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

Monday 18 June 2018 (Afternoon)

In Committee Room 5

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Justine Thornton QC, Counsel, Department for Transport
Nathalie Lieven QC, Counsel, Yartlet Trust

WITNESSES:

Ian Raybould (Yartlet Trust)
Tim Smart, Chief Engineer, HS2 Ltd
Colin Smith, Property Consultant (HS2 Ltd)

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(At 4.05 p.m.)

1. THE CHAIR: Thank you. We are here again. Mr Mould is a pleasure, but it’s always welcome to have an alternative, so welcome. I think you’re here for a week – looking forward to it. I’ve started, before sessions, just to remind petitioners it’s helpful and most effective if petitioners say upfront what they’d like, why and if there are any acceptable solutions should their primary requests not be possible. That really helps us do the best we can for you. But with that, over to you.

Yartlet Trust

Submissions by Ms Lieven

2. MS LIEVEN QC: Thank you, sir. So I’m representing the Yartlet School this afternoon. My name is Natalie Lieven QC. Yartlet School is a small day and boarding school between Stone and Stafford. As requested, I’m going to start by saying what we want. What we want is a new access between the school and a lane, which I’ll show you in a minute – it’s somewhat further north – in order to avoid the very considerable congestion and difficulties of getting into the school once HS2 is started under construction. The new access would need to be in the additional provision, which I know is already planned up for the parliamentary process. Why? At this stage if I can ask to put up some of the slides. The school lies within, at its closest point, 75 metres of the HS2 works. If I could have up A167(5) please to start with. You can see the existing position of the school. The A34 is just to the left and the new cutting I’ll show you in a second is just below.

3. The school has two primary concerns. One is in respect of the impact of what I’m going to call environmental issues, noise and dust on the school teaching and boarding facilities. I’m happy to say we’ve been in very significant negotiations over that. We are within a millimetre of an agreement. There are people outside discussing it now and I hope we’re not going to need to trouble the Committee on that. There is a small possibility we might have to come back on that but it is so small I would suggest the Committee don’t need to worry about it. The reason we’re here today and now is in respect of the access arrangements.

4. THE CHAIR: Is it possible to look at a map?
5. MS LIEVEN QC: Yes.

6. THE CHAIR: We did drive past so we saw the access when we were on a private visit but we drove in the other direction opposite the school from memory.

7. MS LIEVEN QC: Absolutely, sir. So if I can put up A167(4) you can see there the A34 going diagonally across the page. The new railway going left to right across the page. Stafford is to the south. Stone is to the north. You can see from that just very quickly that there are very significant works within close proximity to the school including the fact that the A34 has to be diverted just to the south of the school for a significant period while HS2 is being constructed. It will then be put back, at the end of the construction phase, onto the main, the existing route. But we’ve got very significant works very close to the school.

8. So far as, if I can just go back then to, or go to slide 6 in this list, A167(6). That’s the southern part of the school and you can see the red line there is the proposed cutting. The closest part of the permanent HS2 works. So you can see just how close they are to the school. The A34 is just under the trees on the left hand side. So in terms of the current access arrangements, if I can ask to go to slide 12 in the same pack, A167(12). The school is in the middle there. What happens at the moment is the A34, as the Committee may remember from the site visit, is a dual carriageway. There’s no opening in the dual carriageway opposite the school. So if you are parents or carers dropping your children off from the south, i.e. from Stafford direction over here, at the moment you have to drive up the A34, do a U-turn at the Enson Lane gap, which is there and then drive back to the school to drop off your child or children. If you are coming from the opposite direction, from Stone to the north, you come down the A34, left into the school. But then if you want to go back to Stone you have to drive down to the south to a turning point you can see there at Whitgreave Lane.

9. Now between of course the school and Whitgreave Lane is going to lie HS2 and all those works that we saw a moment ago. So what we are asking for is two things. One is a new access lane. If we can look at slide 26 please? So that’s the school down there. Enson Lane is at the top here. What the school is seeking is an access lane parallel to the A34 and then linking up to Enson Lane, then some form, and I’ll come back to this in a second, some form of reconfiguration at the A34 at Enson Lane.
10. If I could have slide 11 please in the same pack? This shows a proposal which the highway engineer who’s been helping the council suggested would be appropriate at the A34 so that parents can turn across the A34 safely into Enson Lane rather than having to do the U-turn which is what’s happening at the moment. So in terms of why that’s all justified there are effectively two issues here. First of all the Committee will already appreciate that there is going to be a very significant increase in the number of HGVs on the A34 by reason of the HS2 works. If I can show you two slides to make that clear? First of all slide 20 in our pack is an extract from the HS2 environmental statement. That shows in the right hand column the percentage increase of HGVs over the baseline without HS2. It varies. The ones that are relevant are not so much the first one as the next three – A34 Stone Road between Redhill roundabout and Whitgreave Lane, you can see an 88% increase. Then between Stone Road between Whitgreave Lane and Yarlet Lane, 88.1% northbound. I’m not going to go through all of them. Then, A34 Stone Road between Yarlet Road and Stone Road northbound, so that’s between effectively the HS2 works and running north. When this document was drawn up that was only 17%. But the Committee will be aware that there’s been an undertaking with Staffordshire County Council to try to redirect HGVs away from what I think is described as Beaconside, onto the A34 in order to relieve the traffic from around Stafford.

11. We don’t know the precise figures from that but if I can have up – so take the 17% as it were the base increase of HGVs from the HS2 works on that stretch. Then if I can have up one of the HS2 slides, P593(9). This is a document produced by HS2 in the light of the agreement with Staffordshire. It’s for the section of the A34 between Yarlet Lane, which lies to the south of the HS2 route up to the A51 which lies to the north, north of the school, north of Enson Lane, up towards Stone. You can see, with all respect to HS2, this is not the clearest table to show what’s really going on. But if one starts, just take the northbound section. So the 2023 future baseline, HGVs 558. HS2 traffic, HGVs 510. So one can see from that that on that stretch of road, which is the key stretch of road as far as my clients are concerned, there’s something like a 90% increase of HGVs.

