MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE

taken before the

HIGH SPEED RAIL BILL COMMITTEE

on the

HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS – CREWE) BILL

Tuesday 8 May 2018 (Afternoon)

In Committee Room 5

PRESENT:

James Duddridge (Chair)
Sandy Martin
Mrs Sheryll Murray
Martin Whitfield
Bill Wiggin

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IN ATTENDANCE:

Timothy Mould QC, Lead Counsel, Department for Transport
Alastair Lewis, Parliamentary Agent, Staffordshire and Lichfield Councils

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IN PUBLIC SESSION
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(At 2.00 p.m.)

1. THE CHAIR: Thank you, everyone. Today, I think we were due to hear a more substantive session from Staffordshire Council, who previously have been before us, but I understand HS2 and Staffordshire County Council have come to some agreement, and there’s a statement, so I was proposing to hear from that statement and then the Committee would move into private sitting to consider other matters. Mr Mould?

**Staffordshire County Council and Lichfield District Council**

**Statement by Mr Mould**

2. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Thank you very much indeed. Yes, absolutely right, to my right, Mr Alastair Lewis of Sharpe Pritchard, who are the Parliamentary Agents for Staffordshire County Council and Lichfield District Council. The statement is as follows, and this is an agreed statement between HS2 Ltd, Staffordshire County Council and Lichfield District Council:

3. Following the petitions submitted by Staffordshire County Council and Lichfield District Council, there has been constructive dialogue between the promoter and the councils on the issues raised in the petitions. The promoter has taken significant steps towards addressing the concerns raised by the councils, and has offered an extensive package of assurances covering the following matters: firstly, Stone railhead and infrastructure maintenance base: several assurances have been given covering reducing the footprint of the maintenance base and maximising the use of rail; ensuring that the M6 slips are put in place as soon as practicable and their use is maximised to reduce the use of Yarnfield Lane; thirdly, limiting the height of permanent buildings at the maintenance base to two storeys; fourthly, limiting the height of the temporary worker accommodation and office buildings at Yarnfield North Embankment to two storeys; then providing for additional noise and visual mitigation; and finally, dust monitoring at the railhead.

4. Just for the sake of complete clarity, where I have referred in the last few moments to the maintenance base, I’m referring to the same facility that others will know by the acronym IMB-R.

5. The second topic in relation to which assurances have been agreed is as follows: a
number of highway and junction improvements, including providing for temporary improvement works to be made permanent, thereby delivering long term benefits; then thirdly, agreement that Kings Bromley will not be used as a main construction traffic route; fourthly, the widening of Wood End Lane to allow its use by construction traffic, thereby avoiding roads in Lichfield.

6. The next topic is the stopping up of Bottom Lane; then the provision of an alternative to permanent stopping up of Common Lane; then an additional construction traffic route to reduce the impact upon Beaconside at Lichfield.

7. The next topic being haul roads to be put in place as soon as possible and their use to be maximised; then in relation to socioeconomic issues, for example, encouraging the recruitment of local disadvantaged or underrepresented groups in the construction of the scheme.

8. Then the reduction or avoidance of the need to take hedgerows and assurances as to the protection of veteran trees, as well as specific assurances on retaining Noddy’s oak and minimising the impact on Bishton Lane.

9. The next topic is the extension of the remit of the existing ecology review group, so that it will cover Phase 2A, and participation in the work of Phase 2A green corridor; then local engagement in the design of the Great Haywood viaduct; then the extension of noise assurances given to the local authority noise consortium on Phase One, the extension of those assurances to Phase 2A; and finally, amending the provisions of Schedule 17 to the Bill in respect of the approval of lorry routes and requiring discussion of proposed routes in traffic liaison groups.

10. These assurances are in addition to those already offered and accepted in respect of the lowering of the Kings Bromley viaduct, with which members of the Committee are familiar, and given the steps taken by the promoter to address the concerns raised, and the assurances offered, neither council will be appearing before the Select Committee this week.

