments plus the production of our evidence) has necessitated the use of parish council funds. Local representation is a hand-to-mouth exercise and I really hope that it pays off, because all we want is to salvage what we can and our petition rests on you to support us.

Moving on, we will highlight the following issues from our petition, using one or two concrete examples for each:

1. Fuel security: a national issue of critical local relevance.
2. Ground conditions and existing infrastructure.
3. Community isolation and wellbeing

4. Traffic and footpath issues, including the intended permanent stopping up of Budworth Road.
5. Landscape and wildlife
6. Our requests for mitigation and compensation to the community.
7. Community relations.

1. Fuel security and water quality

INOVYN Chlorvinyl Ltd uses purified brine to produce the chlorine which is used to purify 98% of the UK's drinking water and is the building block for numerous other chemicals. A failure to supply brine to the ICV business would result in the cessation of the purification of water in the UK within two days.

The Promoter's Response is *'the Proposed Scheme would be designed to allow the continued safe extraction and use of the existing Holford Brinefield and as result, the impact on salt resources and human health are not considered to be significant.*

*However, the consented Springbank Farm extension to Holford Brinefield sits partially under the route of the Proposed Scheme, **which could impact on the viability of five of the proposed 12 caverns.** Therefore, it is anticipated that significant residual effects may occur with respect to sterilisation of the salt resources associated with the Springbank Farm extension to Holford Brinefield.*

So in layman's terms, does that mean there could be a negative impact? We request that the Promoter is required to provide clarity. On a similar vein, we also request that the Promoter is required give an undertaking to publish, at the earliest opportunity, the results of those ground investigations already undertaken.

Fuel security is a significant concern for the residents of Pickmere and the whole country at a time of fuel insecurity & unprecedented price increases. Our nationally strategic secure gas storage is in local salt cavities. HS2 Phase 2b has directly compromised plans to add 50% additional capacity due to the sterilisation in 2013 of the £300m King Street Energy gas storage project – all set to go with planning permission – which would have added 10 new cavities / five additional days' storage to our existing 10 days' national capacity.

The Promoter's Response was thus:

As outlined in 10.4.47 of Volume 2, MA02 of the main ES, the consented King Street Energy extension to Holford Brinefield sits partially under the land

required for the construction of the Proposed Scheme. Once built, the route of the Proposed Scheme would not impact on the proposed cavern locations. This would result in a negligible impact on a very high value resource, resulting in a negligible effect.

In effect, HS2 says that the new route does not affect gas storage expansion. Well, the Chief Executive Officer of NPL Group, which owns King Street Energy, completely contradicts that. I have John Lewsley, the Chief Executive Officer's permission to quote him verbatim, as follows:

1. The current line placement of HS2, last updated in October 2022, safeguards approximately 86 Acres of our 240 Acre site at King Street – some on a temporary and some on a permanent basis.

*2. Planning permission has been secured and implemented for a gas storage project on King Street **but it is not possible to build the consented scheme** given the land take safeguarded by HS2.*

We request that the Promoter is required to give an undertaking to explain this disparity at the earliest opportunity. For clarity, when the then Secretary of State, John Prescott, granted the planning permission in 2009 he did so due to the 'national need' – a need that is far greater now.

It was the 2013 preferred route that completely sterilised any possible expansion to gas storage in mid-Cheshire, HS2 Ltd having failed to adhere to their own route selection criteria by not identifying salt mineral reserves. That cost the country and King Street Energy dear. The 2016 re-alignment went some way towards de-sterilisation but construction and safeguarded land mean the outcome remains the same. Expansion of the King Street Energy site is not currently considered viable by the owners. HS2 Ltd has indeed effectively sterilised the site.

Interestingly, I also asked Mr Lewsley why, given so much wasted investment on their part, they did not petition? His reply was that '*the business has decided to engage in a different way.*' I can't say I blame him.

2. Ground conditions and existing infrastructure

It is our belief, shared by many other petitioners, that the Select Committee should consider that the wrong route has been chosen for HS2 Phase 2b. I know that you feel you have heard this ad nauseum but indulge me for a couple of minutes.