12. In the nicest possible way, please don’t be fooled by the 9% HGV figure on the right hand side of that table. So far as we can work out that’s a percentage of HGVs of
the total increase. But in terms of the impact of HGVs that’s really completely irrelevant. The critical issue is that we’ve got something like a 90% increase of HGVs on the critical link.

13. THE CHAIR: Is it possible to look at it at the angle we’re more familiar with that HS2 use?

14. MS LIEVEN QC: There’s a –

15. THE CHAIR: If it’s inconvenient to do it now perhaps we can ask the QC later on.

16. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Sir, I can put it up now, P593(8) please.

17. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Don’t feel you have to speak. That says something to us and perhaps HS2 can speak to that at the end.

18. MS LIEVEN QC: Yes, I think, sir that is put into – sorry I’ve got an unnumbered pack. I think that’s put into bar chart form what I showed you a moment ago in figures.

19. THE CHAIR: It just helps us to see how peaky it is or whether it’s peaky and persistent. I’m sure these are the wrong technical terms but I think we all know what we’re talking about.

20. MS LIEVEN QC: Absolutely, sir. You have you – you’re familiar with certain visuals, which of course I as a newcomer am not. But can I put in a word of caution which I suspect the Committee’s heard from other petitioners which is that all these figures are of course based on HS2’s assumptions about the amount of spoil that’s reused on site. If those assumptions are wrong, even by a relatively small percentage, then not just do the peaks get peakier but they also get longer.

21. So taking that very considerable increase in HGVs into account the next question is, ‘Well why does that matter so much to the school?’ There are two reasons. First of all, the increased HGVs are going to make the existing manoeuvre at both Enson Lane to the north and Whitgreave Lane to the south significantly more hazardous for parents and children. Because of course turning across a dual carriageway, if you go back to
A167(12) for a moment, doing a U-turn on a dual carriageway, which will now be carrying a very significant number of HGVs, is not by any means a desirable manoeuvre. The school is very concerned about that. The second point is in light of the fact that that is a very undesirable manoeuvre on a road that will now have a lot more HGVs on it, there is a very real risk that Staffordshire County Council as highway authority will ban U-turns at those junctions. They have said they would like to ban U-turns at other gaps and other gaps along the A34, U-turns are in the main banned.

22. Given the HGV traffic, sorry, the HS2 traffic and in particular the HGVs, there’s got to be a very, very real risk that HS2 will then stop U-turns at Enson Lane and Whitgreave Lane. If that happens, parents will then have to do a very considerable further distance, something like a kilometre further north to get up to the roundabout at Stone to come back down. That ends up being two more kilometres. So if they can’t do the U-turn and we don’t get the new access they will have to go up to very close to the edge of Stone to the roundabout to come back down.

23. Then of course the other problem is that there is going to be increased congestion on this road in any event because of HS2. Take the perhaps average – Mr Raybould, who is the head teacher will speak in a moment – the average parent, if there is such a thing, coming up from Stafford, wants to drop their kid off at Yartlet. At the moment does the U-turn, can’t do the U-turn any longer and has to go another kilometre up towards Stone. They’ll then start running into traffic at that roundabout, which of course itself will have been increased by HS2. So the overall journey time will get even longer. So there’s a real concern about safety but there’s also a real concern about convenience to the parents.

24. Convenience to the parents very, very much matters to this school. Mr Raybould will give evidence in the moment. The school is in a very vulnerable situation because it’s going to be bang next to these HS2 works. It’s going to be bang next to a major diversion of the A34 and it’s going to have significantly great more difficulty for parents getting access. It’s not, again Mr Raybould will touch on this in a moment, it’s not going to take very many parents thinking, ‘This is just becoming too much of a problem,’ in dropping off their kids to get them to think it would be better to go to another school. So the school is really, really concerned about these works and the impact and why they’ve got to find a solution to these access problems.
25. Just going back really quickly to 26 that shows our plan, sorry, our 26. That’s it. HS2 in essence have raised three issues with the new access. First of all they say, well, severance of farmland. In fact that isn’t correct. The new lane runs parallel with the A34 very close. Then it runs up existing hedgerows to Enson Lane. So there’s no reason why there would be any severance. Secondly, in terms of impact on hedgerows there will be two bits of hedgerow where the new lane has to go through but we’re not talking about removing extensive pieces of hedgerow. The third point HS2 make, as they always do I suspect, is ‘Well it’s going to cost money.’

26. The school, it’s a small school. It has not employed a highway expert. We’re not in a position to challenge HS2’s costing of whatever junction improvements are required but what we say is – what we ask the Committee is to order HS2 to make provision for the new lane, then for HS2 and Staffordshire County Council to work together on what form of new junction is required. Because HS2 has said, ‘It’s got to be a roundabout.’ Mr Wilkinson, which the Committee may remember gave evidence for one of the parish councils and is a highway engineer, he doesn’t think a new roundabout is necessary. That’s not a matter I want to advance in front of the Committee one way or another. It’s for Staffordshire and HS2 to go away and work out what the appropriate form of junction is. Mr Wilkinson thinks something in the form of the slide I showed you a moment ago is sufficient. That’s really a matter for the highway authority and HS2.

27. We have, in terms of the very large sums that HS2 have mentioned, we are somewhat conscious of the fact that HS2’s figures have often been challenged in this Committee as they were on Phase One but we’re not calling a highway engineer to put an alternative figure. So, sir, in brief outline that’s what we want and why we want it and why it’s so important.

