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HS2 INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR

High Speed Rail (London West Midlands): Additional Provision

Summary of Issues Raised by Comments on the Supplementary Environmental Information AP5 Environmental Statement

Submitted to:
The Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills

HC872

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REPORT





SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED BY SUPPLEMENTARY ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION AP5



HIGH SPEED RAIL (LONDON WEST MIDLAND) BILL: ADDITIONAL PROVISION

**SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED BY COMMENTS ON THE SUPPLEMENTARY
ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT 4 AND ADDITIONAL PROVISION 5 ENVIRONMENTAL
STATEMENT**

Report prepared by the Independent Assessor appointed under Standing Order 224A(6)(a)

Submitted to the House of Commons by the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills, pursuant to Standing Order 224A(6)(b) and (8)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Report forms the comments of the Independent Assessor on the issues raised by comments on the Supplementary Environmental Statement 4 (SES 4) and Additional Provision 5 (AP5) Environmental Statement (ES), which constitute the Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI) which accompanied the Petition for further Additional Provision (“AP5”) to the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill, commonly known as the HS2 Bill. AP5 consists of a range of changes to a selection of Community Forum Areas (CFAs) mainly focused across the Chilterns area and additional provision in CFA 21 and CFA 22. In this Report ‘AP’ refers both to the overall set of amendments, and to each specific additional provision, depending on the context.

Golder Associates (UK) Ltd (Golder) was appointed Independent Assessor by the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills (officials of both Houses of Parliament) in December 2013, after an advertised public procurement procedure. The appointment was made under a Standing Order passed by the two Houses of Parliament which required the Examiners to appoint an Independent Assessor to prepare a summary of issues raised by comments on ESs relating to the Bill. The first such summary Report was published in April 2014 and a second Report dealing with a first round of SEI comments was published in December 2014. A third Report dealing with comments on AP2 issues was published in November 2015. A fourth Report dealing with comments to AP3 issues was published in December 2015 and a fifth Report dealing with comments on AP4 issues was published in February 2016.

A period of public consultation on this SEI ran from 2 December 2015 to 22 January 2016. The Secretary of State for Transport set the consultation period, under the terms of the relevant Standing Order of the two Houses. The Examiners were required by the Standing Order to set a deadline for the Assessor to compile the Summary Report on the SEI and submit it to the Examiners. This period had to be a minimum of 28 days from the date all comments were sent to the Assessor following the end of the consultation period. Forty-five comments were received during the consultation, with an additional forty-nine items of junk mail.

This Report sets out the work of the Independent Assessor in respect of comments received from the above consultation. It broadly follows the format of the previous Reports published on comments on the initial ES (Golder Associates, April 2014), the first round of SEI consultation (Golder Associates, December 2014), the second round of SEI consultation (Golder Associates, November 2015) the third round of SEI consultation (Golder Associates, December 2015) and the fourth round of consultation (Golder Associates, February 2016). This Report is intended to enable the reader to understand the patterns and key issues arising from the public consultation, along with a presentation of a synthesis of the consultation responses. The results are presented in terms of key environmental issues raised as a result of the consultation, by CFA where possible for the proposed line.

It is not the intention of a summary report to detail each and every response. The responses received from this consultation also did not always correspond neatly to particular AP references. Therefore in this Report the Independent Assessor is presenting key issues and any CFA ‘hot spots’ which were evident from the analysis of the full responses received.

The Report is in two sections:

- i) An introductory section setting out the Terms of Reference, work programme, approach and methodology applied by the Independent Assessor;
- ii) Results, presented as
 - Key issues; and
 - CFA results.

The Report was submitted to the Examiners on 23 February 2016 and the Examiners submitted it to Parliament in line with the Standing Order requirement. As required by the Standing Order, the Department for Transport will publish all responses received. The responses will be made available online at <https://hs2phaseoneap.dialoguebydesign.net/>. The Independent Assessor has no role in the publication of responses.