No-one has ever said that HS2 Phase 2b cannot be built. We have the technology to put man on the moon. However, the real equation is risk and safety versus value for money. HS2 Ltd clearly accepts there is the element of risk given Cheshire's geology but until the final ground investigations are done and the design complete, the cost of mitigating that risk is unknown. The design is in its infancy and we estimate at least 85% of the ground investigations have yet to be undertaken. Ultra-high speed rail requires very small tolerance of ground movement, measured in millimetres, which is why the risk/cost balance is so critical in an area of persistent ground movement.

As Professor Emeritus Peter Styles, the Past-President of The Geological Society of London says,

"It is possible to deal with almost any adverse ground conditions but the question is, is it economic?"

The question for the Select Committee is, can the present route be justified on cost and safety grounds or must an alternative be recommended?

Mr Mould said in a previous hearing that we do not want a collapse under our railway. Well, when the New York office of the White Star Line was informed that the Titanic was in trouble, White Star Line Vice President Franklin announced "We place absolute confidence in the Titanic. We believe the boat is unsinkable." By then, the Titanic was already at the bottom of the ocean. We should not even contemplate the possibility of a collapse.

Mr Mould previously referred to existing infrastructure safely crossing the same geology. I don't think we can take much comfort from this example of the current adjustments in place for rail infrastructure to cope with ground movements.

Exhibit A87(2): WCML photo of adjustment system

This is the reality: this image is taken from Elton Flashes, near Sandbach, on the Crewe to Manchester line. It shows the jacking up arrangements in place to cope with the River Wheelock and subsiding land which is continuously monitored. I remind the Select Committee that the tolerance for ground movement for ultra-high speed rail is measured in millimetres. No matter how sophisticated the monitoring arrangements that HS2 Ltd claims, the as-yet undesignated adjustment mechanisms will be very, very expensive.

Given that the Promoter chose to infer during an earlier Petition that the fact that some affected parties such as Morrisons and Winsford Salt Mine had not petitioned was their tacit approval of the proposed scheme, I would urge you not to make that assumption.

With regard to the Winsford Salt Mine, the Committee might like to reflect on the expert opinion of Caroline Warburton, a geologist and geotechnical engineer, a Fellow of the Geological Society with a degree in Geology, an MSc in Geotechnical Engineering and an MA in Land Use Planning with regard to Winsford Salt Mine:

Exhibit A87(3): Carolyn Warburton, Response to Consultation on HS2 Phase 2b November 2016, submitted in February 2017 Ltd Document Consultation Route Technical Note – C320 Contract – Cheshire Salt Area Review HS2 Document Number C320-AEC-CV-NOT-220-000003 MDL Ref: B340 Revision - PO3 Date Approved 2017 – 4. Chronology of Options Considered 4.2 Initial Preferred Route & 2013 Consultation Route Page 16

I quote, ‘Salt extraction and potential pillar failure in the Winsford Mine...The proposed HS2 route crosses the Winsford mine. The salt pillars carry the load of the roof and are subject to compression. Pillars will deteriorate with time due to both chemical and physical processes which are difficult to characterise or predict. The voids in the collapsed rock above may or may not reach the surface - with a sudden catastrophic failure.’

The stakes are too high for anything less than total confidence in the route choice. We request that in the interests of safety and cost, the Select Committee takes this 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.

3. Community Isolation, Loss of Social Capital and Wellbeing

We have no reason to doubt that The Environmental Statement (ES) accompanying the Bill is fully compliant with legal requirements and has been

developed in accordance with the accepted best practice methodologies recommended by a range of UK institutional bodies.

What is up for legitimate debate is whether or not the communities afflicted by the scheme have felt that there has been sufficient engagement with them to use their local knowledge to input their concerns, and sufficient commitment put into reducing the stress and negative impacts.

HS2 Phase 2b will never 'serve the Pickmere community' nor be of benefit to it. The construction phase will see our rural village surrounded by six construction compounds, in existence for up to 6 years and 3 months. The proposed Pickmere Lane Satellite Compound is within the parish and there are two further satellite construction compounds within neighbouring parish boundaries which would be accessed via roads within the parish of Pickmere: Arley Brook Viaduct and Budworth Road Satellite Compounds.

The Pickmere Lane Satellite Compound is expected to be operational for four years, with an average of 70 workers per day, increasing to 120 workers and 45 staff at peak times. That represents **28%** of our current village population of 600.