28. One very small point just finally, the school did have a concern about the location of the haul route. If I can have P580 put up? I hope that’s the right number. The school asked for an undertaking that the haul road be to the south of the cutting. When we go their slides, we found that the haul road had indeed been put to the south of the cutting but HS2 are not apparently prepared to commit to that. We would like what our, as it were, subsidiary ask is that they should be required to commit to it given that they’ve shown it on their own plan. But I’m not going to say any more about that.
29. THE CHAIR: Okay. Any questions from the Committee? Sandy?

30. MR MARTIN: Yes, thank you. I’m interested to hear your reasons for the route that you picked for the additional lane to get you up to Enson Lane. If there were an alternative route for that lane from Yarlet School to Enson Lane, would you be willing to look at alternative routes? It’s not the route that matters particularly.

31. MS LIEVEN QC: It’s not, as long as it’s a reasonably direct route that doesn’t incur massive different maintenance costs. It’s not the route that matters. But, sir, I should say the plan I showed you a moment ago with the route, HS2 drew up an options report, so we’re looking at our 26. This plan comes out of the option report. Ourselves and HS2 have all agreed that if there is going to be a route to Enson Lane, this is the best route. But in principle you’re entirely right. Can I from there very quickly call Mr Raybould, who’s the head teacher?

32. THE CHAIR: Have you got any more questions? Can I just ask one question? If the head teacher wants to come alongside just over here. If that road was built whose properties does it go through?

33. MS LIEVEN QC: So, sir, my understanding is that the freehold is owned by Staffordshire County Council. There are tenant farmers of the County Council and so far as we’re aware there does not appear to be any in principle objection. I can’t go so far as to say they’ve agreed but we don’t believe there’s any in principle objection.

34. THE CHAIR: Okay. Sheryll Murray?

35. MRS MURRAY: Just I notice you’ve got on there that it’s a single carriageway road that you’re proposing. Would you be operating a one way system during school hours?

36. MS LIEVEN QC: The proposal is that I think it’s three and a half metres wide which is wide enough for two cars to pass.

37. MRS MURRAY: Okay. Could we just have a look at the bottom of that plan? I thought, yes, sorry, yes, it does say ‘single carriageway’.

38. MS LIEVEN QC: It does say single carriageway, you’re absolutely right, madam.
But I think it’s wide enough for two cars to pass. If it wasn’t there might have to be passing places, but yes, it’s not intended to operate it as a one way system.

39. MRS MURRAY: Thank you very much.

**Evidence of Mr Raybould**

40. MS LIEVEN QC: So Mr Raybould, can you just give your name and position at the school please?

41. MR RAYBOULD: Ian Raybould, I’m the headmaster at the school.

42. MS LIEVEN QC: And just tell the Committee a little bit about the nature of the school please?

43. MR RAYBOULD: We’re a non-selective coeducational school, 157 pupils on roll, which serves 120 families. The age range is from two years old to 13 years old. We are an independent alternative to local maintained schools. We have a very strong outdoor ethos and a very caring individualised approach. Perhaps because of that caring nature and that hands on type ethos we tend to attract pupils who are failing to thrive in more typical schools and can offer them a really interesting alternative which can help to build their confidence and help to see them thrive once again.

44. Perhaps because we appeal to those pupils who have difficulties, we have about 25% at the moment of our pupils on our special needs register throughout the school. About one third of our pupils from the age of seven to 14 are on our special needs register. We are very successful in what we do. I’m able to say because it’s in the public domain as of today that our latest inspection report has shown us to be excellent in respect of pupils’ personal development. That is the school in a nutshell.

45. MS LIEVEN QC: And I know you have some boarders but roughly how many parents or carers drop off children in the mornings?

46. MR RAYBOULD: There will be about 120 families so 120 vehicles, 157 on roll all together, but because of siblings the number is slightly less in terms of number of vehicles that will be entering and exiting each day.

47. MS LIEVEN QC: Can you just explain to the Committee why you are worried
about the traffic arrangements and the impact of HS2?

48. MR RAYBOULD: Some of the points have already been touched upon but I do feel we are in a vulnerable position. You will imagine that many of our parents have realised that the HS2 project will be on our doorstep. They are already worried what will be the impact environmentally, aesthetically, as well as the access. So we’re doing our best to reassure parents about these matters. But my biggest concern really is access. You can imagine the typical day for many parents. The vast majority of our parents are both working. They have jobs therefore to get to and hopefully on time. They’ll have children who are not eating their breakfast quickly enough and have lost their swimming kit and have not had their homework books signed.

49. THE CHAIR: We know the problem. I think we all do. Can we focus the question on things that are very contained, I think, because there’s some good background to the school all of which was already covered in the documentation. I’m keen not to close you down before giving some additional information.

50. MS LIEVEN QC: No of course, sir. What’s the specific problems with HS2 as far as parents getting in at the moment?

51. MR RAYBOULD: The specific problem is because of the typical family delays, they’re already in a rush, as many families are. They need to get to work/school on time. What would be a huge problem for our families is our additional delays. A 15 minute delay for example would have a big knock on effect. It would irritate our families. It would distress the children in the car. Because of the problems that we’ve seen, the way the U-turns work and the fact that they may get closed down. The fact that families may be sitting in traffic at roundabouts. My biggest fear is that will become unacceptable to our parents and they would seek alternatives. As we are an independent school it is very easy to find an alternative and move from one school to another.

