MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE
taken before the
HIGH SPEED RAIL BILL COMMITTEE
on the
HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS – CREWE) BILL

Tuesday 22 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:

James Strachan QC, Counsel, Department for Transport

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WITNESSES:

Malcolm Jennings and Sharon Mulcahy
Gaynor Irwin and Lily Irwin
Tim Smart, Chief Engineer, HS2 Ltd
Peter Miller, Head of Environment and Planning, HS2 Ltd

IN PUBLIC SESSION
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(At 2.00 p.m.)

1. **THE CHAIR:** Just in terms of logistics, the House will be having a minute silence to remember those who were affected by the Manchester bombings. At 2.30, we will observe a minute silence. The minute silence will begin with a bell and end with the sounding of a completion bell and, at 2.29, we will announce to everyone that’s likely to happen, so we might pause a few seconds before the bell.

   **Malcolm Jennings and Sharon Mulcahy**

2. Mr Jennings, in an earlier session, I reminded you, if possible, in the first 10 minutes, try to make all the principal points so that we can engage and that helps the Committee and helps us help you. Thank you very much for coming today, Mr Jennings.

   **Submissions by Mr Jennings**

3. **MR JENNINGS:** Alright, well, good afternoon, Mr Chairman and the Committee. Thanks for allowing me to see you today.

4. **THE CHAIR:** You’ll have to speak up. I can’t hear you.

5. **MR JENNINGS:** Can I speak up? Okay.

6. **THE CHAIR:** That’s lovely. Thank you.

7. **MR JENNINGS:** My name’s Malcolm Jennings and I live at Three Chimneys, Bar Hill along with my partner, Sharon Mulcahy, who is beside me. Sharon’s lived in the property for over 20 years and became sole owner in 2006 as a result of a divorce settlement. She eventually paid off her mortgage and is the owner of the property.

8. **THE CHAIR:** Sorry we’re all struggling to hear you.

9. **MR JENNINGS:** Sorry.

10. **THE CHAIR:** Maybe sit closer to the microphone. The microphone’s there, and lean in a bit, and over to you.

11. **MR JENNINGS:** Right, okay. She eventually paid off her mortgage in 2016 and
become the sole owner of the property. Now, without divulging too much of our personal life in such a public environment, we met in 2006. In 2008, I decided, as an only child and sole carer of my mother, to leave work to spend more time with her. She was suffering from dementia. Prior to that, I had been living in rented accommodation and travelling into London where I worked for a telecommunications company. Our relationship grew and it was our intention at some point in the future to buy a property together. That was put on hold in January 2012 when the route of HS2 was announced and our lives changed forever. I must stress as this point that it is still our intention despite the obstacles of HS2.

12. Initially, we opposed the plan, but the forces we were seeing were so great that we began to realise we were pushing against a closed door. With help and guidance from our MP, Sir Bill Cash, we started to engage with HS2 and worked with them as best we could, attending roadshows wherever possible, holding meetings and site visits with engineers and community liaison officers. I got the impression from these discussions that most of what we were told was what they thought you wanted to hear. On saying that, the vast majority of HS2 contacts we have met in those early days seems to have left the project for various reasons. I was going to make a pun at this point about the light at the end of the tunnel, but I’ll pass on that. I still regard the project as flawed, but there’s nothing we can do about it. We’ve got to accept what this Committee decides and what the Government decides.

13. To move onto our personal circumstances, we now both work from home as, on leaving work, when my mother went into care, I went on to pursue my hobby, sailing. I’m now a shore-based instructor for the RYA, and also a radio assessor for Her Majesty’s Coastguard.

14. The training centre I help to run delivers online courses. We’ve got over 600 students on the books. So, my working day is spent setting up lessons, marking assessments and working with students in person or via the telephone. All this along with the general administration of the school. I’m also a trustee and training commodore of a sailing association and we’ve got boats throughout the UK, so I organise training events for those. So, it keeps me busy.

15. Sharon works for BT and again, works from home alongside communication
providers in the UK and also in India, or with a back-office team in India. So, currently our working environment is as good as it gets. I make no bones about that. Sharon has an office in the corner of our dining room; I have a desk on the first-floor landing and we both look out over a rural landscape. There are green fields with sheep and lands in the spring and hay in the summer. So, I hope I’ve painted a good picture at this point of what life is like for us and how, next, all this is about to change with the arrival of HS2.

16. I realise this is a rhetorical question, but how would you feel – and I include Mr Mould in that – if you were going to be subjected to what we were going to be subjected to, or what is proposed we will be subjected to. Now, slide A110(2), that shows the junction with Manor Road and the A525 Bar Hill. The bridge you can see is where the 525 crosses the existing West Coast Main Line. I realise that HS2 could be proposing improvements to that junction, but I haven’t seen any detailed proposals for that. Now, a fully laden HGV pulling out of that junction to turn left into Bar Hill is an accident waiting to happen, and we’ve been told that there are something in the region of 400 vehicle movements a day coming out of that junction.

17. MR WIGGIN: Sorry Mr Jennings, why is that an accident waiting to happen? That’s a legitimate junction.

18. MR JENNINGS: It’s a legitimate junction. What I should have done is taken a photograph from the other side and you can’t see –

19. MR WIGGIN: But the local authority who police roads allow HGVs to use that road. That is a legitimate junction.

20. MR JENNINGS: Well, it is a legitimate junction but –

21. MR WIGGIN: So why is it your feeling that there’s going to be an accident? Because I very much care about human life.

22. MR JENNINGS: The only vehicles that use that on a regular basis are milk tankers. There are very few HGVs, trucks of however many tonnes carrying soil and spoil come out of that junction. So, there are three or four milk tankers a day using that junction at the moment.

23. MR WIGGIN: Thank you very much.
24. MS MULCAHY: May I just add to that as well? As car user, pulling out of that junction to turn left or right is very tricky because you cannot see what’s coming over the railway bridge until it’s actually on top of you and it’s very difficult to see if you’re travelling this way for any cars actually travelling to the east to go over the railway bridge. So, the time it would take an HGV to make the decision to pull out and then actually get around that corner could actually be an issue.

25. MR MARTIN: It’s very difficult to tell from the maps because we don’t actually have that exact junction on the map, and in fact, the one place where we would see it on our first map, which is P236, it’s been obliterated by a small inset of the local map of the area.

26. THE CHAIR: How about P238?

27. MR MARTIN: P238.

28. MR JENNINGS: As you can see there, that’s the junction there that we’re talking about and there are no plans as I can see for Manor Road and the A525 for an improvement.

29. MR MARTIN: So it is your belief that is going to be one of the haul roads.

30. MR JENNINGS: It’s going to be an issue. I’m sure it is, yes. Well, it is a haul road.

31. MR MARTIN: It is one of the haul roads? Right.

32. MR JENNINGS: For the proposed scheme, it is going to be for the Lea Valley viaduct.

33. MR MARTIN: Thank you, Mr Jennings.

34. MR JENNINGS: If we can move on –

35. MRS MURRAY: Sorry.

36. THE CHAIR: Sheryll Murray.

37. MRS MURRAY: I’m just wondering, because it does look as though there are
visibility splays there. Does the road widen coming up to the junction? Because from
the photograph, it clearly looks as though there are some visibility splays there.

38. MR JENNINGS: Personally, there isn’t. It is a left-hand corner with no – they
are not cutting the corner at all at that point.

39. MS MULCAHY: You can turn right, but it does look as if it widens there. It may
widen slightly, but there’s only room for one car to pull out either way.

40. MRS MURRAY: Okay, thank you.

41. THE CHAIR: Okay, carry on then.

42. MR JENNINGS: If I can go on to A110(3). As you can see, that’s the front
elevation of Three Chimneys, 42 Bar Hill. You can note the nautical themes in the
window. And A110(4) and then (5) show our working environment. That was the view
from my office window, and HS2 will be running from approximately that tree there
across. I think you’ve had discussions with the owner of Bar Hill Farm as regards the
impact on his business regarding that.

43. Now we envisage there will be little or no respite from the construction of HS2
during its five years of construction. As you can see from the front of the house, from
Sharon’s office window, and from mine, not only we will we have HGVs passing within
five metres of the window; we will be within 300 metres of the centre of the line and all
the earthworks. And so it means we will be 100 metres from the actual construction.

44. As you can see from A110(8), which is an extract from the map, the rear of the
house, we will have a tunnel satellite compound, so we won’t even be able to take a
break from it in the garden.

45. If we return now to A110(6) and then (7), you will see that although Bar Hill is
designated an A road, it has a large number of houses that do not have driveways.
Nearly all of those have two or more cars, and in some cases, some have four. There are
always cars parked on the road. This means the traffic has to slow and in most cases,
stop to let others pass. Because our home is double fronted, a double fronted end
terrace, we have enough room at the front of the house to park on the driveway, so you
can guess where the HGVs are going to pass: in front of Three Chimneys, Bar Hill.
46. I would like to point out at this juncture that the proposed realignment of Bar Hill starts approximately where I was standing when I took this photograph. As I said earlier, we’ve accepted HS2 will go ahead and what I’m petitioning for is to make mine and Sharon’s life more tolerable in its implementation. HS2 may say it is only during the construction phase. In that, they may be correct, but I’m aware of my own mortality. I will probably never get to see this railway in operation. So, forgive me when I say we require improvements to my home environment during its construction rather than the 10 plus years shown on slide A110(9).

47. We want the next slide, sorry, 10. The single tunnel, which I believe you’ve had numerous presentations on, would have been the best option and I know you’ve been subject to arguments on both sides as to its rationale and suitability. I conducted some research myself and, using HS2’s own model, arrived at a figure that is the lower end of Staffs County Council’s submissions. I don’t know whether you want me to go through that or not at this point.

48. THE CHAIR: I think we have gone through the principles of the case ad infinitum with many, many experts and I would urge you to use your time to concentrate on your property and what would happen, either if there was a tunnel, what mitigation you need; if there wasn’t a tunnel, what mitigation you need, what outcomes you want. This is your moment to shine a light on your case.