More information on Golder Associates is included in the initial ES consultation report (April 2014), HC (2013 -14) 1199, available at <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-private-bill-office/2013-1014/HS2-Independent-Assessor-Report.pdf>.

Timeline of Assessment

As noted above, the period for consultation started on 2 December 2015 and finished on 22 January 2016.

Process

Public responses to the Consultation were submitted directly to the Department for Transport, as required by the Standing Order, with no involvement from the Independent Assessor. The consultation and the process for submitting documents were designed by HS2 Ltd, working with the Department for Transport. The process for the Consultation followed the same format as that used for the prior ES and previous SEI consultation periods. Every response was passed on directly from electronic or physical post boxes to the Department's selected processing contactor without any third party opening or reviewing any response.

The Department's contractor was responsible for logging, opening and (in the case of hard copy responses) electronically scanning all received responses, as the responsible party of receipt. The comments were electronically transferred to the Independent Assessor in batches, with each response having its own individual reference number.

On receipt of a batch, the Independent Assessor allocated each response with another reference number appropriate for the Assessor's software programme and for referring to the response position within the processing system for stand-alone referencing. Each such reference number is directly linked to the logging reference number to provide an audit trail.

The Independent Assessor developed a bespoke approach for the handling of the responses based on Golder's proprietary GoldStake response management system and created a series of management screens and dashboards to reflect the expected key issues and types of response as well as detailed management and monitoring of performance and outcomes. More details on the GoldStake system are included in the initial ES consultation report (April 2014 HC (2013 -14) 1199, available at <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-private-bill-office/2013-1014/HS2-Independent-Assessor-Report.pdf>).

The database management structure also included reference and logic checks to avoid record duplications and mis-keying of records. The Independent Assessor also had access to senior specialist experts in all technical areas of environmental assessment throughout the course of the assessment to provide an additional level of expert input as necessary.

1.1 Responses

Volume of Responses

The total number of responses received by 22 January 2016 was forty-five, with a further forty-nine logged as 'junk' mail. The consultation cut off time was set as midnight on 22 January, with postal submissions accepted into the following week, provided the posting time could be demonstrated as being prior to the deadline. Electronic submissions were not accepted after midnight on 22 January.

Where possible, the Independent Assessor related each response to an appropriate CFA where this was indicated by a responder. The consultation was open to national responses (via the online consultation form) and was therefore not restricted to the public within the immediate hinterland of the affected area.