52. THE CHAIR: Sheryll Murray?

53. MRS MURRAY: You mentioned the number of pupils and the number of families. But Ms Lieven actually alluded to the fact that you have some boarders. It’s just to ask you how many boarding places you have.
54. MR RAYBOULD: We have 90% of our main school pupils, that’s from year 3 to year 8, board sometimes. But if I make it clear that we only have flexible boarding and only on Wednesday and Thursday nights. So there would never be a time – we couldn’t accommodate all 90% of those pupils at any given time. Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays they all need to go home. So the typical thing would be approximately 20 children on a Wednesday night, approximately 20 children on a Thursday night would take up the option to flexi board.

55. MRS MURRAY: Okay, thank you very much.

56. MR RAYBOULD: You’re welcome.

57. THE CHAIR: Okay. Justine Thornton?

58. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Thank you, sir. Members of the Committee, in essence the dispute between the school and HS2 is simply over the process of decision making. To put it shortly, we accept that this matter needs to be looked at but we think it’s essential that the Highways Authority is involved in coming to a decision on this and that the Committee has their views before you, before you decide what to do about the access to the school. What Ms Lieven has asked for you from today is that you order that the access is provided. Then HS2 and Staffs County Council work together to provide that. We say that’s not the right way for this decision making to proceed.

59. The reasons for that are at P593(30). In essence, the Committee has already canvassed some of those with Ms Lieven. It will require substantial engineering works. There will be a significant impact on a neighbour farmer’s land, an environmental disruption. We estimate currently the costs are circa £2.3 million. A watercourse crossing will be required. It may involve the upgrade of Enson Lane for two way traffic, potentially a new roundabout at the A34 and Enson Lane junction. There will be disruption to the farm, although we can quibble about how much disruption and there will be an impact on existing hedgerows.

60. Just to put this in context, HS2 has been involved in extensive negotiations with the school already. If I ask for slide P5593(6) to be put up to show you the progress we’ve made to date. As it says there, we have been working closely with the Yarlet Trust to seek to address the trust’s concerns. We’ve agreed to offer assurances on a
number of topics. Clearly maintaining access to the school is large today. We’ve also been in negotiations and discussions about traffic management, noise and vibration, air quality, risk management action plans for noise and vibration, the width of the Yarlet south cutting and engagement with the school in the use of the land. That’s resulted in a 17 page agreement with the school whereby we’ve sought to resolve the concerns.

61. If I could ask for that to be put up? That’s at P703. If we go forward to get to the start of the agreement. If I could just ask the person driving the slides to scroll through so you can see the extent of the progress we’ve already made and then I’ll come to the particular clauses that are in continued discussion.

62. THE CHAIR: Let’s go those in discussion. The point is lots have been done.

63. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Thank you, sir. The clause in discussion is at P700(7) on my version it’s 2.4. I think the numbering must be a little different. It’s section 2 just above site traffic management. It’s 2.4, sir, where this is what we have offered to the school to ensure that we can come to a proper decision about the access. So 2.4 I’ll read out, ‘The promoter will in consultation with Staffordshire County Council’, who are the highways authority, ‘consider the need and scope for a safe and acceptable alternative to the current U-turn provision on the A34 at Enson Lane taking into consideration the predicted HS2 traffic and will prepare a report for the Select Committee. Such report to be finalised and reported to the Select Committee before it breaks for the summer recess.’

64. What we’ve also agreed, sir, in the corridor in the last ten minutes or so before we came in today is that as per a request from the school that report and analysis should consider the current U-turn at Whitgreave Lane, which is effectively for the parents who turn southwards out of the school. So we will prepare a supplementary report on that. And there’s a new clause, 2.6, we will share the reports with the school at least one working day in advance of reporting to the Select Committee. So we say that for the reasons I’ve identified, because of cost and third-party impact, it is proper to have the Highways Authority to have their input into this before we bring it back to the Committee.

65. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Sheryll Murray?
66. MRS MURRAY: Can I ask you why you feel you need to report to the Select Committee? Surely the purpose of us all being here today is so you can give the Select Committee enough evidence for us to be able to determine how to resolve this.

67. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Well, Mrs Murray, I’m certainly willing to call Mr Smart to give the school’s views on the impact of disruption to the school’s access if that would assist the Committee. The reason that we consider it necessary to involve the Staffordshire County Council as the Highways Authority is because of the relatively recent development where traffic was routed from Beaconside to the A34.

68. MRS MURRAY: So can I ask how much dialogue has been undertaken so far with the school, Staffordshire County Council and yourselves to try and resolve this?

69. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Mrs Murray, there certainly has been. I think I’m being passed various notes. There certainly has been dialogue, extensive dialogue over the last 15 or 18 months, which began with a report on options, which HS2 produced at the request of the school. That came up with five options. We’ve been in communication with Staffs County Council. There’s been a dispute over costs and so we are seeking to bring this to a head in an orderly fashion.

70. MRS MURRAY: Could you expand on your comment about costs please?

71. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Yes.

72. MRS MURRAY: And the dispute, the dispute over costs.

73. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Well the cost estimate of the school is currently circa £2.3 million and we can provide that breakdown to the Committee. I think it may even be in the petitioner’s slides. But we have done a breakdown of that. We’ve also priced up our own options, which are not satisfactory to the school. But they come out at about £700,000-800,000.

74. MRS MURRAY: Are you happy to share that alternative with us?

75. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Of course. It may be that the best place to go to is the report or I can ask Mr Smart to give evidence, whichever the Committee would prefer. The access report, the options report is at P698(2). If we just scroll down to the
next page, this is the petitioner’s preferred option. That’s option 1. Then if we scroll
down to option 2, sorry, option 1 is one of the options considered. If you could just
scroll through to option 2? So you can get a sense of the different options that have
been looked at. That has an access route coming off the A34 down to the school’s car
park. You can see the sign that says ‘school car park’. Then option 3, as Ms Lieven has
rightly pointed out, is the school’s preferred option. Then this is a fourth option. Then
there’s a fifth option, which is upgrading the existing access. I understand that’s the one
that’s been priced at £700,000-800,000.