49. MR JENNINGS: Right. Can I ask whether or not you’ve consulted Network Rail?

50. THE CHAIR: Sorry, you can’t ask us questions. You can say it to us and we can ask you questions.

51. MR JENNINGS: Sure, okay.

52. THE CHAIR: Sorry.

53. MR JENNINGS: No, that’s fine. One of the things about the HGVs then, because I’ll pass on my tunnel comparison spot, is vibration from vehicles. I can’t see anything in HS2’s documentation that caters or covers the vibration of the traffic. As I said, HGVs will pass within five metres of our window. On the occasion that we do get
HGVs passing, the house shakes, so I’m concerned about the sheer volume of traffic that they are proposing and the structural damage it will do to the property.

54. One last point, just mentioning the single tunnel option just for one paragraph, is the large number of properties and businesses that won’t have to be purchased by HS2 should the single tunnel go ahead. If the Committee decide that the construction outside our home on the scale and visage should go ahead, both Sharon and I feel HS2 is making our working environment untenable, and the best option would be for HS2 to purchase the property at its unblighted price and for us to rent it back while we search for another home that meets our needs at a different location. Once Sharon’s given her bit of the presentation, I hope the Committee would add weight to that proposal. Okay, do you want to say a few words, Sharon?

55. THE CHAIR: Have you already applied to HS2 for the purchase?

56. MR JENNINGS: Yes. Sharon will take you through the rationale behind that.

57. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Yes, Sharon.

58. MS MULCAHY: Okay.

59. THE CHAIR: Sorry, I shouldn’t call you Sharon. It’s Ms Mulcahy. Malcolm is calling you Sharon, so I did.

60. MS MULCAHY: That’s fine. I think there was some debate over the pronunciation of the surname anyway.

61. THE CHAIR: To save my embarrassment, I said Sharon. Ms Mulcahy

62. MS MULCAHY: Sharon’s fine. So to try not to repeat anything that Malcolm said, but obviously as he said, I am the home owner of 42 Bar Hill, Madeley. I’ve lived there for 23 years. The reason for travelling here today and speaking to you is I would like to personally ask you to please seriously consider the single tunnel option between Whitmore and Madeley. My reasoning for doing that, obviously, in addition to the lessening of the devastation to our little beautiful patch of countryside, which we’re all very proud of and the impact on our several local communities – and I think you’ve had all the parish councils appear in front of you – and I’m sure you’ve heard all the
arguments, so I’m not going to repeat those. But from a personal point of view, I feel that that single tunnel option presents for Malcolm and I, and for any other residents of Bar Hill that may wish to move during this period in the run up to the construction, but are specified as being outside of the statutory blight zone, I think this option presents us with the best opportunity of being able to sell our properties on the open market.

63. Because we’re outside of the statutory blight zone, our only other option is the need-to-sell scheme, and I will come back to that in a moment. HS2 Ltd have advised me that I am 279 metres from the centre of the proposed line. As Malcolm has indicated already, we have the existing West Coast Main Line to the east of us and the proposed route of HS2 will be to the other side, to the west of us, so we will actually be sandwiched in between.

64. Could we have slide A110(9), please? Now, I know for a fact that not everyone on this short section of road, of Bar Hill, wishes to move, but in my opinion, every property in that section there that you can see, I believe to be blighted. That’s regardless of the compensation lines that have been drawn on a piece of paper and designated distances from the centre of the line. And I would say that those lines on that piece of paper are actually meaningless in the real world and to potential buyers. People that we’ve spoken to, friends, family, even a guy coming down on the train who happened to notice what we were reading, all assume that anyone impacted by HS2 in the close vicinity will be compensated and they’re amazed when we say, ‘Actually, no. Outside of 120 metres, there is no statutory blight’.

65. I’ll be honest, I wouldn’t even consider buying my property, which, as you can see, is marked there with the red arrow, not with the prospect of HS2 construction coming up and I would put the question to yourselves, would you honestly consider buying that property with all of that that’s about to kick off?

66. Having worked for, bought, renovated and maintained my home, my expectation as an ordinary person is that I should be able to market my property when I choose and at a fair market price, and that’s really what I’m asking. Since submitting our petitions, we have been contacted and visited by representatives from HS2 and in each of the communications they have suggested that we can apply for need-to-sell, which we were aware of. We were aware of the need-to-sell scheme because we’ve been to every
consultation event that has come to Madeley, and if we couldn’t make Madeley, we went to Whitmore.

67. The problem I feel – again, it’s only my opinion – with the need-to-sell scheme is the requirement to provide a compelling need to sell. So, it isn’t a desire to move or wish to move on as Malcolm said. We’ve met; we always intended to buy a property together. That’s our lives progressing. That choice has been taken away unless somebody considers that a compelling need to sell.

68. THE CHAIR: Well, we’ll ask Mr Strachan. We probably won’t be able to make a commitment, but can give an indication as to types of parameters and whether you wish to move on or the fact that you have a business so there may be a chink that allows you to apply, and I suspect he’ll try to find a chink to keep you happy.

69. MS MULCAHY: Okay. Sorry.

70. MR WHITFIELD: Do you know what your neighbours have done? In particular, as we’re looking at that page, as we get close to the actual HS2 site, they become trapped between storage areas during construction. I wonder if you know what’s happened with those properties.

71. MR JENNINGS: As far as I’m aware, out of the houses between ourselves and the construction, up to – I’ll just show you on the map – up to the lane here, which is an access route for the northern portal, one house was sold with the knowledge of HS2 in 2012. Don’t quote me on this, but two houses, I think, have been bought by HS2.

72. MR WHITFIELD: Because these are the only houses that sit in a sandwich between the West Coast Main Line and the potential HS2 line.

73. MR JENNINGS: Yes. There was one further north. Sorry, there. North of us, but that was a bank repossession.

74. MR WHITFIELD: Ah, right.

75. MR JENNINGS: So houses here, up to here, one was sold with the knowledge of HS2 and as far as I’m aware, the other two that were sold have been sold to HS2 under need-to-sell.
76. THE CHAIR: Sheryll Murray’s got a question.

77. MRS MURRAY: Yes. I’m very aware of the photograph you showed us of your working view. But I think this is in an embankment, is in a cutting?

78. MR JENNINGS: It’s in a cutting as far as we’re –

79. MRS MURRAY: I’m just a bit confused because you make it look, from that photograph, as if you’re going to look at and see the railway track. Is it because it slopes uphill or downhill?

80. MS MULCAHY: In front of us, we will see the railway. The cutting starts to the right of our property as far as I understand. Is that right?

81. MR JENNINGS: There is an embankment that starts here, if I can go to this slide.

82. MS MULCAHY: Can we? Is there any…?

83. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I don’t want to, obviously interrupt, but if you’re looking at photograph number 5, A110(5)? Is that what…?

84. MS MULCAHY: Yes.

85. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I made the same mistake. I made exactly the same mistake. I thought someone had drawn a line with the railway. Those are existing telephone lines.

86. MRS MURRAY: Yes. That’s fine. I’ve just been very confused because I thought it was in a cutting and I thought, ‘That doesn’t’ – yes, thank you.

87. MR JENNINGS: That line at the right-hand side is an actual electricity supply column.

88. MRS MURRAY: Thank you very much.

89. MS MULCAHY: So, as you can see, we are undeniably close to the proposed line and under the current proposal, a cutting for the Madeley tunnel. Also, from speaking to other people at consultation events, our understanding of the need-to-sell process is that – and we’re going on what people have told us – it’s deliberately off-putting and
difficult to obtain. Although I’m assured by the representative from HS2 that I spoke to yesterday that the form itself is relatively straightforward, I was also told that to be successful, we need to back up every statement that we make with detailed evidence. And that means divulging a lot of very personal information to complete strangers and this is the issue I have with this compelling need to sell, especially in our situation, this short section of road where it’s obvious that we are all impacted.

90. Just to mention, we did ask, didn’t we, when we were visited on the success rate, and HS2 had to come back to us on that. They said, ‘To date, it’s 45%’. So, sensibly, I think, Malcolm and I consider the need-to-sell option as a last resort. So, we’ve delayed putting the property on the market because the need-to-sell scheme is by no means guaranteed. We feel that, to start with, we must maximise our chances of selling our property on the open market. That’s the approach we’ve decided to take before we even try to submit an initial application under need-to-sell.

91. So, for personal reasons – Malcolm touched on one of them: his mother became ill with dementia and he was caring for her – we decided, first of all, we’ll wait for the route to be confirmed before we take any action. We did want to move. We then decided we’d wait for this decision on the single tunnel because we believe that this single tunnel option will give us a better chance of selling our property on the open market. And if not, then we would look at submitting a need-to-sell application. Are we okay for time?

92. THE CHAIR: Yes, absolutely.

93. MS MULCAHY: Malcolm’s already gone into the fact that we do work from home. The construction traffic will pass within metres. I spend at least 50% of my working day on the telephone to offshore and to other areas of the UK. We’ve also got the diversion of Bar Hill, which actually, I think, looking at the map, starts just outside of our property. If we could have a look, perhaps, at A110(7), please.

94. THE CHAIR: We’re expecting the minute’s silence to start in about 20 seconds so feel free to just confer, but when the bell rings, we’ll have the minute’s silence and then we’ll come back to some comments and then hopefully hear from HS2.

95. MR JENNINGS: Do you need us to stand at this point?
96. THE CHAIR: Sorry?

97. MR JENNINGS: Do you need us to stand?

98. THE CHAIR: No, unless you want to. Normally, we remain seated, but feel free to observe the minute’s silence in whatever way you consider appropriate. As Chair, we’ll stay seated.

A one-minute silence was observed.

99. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Any remaining points before we end?

100. MS MULCAHY: Not very many. Nearly finished. So, as I was saying there, you can see how close the construction traffic will pass to the front of our house, which is where my office is on the ground floor. Malcolm works on the landing. And also, the diversion of Bar Hill, which will affect us, and I’m led to believe that will take approximately one year and nine months to complete if the current scheme is pursued.

101. We just feel that, at our time of life, we should be able to enjoy living wherever we choose. So, my other ask today is – apart from asking you to please consider the single tunnel option – is that perhaps the property purchase arrangements – I know they’re all set in place, but could they be applied more humanely and flexibly, please? With more consideration to take account of individual circumstances and topography, such as in the case of Bar Hill. I think I will leave it at that, but thank you for hearing my petition today.

102. THE CHAIR: Thank you both. I think Martin and then Bill have a question before we come to HS2.

103. MR WHITFIELD: Just want to look at this photograph. I understand that opposite your house falls under the Bill for rerouting a bridleway. Is the road used as a bridleway at the moment?