The Promoter's measures for managing the impact of the Pickmere Lane compound are, frankly, unworkable. I refer to page 42, para 25 of the Promoter's Response:

The number of private car trips to and from the construction compounds (both workforce and visitors) would be reduced by encouraging alternative sustainable modes of transport or vehicle sharing. This would be supported by an overarching framework travel plan that will require construction workforce travel plans to be produced that will include a range of potential measures to mitigate the impacts of workers' traffic and transport movements associated with construction of the Proposed Scheme. The travel plans will promote the use of sustainable transport modes as appropriate to the location and types of trip. They will include measures such as:

- provision of information on and promotion of public transport services;
- provision of good cycle and pedestrian facilities;
- liaison with public transport operators;
- promotion of car sharing; and

- the appointment of a travel plan coordinator to ensure suitable measures are in place and are effective

The reality is that anyone with local knowledge would know that these statements are meaningless. You can promote public transport as much as you like but that won't change the fact that there is only one public transport operator, who currently has four services a day from Pickmere to Knutsford, 07:05/10:10/12:10/14:10, and three in the opposite direction 09:27/11:17/13:17. Likewise, you can talk about providing good pedestrian and cycling facilities but we don't have the roads for cycle routes and anyway, unless people live close enough to contemplate walking or cycling in all weathers, this is a non-starter.

Rather than talking about impractical and vague aims, we therefore request that the Select Committee requires the Contractor to provide a transport service for staff. The construction industry has well-established site traffic management protocols. A coach service to/from the compound will eliminate hundreds of vehicle movements, reduce congestion and reduce pollution.

Exhibit A87(4): Construction phase map for the Pickmere area

Please try to imagine the impact that the construction of a huge embankment with a railway line on top, bisecting your previously pretty and quiet village, would have on you, your neighbours and your quality of life. Pickmere's community's viability and well-being relies on vital 'accessibility to other community facilities' such as public transport, shops, schools, pharmacies etc. only available outside the village in the nearby communities of Wincham, Northwich and Knutsford, access to which will be seriously compromised due to the numerous diversions, changes to the road network and congestion due to the high volumes of HGVs carrying construction materials.

Work, family, leisure and life means that a small village such as ours is disproportionately affected by works taking place in and around the vicinity. The Royal Cheshire Show is an example where Pickmere, Wincham and Tabley residents are all significantly impacted by the increase in HGVs and general traffic during set-up, the show itself and the dismantling.

That is only a four-day inconvenience.

In general, the proposed HS2 'revising works to roads and public rights of way, including realigning some roads' do not meet the needs of the Pickmere

community. It is vital that transport links for non-vehicle and vehicle users are maintained to prevent community severance and isolation and do not increase the potential safety hazards for users. e.g. longer routes, unlit public rights of way, etc.

Words such as ‘moderate’ to describe the impact of a 3km increase in journey time are completely inappropriate for someone facing a 3km detour twice a day, every day for more than three years. That is an additional 1.500km annually per vehicle – polluting, expensive and timewasting certainly but a ‘moderate’ impact? We disagree. And that is only one route, when in real life people may travel in different directions for different needs.

We also cannot agree with the Promoter that, as set out in Section 6 (‘Community’) of the MA03 Community Area Report within Volume 2 of the main ES, *the assessment did not identify community isolation effects to the village of Pickmere during construction or operation.*

Exhibit A87(5): ‘Bird’s eye’ view of Pickmere surrounded by adjacent works, including:

Linnards Lane (Wincham) A556 Chester Road Footpaths 15/2 and 15/1 (Plumley) Flittogate Lane Footpaths 1/1, 3/1, 4/1 (Tabley Inferior) Budworth Road, Frog Lane, Pickmere Lane, Feldy Green Lane, Colliers Lane, School Lane, Footpath 10/1 (Aston by Budworth), Bridleway 17/1 (Aston by Budworth), M6 Motorway including J19 on and off slip roads, Six satellite compounds

This graphic shows a bird’s eye view of Pickmere, surrounded by HS2 activity. Isolation effects arise from either physical ‘islanding’ of properties or an increase in journey times and/or distance between residential areas and the community resources that residents use on a regular basis, both of which are clearly evident in relation to our Parish. Had there been any community engagement with us, we could have explained this.