76. THE CHAIR: Sheryll Murray and then Martin.

77. MRS MURRAY: That’s very helpful. It would have been helpful to have been
shown these right at the beginning. But I think, thank you, Chairman.

78. THE CHAIR: Yeah. What I’ve established is HS2 have said that doing nothing is
not an option. The five options are relatively, in very simple terms very similar.

79. MRS MURRAY: Yes. Chairman I don’t think we need a report to tell us that.

80. THE CHAIR: Point taken. Martin?

81. MR WHITFIELD: My question is just in relation to the situation with the
forthcoming AP because it seems to me none of these options and certainly not the U-
turn provision is within the scope of the Bill as it stands at the moment. So is it HS2’s
intention to put any of this or to offer to put any of this into the AP2 without the
direction of this Committee?

82. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Yes, if we, after consulting with Staffordshire
County Council, think it’s necessary to do so to ensure the safe acceptable alternative
access then we would do so.

83. MR WHITFIELD: So if that conclusion of the discussions from HS2, from the
Council’s point of view, is that nothing needs done we would be in a vacuum of scope
of the Bill to deal with this access problem?

84. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): I’m sorry, sir?

85. MR WHITFIELD: We would be beyond the scope of this Bill to deal with the
access problem on the five ideas that you proposed.

86. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Well one of the reasons we thought it was important to come back to the Committee before the summer recess was on the timing issue that you’ve identified.

87. MR WHITFIELD: So you’re looking for guidance from us on that?

88. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Sorry?

89. MR WHITFIELD: You’re looking for guidance from us for the purpose of the AP2 as well as the discussions with the Council?

90. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Yes.

91. MR WHITFIELD: Right. I’m grateful.

92. THE CHAIR: Sandy?

93. MR MARTIN: Yes, I’m slightly bemused by the options which involve an upgraded access directly onto the A34 because of course the junction between the lane actually leading into Yarlet School and the A34 is right on the point at which the new or the temporary diversion of the A34 is going to take place. I fail to see how you could do that and maintain a link onto the diverted section of the A34 and then maintain a link onto the new over bridge for the A34 without having to build not one but two separate reconstituted junctions: first a separate reconstituted junction onto the diverted A34 and then a new separate reconstituted junction onto the new part of the A34.

94. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Well, sir, it’s important to distinguish there are two different issues affecting access to the school. One of them is the one you’ve alluded to, which is the diversion of the A34. I have Mr Smart behind me and we have addressed it in our slides. That that can be done with we would say minimal and entirely manageable impact on access, namely a closure over a couple of weekends and an alternative access provided to the school. Ms Lieven’s presentation was focusing mainly on a different issue, which is about the diversion of traffic from Beaconside and the impact that will have on the U-turn. It’s that that has caused us to think we should talk to Staffordshire County Council and have their views. But if the Committee’s
minded to rule that the diversion of the A34 is going to have a material adverse impact on the school then I would ask that you hear from Mr Smart before doing so because we don’t accept that as a proposition. That’s why, in answer to Mrs Murray’s comments, matters have proceeded as they have at a relatively late stage.

95. MR MARTIN: With all due respect, Mr Chairman, that’s not the point I was making, Mrs Thornton: not that the diversion of itself would create the problem but that if you were going to build a new enhanced junction onto the A34 and the A34 was being diverted you would have to build an enhanced junction onto a diverted section of the A34 and then rebuild it again when you rebuild the A34 in that spot.

96. THE CHAIR: Shall we bring Mr Smart on as evidence so you can ask Mr Smart what’s the best option? Does that make sense?

97. MR WIGGIN: It’s too difficult to ask the Committee to decide what it’s going to do and then not hear Mr Smart.

98. THE CHAIR: Yes. Mr Raybould, if you can stand down? If we can have Mr Smart and we’ll find out from Mr Smart.

**Evidence of Mr Smart**

99. MR SMART: Good afternoon.

100. THE CHAIR: Thank you. I’m sure I’m not allowed to do it but can you answer the question for us?


102. THE CHAIR: Get stuck in.

103. MR SMART: Yes, so I understand Mr Martin’s question. We have quite a complicated arrangement in terms of how we keep the existing road alignment and camber. We build in the new alignment on the diversion. Now I can go to the slides, which are there but they’re fairly clear I think so I’ll try to explain it without taking the time to go through all of them. Basically we can do this by just localised lane closures while maintaining access. The point about widening this access here is that at the moment, so in this area here, because we’re having to do a localised realignment, we
can take the opportunity to give the school a better acceleration/deceleration lane into the school and better sight line. That can be done as part of our diversion works.

104. THE CHAIR: And that’s a permanent change?

105. MR SMART: That would be a permanent change, which would be there.

106. THE CHAIR: Which is an existing problem without HS2 so that would be great.

107. MR SMART: Yes, the issue comes in, when we are doing our diversions on the southbound and the northbound, how we do this tie-in here. We’ve gone through with the construction engineers quite detailed about how we can maintain that. Obviously it is impossible to maintain that access the whole time because, amongst other things we have to lay blacktop tarmac and that takes a while to go hard enough to be able to traffic on it. Albeit in the event of emergency we could bring emergency vehicles through and then we would have to just make good afterwards.

108. So we can actually do that whole arrangement and that tie-in with two to three weekend closures: one when we do the northbound, sorry, one for the diversion on the north and one for the diversion on the south. It is the southbound which is more of a problem because of course the school has a left in and left out. That is coming on the southbound carriageway. So we can actually do that, sir, is the answer. So the school would have an issue for two to three – it would be a Saturday to Sunday. Of course, I should point out that in terms of resurfacing this is the sort of thing that one has to be done anyway. That road would have to be resurfaced. We’ve got the advantage – or, sorry, the school has the advantage with us that via our liaison procedures and everything we can time that by talking to the school to try and minimise the impact of when we do do that.