104. MR JENNINGS: No.

105. MS MULCAHY: No. We’ve seen very few. There’s a pony and trap goes along quite regularly, but no, the road doesn’t tend to be used by riders.
106. MR JENNINGS: Are you intimating about Red Lane?

107. MR WHITFIELD: I’m not sure. I’m just looking at the –

108. MR JENNINGS: There is a diversion at Red Lane. Red Lane actually is in the top left-hand corner there. It’s out of shot at that one.

109. MR WHITFIELD: Ah, right. So there is a –

110. MR JENNINGS: Yes.

111. MS MULCAHY: It’s very close to the railway bridge.

112. MR WHITFIELD: Yes, they’re talking about rerouting it.

113. MR JENNINGS: The old sunken lane as it was. The old cart route.

114. MR WHITFIELD: Excellent. Thank you.

115. MR JENNINGS: Thank you.

116. THE CHAIR: Bill?

117. MR WIGGIN: I’m very sympathetic to what you say about the purchase issue, but are you not nearer to the West Coast Main Line than you will be to HS2?

118. MR JENNINGS: We’re between the two.

119. MS MULCAHY: I’d say we’re about equidistant.

120. MR WIGGIN: Okay. Can you hear the trains?

121. MS MULCAHY: The West Coast? Yes, yes, depending which way the wind is blowing, we can hear them louder than at other time.

122. MR JENNINGS: We can also hear the M6 motorway as well.

123. MR WIGGIN: And the cars.

124. MS MULCAHY: But to us, that isn’t an issue. It’s the construction.

125. MR WIGGIN: Do you think the noise will be worse when HS2 is in than it is at
the moment?

126. MS MULCAHY: I think there will be added noise because obviously, we’ll have two railways.

127. MR WIGGIN: Yes. But you really are right in the middle. I do appreciate that.

128. MS MULCAHY: We are literally in the middle. We were looking at some of the figures on the train and we had to smile because it almost looked as if it’s going to be quieter when HS2’s built, but we perhaps don’t believe that.

129. MR JENNINGS: Probably because we’ll be going deaf at that point.

130. MR WIGGIN: Well I think that’s because it’s in a cutting.

131. MS MULCAHY: Possibly, yes, but there’s talk of a boom as it enters the tunnel.

132. MR WIGGIN: But for you, the main issue is the period between now and when it’s actually built.

133. MS MULCAHY: Yes, because it’s impacting our lives now.

134. MR WIGGIN: Thank you.

135. THE CHAIR: Sheryl?

136. MRS MURRAY: Have you had any discussions with HS2 about how to mitigate some of the perceived problems that you might feel living there whilst it’s going on?

137. MR JENNINGS: We’ve had discussions, but really it gets frustrating in that they will trot out what I call ‘the HS2 mantra’ and you’re not really convinced. I’ll give you a classic example with this. At one of the early roadshows, we had roofs, double glazed windows, patio doors, when you were taken in and given headphones, and then you were told, ‘Did you hear the train go past?’ And all you heard was birdsong. That really sowed the seed of some of the information –

138. MS MULCAHY: The early information.

139. MR JENNINGS: Yes, the early information that HS2 were giving us. There’s
noise with it. This is 300 metres from the line. ‘You go into this cubicle, put the headphones on and all you hear is birdsong’.

140. MS MULCAHY: We stood there for four minutes.

141. MR JENNINGS: We stood there for four minutes before they opened the door and said, ‘Have you finished?’ ‘Well, I’m waiting for the train’. ‘The train’s gone’.

142. MS MULCAHY: It was almost – well, it was...

143. MR JENNINGS: It was an insult to your intelligence. It was really, sorry.

144. MRS MURRAY: So those booths didn’t actually show you a visual?

145. MR JENNINGS: No, they just gave you the noise impact or supposed noise impact.

146. MS MULCAHY: The figures have changed. It’s been so difficult. Even between the environmental statement that we, you know, replied on, the figures for HGV construction traffic that were sent in the promoter’s response document matched that, I believe. And then we’ve had a letter since to say that they’ve reduced, and you get to a point, as I say, over the last five years, where you don’t know what to believe. And I know things move on and I know things will be mitigated and improved, but it’s keeping up with what is. It’s frightening. As normal people, living on this road, we’ve got this huge project, this huge construction project looming and we don’t necessarily feel we’ve got all the information or all the right detail that we can comment on because it’s constantly changing.

147. THE CHAIR: Shall we hear from HS2? Nods of assent, Mr Strachan?

Response by Mr Strachan

148. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Well, I’ll certainly be guided by the Committee as to how best to cover the topics. I’ve got three I was just going to cover and outline.

149. THE CHAIR: Just to give you guidance, we’ve spoken a lot about the long tunnel option, so just consider the specifics in relation to the property.

150. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Absolutely. I wasn’t going to repeat any of the
arguments you’ve already heard because you’ve heard those. I was just going to concentrate on three things relevant to these petitioners.

151. First of all, just to explain the position during construction because they’re obviously very concerned about that. Then explain the position as it will be once the railway’s in place, and then touch on, finally, the options that they have now or indeed later on under the need-to-sell scheme. I think those are the three things. If, at any point, there’s a technical issue or engineering question, I’ve got Mr Smart behind me who can quickly answer anything that the Committee may want to know. If I just show P237.

152. This is the construction map the Committee is very familiar with now. We’ve got the petitioner’s property in red and you will have seen, obviously, West Coast Main Line. In terms of what’s going on, this brown area here is a temporary stockpile area where earth will be placed as a result of quite considerable cutting excavations that are going on down here. That obviously is a construction work and will be visible, but the stockpile, once it’s in place, does serve to provide some protection from construction activity. But there is obviously quite a lot of construction activity in this location because the Madeley tunnel’s being constructed over here where the cursor is now.

153. The A525 is kept open during construction, but that’s done by building an offline diversion. You’ve heard about these before. The offline diversion is built and then once it’s built, it’s tied into the old road and the old road, you just see it under the cursor. It’s just running along here. That will then cease to be the A525. But people will be able to continue to pass along the A525 throughout the construction process. There’s a strip of pink just outside the petitioner’s property and I’m going to show you that in a moment. That’s actually to introduce some planting on the other side of the road. I’ll show you that in the final stage. The green dotted line, as you know, is construction traffic routing proposed. Obviously, has to be approved by the railway and local highway authority in due course and I just want to show you, if I can, the amount of construction traffic.

154. THE CHAIR: Just before you do, you showed us where the soil was going to be put. It was going to be outside or just opposite the roads, behind the pink barrier. Why not put all that soil to the right where I think it says BW1? There’s no property around there. It’s next to somewhere else you’re using as well.
155. MR JENNINGS: If I can just take the slide at that slide at that point and come to Mr Mould’s defence, there is a property there where that cursor is now. Just that one there.

156. THE CHAIR: Nevertheless, perhaps in the bottom right you could put it. I don’t know. Has consideration been given to…?

157. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I imagine it has, but I don’t know the answer myself. I will ask Mr Smart to see if he knows and fill you in in a moment. Can I just explain the number of vehicles because there’s a concern of the petitioners that the numbers have changed and that’s not right, but I’ll just explain why they might be under the impression that they have.

158. If one goes to P255(2), you’ve got one of these plans. You just need to zoom in a bit. We’re over up here, INJ. You’ve come across the A525, Newcastle Road. This is showing construction traffic routing on the A525. The flows at INJ are on the A525, but as you’ll appreciate, as they cross here, they’re accessing those nodes and construction sites before they get to the petitioner’s property, so there are higher flows on the A525 to the west than there are to the east. It’s not very clear on this, but I’ll show you on P255(3), the INJ flows are shown in this histogram you may have seen before. They’re referred to – 502, or something like 476 vehicles. There is a peak activity on the A525 on that west side which occurs in December 22, approximately, and December 23. You’ve seen reference to that in relation to Woore where the traffic goes. Outside of those two months, there’s still construction traffic, but it drops off considerably.

159. But in front of the petitioner’s property, which is obviously of most concern to them, there is P255(4), and this is what I understand is being referred to as the numbers having changed. Because the traffic is going into those work sites I’ve shown you, only a small amount of traffic’s going on past the petitioner’s property and these are the predicted amounts of traffic that go past the petitioner’s property. There’s a peak month in December 21 of 180 HGVs but throughout the period, it then drops off to far lower levels and that is the traffic, if you go back to P237, that’s potentially going down Manor Road. So, it’s necessary to access Manor Road, but the volume of traffic passing in front of the petitioner’s house during construction is very considerably lower than that, which is going to these two sites and consequently on to Manor Road.
160. Now, I only say that because that’s always been the position. The detail of it, I can see why it might be confusing to look at INJ versus outside their property, but that explains why it what it is.

161. Leading on to my second point, what happens when the railway’s operational, P238, just to give you a plan. Actually, can I show you P241? Same plan, but with a cross section. Once the railway’s built, and I think the main activity of construction around their location is about four years, but once it’s actually built and up and running, there is that line of round green that I’ve shown you. That is where we took the pink land to plant, so it's a landscape hedgerow habitat, planting alongside the road. The A525 road is on a new alignment, but it diverges from the older line beyond the petitioner’s property, but it’s now going over the railway. There’s the new realigned bridleway across the field. The field’s reinstated and in terms of views and also noise, because the noise effects are limited in this area because it’s in a cutting.

162. If I just show you the next slide, P242, this is that cross section from the petitioner’s property. So, taking their property at 1A, they’re looking out across the A525, that’s the field that was previously their view. That’s reinstated. Once you get right across here to the railway, the railway’s in effectively a false cutting, and it’s unlikely to be visible at all. It’s unlikely to be visible because of the landscaping, but it’s also having a significant mitigating effect on noise on those properties.

163. So, that’s the position in operation. Now, of course, these petitioners have already indicated they may not be happy with that situation, and they’ve indicated they have plans to sell the property, which they regard as frustrated by what’s going on. That brings me on to the need-to-sell scheme, which is the third and final topic.

164. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry, I just wondered, before you leave that, if you look at P239, which is the sound map, we have the petitioner’s property marked on there in red. Is that actually within the 50 to 65 decibels, or are you saying that it’s literally just on the border of that.

165. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): The reason it’s in red is it’s just marking the petitioner’s boundary.