AP5 Types of Responses by Volume Pie Chart

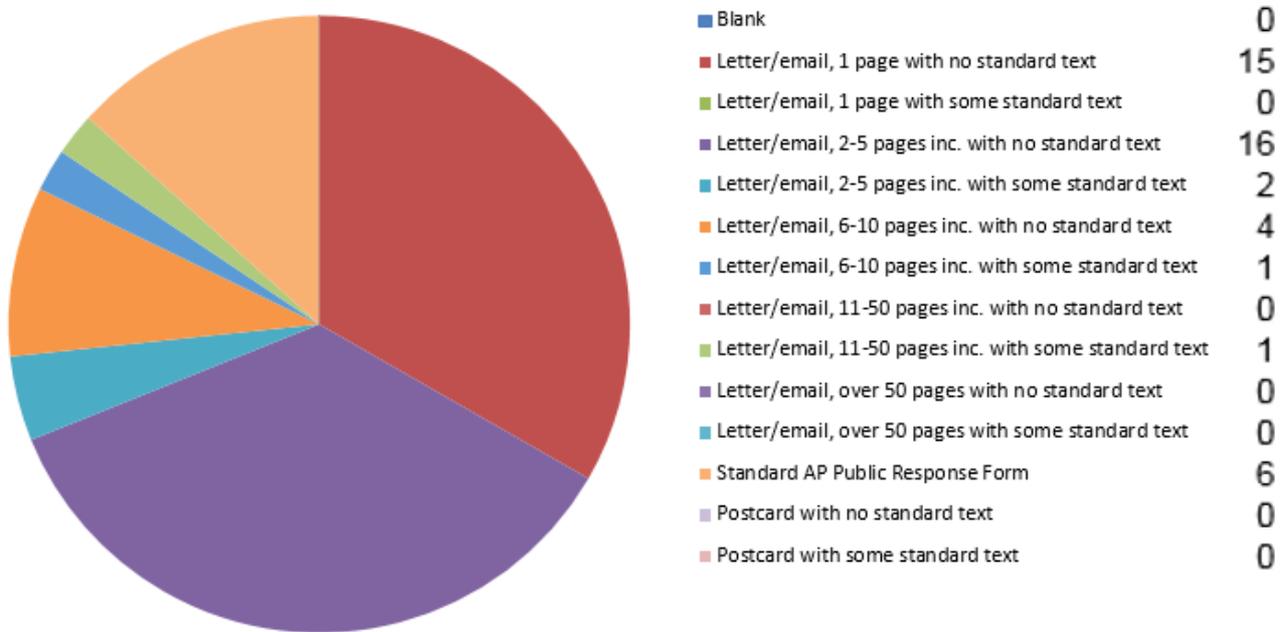


Figure 1: Responses resulting from the Public Consultation on the Supplementary Environmental Information AP5 (December 2015 – January 2016) for Phase I of HS2.

Junk Mail made up over half of all received responses as follows:

- Online Network: 14
- A Marketing company: 12
- General Spam: 4
- Wind & Power Advertisement: 4
- Business Advertisement: 4
- Russian Real Estate: 2
- Conference invitation: 2
- Charity Ball: 2
- Invoice: 1
- Electricals and Appliances: 1
- Sports Products: 1
- Mental Health Training: 1
- HM Revenue and Customs Spam: 1
- Total 49**



Calibration with Environmental Statement Categories

The Independent Assessor has used the categorisation of issues as defined in the ES where possible as the foundation of its analysis. This was the format followed during the reporting of the ES consultation phase and all other rounds of SEI consultation. This method enables the presentation and discussion of results in Section 2.0 of this Report to be easily related to the material and locations presented in the SEI material accompanying the AP.

These categories have been supplemented by the Independent Assessor to include a smaller number of issues that arose from multiple submissions in the response results. The Assessor has also used the designation of CFAs and specific APs as the foundation of the results presentation in Section 2.0. These will enable interested parties to quickly gain an understanding of the relevant AP and relate it to local issues (where expressed in this manner). An interactive CFA map is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-phase-one-environmental-statement-documents>.

1.2 Campaigns

Although a number of respondents used similar text and wording for a number of issues raised in the proposed changes, ten letters in particular, just under a quarter of all responses, there was no specific campaign identified.

2.0 RESULTS

This section of the Report presents a summary of the key issues and concerns received from all respondents to the AP5 (December 2015 – January 2016) consultation. The Key Issues section is designed to provide the reader with a quick and accurate picture of the feedback received from the entire consultation. The results include responses from a range of respondents from individuals to public authorities. It does not evaluate responses on a technical level against assumptions presented in the AP. Responses specifically referencing individual CFAs are referenced in Section 2.2.

This section is intended to provide the reader with a snapshot of the issues expressed within each category. However, where particular geographical features or themes are a recurring element of the relevant responses this Report highlights those issues.

Key issues are presented below ranked in numerical order of comments received. Many responses referred to numerous issues within each response. The separate issues were logged as separate comments where appropriate. Consequently the figure for the total number of comments/issues is greater than the total number of responses.

Issues relating to sound, noise and vibration and landscape were of the greatest concern for respondents to this AP consultation.