109. MR WIGGIN: Does that make it work for you?

110. MS LIEVEN QC: Well, sir, we’re grateful for Mr Smart’s efforts and it might be a slightly improved opening into the school but it doesn’t deal with the fundamental problem of HS2 at all. Because the critical issue as far as what’s concerning us is that the dual carriageway has a central reservation and will continue to have a central reservation. So it will continue to be left in/left out. So option 5 is a nice to have and it
will slightly improve the turn, in particular the turning out for parents leaving, but it doesn’t address the reason why we’re here.

111. THE CHAIR: Sheryll Murray?

112. MRS MURRAY: Mr Smart, could you explain to me, because it’s not clear from this, are you talking about having access for traffic in both directions on the dual carriageway? So you will put a break in the central reservation so that you could have a junction where vehicles could come out of the school, cross over, to prevent the U-turns at either end of the road?

113. MR SMART: No, Mrs Murray, we’re not considering doing that because that would be a very difficult junction to engineer. What we’re actually doing I think has already been stated by Ms Lieven and Ms Thornton is the junction to the north, the existing U-turn junction, there have been some concerns raised that the increased traffic from HS2 that the manoeuvre that the parents and people going to the school currently do, which is a U-turn, might now be problematic with the increased traffic.

114. The reason we’re doing the study is that that is an opinion at the moment and it may be a right opinion but there has not been a proper study done to say, ‘Is that indeed the fact?’ And if it is the fact, what is the answer to that? That is the work that was referred to earlier in terms of the report and the review that we would do on the light of the further work we’ve had to do on the traffic from the Beaconside changes that we’ve been discussing with Staffordshire.

115. MRS MURRAY: Sorry to interrupt you, Mr Smart. Have Staffordshire County Council ever undertaken any traffic studies into those junctions in the past?

116. MR SMART: I couldn’t answer that. I’m not aware that they have.

117. MRS MURRAY: But they haven’t been asked if there are any?

118. MR SMART: They may have done. I haven’t got that information myself but I can check with my team to check if we have asked that question.

119. MRS MURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

120. THE CHAIR: Sandy?
121. MR MARTIN: Sorry, Mr Smart, a very, very small point of misunderstanding on my part probably but I was assuming that the A34 was a trunk road at this point. Am I wrong?

122. MR SMART: It is a trunk road, yes. Sorry, sorry, it’s under the jurisdiction of Staffordshire County Council.

123. MR MARTIN: So it’s not a trunk road.

124. MR SMART: Yes. It’s not a trunk road, sorry.

125. MR MARTIN: It’s a very big road that isn’t a trunk road?

126. MR SMART: Yes.

127. MS THORNTON QC (DiT): Sir, could I also take the opportunity to ask Mr Smart about Ms Lieven’s subsidiary request which went to the haul route at Yarlet south cutting. If we could put up P700(14) of the draft agreement between the school and HS2, which is section 12, haul route at Yarlet south cutting? Now, Mr Smart, before I turn to this, just to put this in context. At the moment there is a haul road proposed to the south of the line, so further away from the school. The school has expressed concern about that location changing. So the current provision says, ‘The promoter will engage with the school at the detailed design stage of the proposed scheme concerning the location of any site haul routes associated with the Yarlet south cutting. In the event that a haul route is proposed on the northern side of the cutting, we will require the nominated undertaker to seek to reduce the impacts on the school resulting from such haul route as far as reasonably practicable.’ So that’s what HS2 is prepared to offer. The school wishes to go further, as I understand and seek more guarantees from HS2. Can you give your opinion on those guarantees sought by the school?

128. MR SMART: Yes, could we go to P580 please? Now I understand the school’s problem with the proximity of the works because that is the extent of the permanent cutting. That cutting has to be able to stand for a civil engineering design life of 120 years without needing to have landslips and rail blockages. Therefore we have got that on a preliminary design at one to two-and-a-half slope angle. Now, when we have sufficient geotechnical information and we do the detailed design we may well be able
to reduce the width of that cutting based on the side slope angle. That’s the first thing.

129. Now the issue with the haul road is of course the haul road goes through the centre of the trace at the moment where the road is, the existing road and the diverted road. Until those bridges are in place it’s difficult to cross there. Therefore we have a blocker. So it will be that we may have to use for some time a haul road along the north side, for no other reason than we have to actually make the excavation not only forming the cutting, apart from moving material. So this whole area here, which I’m just circling, is something which we’ll work out in detailed design with the contractor as to how we move across here in sequence with the bridges and forming the cutting so we can go underneath. At the moment it would not be possible to give an undertaking that we wouldn’t have a haul road there because for a time we may well have to. But by using measures such as dust mitigation and noise mitigation quite often, I know the Committee are used to seeing these sorts of features on our construction drawings.

130. THE CHAIR: But you’ll try to avoid it?

131. MR SMART: We’ll try to avoid it, yes.

132. THE CHAIR: Sheryll Murray?

133. MRS MURRAY: I want to go back to the roads and the access but looking at this map if you compare this map to the option 5 access, that’s the enhanced access, is that pink area defining that this is within the Bill limits already? Option 5?

134. MR SMART: This pink area here?

135. MRS MURRAY: Yes.

136. MR SMART: No, I don’t think that’s within option 5.

137. MRS MURRAY: It looks as though it’s shaded pink. I thought the pink areas were actually within the Bill limit. So the option you’ve said you would prefer or you would be discussing with Staffordshire Council is actually within the Bill limits so it wouldn’t need an additional provision.

