



The Old Lamb
Potter Row
Great Missenden
Bucks HP16 9LT
10 February 2016

Chairman of Select Committee
High Speed Rail Select Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Syms

Is the cost of the tunnel to Leather Lane disproportionate to the benefits, as Mr Mould claims?

I fully appreciate you are now finalising your report and have no time to cover old ground, but Mr Mould's repeated dismissal of the short tunnel extension is ill founded, and Mr Strachan has too often misled by truncating the full facts. REPA, and its 850 registered members, feel the decision should be taken on all the facts.

On 28 Aug 2015¹ your Committee said you needed to be satisfied that AP4 brought 'adequate beneficial effects in the South Heath area'. You clearly expected the 17m depth at the portal to make a real difference to the north end of South heath. We feel that AP4 has failed to pass your test, and given the true cost, and the benefits to be obtained, that a further tunnel extension is entirely justified.

The mitigation provided proved much less than expected. The north west of South Heath got surprisingly little benefit, especially those behind the portal and along Potter Row. The peak noise impacts reduced little (some 2dB for most homes) with 156 homes remaining above the night-time maximum LOAEL, 43 of which exceed 65dbmax - nearly twice as loud as the LOAEL. And all this in an undeniably peaceful part of the AONB.

Members of REPA visited HS1 to hear the noise first hand and talk to local people. We are not surprised that few complain now – all you hear is the roar of the motorway, punctured by a few trains each hour. This is quite unlike what part of our community will experience.

AP4 brought to the north side of South Heath a permanently wider cutting, much bigger compounds, a new haul road, the visual impacts of barriers on top of cuttings, and taller pylon(s) involving a new change of direction. The adverse impacts on the footpaths from Great Missenden will affect both residents and visitors.

Potter Row is left seriously exposed – with nearly 80 people in 37 homes, with an average age of 65, most are retired and will suffer the impacts day in day out, first in construction and then forever. Many suffer ill health and had hoped to remain in what is currently a quiet and beautiful location for the rest of their lives. What HS2 Ltd propose is traumatic for them. It is not an exaggeration to say almost everyone may eventually feel forced to apply for NTS

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/high-speed-rail-london-west-midlands-bill-select-committee-commons/news-parliament-20151/extension-of-chilterns-tunnel/>



(under 'age and stage') and leave. Potter Row property is worth – conservatively – some £50m. Is this really what HS2 should be doing to a close-knit and aging community?

In total, extending the bored tunnel a further mile benefits directly another 328 homes (which would no longer be within 1km of the open line). In contrast just 4 homes are near Leather Lane (all already being sold to HS2 Ltd), and HS2's alignment would also be lower improving the impacts in this area.

You may recall the archaeological sites and heritage assets in Potter Row and how they or their setting will be damaged by AP4 – and that the ES even omitted some of these assets and the setting issues. A tunnel extension would preserve them for future generations.

HS2 Ltd's £40m price tag does not stand up to scrutiny – not only on tunnelling costs (where the HS2 Ltd figures greatly exceed tunnel costs elsewhere) but also on costing excavating the cutting and removing the spoil. Firstly, REPA showed how the extra spoil at the south portal could remain there, avoiding the cost of transporting it away. Secondly, plainly less spoil in total means less eventual surplus spoil (and so less than the forecast 12MT would need to go to landfill), which saves further costs that have been omitted. Thirdly, the cuttings have been excavated assuming a £22m³ which is an average cost figure that ignores the fact the cuttings are both deep and in chalk and can be expected to cost some 50% more.

Mrs Mould and Strachan persistently told your Committee there would be a shortage of spoil (430,000m³) causing more traffic if they extended the tunnel. While we would deny this (using HS2 Ltd's own numbers), this ignores HS2 Ltd's own report on REPA that said the spoil could be balanced by adjusting the depth (Part 4 para 6.6.4, 7 July 2015). Understandably the community are angered and frustrated when HS2 Ltd's own advocates continue to misrepresent the facts to your Committee.

The £40m underestimates the property savings. Only £13.7m was included as the saving for this extra mile, yet more homes are being purchased under Need to Sell – all of which HS2 Ltd say are excluded from the £13.7m on the basis they will be sold later. BUT, as is patently clear, Potter Row and those near the portal are indisputably blighted – they will never fetch an unblighted price. It is clearly wrong to omit the blighted impact on property, as well as the effect on cash flow. Even if just Potter Row sells up under NTS, this is a sizeable figure.

HS2 Ltd have failed to demonstrate that their extension provides adequate mitigation to those on the north of South Heath, because it doesn't!

The benefits of an extension are clear: far from being too small against the costs, we believe they make a compelling case for the extension. Even were the £40m right (which REPA argue when properly assessed is actually a saving) it would still not be a "disproportionate" cost.

Yours Sincerely

Beverley Manton,

Chair of REPA