We therefore 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.

Furthermore, given that Pickmere effectively feels abandoned by Cheshire East Council’s decision to withdraw from the petitioning process, we urge the Select Committee to require HS2 Ltd to treat Pickmere Parish Council as a key

stakeholder on mental health and community wellbeing issues and undertake to guarantee engagement with the Parish Council on all associated issues.

We also have to take account of loss of visual amenity and noise impacts

Exhibit A87(6): Detailed map with relevant locations highlighted

These are the key features: the Pickmere Lane satellite compound, the Footpath Pickmere 9/1 temporary diversion, the B5391 Pickmere Lane temporary closure and the School Lane temporary closure, the Pickmere embankment, the Arley Brook viaduct, the B5391 Pickmere Lane realignment, the Flittogate Lane diversion, the School Lane diversion and the Frog Lane diversion.

The map shows the profound and prolonged impact across the Parish during the construction and operation phases. There are several areas that will suffer either 'moderate or high magnitude of visual change...resulting in a moderate (or major) adverse significant effect' during construction and persisting after 30 years (an entire generation) as detailed in the Environment Statement.

Exhibit A87(7): View of land behind VH with imagined line of HS2

Running trains on a raised embankment 2.5kms long and up to 12m high, with an additional 6.5m for catenary, compounded by the major engineering works to build it, to divert a 900mm high pressure gas pipeline and another 300mm pipeline to Tata Chemicals, right across the parish will not only cost us our visual amenity by ruining our open greenbelt aspects, but the consequent sound transmission will impact significantly on our tranquil, peaceful rural locality.

We fail to understand how the construction of the Pickmere Embankment meets the approach 'avoid or reduce effects on the visual amenity of residential communities, receptors and users of the landscape' as stated in the Environmental Statement Document Non-Technical Summary Document M13 Pages 65 to 67.

The large-scale structures associated with construction, including construction plant, earthworks, temporary material stockpiles and construction activity will be out of character with existing views over the small-scale, rural landscape.

In terms of mitigation for the loss of visual amenity, we do not consider the minimal planting proposed to be in any way sufficient. Hedgerows cannot replace trees. The assurance recently received falls very short of the robust

undertaking we expect. 'Reasonable endeavours' amounts to nothing substantive.

Construction noise will be noticeable in outdoor areas for a prolonged period. People in this community are likely to experience these features of the Proposed Scheme as changing the quality of their neighbourhood and to regard that change as adverse, both in diminishing the amenity of the village and in reducing the sense of its rural character.

We note with concern that the SES 1 has identified operational noise effects on the acoustic character in the residential community of Pickmere at approximately 45 dwellings in the vicinity of the B5391 Pickmere Lane, School Lane, and Hall Lane. I quote, 'The noise effect is likely to result in a significant community effect' identified as 'MA03-O-C5' on SES1 and AP1 ES Map.

45 dwellings represents 17% of our village homes, a very significant proportion. The Parish Council was unaware of this number until it was included in the Promoter's Response. Can the Promoter confirm that affected households will be contacted personally with the engagement of the Parish Council?

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.

It is possible that the scope and timeframe for Phase 2b might be further changed depending on the outcome of ground investigations. This lack of clarity only adds to feelings of powerlessness and stress amongst villagers who are already worried about the impact of noise and light pollution, traffic impacts and the inevitable decline in our air quality, particularly during the construction phase.

We request that HS2 provides more detailed information about how it proposes to minimise the impact on mental health. Can HS2 Ltd confirm that they have now commissioned their report into addressing community mental

health and wellbeing and let us know when we can look forward to its publication?

We note that the Promoter has appointed The Cambridge Centre for Health Services Research, to conduct a large scale £2m longitudinal study, which will take place over 10 years. This timeframe seems very unambitious, because communities will not be able to benefit from any outcomes or learning before enduring the impacts in real time.

The Promoter has informed us that HS2's Community and Environment Fund (CEF), with objectives that include improving and supporting community health and wellbeing, has been designed with all phases in mind and that if Phase 2b is granted Royal Assent, funding opportunities will be available. But that funding will not be available until two-and-a-half years after Royal Assent is granted.