138. MR SMART: No, that is, yes. That’s the point.
139. MRS MURRAY: That’s the only option you’ve given us which is within the Bill limits at the moment?

140. MR SMART: Yes.

141. THE CHAIR: Okay.

142. MRS MURRAY: So it wouldn’t need an additional provision.

143. MR SMART: That wouldn’t. Well, my understanding is that wouldn’t, no.

144. MRS MURRAY: Thank you.

145. THE CHAIR: Any further questions?

146. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry can I just ask Mr Smart just to clarify something? HS2 accept that the U-turning that’s happening to the north of that map now at the next junction is inherently dangerous given how busy the road is and are looking to resolve this problem. The difficulty seems to be the extent between the options to resolve this and the challenge that there is about the fact that the A34 you can’t cross the lane at the point of existing entry of the school. Are there options, I know we mentioned a roundabout, but why can’t there be a roundabout rather than that U-turn spot?

147. MR SMART: Well first of all, sir, I should say that we haven’t accepted that there has been a problem because we haven’t done the study.

148. MR WHITFIELD: Yes, there is a risk.

149. MR SMART: But clearly we can understand that there is an issue there which needs further review and there is indeed a risk. My understanding is that the roundabout may be a solution. That’s probably, in terms of cost and time, the worst case solution but there may be other solutions. That’s part of what the review would look at.

150. MR WHITFIELD: Can I ask why a roundabout wasn’t considered just by the entrance to the school or was it and dismissed for a reason?

151. MR SMART: Well because in the scheme of things we’re trying to do a proportionate response to what we’re doing here and bearing in mind the school has a problem with access for the four weekends of the time that we’re there while we do the
tie-ins; otherwise access is maintained. To build a roundabout there on the A34 and get highway approvals, and you’ve got another roundabout which the highway authority would not necessarily want, that was not an option that we considered because we went forward on the basis of, well, it would have been an early sift looked at but not taken through design as effectively an over-provision. There would have been quite a lot of disruption there while we formed a roundabout there quite frankly.

152. MR WHITFIELD: But there’s going to be massive disruption there anyway because it’s where the alternative A34 is coming back onto the original A34. It’s going to be resurfaced anyway.

153. MR SMART: There is disruption but in terms of the school access we believe we have a manageable solution in terms of the times when access would be made difficult for them, yes.

154. MR WHITFIELD: Okay. I’m grateful.

155. THE CHAIR: How much would that roundabout cost?

156. MR SMART: I would have thought a roundabout there, depending on how many legs, but it’s a roundabout just for school access. So maybe a million or so; it depends on the levels.

157. MRS MURRAY: And the safety of schoolchildren.

158. MR SMART: Yes, I understand that and that is paramount. And that is why in my evidence and belief that we would make sure that we make that junction improved in terms of the sight lines that they currently have. So they have a safer junction in effect.

159. THE CHAIR: Okay. I think Sandy’s got a question.

160. MR MARTIN: Yes. Mr Smart, you have discussed all of this with Staffordshire County Council have you not?

161. MR SMART: Yes.

162. MR MARTIN: How happy are Staffordshire County Council about having various independent accesses onto the A34 which, notwithstanding that it is a trunk
road, is nonetheless a busy dual carriageway which is about to get much busier and people doing U-turns at either end of it? If I was on Staffordshire County Council I would want to seek a solution which actually did away with both of those things.

163. MR SMART: Yes. I think they’re certainly uncomfortable, Mr Martin, which is why they’ve expressed concern about the existing U-turn to the north with the increased traffic because they clearly are. I think it is not an ideal situation here as it exists and clearly we need to be absolutely sure that we don’t do anything that makes that situation worse in terms of what the traffic does from a safety point of view. Anything we do do is subject to Staffordshire giving approval and, furthermore, as you’ve already heard many times before, road safety audits and the like.

164. THE CHAIR: Can I ask through yourself, would the school be happy with a roundabout at the junction? Have they dismissed that because they didn’t think it would be doable?

165. MS LIEVEN QC: At the junction at Enson Lane, sir, or outside the school?

166. THE CHAIR: Outside the school on the main road.

167. MS LIEVEN QC: I would suspect the school would very much like a roundabout outside the school. That would be very good for the school. I think, without turning myself into a highway engineer, there’s going to be a significant problem putting it there at the point where the tie-in comes in and the need to redesign twice. But in principle, for the long run of the school, having a roundabout there would be a very desirable solution.

168. THE CHAIR: Okay, thank you very much. I think we’ve heard enough. We will try to give you an early indication of our thinking because simply waiting for a report in the summer might not fit with the timetables of our report. Certainly, if we were expecting something back on deliberations between the two parties or a formal report saying you’ve not decided, there will be a point earlier than summer recess where we would need that piece of information so it can float through to our reports and roughly, if you’re looking, before the middle of July. That would be the type of timescale to give you an indication, but through the clerk, I will be able to come back to HS2. I’m keen to make progress, but I don’t want to cut you down if there’s something essential.
169. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): No, sir, simply to say that if the Committee would be assisted by an early report, we can certainly work to your timetable. So, if that helps.

170. THE CHAIR: Early report, great. Early agreement with the school, even better, and take it out of our hands. That would be our strong preference. We are getting into quite some detail and I think everyone who’s listened has got a feel for our views and the direction that we’re going. So, hopefully HS2 can take notes and the school, without whipping up too much enthusiasm, can actually focus on a compromise solution that keeps everyone equally and I’m happy.

171. MS THORNTON QC (DfT): Understood, sir.

172. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time.

173. MS LIEVEN QC: Thank you very much, sir. Thank you.

174. THE CHAIR: Mr Smart, I think we can stay there. We’ve got the pleasure of your company. We’ll just take a few seconds while everyone’s transitioning. So the process, would you like to take five minutes? Okay, the Committee will meet again at some point after 15:15. We’re going to private deliberations.