11. The promoter has agreed to continue dialogue with the councils on other matters raised in their petitions, and in particular the promoter accepts that the councils should, if necessary, be able to return and appear before your Committee on the discrete issue of
the use of land at the Rugeley power station site, which is very important to them. The promoter is currently considering alternative options to the use of that land.

12. The promoter believes that the assurances given to the county will benefit stakeholders along the Phase 2A route and that, as some of the assurances apply to the route as a whole, will benefit stakeholders in Cheshire East as well.

13. What I have said to you is, of necessity, a summary of the assurances that have been given. The full text of the assurances given, of which I have given a summary, will be published shortly.


15. MRS MURRAY: Thank you. I’m not sure which of you gentlemen would like to answer these questions, but I’ve got a couple. And it’s just to seek reassurance really. First of all, has there been a dialogue with regard to this agreement with Stone Council?

16. MR MOULD QC (DfT): This particular agreement and these particular assurances have been subject of discussions between the promoter, HS2 Ltd, and Staffordshire County Council and Lichfield District Council.

17. MRS MURRAY: Then perhaps Mr Lewis could tell me if you have had any discussions with the parish and town councils within your area before you agreed with this agreement?

18. MR LEWIS: I can’t answer that question personally; I don’t have anyone here from the council with me to be able to answer that question, I’m afraid.

19. MRS MURRAY: Okay. I think it’s quite important that we know that Staffordshire Council is in dialogue with the towns and parishes within its boundaries.

20. THE CHAIR: So could we – in addition – I completely agree with that point, but in addition, I believe we’re seeing Stone parish separately?

21. MRS MURRAY: Okay. So we can get the assurances from them.

22. THE CHAIR: So whilst we would encourage all local government groups to work together, there is an opportunity for them to come and disagree with anything that
Staffordshire as a county have said.

23. MR LEWIS: I totally take that point. If I may, I do know that throughout this whole process, through some very, very dedicated officers at the county in particular, but also Lichfield district, they have worked closely, I do know that, with the parishes. I hope you can understand that in the last-minute nature of negotiations, on a Friday evening, at 10 o’clock, it can be difficult to contact everybody, and so I can’t warrant that that was done.

24. MRS MURRAY: Absolutely, I fully accept that, thank you. The second thing is: who’s going to be responsible for monitoring that the work is completed within the terms of the agreement? Is it up to HS2 to make sure that – obviously to make sure that they comply, but who’s going to monitor it? I mean, very often, local authorities will be responsible for the monitoring and enforcing of any agreement and rules; would you envisage Staffordshire council will be keeping a very close eye on this?

25. MR LEWIS: Staffordshire County Council obviously have the benefit of having the experience of Phase One under their belts already, and I do know that they have already entered into relationships with HS2, on Phase One, in relation to the assurances given then, in Phase One, and the same for the other local authorities that I represent on Phase One, so I would expect that to happen.

26. MRS MURRAY: Thank you very much. And just thirdly, you said about extending the remit of the existing ecology review group, so that – to cover Phase 2A and the participation of work on Phase 2A green corridor; how do you – what groups do you extend that remit to, Mr Mould? Is it just local councils, or who are the stakeholders who would be – where would you be extending the remit of the ecology review group. How is that group made up, please?

27. MR MOULD QC (DfT): That group is made up of a mixture of local authorities and other statutory bodies with a statutory remit in relation to ecological matters, and also I think a number of non-governmental organisations. This was a body that was established during the course of the parliamentary process on the Phase One Bill, and essentially, the assurance that I just mentioned to you, it simply extends its geographical remit northwards, so that it covers the Phase 2A Bill.
28. MRS MURRAY: Fine.

29. MR MOULD QC (DfT): But in terms of its terms of reference and its membership, the group essentially remains as constituted.

30. MRS MURRAY: Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

31. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Sandy?

