

Summary of MPs Meeting with HS2 Ltd 11th January 2012

Following the statement by the Secretary of State for Transport, Justine Greening on Tuesday 10th January, the proposed HS2 rail line has been given the go ahead. As a result, I met with representatives of HS2 Ltd to discuss what changes have been made to the original plans and how these and the line will affect the local area. The following notes are a summary of the meeting.

VIADUCT

The viaduct that will extend over the Grand Union Canal and the River Colne will be 15m wide and have a 3 year construction phase. It will be built at tree canopy level so as to take into account local wildlife in the gravel pits and minimise disruption to their habitats.

There is most likely going to be a design consultation, which local residents will be invited to contribute to. This detailed design consultation will have to take place in the next 12-18 months to ensure it is completed in time for the Hybrid Bill. The design should be in-keeping with the natural environment and could become an “outstanding feature” of the landscape.

The viaduct will include noise mitigation measures. At present the proposed barriers would be 2m high as opposed to the 3m noise absorbing barriers proposed for the rest of the track. There is no reason why these barriers cannot be made bigger although there is an issue with ‘noise shadow’; a term which suggests that raising the height of the barriers might cause more of a noise impact as the noise would effectively be ‘thrown out further’. There is also a possibility that barriers could be made from a transparent sound absorbing material. HS2 Ltd is committed to modelling the sound impacts for each scenario in order to gain the most effective outcome in terms of mitigation.

HOAC

The 3 year construction cycle will undoubtedly impact upon HOAC’s ability to continue providing the same services, in the same location. Bilateral discussions with HOAC and London Borough of Hillingdon should start anytime from now and will seek to find a resolution that does not force HOAC to close. There is also a possibility that the construction works could be phased to minimise the impact. Again, these measures will need to be discussed in bilateral meetings.

HS2 working with local communities

Consultation forums will be set up in the coming months to engage with the local community. The will include representatives from action groups, local residents’ associations and parish councils. There will also be planning forums at unitary and local authority level.

TUNNELLING IN WEST RUISLIP AND ICKENHAM

One of the main changes to the proposed plans involves a new tunnel that will stretch from Northolt and eventually emerge at West Ruislip. Upon emerging from the tunnel, the HS2 line will sit in a new cutting alongside the existing Chilterns Line.

The tunnel means that the line will run below the existing Chilterns line as it emerges from the tunnel at West Ruislip with the track then climbing to the bridge over the River Pinn and onto the

viaduct. The majority of residents of The Greenways should not be able to see trains emerging from the tunnel, although there is a possibility that residents at the furthest end of The Greenways may be able to see the top of the train upon its emergence.

The initial consultation included noise mitigation measures that would have minimised the noise from both the new line and the existing rail corridor which carries not only passenger trains but also freight. However, the tunnel means that this noise mitigation measure is not necessary. There will be provision at the mouth of the tunnel that will minimise noise from the new line but will not decrease rail noise from the existing line.

There remains an issue with Ruislip Golf Club as the tunnel mouth is situated on the site of the current Club House. HS2 Ltd will initiate discussion with residents and the Golf Club directly.

The impact on roads during the construction phase has been minimised as the line is now on the other side of West Ruislip station. At present it is not anticipated that main arterial roads (Ickenham Road in particular) would have to close for longer than 1-2 days. This is an improvement on the original estimate.

The Government has already committed to a comprehensive Code of Construction Practice which will address a number of issues, including but not limited to: traffic management plans, restrictions on working hours/practices, dust management and suppression plans, and controls on construction noise.

WHY WAS THE TUNNEL NOT EXTENDED FURTHER?

The main reasoning lies in the cost to benefit ratio and the fact that the track naturally has to cross the River Pinn. If the tunnel was continued it would have to travel deeper underground and then emerge in the gravel pits, thus the decision was determined largely by the natural environment.

REFRESHED HARDHIP SCHEME /COMPENSATION

The Government has written to everyone who may be directly affected by the route.

There will be a 12 week consultation occurring in the Spring of 2012, to help finalise the Government's approach on blight policies. The new blight scheme and safeguarding zone will be in place by Autumn 2012.

Compensation measures include a disturbance allowance and compensation for loss of property value. However, these payments, known as Part 1 payments (after Part 1 of the 1973 Land Compensation Act) cannot be claimed until after the railway has been open for one year (as it is only at this stage that the actual impact can be assessed).

NOISE

There are several spots in Harefield that modelling suggests will experience an audible increase in noise from the new line. This increase will be 3 Decibels, which they suggest is only just perceptible to the human ear. These are largely rural areas and residents in South Harefield should not be affected. Residents in Ickenham and West Ruislip should find that the noise from new trains will be

no more than that experienced due to the existing line. This does not take into account any increase in capacity or regularity on the existing line.

HS2 Ltd will produce an additional model that takes into account noise from existing rail and aviation.

If you have any specific questions or require any further information please contact me on nick.hurd.mp@parliament.uk or write to Nick Hurd MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.