4. Traffic and footpath issues, including the intended permanent stopping up of Budworth Road.

Exhibit A87(8): TR-08-306 Construction Route

This map shows the anticipated HGV movements around three key satellite compounds, a huge impact on our country lanes. Please bear these numbers in mind because they will be very relevant. We have heard loud and clear in previous hearings that Highways are the concern of local authorities. We note the promoter's Response drawing our attention to HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg Information Paper E3: Management of Traffic during construction.

We understand the nominated undertaker's expected approach to consultation on highways and traffic issues. However, we have seen no evidence historically that Cheshire East Council has been willing to consult and engage with us on these issues, nor has the capacity for effective enforcement.

There are two glaring issues raised by that the Promoter in their response.

The first is Pickmere Lake. The Promoter refers to the Lake as 'a local wildlife site that is north of Lostock Gralam.' (para 23, Promoter's Response).

Only someone with no knowledge of the locality could describe the lake in those terms. It isn't called Pickmere Lake for nothing. The issue isn't that it doesn't fall within the area potentially impacted by the Proposed Scheme, it is that anything to do with the lake has a massive impact on our village. It is vital that the Promoter takes into account that the Lake is a leisure destination and

priceless recreational amenity for local residents and thousands of visitors from April to September.

Exhibit A87(9): Newspaper headline

The warm weather influx of visitors impacts the village to a high level. Gridlock is a frequent occurrence and the Police have had public dispersal orders in effect several times in recent years, including last weekend. We are convinced that this has not been taken into account by the Promoter, DfT or the local authority. Certainly our Parish Council has never been consulted. We simply cannot visualise how the HGV movements in the previous exhibit can be coordinated when the village itself is gridlocked.

It is crucial for leisure, community health and wellbeing that access to the Lake forms a critical part of the responsibility of the nominated undertaker, with close consultation with the Parish Council.

That is why we request that the Select Committee recommends that HS2 Ltd and the DfT ensure that there is a mechanism that guarantees the nominated undertaker will include Pickmere Parish Council, with other stakeholders, on its traffic management proposals in order to reach an acceptable plan that builds on local knowledge to reduce the negative community impacts from construction traffic routes and their phasing, and provides an effective mechanism for remedy as and when issues inevitably arise.

The second issue is access to the Cheshire Showground.

It came as something of a shock to read the following in the Promoter's Response, and I quote:

10. As set out in paragraph 6.4.4 Volume 2 of the Environmental Statement for MA03, and based on engagement with the Showground, the viability of the business may be affected by the loss of land (21%). Due to this loss of land, it has been assumed that Cheshire Showground would not be able to continue to operate during construction. Construction, as set out in paragraph 6.4.4, will take approximately three years and six months to complete.

11. Paragraph 6.4.26 also states that the Promoter is continuing to engage with owners and operators (including Cheshire Agricultural Society) of the Cheshire Showground to identify reasonably practicable measures to retain the showground activities on the site and help mitigate the likely significant effects identified in this assessment.

The Royal Cheshire Show is the county's premier agricultural event, attracting thousands of visitors in June each year. 80,000 attended last week.

Clearly it is almost inconceivable that the Showground will ever host the Royal Cheshire Show again – why should it return if it establishes itself elsewhere? But the loss of the Show and the effective loss of the viability of the Showground represents a big hit to the local rural economy. It is another casualty of HS2's collateral damage. In our opinion, phrases such as 'continuing to engage' and 'reasonably practicable measures' are vague and meaningless. Could the Promoter confirm if they have been 'engaging' with the President of the Royal Cheshire Show, Fiona Bruce MP, and Esther McVey, MP for Tatton, about the effective stopping up of the Showground and the impact of this?

Going back to traffic, the construction of HS2 Phase 2b will have an unprecedented impact on our village. It is hard to envisage how our small parish will be able to cope with roadworks that involve thousands of HGV and vehicle movements for work. The construction phase will be particularly challenging. We touched on some examples in our introduction but this HS2 document summarises the challenge we face in terms of peak HGV movements. I'm going to hand over to my colleague Chris Tarrant for the following.