166. MR WHITFIELD: Yes, I’m just wondering.
167. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes, sorry. It’s on the boundary of the LOAEL level, as it’s referred, the lowest observed adverse effect level, which is the grey boundary, and if you want the readings themselves for their property, they’re summarised on P240(1).

168. MR WHITFIELD: They are a property that will have, as it says here, significant effects on their dwelling, but at a lower level.

169. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): The significant effects come from the Lmax level, rather than the Leq. You can see that here. This is the modelling for their property. During the day, it’s 56. During the night, it’s 46, and then you have Lmax of 68 or 70, depending on the trains. If you go to the change in the noise environment, the Leq measurement, there’s a zero change during the day and 1 at night, and 3 is when it becomes perceptible.

170. So, if you’re looking on the Leq scale, they’re 56 during the day doesn’t change, nor does the 46, but they will hear the trains because the Lmax levels, but the overall impact is limited by what topography –

171. MR WHITFIELD: Limited, but there is an effect?

172. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): There is an effect. I’m certainly not saying you won’t be able to hear the trains, but then you’ve heard quite a lot of evidence about what impact that has on people’s behaviour, which I won’t repeat.

173. That’s the noise effect. I was just about to move on, unless there are any other questions, to the need-to-sell scheme. As you saw from the maps, their property is not required for the construction of the railway, so it doesn’t fall within the statutory blight schemes. But the need-to-sell scheme is there to cover generalised blight. I don’t want to get at all into the petitioner’s details in this form because they’ve given you some details in their petition itself and explained their circumstances in a bit more detail. I don’t need to air that now.

174. But what they do describe is precisely the sort of thing which is given as an example of a compelling reason to sell and I can show you just the guidance. I’m not going to read it out, but I’ll just show you the guidance, R117(14). The criteria in 5,
‘Compelling reason to sell’, it explains it in more detail. I don’t want to, as I say, get into the details, but you can see the sorts of circumstances described, for example, from 3.1.34 onwards. There’s circumstances when people would have a compelling reason to sell or examples of what’s likely to be a compelling reason to sell.

175. So, in answer to the Chair’s question, I can’t obviously provide guarantees or reassurances as to how applications are treated by the Secretary of State because it’s a Secretary of State administered scheme. What I can say is that looking at the guidance, and the sort of circumstances they have indicated, they appear to fall well inside those sorts of circumstances where there would be a compelling reason to sell.

176. The best way to test that, of course, is to make the application, which is what I understand HS2 staff have indicated, and to see how it goes. Of course, they will always get reasons if they were to be rejected.

177. THE CHAIR: I would comment that those are quite strong words that you’ve used. They may appear weak and caveated from someone who hasn’t sat here during other sessions, but I take that as a strong indication that it is likely to be accepted and we can give an indication, if we so chose, in our reports in relation to that. Sheryll?

178. MRS MURRAY: Just to reassure the petitioners, every application is treated with the utmost confidentiality.

179. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I was just coming onto that. I understand the concern. Inevitably, with these schemes, where public money is at stake, there is a scrutiny process that requires people to divulge information to make sure the system is not being misused by others. That’s a necessary part of the system, but as you’ve just indicated, the information is treated confidentially, as you would expect, and therefore, whilst I know it’s intrusive to have to provide that sort of information, you should rest assured it will be treated in confidence for the purposes of dealing with their application.

180. MRS MURRAY: And just to refresh my memory, an application is open to a petitioner to make under the need-to-sell scheme for up to a year after the completion?

181. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Exactly. It’s not even an application that has to be made now. It can be made any time within that period. For example, if they’re finding
it more difficult than I was indicating would be the case during the construction phase, because we’re hoping the effects will be mitigated, they might see that in practice, but if they were dissatisfied, they can make the application. Also, the offers, as I’m pretty sure I remember – I’ll be corrected if I’m wrong – stand for acceptance up to three years. You can make any number of applications, but if you make one and even if that lapses, make another one in due course. So, there is a certain degree of flexibility in the way the scheme is operated.

182. THE CHAIR: Okay. Martin?

183. MR WHITFIELD: The petitioners have been given an indication of the success rate as only 45% by HS2. Is that correct?

184. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I think that is the current statistic. I haven’t checked if that’s the latest up-to-date figure. I’ve certainly seen that figure of 45% accepted.

185. MR WHITFIELD: It seems a remarkably low success rate given the criteria that’s available before the application.

186. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Well, it depends –

187. THE CHAIR: Would you like to see a bit more information from HS2 on this?

188. MR WHITFIELD: Yes. I’m surprised at that figure given the advocacy that’s been put into this element of compensation.

189. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Well, we can certainly try and give you more information on that. On the one hand, confidentiality of the details of the application has to be maintained, but we can provide you with as much information as we can, respecting that confidentiality, with the sort of applications, perhaps even the relevant reason for refusal. There are five criteria, some of which relate to being owner-occupier, and some people may fail because they put in an application when they weren’t entitled to make one.

190. There are other criteria, which may have –

191. THE CHAIR: That would be really helpful. We can always come back to it if we
need more information. Martin, then Sandy.

192. MR WHITFIELD: What is happening with the other properties that are on that road as regard to HS2 purchases?

193. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): The information I’ve got at the moment is that on Bar Hill, there are three properties that are being acquired. Number 16 Bar Hill was acquired under the exceptional-hardship scheme, so that was the predecessor, and 16 Bar Hill is further north.

194. MR WHITFIELD: So, if we go back to 326 or another suitable one.

195. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): So 16 is, if I say approximately, there. Number 66 has been acquired and that’s, I think, this one down here. Next one on, and that was acquired under the need-to-sell scheme. And then there is another. There have been some properties obviously acquired under blight because they sit under the line of the route, and I think there is a live need-to-sell application to the south. So that’s the extent. There haven’t been many applications. I don’t know how many applications have been made or were rejected, but certainly some have already been made and accepted under need-to-sell. We’ll get you some more details as I indicated. For 45% accepted doesn’t mean the opposite of being rejected. 35% have been rejected and the other 20% are either pending or were withdrawn before a decision was made.

196. THE CHAIR: And presumably some people apply under two schemes?

197. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Some people will have applied. Some people might have applied underneath sell when they could have applied by way of a blight notice. Some people decided not to proceed.

198. THE CHAIR: It’s highlighted a very important general point and I think we’re looking forward to receiving more details in writing. I think we’ve come to the end of your three points.

199. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Unless there’s any further information.

200. THE CHAIR: Sandy’s got a question. No one else is catching my eye. Then I’ll come to the petitioners to wrap up.
201. MR MARTIN: It’s just from a clarification point of view, Mr Strachan. Clearly, criteria are helpful, but if, for instance, it’s criteria saying, ‘too far away’, it would be quite helpful for us to have some indication of how far away. If it’s all anonymised, then if too far away can be broken down into 50 metres further away than anyone else; 100 metres further away than anyone else; different county than everyone else.

202. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I’ll see what’s possible, understanding and getting the clear message of as much information as possible is what you want, so we’ll see what we can do.

203. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. You don’t have to say any final words. You may feel that everything’s covered. Equally, as petitioners, you’ve got the final say, if you choose to do so.

204. MR JENNINGS: I’d like to see some indication of the effect of the vibration of HGVs on the properties.

205. THE CHAIR: If we could go back, we missed that one, didn’t we?

206. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I’m sorry that’s my fault. The answer to that is contained in the environmental statement, volume 4, technical appendixes. It’s got the number, SV00100, for those who are looking it up. But the answer to that is, vibration from construction traffic is dealt with in annexe G of that document 2.1.17 through to 2.1.23. We’re going to, I think, touch on this in the next petition, but in short, ground-borne vibration can occur from the movement of heavy goods vehicles, but where the road is not poorly maintained; where it’s properly maintained, it’s understood that there is very little likelihood of damage from HGV traffic.

207. THE CHAIR: This is a question I’m probing later on today, if that’s okay. Any other points?

208. MR JENNINGS: There’s just one point, have you all got the green folders?

209. THE CHAIR: We tend to use the screens. If you’ve got a question, I’ll get it up.

210. MR JENNINGS: Yes, that was a question. If you’ve got the green folders I’d like to compare P245(4) with what’s in the green folder.
211. THE CHAIR: No, we do it all on the screens, so if you just –

212. MR JENNINGS: No, with what’s in the green folder – because it’s totally different.

213. MS MULCAHY: Which is what we received. It’s an illustration of how confusing some of the information that we receive is. 245(4), which says, ‘HGV construction traffic on A525 past the petitioner’s property’ – is not the same as we –

214. MR JENNINGS: Is what Mr Mould was saying.

215. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I’m Mr Strachan.

216. MR JENNINGS: Oh, Mr Strachan.

217. MS MULCAHY: Oh, sorry.

218. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): It’s an easy mistake to make, although he won’t thank me for saying that. But, yes, that is clearly – you’re right – that is wrong that slide – because that’s simply a repeat of the previous slide. The letters you’ve been sent, in your petition assurance letter, identify the correct vehicle numbers. That is simply a repeat of the histogram for INJ and you’re right that that’s showing more than pass your property. The correct one is the one I’ve put up on screen. But if you want further clarity about that we can talk to you outside or I can provide it now. But you’re absolutely right. Don’t rely on that slide, but do rely on the letters and the information you’ve been provided in the petition assurance letter and your response document.

219. THE CHAIR: I think it might be helpful, given there has been an error, to write again with the correct information, copy the Committee in, and the Committee can just assure itself you’ve now got the right information.

220. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes.

221. THE CHAIR: There should be high standards. Equally I appreciate sometimes in life mistakes happen.

222. MS MULCAHY: Well, I do understand, but it’s just that over the last five years there have been so many different versions, it’s hard to know what is coming our way.
223. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I will apologise for that slide having gone to you in that form. I can’t get into other things that you’re referring to. But I do apologise for that. But we will write to you with the correct slide and information. But I’m sorry that you’ve received that.

224. THE CHAIR: Thank you for saying sorry and apologising. It does – certainly for the Committee – it means something. I think we’ve come to the end. It’s convenient for the Committee to take a short break and we will come back at 3.10. Order, order.

Sitting suspended

On resuming –

**Gaynor Irwin and Lily Irwin**

Submissions by Ms G Irwin and Ms L Irwin

225. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for petitioning today. As I reminder, a tip we’ve given to petitioners is to try to make some of their main points within the first 10 minutes and then we can pick up on those and question rather than leaving the ‘what you want’ to the end, let us know early and then we stand a better chance of being able to give it to you. Thank you very much.