32. MR MARTIN: Yes, thank you very much. Mr Lewis, during the presentation of Staffordshire’s evidence the last time we heard from you, one of the things that really stood out for us was the dangerous junction between Yarnfield Lane and the A34.

33. Now, I note in the agreement that you do say that one of the things that you’ve agreed is that the promoter should pay for the signalisation of that junction. I just wondered to what extent you’ve discussed that and whether it might be something a little more than just sticking in a couple of traffic signals and whether it would extend to the road on the other side of the A34 as well, the name of which escapes me, but basically, it’s an offset crossroads and I don’t think it’s in these maps at all. There was a lot of traffic turning right off the A34, turning right on to the A34, doing it from two different directions at the same time. I think the entire junction probably needs more than just a few traffic signals.

34. MR LEWIS: Well, again, it’s very difficult for me to answer that question, I’m afraid, without those instructing me behind me. But all I can say is that I’m sure that the traffic engineers at Staffordshire were apprised fully of what was being discussed here and gave their blessing to the final agreement here. I’m afraid I can’t answer the specific question. If you would like that, I can certainly arrange for the council to write to the chairman and answer your questions separately, if that would help

35. MR MARTIN: That probably would be helpful thank you.

36. MR MOULD QC (DfT): There’s no doubt that the assurances that we have just mentioned – can we put up P117(10)?

37. MR MARTIN: Yes that’s the signalisation.

38. MR MOULD QC (DfT): That certainly deals with part of your question at 17a.
We will bring forward an additional provision later in the year to provide for the signalisation of the existing priority junction of the A34 with Yarnfield Lane to be made permanent.

39. The other junction that you had in mind I think is further to the west on Yarnfield Lane, is that right? Or are you thinking of one which is further to the south in Stone?

40. MR MARTIN: No, no, no. On the A34 – it’s a complicated junction on the A34 which consists of a road to the north, I believe, which joins the A34 about 100 yards west of the junction of Yarnfield Lane with the A34, such that – so it’s an offset.

41. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Oh it’s Eccleshall Road and Pirehill Lane.

42. MR MARTIN: Yes, yes. I mean, the entire junction would need to be treated as a junction, I think.

43. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes. I don’t believe that there is any specific provision for physical improvements to that junction. As I understand it, and again, with the qualification that Mr Lewis puts forward, if there’s more to be said about this, we’ll let you know, but my understanding is that the reason why that junction is not the subject of any specific physical improvement is because, as you were told when we heard the petition of the crisis group in Stone Town Council a few days ago, that junction is already operating at capacity and the view of the highway authority, as I recall, is that there’s very little that can be done physically to improve its operation. So that is a junction where the focus, I suspect, would be on traffic management measures within the existing junction rather than any physical change. But I say that from memory, and I echo Mr Lewis’ point that, if there is more to be said, we will report back to you on that.

44. MR MARTIN: Okay.

45. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Can I just return to the question that Mrs Murray posed? Mr Lewis, a very helpful response in relation to the county council and its communication with parishes within its area. For the promoter’s part, the promoter will be ensuring that those assurances that have been offered to Staffordshire, of which I have just summarised before you, insofar as they relate directly or indirectly to issues raised by parishes within Staffordshire which are due to appear before you later in your
proceedings, that we draw attention in good time to those assurances and to the substance of them, so that those parish councils are able to reflect on those assurances well before they appear before you.

46. And that process starts this week, because I think Kings Bromley Parish Council are due to appear before you on Thursday, and they will be very interested, I’m sure, in at least two matters: firstly, the assurances given in relation to Kings Bromley not being used as a main HS2 construction route, and secondly in relation to the proposal to provide a permanent realignment to Common Lane.

47. MRS MURRAY: Thank you very much.

48. THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Mould; thank you, Mr Lewis; thank you Staffordshire County Council and Lichfield for all this work. Meeting closed.