Exhibit A87(10): Peak movements table

This graphic shows peak construction movements and these will coincide with;

Work 1/82 Diversion of gas main close to Pickmere Lane and Flittogate Lane

Work 1/83 A diversion of Flittogate Lane

Work 1/83A An access road carrying Pickmere Lane over Waterless Brook

Work 1/83B A temporary diversion of Flittogate Lane

Work 1/84 A realignment of Pickmere Lane

Work 1/85 A realignment of School Lane and Frog Lane

Work 1/86 A temporary bridge over Waterless Brook

Work 1/87 A temporary bridge over Tabley Brook (Aston-by-Budworth)

Plus the major work to construct the embankment itself and effect changes to footpaths that include: Footpaths Pickmere 8/1, 9/1, 9/2 and 4/1 all to be stopped up (with alternatives provided in substitution).

We note from the PRD (Pg 40, Para 12) that the assessment of B5391 Pickmere Lane has been updated for the AP1 revised scheme and is reported in Table 17 and Table 18 of the MA3 Area Report, Volume 2, of the SES1 and AP1 ES. The moderate adverse effect on traffic related severance (due to changes in both total traffic and HGVs) on the B5391 Pickmere Lane between School Lane and Budworth Road during construction as reported in the main ES has changed to a major adverse effect in the SES1 and AP1 ES. The reporting of a major adverse effect on traffic related severance due to changes in HGVs on the section of B5391 Pickmere Lane between Budworth Road and A556 Chester Road as reported in the main ES is reported as an increased major adverse effect in the SES1 and AP1 ES. There is also a major adverse effect now being reported due to changes in all traffic on this section where previously there was no adverse effect.

But para 13 includes the correction:

On the section of the B5391 Pickmere Lane between Park Lane and School Lane, a moderate adverse effect on traffic-related severance was reported in the main ES and a major adverse effect on traffic-related severance was reported in SES1 and AP1 ES due to all traffic and HGVs. However, this section of the B5391 Pickmere Lane is not designated as a construction route and consequently there would be no effect on traffic-related severance on the section of the B5391 Pickmere Lane between Park Lane and School Lane.

Which is it??

Likewise, Para 14 & 15: There is forecast to be moderate adverse on traffic-related severance due to changes in HGVs on the section Budworth Road between Old Hall Lane and B5391 Pickmere Lane during construction of the Proposed Scheme, as set out in Table 44 in the MA3 Area Report, Volume 2, of the main ES. / The assessment of this section of road has been updated for the AP1 revised scheme. The moderate adverse effect on traffic-related severance on Budworth Road between Old Hall Lane and B5391 Pickmere Lane during construction of the Proposed Scheme has changed to a major adverse effect during construction of the AP1 revised scheme, as set out in Table 18 in the MA3 Area Report, Volume 2, of the SES1 and AP1 ES.

How can we have confidence in the Promoter's modelling and that the assessments won't be revised again?

And again, we were baffled by two apparently contradictory paragraphs on Page 40 (Para 12) and Page 41 (Para 18).

Exhibit A87(11): 'Split screen' of the two paragraphs

*12. The assessment of B5391 Pickmere Lane has been updated for the AP1 revised scheme and is reported in Table 17 and Table 18 of the MA3 Area Report, Volume 2, of the SES1 and AP1 ES. **The moderate adverse effect on traffic related severance (due to changes in both total traffic and HGVs) on the B5391 Pickmere Lane between School Lane and Budworth Road during construction as reported in the main ES has changed to a major adverse effect in the SES1 and AP1 ES.** The reporting of a major adverse effect on traffic related severance due to changes in HGVs on the section of B5391 Pickmere Lane between Budworth Road and A556 Chester Road as reported in the main ES is reported as an increased major adverse effect in the SES1 and AP1 ES. There is also a major adverse effect now being reported due to changes in all traffic on this section where previously there was no adverse effect.*

*18. The assessment of traffic-related severance has been updated for the AP1 revised scheme and is reported in Table 21 of Volume 2, Community Area report: Pickmere to Agden and Hulseheath (MA03) of the SES1 and AP1. Table 21 describes roads where changes in traffic flow result in significant effects on traffic-related severance for non-motorised users for 2038 and 2051. **There is no forecast traffic-related severance during operation on roads in Pickmere.***

It would be helpful if the Select Committee recommends that in future the Promoter makes their proposals comprehensible and unambiguous.