226. MS G IRWIN: I’m Gaynor Irwin and this is my daughter Lily. We live at the Manor House on the junction of the A525 and the A51 in the centre of Woore. You can see it on A116 – if you want to have look at that – where we’re positioned. We live here and our driveway exits on a rather strange angle, you could say. It literally cuts the corner of the 525 to Audlem and the A51. Here is the junction where the main haul route will turn right on the 525 to Madeley.

227. Our issues are mainly – because of the huge increase in HGV traffic – we’re very concerned about the level of pollution that may affect Lily, because Lily has cystic fibrosis. And the fact that the vehicles are turning right means that they will all have to stop to turn right. Now, if you would call up A113(2) please?

228. This is a survey that was undertaken last September by the Woore Parish Action Group. And they monitored traffic through Woore at that crossroads for 12 hours, from
7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. And the main column we were interested in were the HGVs. In total 221 HGVs passed through the village, which corroborates the Department of Trade’s statistics for Woore for 2016, agreed that 205 HGVs per day travel through Woore. Now, HS2 are saying that going through Woore from the south of the A525 to the A51 there will be a 10% increase in total traffic. We’re not concerned about total traffic. We’re concerned about HGVs. And with their HGVs, in the peak periods it will be nearly a 632% increase in HGVs and in the lower periods it’s like nearly 400% increase in HGVs. And the same goes for the 525, where it’s going to be at least a 200% increase in HGVs to 150% at the off peak period.

229. Now, with the volume – I do understand that the HGVs are supposed to be Euro 6 specification engines, but we’re concerned of how is that going to managed? That they are Euro 6. And whilst idling at the junction to turn right to Madeley, there’s also the other 200 and odd ‘normal’ HGVs that pass through us. And if they’re not Euro 6s, they could be parked there for quite some time. We have a concern – the HGVs that HS2 have listed, what type are they? Are they 32 or 39 tonne tippers? Are they articulated lorries, curtain siders? What are they? That depends on, when they’re going to the sites, how long do they take to unload? If we have a truck going through the village at peak periods every one minute, how fast are they unloading at that site to return to us because we’re frightened there could be a backup all the way back through Woore and beyond.

230. As far as emissions are concerned, I understand Euro 6 trucks are very, very efficient. And I’ve seen the figures that HS2 have given for the air quality standards which are on P280(1). We feel that those figures are flawed. I’ll explain why. For starters, we’re basing them against the EU and the UK air standard quality which is 40. Cystic fibrosis is affected in the lower 20s, if not lower than that. So, although these look quite low figures with the proposed scheme, that could be between – including the current HGVs – we have going through between 500 and 750 HGVs at any one time passing through the village, through that junction.

231. Now, the Tern Hill roundabout, which is the opposite end of Market Drayton, they have 1,150 HGVs on average passing through those and they are well over the emissions ratios. The Tern Hill roundabout is heading towards open countryside, whereas Woore village – it’s a built up area where that junction is. So, we think that the
figures with the proposed scheme are incorrect. I think they’ll be either the late teens or the mid-20s at least, if you just look pro rata. We can’t afford to do an air monitoring outside our house but I think that those figures just do not add up. But that’s just for me being a lay person.

232. THE CHAIR: Sheryll Murray’s got a question.

233. MRS MURRAY: Has your local authority carried out any air quality tests?

234. MS G IRWIN: They haven’t so far in Woore. They’ve promised perhaps by December next year they might try and do some then for us. So, yes, but there’s been none so far.

235. Our second grievance, if you want to call it that, is the fact that the volume of traffic on both the 525, the A51 and the 53 could seriously inhibit us if Lily has an issue, a medical issue, where we need to rush her to hospital. We wouldn’t usually dial 999 and ask for a blue light to come out to us because it takes too long. And with some of the serious exacerbations that Lily suffers we need to get to hospital in the quickest amount of time possible. So, it’s basically a question of jumping in the car and getting there, basically. If you’ll just excuse me while I find some photos? Sorry about this.

236. THE CHAIR: That’s okay.

237. MS G IRWIN: Okay. If you look at evidence A109(4) please. This is the view outside our driveway. To exit our driveway we have to drive on to this piece of pavement, because our driveway is at an angle. It crosses the road. We understand from the drawings and the outlines that HS2 have sent the village previously and the parish council that all these pavements etc. are due to be removed so that HGVs can swing around this junction easier. If they take away the pavements outside our house we won’t be able to see what traffic is coming towards us.

238. MR WIGGIN: Can we just check if that’s right because that’s a horrible thought for you? Is that correct, Mr Strachan?

239. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): It’s not my understanding at all. No. I’ll get it checked while we’re in the room.
240. THE CHAIR: Let’s get it checked for the petitioner. Thank you for that brief intervention. And we’ll get confirmation. But let’s assume that HS2 will be able to give the reassurance that’s not the case. If they’re not able to give that reassurance, we’ll come back to it.

241. MS G IRWIN: If that’s the case then that’s fine, we can get out of the house. But then we will join the traffic on either 525, which is our usual route, which HS2 have highlighted in some of their evidence. And if we are stuck in traffic we don’t know how we’re going to get there quick enough. There is no other alternative route. If we went the 51 and the 53 it would just be as chaotic, because that’s when traffic’s travelling back again. We’re quite concerned as to how we’re going to get to hospital within say half an hour? Within say half an hour. We moved to Woore because we knew we were quite close to the hospital and we weren’t far away and we had good access. Would you like to explain to them why we need to get to hospital?

242. MS L IRWIN: So, there are quite few complications that you get with CF and one of them is called haemoptysis, where you cough up blood. In most people it’s not a big deal. It’s just a bit of watery blood every so often. I had one earlier this year and I had a very serious haemorrhage within my lung and it was very serious. I had to be put on a drip for three days. But I had to get to hospital immediately because – if we call the emergency services it takes about 40 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. And that’s too long. We can’t wait that long for an ambulance to arrive. So, we have to get there as quickly as we can; otherwise it’s fatal – it can be fatal, which is why it’s such a serious issue to have all this traffic and not be able to get through it.

243. THE CHAIR: And how quick is it on the fast run?

244. MS L IRWIN: It takes about 20 minutes.

245. MS G IRWIN: About 20 minutes.

246. THE CHAIR: So, you predict in a worst case scenario it’s 50% more time – half an hour. Sandy’s got a question.

247. MR MARTIN: Lily, can I ask you, which hospital do you normally go to? Is it the one in Crewe?
248. MS L IRWIN: No. Is it Royal Stoke?

249. MS G IRWIN: Royal Stoke Hospital.

250. MS L IRWIN: In North Staffs.

251. MR MARTIN: That’s along the A525, is it?

252. MS L IRWIN: Yes.

253. MS G IRWIN: Yes. That’s where the specialist centre is for cystic fibrosis in our area.

254. THE CHAIR: Thank you.

255. MS G IRWIN: So, mitigation-wise – you heard our parish council’s suggestions yesterday. And I’m going to put forward – as well as everybody’s in favour of the longer, deeper tunnel – but our other suggestion is that HS2 should possibly consider more seriously the reactivation of just the Madeley chord. We’re not asking of the whole railway line. We’re asking for the Madeley chord. Basically, in the area where the chord is situated, which is still intact, there is what one might call – there’s going to be a lot of building activity because they’re going to build a viaduct – a 750 metre long viaduct – which will cross the chord. Now, where the chord is – to build the viaduct, you need craneage, serious craneage. So, therefore they would have lifting gear to be able to lift off anything heavy or whatever. The Chord literally connects to the West Coast Main Line.

256. The West Coast Main Line only runs at one third capacity overnight and I thought – we always feel that part of the whole remit of HS2 is to get more people and things using the railways. I can’t understand personally why HS2 haven’t given it more consideration, considering the cost of the trucks – just the transport we’re talking about for the 14 mile round trip from the M6 to Madeley, the cost of hiring those trucks – be it 32 tonne tippers or whatever – is approximately anywhere between £80 and £160 million for five years. I know this because I worked in logistics for 20 years so I know how much one of those things costs to run every week. So, rather than putting the money into haulage and upsetting every community within an X mile radius of Woore, we can’t understand why it can’t be looked into more seriously of rebooting the chord so
that raw materials perhaps even tunnel boring machines etc. can be delivered in
overnight on the West Coast Main Line on the freight trains and then be used next day.

257. The current proposal, like we say, which is going to be 14 miles, I think HS2 will
lose all control of their supply chain, because they’re going to be stuck from wherever to
– especially with the smart motorway upgrade – they’re going to be stuck for miles. It’s
going to take them hours to get to that site. If it was put on a freight train, freight train
carriages carry about 77, 78 tonnes at a time. For the vehicles that they’re talking about,
if they’re just carrying aggregate or spoil away, you’re talking probably two trains a
night maximum at the peak period and one train in the lower period per night, or every
few nights perhaps in the off peak period. You could probably get away with that over
that kind of time and it wouldn’t affect hardly anybody.

258. THE CHAIR: It’s quite a technical point so I might –

259. MS G IRWIN: Oh, it is quite technical.

260. THE CHAIR: It might be that Mr Strachan wants to call later on Mr Smart. But
at this stage Sandy has a question.

261. MR MARTIN: Chair, could I suggest we have A115 up? It might be easier for
Ms Irwin –

262. MS G IRWIN: Thank you.

263. MR MARTIN: – to demonstrate. So, the Madeley chord that you’re talking about
is the one the comes –

264. MS G IRWIN: Yes, this is the chord here. The chord was built to take coal
supplies from the Silverdale railway. Basically, it is built to carry serious weight on it.
It connects, or can be re-connected, to the West Coast Main Line. It still exists. It’s still
sat there, overgrown, but it’s still there. And with this viaduct that they’re going to
build over it, you could have craneage and everything to be able to lift off heavy metal
or concrete or tunnel boring machines or whatever. And then take them. It’s just so
close, in that area there, to the new HS2 line. Everything could – and some of the site
you’ve seen in the last petition – a lot of stuff could be moved around here and you
could keep it concise. And also, it would be a win-win because the rail freight

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companies would do well, the government would do well because rail freight would increase. And the whole area would feel much better if we didn’t have X hundreds if not thousands of trucks driving around the place. And there’s also – it’s much greener as well.