2.1 Response by Issue

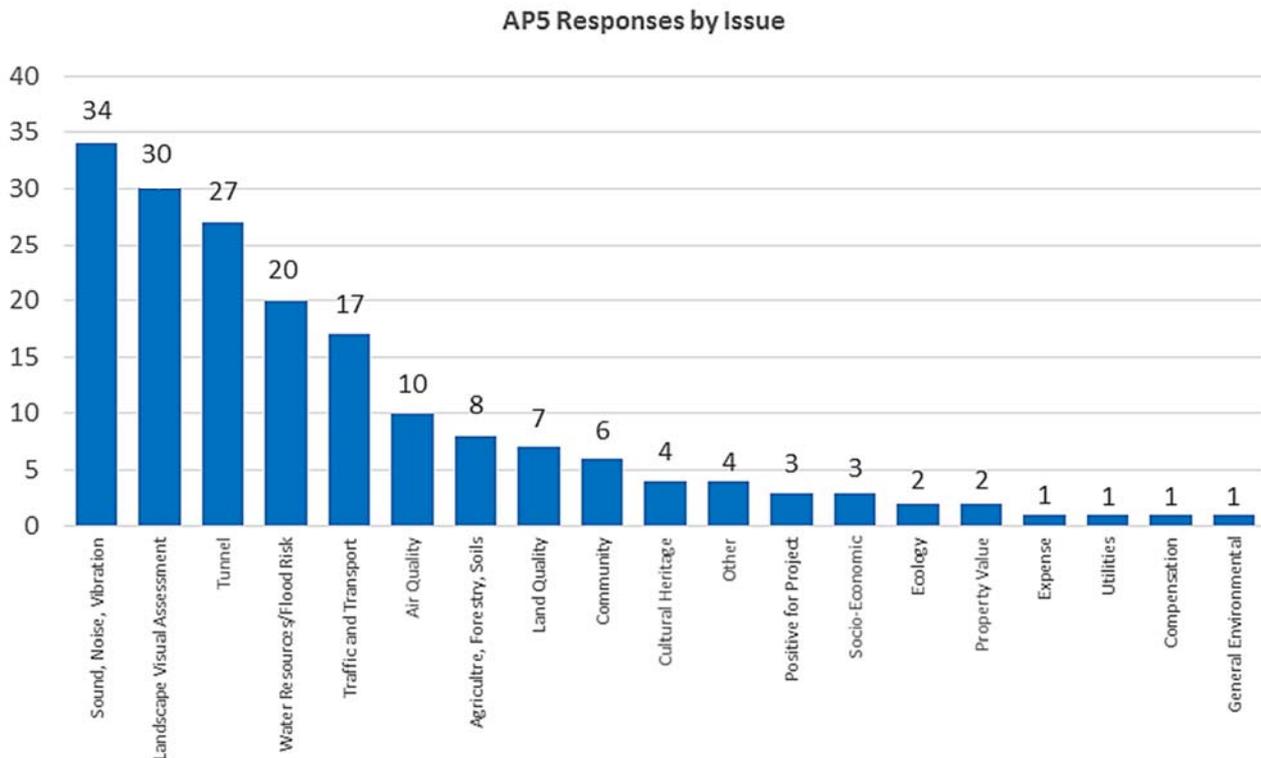


Figure 2: Responses by Issue

Issue 1: Sound, Noise and Vibration – 34 Comments

The key concern in this category is the proposed increase in height to the noise mitigation barriers near Wendover and the Small Dean Viaduct. Respondents are divided as to whether the barriers ‘may bring some improvement to noise from the operational railway’ or ‘bring no increased mitigation’ to surrounding areas. Respondents are all concerned about the potential landscape impact of these proposed barriers (see below). Many respondents also expressed concern that the potential operational noise levels are now expected to be at levels above 60 db and are unimpressed with the statement in the ES documentation that the High Speed train noise ‘is only just louder than organ music in church’. One respondent mentioned concern about disturbance from night time freight movements along the line and one claimed that they have been disturbed already at night by drilling beneath their bedroom (in London). A third of respondents referenced potential noise and vibration disturbance from construction traffic and activities. All respondents re-iterated that noise mitigation issues would be better serviced by increasing tunnel length throughout the Chilterns AONB.