The Promoter (Page 33, para 31) considers that the local Pickmere roads are capable of accommodating the forecast traffic flows during construction of the AP1 revised scheme. Seriously? The next two images are of the local lanes in question.

Exhibit A87(12)

Exhibit A87(13): Chris T's photos

The Promoter does not consider that the additional traffic associated with the AP1 revised scheme would materially impact the ability of Pickmere residents to access other communities, including specifically Wincham, Northwich and Knutsford.

We disagree. The Promoter's averaged assessment works out at one HGV every minute on the section of B5391 Pickmere Lane realignment between School Lane and Budworth Road, based on a peak daily two-way combined flow of 510 HGVs over an assumed 10 hour working day. The section of B5391 Pickmere Lane between Budworth Road and A556 Chester Road would also carry a peak daily two-way combined flow 510 HGVs over an assumed 10 hour working day, another HGV every minute on average.

Budworth Road between Old Hall Lane and B5391 Pickmere Lane would carry a peak daily two-way combined flow of 178 HGVs over an assumed 10 hour working day, which equates to approximately one HGV every three minutes, and the section of School Lane between B5391 Pickmere Lane and Frog Lane, and the section of Frog Lane between School Lane and Budworth Road would carry a peak daily two-way combined flow of 126 HGVs over an assumed 10-hour, one HGV every five minutes.

In the real world, these averages are meaningless. In effect, they mean the near-constant likelihood of driving alongside HGVs at any given point of the day, with all the pollution and delay that will entail.

Other parishes further south along the route have suffered highways damage as a result of construction traffic. We therefore request that the Select Committee recommends a baseline survey of our roads prior to the start of construction.

Budworth Road

Exhibit A87(14): Map of Budworth Road

The proposed permanent closure of Budworth Road and improvements to Frog Lane and School Lanes has been a primary concern for several years. We were particularly worried that the so-called necessary 'improvements' (i.e. widening) of our rural network of country lanes, most of which have a 7.5t weight limit, in order to accommodate HGVs and construction vehicles would permanently blight our rural character by urbanising the character of our roads.

We have been encouraged by HS2 Ltd's willingness to engage with us on this issue and share their optimism that alternatives exist to avoid closing Budworth Road that would remove the necessity to alter Frog Lane and School Lane. This would be a significant mitigation measure that will reduce the long-

term impacts on our rural character and also improve life for the residents of the properties along these lanes,

We recognise that more work needs to be done but are seeking that the Promoter gives an undertaking to keep Budworth Road open, because it will be worth it.

The other issue we would like to address is terminology. Footpath Tabley Inferior 3/1 is identified as having a moderate adverse effect from an increase in journey length of up to 1.2km and that Footpath Pickmere 8/1 is identified as having a moderate adverse effect from an increase in journey length of up to 827m.

Whilst the Promoter concludes that these effects will not materially alter leisure activities within Pickmere parish, we would point out that many people use footpaths as a means of getting from A to B. A slightly longer leisurely stroll is not an issue but if someone is using a footpath for a non-leisure reason, that additional distance will not feel moderate.

5.The environment and wildlife

Exhibit A87(15): CWT maps

HS2 Ltd makes many claims about its green credentials. We are very concerned by Cheshire Wildlife Trust's recent report claiming HS2's assessment of nature loss to be "fundamentally flawed", "amateurish" and "riddled with inaccuracies".

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?

These two maps were produced for us by Cheshire Wildlife Trust as part of our work on our Neighbourhood Plan. The top image shows our habitat distinctiveness in relation to the proposed route of HS2.

The second identifies our wildlife corridors.

We believe that the primary proposed mitigation measures (of 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 our parish.

Exhibit A87(16): CWT narrative

We are particularly concerned about the impacts of noise pollution on wildlife and our own quality of life. We trust you are too. Cheshire Wildlife Trust states that “Woodland expansion is desirable to buffer Pickmere’s existing woodlands, which are mainly to the south of the study area. Additionally, planting in the north of the parish would provide a network from Arley Brook and Waterless Brook LWS into the Parish.”

Nature is in a perilous position in the UK. The league table of biodiversity intactness based on data from the Natural History Museum ranks the UK as languishing at the bottom of G7 countries, and twelfth worst of 240 countries and territories.

We therefore 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.

6.Our requests for mitigation and compensation to the community.