265. THE CHAIR: It’s a compelling case. We’ll listen to the other side and you will have the last right of reply.

266. MS G IRWIN: No, no, that’s fine.

267. THE CHAIR: I think Bill Wiggin has got a question?

268. MR WIGGIN: Yes. I’ve read your ‘what do you want done in response’ column. And you’ve only given us ‘all HS2 traffic should be taken off the roads’ and then ‘we should have a single tunnel’. Given that the main concern that you must have and that I think the Committee has is Lily’s health –

269. MS G IRWIN: Yes.

270. MR WIGGIN: Is there anything else we could do? If those two aren’t possible, then what are we going to do about Lily?

271. MS G IRWIN: I’m not sure. I don’t know how we would mitigate that.

272. MR WIGGIN: We’ll ask HS2 then.

273. MS G IRWIN: Yes. We don’t genuinely know what could be done.

274. THE CHAIR: Shall we move to – are you happy to – do you want to say anything else Lily?

275. MS L IRWIN: No, I’m okay. Thank you.

276. THE CHAIR: Well, we’ll come to you both at the end. Can we hear from HS2, Mr Strachan?

_**Evidence of Mr Smart**_

277. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Thank you. Again, I’m in the Committee’s hands
as to what order you might like to deal with but obviously I’m going to ask Mr Smart to help you with the Madeley chord suggestion. It may be that’s convenient to deal with first and then come to the – whether or not that’s an alternative – and then come to the current situation. So, if I ask Mr Smart just to help you? I’m going to leave that slide up on the screen. And while he’s taking a seat, I think you had yesterday – I’m not going to read it out again – but there were some slides in relation to a similar suggestion made by the parish council. And you had these in your pack yesterday. Mr Mould referred to them. I think Mr Smart can talk you through the principles. So, Mr Smart, could you address the Committee on the suggestion made by the petitioner of using the Madeley chord?

278. MR SMART: Yes. I think the Committee are aware – I’m sorry, you can’t see where I’m pointing – but James – I think Mr Strachan knows. This is the Madeley chord – it’s marked on that – which is a disused chord connecting to the old Market Drayton railway. I think the Committee are aware of that from the discussion when we were talking about an alternative location for the depot. That Chord would have to be brought into use and it connects into the slow line on the West Coast Main Line going north, which means that it can only be accessed from the north, directly in. So, any trains coming from the north can come straight in. Otherwise, you’ve got to go up into a yard and then back again because it’s just connecting on this side.

279. Obviously, that would have to be done at a cost. But that’s not the fundamental issue. I’ll come to that. But that would be a cost of within the order of say £10 million to reinstate that. But you would have to configure a railhead in this position and with the trains such as Mrs Irwin has mentioned. This is going to be about a 400 metre train. So, we would have to create some sort of siding in here, which could and probably would mean we’d have to – Manor Road bridge, which is this bridge on the green area here – would probably have to be widened to get the siding in. And that would all come within probably the cost parameters that I’ve mentioned.

280. But the reason why in my evidence to you this would not be a great idea is because if we were just taking materials out and we were taking them to dispose of then one could see that might be a good thing to do. But as the Committee has heard before, we re-use as much of the excavated material that we get from either tunnelling or from our cuttings in embankments along the trace to mitigate having to take it on the roads
and further along. So, that’s where the haul roads come in. So, even if we were to construct another railhead – we already have one at Stone – in this area it would be of very, very limited to use to us.

281. And I do take the petitioners point about we use some crawler cranes to build a viaduct – but no so many, maybe two or three – and they come in as an exceptionally load. Commonly, you will have seen them on motorways. They’re escorted. They come in either at weekends or at night possibly. So, they are done in times that are not intrusive.

282. And there would also be of course all the vehicles we would need to reinstate that chord and build a railhead there, which would itself put a demand on the roads. So, it would really be a bit self-defeating in my view. One could see it would be much more useful if we had a bulk excavation in which we were just taking material away and wanted to transport it a long distance. But we are not doing that in this case. We are distributing it along the route.

283. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): If you could just put up P209(15)? An estimate was made of how many vehicles it would reduce or how many HGVs would be reduced through Woore. Bearing in mind what you said, Mr Smart, and it’s 10 to 16 HGV movements per day through Woore per day or two per hour reduction from those flows that we’ve identified. Is that right?

284. MR SMART: Yes. It sounds about right but of course most of the movements are setting up the sites as you’ve heard and they’re for limited times. And furthermore, I don’t think the Committee have also heard that that, Madeley chord, heading towards flood plain and if we created a railhead there – which itself takes space – that’s even more pressure on the flood plain – albeit temporarily – but we could have a railhead that floods.

285. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): That’s all I was going to ask Mr Smart in relation to Madeley chord unless there are any questions from the Committee or anyone else?

286. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry, Mr Smart, I have a question in relation to the environmental statement about why the environmental statement didn’t draw attention to the air monitors at the school in Woore but did to other primary schools very close
by? It’s a sort of follow on question from yesterday.

287. MR SMART: Yes, I don’t know, I’d have to check on that and we can certainly come back to you, Mr Whitfield, on that. I don’t know the answer for that I’m afraid.

288. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Well, I was going to come on to air quality in a moment.

289. MR WHITFIELD: Yes, I know you were.

**Response by Mr Strachan**

290. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I’ll do that now. In relation to air quality and the concerns obviously – the serious concerns the petitioner have about air quality. First of all, the predictions in the location close to the petitioner’s property. If I just show where they – I believe you’ve got an idea where they are – but the prediction points – if I show you P275? This is their property in red and their house is I think just there and then the drive gives on. The modelling points for air quality – if you can move the cursor to the right – are in the square, which are a bit further, yes – effectively alongside the road. And there is an awful lot of information about air quality modelling contained in the environmental statement. There’s a technical note and guidance on the assessment methodology.

291. I’m not going to be able to do it justice by going through it all now but I’ll just make a couple of points about it. First of all, it is guidance about the methodology which has been peer reviewed so the predictions that are made for this location come through a quite careful process. They’re not simply ones we have selected. They’re done by experts and they are peer reviewed. The way in which air quality modelling works is to identify points on the roads where people might, as their called – receptors on the road.

292. As a matter of principle air quality – pollutants – disperse quite rapidly away from roads which is why you have monitoring points on the roads. For example, the petitioners’ property is some distance away from the actual air quality point where the predictions were taken. And the results of the prediction for their property – and I obviously understand why they’re concerned – but I’m trying to give you some idea of
how robust the processes are to reach those figures.

293. The monitoring figures you referred to a moment ago – P280(1) – I understand Ms Irwin had identified concerns particularly around the 20 micrograms per cubic metre for certain medical conditions. These figures are obviously well below that. These are the figures taken – the predicted figures that will be experienced at the marketplace where – sorry, if I said the marketplace – it’s the square – I’m so sorry. The square – at Woore – and to be clear, if you want an idea of how robust the modelling is, it’s taken for the traffic generation for the peak year of construction activity and the most significant effects of that year. So, you’ve seen I know on a number of occasions the histograms which show traffic through Woore which peaks at those higher figures for one or two months – I think a three month period. The air quality predictions are modelling the worst case scenario of that traffic level generation. Throughout the rest of the period of course, the traffic – there’s still HGV traffic – and that’s clearly the case, but it’s at much lower levels. These figures you’re seeing are effectively, as we’re required to look at, the worse-case scenario.

294. THE CHAIR: I think every member of the Committee seems to be wanting to question you on this. Bill Wiggin to start with. Do you want me to give you a bit of time to finish?

295. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): No, no, all I was going to say is, as before, Mr Miller is opposite the witness, so if there are more technical questions about it, I’m very happy to get him to answer your questions. If they’re questions I can readily answer, I will try. But I don’t want to step outside my comfort –

296. THE CHAIR: Well, if in doubt bring on the expert. Bill?

297. MR WIGGIN: The argument you’re putting forward seems to hinge on that air quality might not be as bad as the petitioner fears, which is perfectly reasonable and factual and we’re not criticising it. But if you’re wrong and she’s right, then Lily is in serious trouble. So, I don’t think we can afford to be complacent as a Committee and what we’re looking for is a sensible and practical solution so that Lily is safe. And I’m sure you would like that too.

298. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Absolutely.
299. MR WIGGIN: So we need more choices for the Committee really.

300. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I’m obviously taking it in stages and I totally understand that point. We are, as an organisation, entirely at one with that principle of ensuring the safety of people. The only reason I’m going through this is – I understand the petitioner’s concern that they don’t believe the figures. And that’s –

301. MR WIGGIN: They haven’t got a lot of wriggle room if they’re right and you’re wrong. That’s the difference.

302. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): In relation to the actual air quality effects, the reason I’m drawing attention to how much robustness is built into the way in which it’s predicted is to show that the wriggle room – if you want to use that term – these are robust figures. In all probability, the figures –

303. MR WIGGIN: That’s fair enough but –

304. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): – are likely to be much less, not more.

305. MR WIGGIN: When you – using the wonders of the 21st century – look up ‘cystic fibrosis’ – and it doesn’t actually say that it is particularly responsive to a particular figure. It’s a human thing so it changes according to the person.

306. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes.

307. MR WIGGIN: So, no doubt you’re absolutely right. But that may not be good enough in this particular circumstance. And if you put up slide 275, you’ll see that the Irwins live in a particular nice and large property with plenty of room to land an air ambulance in the back field, if need be. But that may not be the best solution if Lily needs to go to hospital in the 20-minute window.

308. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes.

309. MR WIGGIN: That’s I think where we’re really concerned. Is everyone happy with that?

310. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): No, I understand. I understand the point. If I can try and deal with it two ways? First of all, what are the likely effects of having the HGV
traffic in terms of air quality in this location? And that’s really what I was trying to provide some reassurance both to the Committee but also to the petitioners because I’m aware they may not be aware of how the modelling work is done. There’s no reason why they should be. They’re not, as they say, experts. But I’m drawing attention to how much effort goes into making sure these figures are right. They need to be right because if we exceed these figures, we’re exceeding what we predicted in terms of environmental impact. So, we are constrained in that respect. So, there’s no reason why we would seek to underpredict things which are actually going to occur. I wanted to make that clear.