Issue 2: Landscape and Visual Assessment – 30 Comments

As above, the key issue mentioned by respondents is the proposed landscape impact of the noise mitigation barriers near Wendover and the Small Dean Viaduct. Respondents all agree that the current designs will have significant impact on the landscape, with many referring to the ‘Berlin Wall’ and ‘Israeli–Palestinian fence’ as comparative structures. Many respondents were also concerned that the noise barriers would attract graffiti artists to further spoil the landscape and views. Aside from this specific instance, respondents were also concerned in general terms about the visual impact and ‘damage’ that HS2 will cause to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and are not convinced that the value of the landscape has been adequately considered in the Project planning. The proposed re-alignment to pylon routes was the third major concern for respondents in this category.



Issue 3: Tunnel – 27 Comments

All responses in this category were concerned with a plea to further increase the length of the Chilterns tunnel to avoid impacts on the Chilterns AONB. Some respondents suggested that the tunnel should be lower (deeper) than proposed in order to avoid potential hydrological impacts on the Chalk aquifer, and they remained concerned over likely impacts at the tunnel portal areas. Respondents are concerned that the proposed 'Green' tunnel is not a desirable option, and could even increase construction nuisance and disruption to the area. They would therefore prefer a fully bored tunnel option.

Issue 4: Water Resources – 20 Comments

Respondents are concerned about the potential risk to public water supply and hydrogeology from the proposed works and infrastructure. The aquifers at Coombe Hill and Bacombe Hill are highlighted as well as the potential impact of disrupting the springs along the spring line. Respondents are also concerned that there has not been adequate assessment over proposals to divert water away from the Weston Turville SSSI and the Wendover arm of the Grand Union Canal.

Issue 5: Traffic and Transport – 17 Comments

Potential disturbance and nuisance from the construction traffic and changes to local traffic flows during construction are the key concerns in this category. The potential impacts on the A413 were particularly mentioned by respondents as a concern, along with HGV movements and associated noise, dust and vibration on the temporary link roads required for tunnel construction.

Issue 6: Air Quality – 10 Comments

The concern in this category is the potential dust created as a result of construction and construction traffic activity thereby causing nuisance and adverse air quality impacts for the respondents.

Issue 7: Agriculture, Forestry and Soils – 8 Comments

This issue is concerned with concern expressed that the temporary tunnel link road between Ellesborough Road and Bacombe Lane will mean that the affected field 'will not be able to be returned to current agricultural use'.

Issue 8: Land Quality – 7 Comments

Respondents make a general comment about the perceived 'degradation of amenity and quality of the Chiltern AONB Area'.

Issue 9: Community – 6 Comments

Respondents in this category raise concerns over potential adverse impacts on community use of St Mary's Church Wendover and Wendover House School in CFA 10 including operational noise from trains on services, concerts and funerals at the church. One respondent also raised concerns over removal of a bridleway and its planned replacement with an overbridge, with no mitigation proposed.

Issue = 10: Cultural Heritage – 4 Comments

Respondents in this category raised a number of specific locations including St Mary's Church, Wendover, and the general heritage of the Wendover area including earthworks, coaxial field systems and buildings of interest. One respondent raised the issue of hand axes and prehistoric activity in CFA 21 and CFA 22 in the northern area of Phase I and one respondent made a general observation requiring HS2 to 'ensure harm and benefits to the historic environment are properly gauged'.

Issue = 10: Other – 4 Comments

One respondent submitted a question to the project team: 'what is a people mover?', whilst another respondent requested the right to approve proposed overhead line works and canalside pylon construction. Two identical responses relating to this CFA were received that commented on the legal procedure for the HS2 process and were dismayed that the HS2–HS1 link is not currently included in the AP5 process.