In the event that Royal Assent is granted, we request proactive support from the Promoter with accessing funding opportunities such as HS2’s Community and Environment Fund (CEF).

Furthermore, we request that the Promoter’s Engagement Team undertakes to proactively introduce themselves to Pickmere Parish Council by attending a Parish Council meeting and establishing a framework for regular contact thereafter.

7.Community Relations

It is an open secret that community relations have never been HS2 Ltd’s strong suit. Let me be honest. We have been underwhelmed by HS2’s attempts at community engagement thus far. We have found HS2 Ltd to be difficult to deal with and reticent about providing information that has been needed to fully appreciate the impact of the scheme on our community. There has been no proactive engagement and in recent years all efforts to engage with Engagement have led to nothing.

So it has been constructive for us to hear that the Promoter acknowledges the importance of rebuilding community relations. But our experience, and that of others, makes us sceptical about HS2's commitment to being a better neighbour.

As recently as 16 March 2023. Bill Cash the MP for Stone referred to his 'dossier' of complaints from his constituents having had "10 years of misery with HS2's miscommunications / farmers received plans that cut their farms in half, severing access / notices served as late as possible and with ill consideration for damage and jeopardy...and Land left in a deplorable state. He concluded:

"The bottom line being that this is completely and totally unacceptable. The truth is that HS2 needs to be given a real rocket"

We have taken note of the negative experiences of other councils, particularly those in Buckinghamshire.

Huw Merriman, Minister of State for Transport, said:

"I want HS2 to be an example to other transport projects, not just in what it delivers, but in the way it is delivered, and I recognise that that means making improvements, learning from experience and changing how we operate in order to become better, and I am committed to HS2 Ltd doing that.

Limiting construction impacts in the first place should be a primary concern for all working on HS2, but so should treating people and places with the respect they deserve and ensuring that any impacts are mitigated or avoided when not required.

We hope that the Select Committee makes recommendations that will ensure these lessons are learned.

It is obvious that 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 is not sufficient.

Also, as problems will inevitably occur, it is critical that this includes a clear chain of command and communication so that problems can be identified and resolved as quickly as possible. It is vital that this liaison role is not a comms/PR role because swift resolution will depend on a thorough operational understanding.

In conclusion

Exhibit A87(17): DfT extract

At the hearing of the Lostock Gralam petition on 18th April Mr Percy stated:

“Obviously, Parliament has decided that this line is to be built...”

With a scheme of this nature, accuracy is vital. One of the challenges for those of us who have been opposed to the Scheme for numerous reasons is that some people unfortunately think that it is a fait accompli. But as Huw Merriman, the Minister of State for Transport has clarified,

“I would also note that...Parliament can reject or significantly amend the overarching Bill or can decide not to proceed with the Scheme were it to choose to do so.”

I would remind the Select Committee that Parliament has yet to decide that this line is to be built.

It is beyond the remit of this petition to discuss the Scheme in principle. However, my understanding from many well-placed sources is that the entire HS2 project may end up costing £200bn and that Phase 2b might average £1bn per mile. I wonder if anyone on the Select Committee shares my curiosity to compare these costs to space travel? NASA put the cost of building the Space Shuttle Endeavour in 2017 at \$1.7Billion and a space shuttle mission costs around \$450 million. HS2 has a fraction of the ambition and perplexingly its costs are still expressed in 2019 prices. Given the rocketing inflation since then, surely it is not unreasonable, on behalf of the UK taxpayer, to expect HS2 Ltd to update its costs to reflect the real world?

Our last and very serious concern is that unless a local authority – in our case, Cheshire East – includes in their undertaking document every single issue across the whole of the local authority area where they have responsibility - e.g. ground conditions, highways, mitigation, footpaths, transport, community engagement, control over working hours, key design elements, planning and health and wellbeing etc., you, the select committee might consider their silence on these matters as tantamount agreement that they are happy with **all** the plans.

Please do not misinterpret Cheshire East's reasons for withdrawing from the petitioning process. It would be a travesty if their withdrawal was allowed to undermine the petitions from Parish Councils and individuals who have already petitioned and those who are still to petition who have worked so very hard to raise their concerns on many vital issues.

That brings us to the end of our petition. Thank you for your time.