311. MR WIGGIN: But if the wind blows it can alter the atmosphere.

312. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): It can. There are obviously variations in air quality which are much more affected by meteorological conditions –

313. MR WIGGIN: Indeed.

314. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): – than say traffic flows. It’s the combination which sometimes is the problem. But, yes. But broadly speaking, I wanted to give you an answer to a question, I think, which you raised yesterday about why it is we’ve predicted those rises – which are 0.2 micrograms – as being negligible. And that’s – if I could just show you in this methodology document – this is more to clear up a question that cropped up yesterday – you can see that these – the 40 micrograms standard is what the legislation sets. And the air quality in this location is way below that. We are predicting there’s 0.2 of a microgram per cubic metre change. And you can see how the impacts are assessed. If you are less than 75% of the standard and you have a 1% change, it’s negligible. If you have a more than 10% change, it becomes moderate. If you’re already at the standard or indeed in excess of the standard – so, if you are in an urban area, for example, where air quality is poor already, then a 1% change would actually be a moderate effect. It is important – I totally understand the concern – but this location in Woore is one where the existing air quality has been modelled at the level it has and the HGV traffic created in this location – even at the peaks we’re showing – aren’t going to have the effects that the petitioners are concerned about. I know they may still be concerned but I have to explain that’s how it’s predicted.

315. The second point is about getting to a hospital and access to hospital, which was
explained. And again, that ultimately is about traffic management and keeping the roads open, as indeed we intend to. I gave you the example of the A525, which is the route in fact that Lily would take, as she’s explained, to get to hospital. One of the features of the construction design is to keep that road open, which is why it’s done as an off-line diversion. So, whilst yes, there is traffic put on to the roads; there is HGV traffic put on to these A-roads – the purpose or the intention of the design is to keep those roads open so that journeys are not interrupted. I know that there’s a concern that the volume of traffic will cause congestion. The point has been made before – it is of course not in the organisation’s interest to have traffic jams at all because we can’t get our vehicles to the site in those circumstances and it would make no sense whatsoever to run our traffic in a way which caused congestion that means the roads seize up. So, that’s the basic principle. On what further steps we can do in relation to this particular circumstance, we are open to suggestions – I want to say that first – we don’t want to impose things on petitioners. We did offer a meeting to discuss it. Understandably they did not want to take us up on that before appearing in Committee. They’d rather bring it to the Committee. I just want to make that clear. We are open to it. I’m just going to ask Mr Miller to deal with this air quality point and what could –

316. MR WIGGIN: No, don’t. It’s not necessary – because in my opinion – sorry, can I just finish – everything you’ve said we can take at face value. There’s no reason to query that. But it won’t be a problem if life is perfectly alright, business as usual. Where it goes wrong is when someone breaks down accidentally in the middle of Woore. There is then a traffic jam, the winds blowing the wrong way. It’s a hot day. All the figures go the wrong way – because accidents are never bad when one thing goes wrong, it’s when three things go wrong. And that’s when they will be a problem. And that’s why we need to think slightly beyond the particular requirements.

317. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes.

318. MR WIGGIN: And as I said, there are options to get Lily to hospital very quickly should we put our minds to it, if that is what is really needed. What we haven’t been given as a Committee is anything we can judge. And that’s what I’m reaching out to both of you for really.

319. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes.
320. MR WIGGIN: Sorry. Thank you, Chairman.

321. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I’m not resisting –

322. THE CHAIR: Bring in Mr Miller so he’s available if that’s what you want. I think we’re going to need him in a second so let’s call him as a witness.


324. THE CHAIR: Do confer, take a minute. Thank you.

325. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Mr Miller, unless I’ve misread the mood of the Committee, I don’t think we need to go through the details of the air quality modelling, the way it’s done from methodological purposes so I’m not going to take you through any of that. I just want to focus on the two issues. One is ensuring the air quality doesn’t deteriorate as a result of the HGV traffic. And the second is the question of what, if anything, can be done in relation to ensuring safe access to hospital.

326. MR MILLER: On the first point, we’ve talked about Euro 6 vehicles. So, our vehicles are going to be good vehicles on the roads. And the way that gets controlled on a site by site basis is that those lorries will be known to us and they’ll go on to a site and they’ll be monitored when they arrive on site. So, we all know precisely what vehicles are HS2 vehicles at any one moment in time as the construction is progressing. That monitoring is in place on Phase One now. That’ll happen on Phase 2A going forward. So, if there is any rogue vehicles which might cause one of these concerns – where you have a multiple effect – we will spot that fairly early on in the process. So, we don’t think that’s going to happen. So, our vehicles are good and you’ll get the good quality emission standards from what we have in our contracts. Sorry, the second question?

327. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): It’s really about ensuring good access to the hospital –

328. THE CHAIR: Before the second question, can I probe you on this issue, because whilst your vehicles you’ve got control of, I think there’s a concern, if there’s a critical mass of your vehicles on top of existing vehicles, there might be a vehicle that you have
no control over – for arguments sake – because it’s an HGV but it’s a horrible, spluttery, polluting HGV that ends up filling the garden with pollutants because cleaner vehicles are blocking the pathway and are queued to turn.

329. MR MILLER: You are right. My guess is that from time to time that might happen now anyway. I can only say that we will have traffic management plans in place. You’ve heard me give some evidence on that in the past; that we’ll be talking that through with the local highways authorities to make sure that the traffic flow is going to work very well. And also, you’ve heard from me and Mr Smart about the need for the contractors to maintain the flow of vehicles. That they do not want to have their vehicles and, dare I say it fairly selfishly, stuck in traffic because they are in the business of getting this done as economically as possible. There is that imperative and that flows through to the benefit to local people who will receive this traffic on the roads. There will be traffic. There’s no doubt about that but it will be managed in a very efficient manner.

330. THE CHAIR: Sheryll?

331. MRS MURRAY: Yes. Thank you, Chairman. Mr Miller, could you tell me, we’ve got your modelling here, everybody knows that air quality gets worse if there is a build-up of traffic. In your worse-case scenario, I would like to be reassured that your worse-case scenario is where you would have queueing traffic due to more congestion on the road because we all know that – even in school situations where you have parents collecting school children from schools and their engines are running and they’re running slowly or stationary, the amount of nitrous oxide actually increases considerably. And so, I would like to know whether your worse-case scenario is just on the amount of traffic using the roads or whether these models are based on idling traffic, due to a hold up, particularly as Mr Wiggin said, if you had a vehicle breakdown or something like that. That is the sort of situation that we need to be reassured we can mitigate against with regard to Lily’s health.

332. MR MILLER: This is about traffic movements. The control around schools – and I think it’s a really good example where – if you’ve experienced it and you’ve got idling traffic – you do get that sort of pollution build up.

333. MRS MURRAY: You do, and it’s a well-known fact.
334. MR MILLER: And the way we handle that is through the code of construction practice where in a school situation – which we heard about yesterday we can, through our traffic management plan, think about how traffic will work on the roads and try and avoid those periods so that you don’t have this build-up of traffic at any one moment in time. So, that’s the sort of thing that the contractors will want to avoid. That avoids them being stuck in a queue, that avoids the pollution building up. And you’re right, if we had a big long queue of traffic, it would build up even more.

335. MRS MURRAY: So, moving on from that, you could for Lily and her mum’s property – because of her exceptional health circumstances – you could take account of that with regard to the traffic management that you put in place?

336. MR MILLER: I think we can in the sense that we would be doing that for a school. So, these sorts of sensitivities we need to be able to think about when we get to those traffic management plans.

337. MRS MURRAY: But if it was one person whose health was possibly at risk, you could make a concession and you could put something in place to make sure that their circumstances are taken account of in your traffic management plan?

338. MR MILLER: And I think that’s – looking at the traffic management plan through the efficient use of that junction – I think that would be good for the school and I think if we can get it right for the school, it would be good for Lily as well. The other thing that I think that we can do is we can add in – and before the construction work starts – and this may give you some further thought – is to carry out some further diffusion tube modelling that you see – the measurements – because you’re concern was that you didn’t believe the figures. And I can understand that. There’s a lot of documentation around. There’s predictions. There’s all sorts of assessments going on. But I was whispering with colleagues just now and we would be happy to think about a sensible set of diffusion tubes being put up to confirm our figures. So, that might be two or three diffusion tubes. We might put one at the school, one at the junction and one on one of the other roads. And then, there is no doubt how that traffic management plan – the basis of how that could work – going forward.

339. THE CHAIR: Can you explain what a diffusion tube is?
340. MR MILLER: It’s a small plastic tube, a bit like a test tube. If you look up on lamp posts in the London area you sometimes spot them. And they’ve got some chemicals in them. You put them up. You leave them there for a few days. They’re taken away for chemical analysis and that gives you a better understanding of what the pollutants are in the air. And then, that can help confirm the figures and confirm our predictions. Just one point – excuse me – the levels that we are talking about are the EU levels. The trigger levels which we are working to are the 40 milligrams per meter cubed as an annualised average. That’s the basis of our assessment. The figures that you’re talking about and what you’re concerned about for these specific circumstances are much, much lower. And that takes into account the cystic fibrosis conditions. Now, having listened to what we have today, I think that the package of measures that we have for the traffic management plan, as I’ve suggested, and doing something to further confirm these figures, that will help shape that traffic management plan and would be a reasonable way forward. And that’s what I’m suggesting to you.

341. THE CHAIR: And presumably you can monitor those during the process as well? If it’s wrong for whatever reason, or there’s third factors – someone said ‘when three things go wrong’ – you can think again. I think Sandy, you?

342. MR MARTIN: Yes. I’m a little nervous because I think Mr Miller might have answered my question but I’m not sure because I had a separate train of thought going on. But when you were working up from the current levels of pollution in Woore and calculating what the levels would be with the additional traffic, was that an extrapolation up from the amount of traffic that we’ve got there now to the traffic you’d have?

343. MR MILLER: Yes, what happens with the assessment – there’s a lot of data around on existing roads. We have a lot of data about what’s happening on those roads. And you’ve seen some of the data that’s on one of your slides. You showed the traffic figures from the petitioners’ traffic counts. They accord with our data. I think that was a point made by Mr Mould yesterday. And then our assessment prediction is based on that. So, we add in what we know about our traffic. And so, we’ve got a pretty good picture of what that outcome is going to be. And so, what I’m suggesting is perhaps a slightly different level of granularity when you get towards the construction phase as we move from this outline kind of scheme that we have at the moment and we’re thinking
about how the thing are actually going to be built. Although we’re predicting that in the assessment, those plans will be modified in due course because we will understand it better. The construction contractors will get to grips with that. They’ll produce their local environmental management plan. They’ll produce their traffic management plan alongside that. And they’ll take into account these sorts of sensitivities.