Issue = 12: Positive for Project – 3 Comments

Two responses expressed enthusiasm for the project and the proposed designs along with a comment on the proposed location of parkway stations for Phase 2 of the scheme. One respondent appreciated design changes proposed in AP5 referring to CFA 22 in the northern area of Phase 1.

Issue = 12: Socio-economic – 3 Comments

Respondents raised general comments about potential adverse impacts on the economic health of communities as a result of the HS2 construction programme.

Issue = 14: Ecology – 2 Comments

One respondent was concerned that species referenced in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 had not been sufficiently considered in the AP5 proposals. The other comprised a comment on the value of hedgerows.

Issue = 14: Property Value – 2 Comments

Respondents were concerned that the proposed noise barriers near Small Dean Viaduct would depress house values in the Wendover area.

Issue = 16: Expense – 1 Comment

One respondent raised a general objection to the cost of the HS2 project.

Issue = 16: Utilities – 1 Comment

One respondent requested that gas mains be laid at least 1 m below the hard bed of a local watercourse.

Issue = 16: Compensation – 1 Comment

A general comment enquiring about compensation to an individual household for perceived disturbance.

Issue = 16: General Environmental – 1 Comment

Respondent concerned that the environmental impact has not been studied enough for the proposed scheme.



2.2 Responses by Community Forum Area

This section of the Report presents a summary of responses and key concerns by CFA reference. These are discussed in decreasing order of response volume. The majority of responses for this CFA related to CFA10 – Dunmore, Wendover and Halton - which is within the Chilterns AONB area.

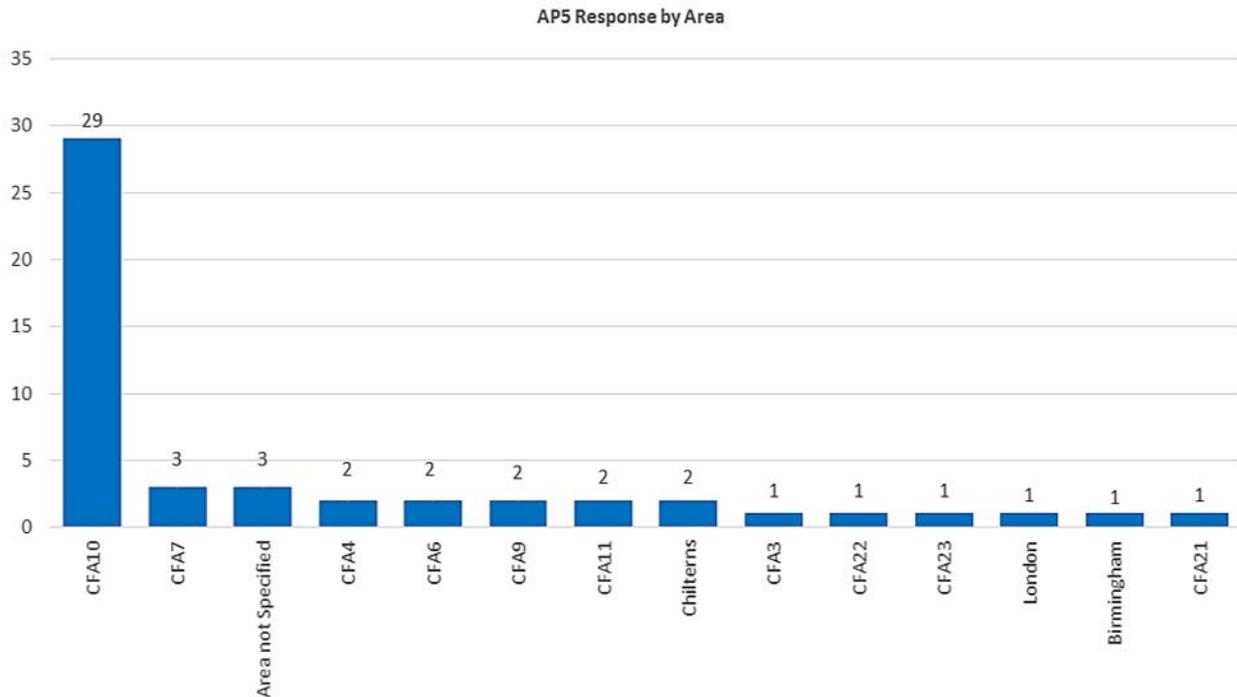


Figure 3: Responses by CFA

CFA 10 Dunsmore, Wendover and Halton: 29 Comments

CFA 10 received the largest volume of responses. Respondents were concerned with the proposals for the 6m high noise barriers to be constructed near the Small Dean Viaduct which will impact visual and landscape elements in the vicinity. Respondents commented on the impacts of operational noise and a range of issues which could degrade the AONB landscapes, including the realignment of pylons. The potential impact on Coombe Hill and Bacombe Hill aquifers is seen as an important concern for public water supply as well as long term aquifer protection. Potential disturbance and nuisance from the construction traffic and changes to local traffic flows during construction are also important concerns in this CFA. The potential impacts on the A413 were particularly mentioned by respondents as a concern, along with HGV movements and associated noise, dust and vibration on the temporary link roads required for tunnel construction. Likely noise disturbance for users of St Mary’s Church was mentioned by many respondents.

All respondents in this CFA were in favour of increased bored tunnelling to minimise environmental impacts in this CFA and to the Chilterns AONB as an area of local amenity and national value.

CFA 7 Colne Valley: 3 Comments

Respondents referred to potential impacts on wildlife and visual damage to the landscape in this CFA.

Area Not Specified: 3 Comments

These referenced general comments about potential noise and air pollution arising from construction and operation of the Project as well as a requirement that potential impacts on cultural heritage along the route should be ‘properly gauged’.



CFA 4 Kilburn (Brent) to Old Oak Common: 2 Comments

Two identical responses relating to this CFA were received that commented on the legal procedure for the HS2 process and were dismayed that the HS2–HS1 link is not currently included in the AP5 process.

CFA 6 South Ruislip to Ickenham: 2 Comments

One respondent was concerned about the potential impacts on wildlife in this area, where they appreciate walking. The other comment concerned a re-submitted previous response to AP4 commenting on the potential impacts of HS2 on transport links in the CFA.

CFA 9 Central Chilterns: 2 comments

The two respondents in this category submitted general concerns over the visual impact of the proposed line in this CFA and required the extension of the tunnel proposals.

CFA11 Stoke Mandeville and Aylesbury: 2 Comments

One respondent was concerned with the proposed longer operation of the link roads supporting HS2 construction and the potential knock-on effect on traffic and transport in the CFA. The other wanted to correct a particular point concerning the length of Hartwell Estate Wall.

Chilterns: 2 Comments

Two comments un-related to specific CFA locations submitted general concerns over the visual impact of the proposed line in this CFA and required the extension of the tunnel proposals.

CFA 3 Primrose Hill to Kilburn (Camden): 1 Comment

This respondent claimed that they have been disturbed already at night by drilling beneath their bedroom and wanted compensation.

CFA 22 Whittington to Handsacre: 1 Comment

This respondent referenced design changes in both AP4 and AP5 for this CFA and listed specific issues for improved ecological, cultural heritage and landscape impact mitigation within the CFA.

CFA 23 Balsall Common and Hampton-in-Arden: 1 Comment

A question submitted to the project team: ‘what is a people mover?’

London: 1 Comment

A general comment on the expense of the Project and lack of perceived benefits for London and Birmingham.

Birmingham: 1 Comment

A general comment on the expense of the Project and lack of perceived benefits for London and Birmingham.



Report Signature Page

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