344. MR MARTIN: Given that, there is going to have to be some form of traffic management at that junction between the A51 and the A525 –

345. MR MILLER: Yes.

346. MR MARTIN: – which will inevitably lead not only to your vehicles having to wait to get through that junction, but also the existing vehicles having to wait to get through that junction. Is it not going to be necessary to add in not only the predicted pollution levels from your own vehicles but also the additional pollution levels from the existing vehicles that are going to have to wait longer?

347. MR MILLER: Yes, and we do.

348. MR MARTIN: And you do already?

349. MR MILLER: Yes, because that’s taking into account the existing traffic on those roads.

350. MR MARTIN: Yes but –

351. MR MILLER: What I’m trying to overcome with the traffic management plan is the point that where that extra level of granularity – and your questions – are if in a number of events you get a backup of traffic; the winds going in the wrong direction – as summarised by Mr Wiggins – you’re in that perfect maelstrom, if you will. What on earth do you do with that? We don’t know that at the moment. And what I’m saying is we can get to grips with that. You heard that we were talking about with Shropshire yesterday, about its traffic – highway authority. We will need to talk about this with them with our traffic management plans because we’re obliged to agree those terms with them. And of course, now we know more about the sensitivities. So, we’ve got a lot of information that we can get to grips with and we can get to grips with that in the detailed design. This is not a perfect answer. I don’t know exactly what’s going to happen if
you meet that perfect maelstrom. And I don’t know what it’s like if you find that
difficult and you’re having to get to the hospital. I can’t imagine what that’s like. But I
think we’ve got the means to work this up and manage it.

352. THE CHAIR: One question from me, is there anything you can do at the point on
which the pollution’s taken in? I’m being overly simplistic. When we looked at noise
and mitigation at receptor it talks of double glazing or one could imagine air quality
units within the house. Is that something that’s effective or a possibility?

353. MR MILLER: I’ve never come across that on any infrastructure project before. I
don’t know what might be in the house to look after you at the moment and you might
want to comment on that. I don’t know.

354. MS G IRWIN: I think the issue is that our house is grade 2 listed. So, it’s a
Georgian house.

355. THE CHAIR: Yes, you can’t –

356. MS G IRWIN: I can’t modify it.

357. THE CHAIR: Okay. I hadn’t appreciated that.

358. MS G IRWIN: I do have trees at the end of the driveway, quite a lot of trees, but
in winter – most of them are deciduous so they all lose their leaves. So, whatever is
happening out on the road will float across to the garden because the trees won’t block
it.

359. MR MILLER: Yes, so you would experience fluctuations –

360. MS G IRWIN: Yes.

361. MR MILLER: – which may or may not make your condition variously worse.

362. MS G IRWIN: Yes.

363. MR MILLER: My guess is that your property is in quite a good location. You’ve
got nice gardens and things like that. So, you’ve got a good property in which Lily can
live. We’re playing tunes on how the traffic works, I think.
364. THE CHAIR: And presumably, Mr Strachan, at some point, if all of these things build up to the point which is unacceptable, it can’t be mitigated against, is there an option to sell the property?

365. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes. I was going to touch on that. I don’t want to offer the wrong solution in terms of what the petitioners currently want to do. But I was going to draw attention more generally that one of the features of the property schemes is recognition of atypical circumstances or special circumstances. And it’s certainly the case in relation to Phase One that there were some acquisitions reflecting what I would describe as atypical circumstances but in particular medical conditions where there was a greater susceptibility to changes from construction traffic. In fact, it was dust – dust emissions close to a very, potentially, dusty site. Even though we have suppression measures, where there was a concern about it, those are the sorts of things which we generally recognise as making up an atypical situation where if – if – and I’m not pressurising the petitioners – but if they got to that sort of situation where everything was failing, that’s the sort of thing that would be recognised –

366. THE CHAIR: I sense from the Committee that this is an exceptional circumstance and I’m pretty sure the Secretary of State would want to deal with it as such whether that is looking at mitigation, or at the other end of the equation, purchase. I think actually having some options and having the Irwins engaging earlier – some people engage early, some people don’t engage and have their day in this Committee – but having more engagement I think would be helpful to flesh out the options.

367. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Well, I’m certainly happy to repeat here again our offer to meet and discuss the more intricate details with of course the petitioners and take things forward in that way. Some of things they may want to discuss not in this sort of forum and discuss what would suit them.

368. THE CHAIR: I understand. Any more questions? Martin?

369. MR WHITFIELD: Yes. I was going to clarify my query because I am getting increasingly concerned about this. In CA4, the Whitmore Heath to Madeley environmental statement, at paragraph 5.3.7, the HS2 identified a number of sites where they said receptors were located and they seem to have specifically chosen the primary schools. And I understand why. But I now find it curious that Woore Primary School,
which has a receptor, is not included in that list. And I heard yesterday that Woore were concerned that they felt out of the loop in a lot of these things. And I wonder why, given there are four receptors in Woore, not one of them had been identified? And slightly flowing from that, and what we’ve heard from today, I understand and I’m open to correction, that near real time air quality management is available. So, would it not be the case given that we have a very specific petitioner who’s come before us, that one of things that could be considered is a near real time air quality monitoring? So, that should it rise at that junction, you could stop your vehicles – I know you can’t stop the other HGVs – but in your traffic maintenance you could stop almost instantly your vehicles, thus reducing the risk, given the increased sensitivity – if you don’t mind me putting it this way – that this specific petitioner has come to us with.

370. MR MILLER: If you had a more active air quality monitoring system, where you said where you’ve got to stop the vehicles, what do you do with the vehicles? If they’re bringing materials in, they will just be backed up on the roads.

371. MR WHITFIELD: This is a specific petitioner who’s come to us today with a very specific problem.

372. MR MILLER: Yes, I’m not saying I would rule that out. What I’m reasoning with you is that actually the free flow of the traffic is by far the better way of dealing with it. So, that I think on one hand I think you’re opening out the opposite argument really which might then play back into backing up of traffic, if you suddenly stop the traffic coming. When we start moving with this construction, our vehicles will be moving all of the time. And you’ve heard over the last day or so the volumes of movements that we’re going to have on these roads. Once we start building this, we will be building it. And it will just keep moving. I think the trick with the air quality is to make sure that traffic is moving all of the time. And that’s careful thought about making sure all of the traffic is working across the highway network so that operates in the best way possible. You do not want that traffic backing up in any way because that’s the pollution point. Dare I say it? You might end up with a bigger cloud of pollution than you perhaps get at the moment, even though we’ve got good vehicles on the roads.

373. THE CHAIR: Have you finished, Martin?
374. MR WHITFIELD: I’m yet to be convinced. But, yes, I’m finished.

375. THE CHAIR: Okay, Sandy and then Sheryll.

376. MR MARTIN: I’m a bit nervous about raising this because I think this is Mr Wiggins’ possible solution. But I’m raising it because you’re not raising it. Clearly, the best solution to anything is to try and make sure that it doesn’t happen in the first place. But it’s also – the other approach is to make sure that if something does happen there is a solution to it happening. So, in this case, while clearly you are going to do everything you can to prevent there from being massive congestion and a massive air pollution problem, would it not also be sensible to have an answer to a problem that arises if it does arise? And it seems clear to me that in this particular case, the problem is how does Lily get to a hospital in time if there is a serious breakdown on the A525, a collision between two lorries on the A525 or whatever? So, my question is really more to Mrs Irwin than anything, which is at the moment presumably if Lily needs to get to a hospital quickly, the only way is by road from your house?

377. MS G IRWIN: Yes, it is.

378. MR MARTIN: If there were another way to get her to hospital from your house, would you welcome that?

379. MS G IRWIN: If it could to us in time to be able to take her back in time, yes. That’s our issue – it’s that basically –

380. MR MARTIN: You have got a fair amount of land behind your house.

381. MS G IRWIN: Yes, we do.

382. MR MARTIN: If somebody put an area which a helicopter could land on, would you be willing to have that in the back of your house – for an emergency which might never arise? But if it did arise would it enable Lily to get to hospital more quickly than she would be by road.

383. MS G IRWIN: Yes, of course we would. We’d just be worried that there was an air ambulance available. That’s the only question to that.

384. MR MARTIN: Right, okay.
385. THE CHAIR: I think with everyone’s permission, I’m just going to float an idea. That we call things to a close for today and ask the Irwins and HS2 to go away and think and look at the options, hopefully narrow them down, and ask HS2 to report back to us within a two week timeframe? Everyone seems to be nodding.

386. MRS MURRAY: I’ve one question to ask before that.

387. THE CHAIR: One question and then I think everyone else seems comfortable with that idea.

388. MRS MURRAY: If you were to offer Mrs Irwin to buy her property under the exceptional circumstances, how long would that remain open to them? So, could they try staying in their property? Is it the same as the need-to-buy –

389. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Need-to-sell.

390. MRS MURRAY: – or need-to-sell? Is it one year after the completion of the scheme?

391. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): The feature of atypical circumstances is that it sits as an exception all of the criteria of the scheme. So, it can cater for any eventuality. So, yes it’s certainly covered by the same timeframes as need-to-sell that you identified. It would be open to make an application during the construction period or indeed – this is all about construction actually, rather than operation of the railway obviously. I’m very happy obviously to do what you’ve indicated. We will do that. The point has been made clearly to me as well, of course we’re focussing on this particular petition and rightly so, but generally speaking the points we made about maintaining access along the roads apply to anyone who in an emergency wishes to get to hospital. It applies to our own workers on these work sites. One of the principles of safe planning of the construction is in the event of accidents, they need to be got to the hospitals urgently. We will do exactly what you’ve asked us – to think about specific – or more focussed proposals. But I wanted to set it in that context.

392. THE CHAIR: Excellent. We look forward to hearing back from you. And to confirm, I think this Committee considers an exceptional situation, we would expect the Secretary of State to consider it an exceptional situation. And we would expect the
Irwins to have a number of options around mitigation and purchase. Thank you.