Sitting suspended.

On resuming –

Evidence of Mr Smith

175. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your flexibility and thank you for being with us, Mr Smith. Martin, do you have any questions before we start the formal presentation?

176. MR WHITFIELD: Thank you, Mr Smith. I apologise about putting the cart in front of the horse. I believe I understand the statutory compensation as has been defined. However, I am still at a loss to identify what compensation is open to someone who has no – and I use the word ‘legal interest’ in almost its widest sense of the term – and indeed I’m thinking about someone who occupies a property on the basis of licence only. What compensation can they look forward to receiving offsetting the fact that they are effectively going to lose their home and it may indeed have been their home for
a significant period of time because they lack the interest in the property and freehold, or the leasehold, or whatever? They seem to fall outside of the schemes and are relying purely upon – I use the word ‘purely upon’ carefully – relying purely upon being an extra special case and will be looked at for that purpose. What help can you give me?

177. MR SMITH: Right, if we go – are we talking about houseboat owners who have mooring rights?

178. MR WHITFIELD: That would be an example or perhaps someone who is occupying a caravan or something.

179. MR SMITH: Well, under the statutory compensation code, as you know, the basis is owners of property will receive compensation for the value of their interest in land plus any disturbance. If it’s a residential occupier, there is also the ability to claim a home loss payout. Now, we’re looking at your particular example, let us assume the licence is a normal licence so it’s very short term. Probably there are prohibitions on either disposing of that to anybody else or subletting it. So, it won’t be a saleable asset. There will be a rent, so it will be an asset that has no value. So, there won’t be compensation payable for land in that circumstance.

180. We come on to disturbance. There will be a provision. There is a provision for such an owner to claim compensation under disturbance for reasonable relocation costs. Now, what that means in terms of a houseboat owner would probably be either provision, if the works can permit, a new mooring, if that mooring is required, or perhaps provision for moving to an alternative mooring.

181. MR WHITFIELD: But that’s really reimbursement rather than compensation, isn’t it?

182. MR SMITH: It is compensation. If you think back, the principle of the statutory compensation code, which, by the way, the Bill incorporates the general law – the Bill doesn’t contain the law; it incorporates the law that Parliament makes. The principle is equivalence, so in terms of land value – the value of the licence – if it has no market and has no value generally, then it’s equivalent if the statutory compensation code applies the same assessment. So, to give people actual extra money, it may have been in Parliament’s mind, that wouldn’t be equivalence. That would be giving them more than
they currently have. Disturbance losses are any other losses not based on the value of land. So, that’s land value and disturbance.

183. Then we come to home loss payments. Home loss payments are payable to tenancies who have an interest in the land and it is their principal residence and they have been there for at least a year. Now, that applies to most residential tenancies, if they are displaced by the compulsory acquisition of the property. The definition of a dwelling, under the Act, is part of a building, and I struggle – the advice to me is that we would struggle to describe a houseboat as a building.

184. MR WHITFIELD: As you would a situation with a caravan or something like that.

185. MR SMITH: Now, that’s the odd thing. There are special provisions for a caravan where certain people can apply for home loss payments where these are –

186. MR WHITFIELD: Static.

187. MR SMITH: Static. So, there are provisions, but there aren’t provisions for houseboat owners. That’s putting it bluntly. That is the situation as I see it. But of course, as far as I’m aware, HS2 isn’t acquiring any mooring rights, but this is a general. We may affect people but we’re not actually acquiring any, as far as I’m aware.

188. THE CHAIR: Well, we’re particularly concerned about nine houseboat owners, as their principal private residence, effectively, that are going to be sizeably affected, although this land isn’t going to be compulsorily purchased. So my question is this: if we want to compensate them – I use that as a non-legal word – but basically give them money from HS2, what would be the easiest legal framework in which to do that without creating a precedent that would make it inequitable?

189. MR SMITH: Well I think if you, sir, consider this is inequitable that caravan dwellers can gain a home loss payment, and the minimum payment these people would normally receive would be £6,100 under the current arrangements, if you think it’s inequitable, you could report that as such and see if the law can be changed. The law we incorporate, which is the general law, at the moment, doesn’t apply to permanent houseboat owners because of the definitions in there.
190. THE CHAIR: Well we’re not looking to change the law. We would simply be looking to instruct HS2 to make an ex gratia payment. Nor would we be giving an intimation that the law should change. I don’t think we’re at that point. We may wish to make a casual reference to the law not being equitable and should be reviewed but that’s not our principal purpose.

191. MR WHITFIELD: I’m not sure happy is the right emotion, but I am satisfied with the explanation.

192. THE CHAIR: Well that will do for now in terms of your happiness. We will allow you to do your presentation. Sorry, we brought you earlier and then we jumped in. Martin is now going to dash out. We will report back to him. If you can take us through.

193. MR WHITFIELD: Thank you.

194. MR SMITH: Well, to begin with, sir, my presentation was mainly to cover and just remind you of some of the slides that I’ve already given. I’ve already covered that. So, there were two areas that I wanted to just touch upon, which was the points raised about tenants’ compensation, which I think were raised by a Member of Parliament for Eddisbury?

195. MRS MURRAY: Yes.

196. MR SMITH: And also the compensation arrangements in relation to Mrs Moorby who had a mooring right amongst other things and her business. I thought those were the things, just to be clear. I don’t want to go back over things I’ve already covered. If we can say that, just to be clear, if we look at tenancies, generally, these are short-term agreements or mainly short-term agreements for residential occupiers. Again, the same principles will apply as I’ve just described where most of these you have to obviously pay a prescribed rent. They can’t be sold. You can’t underlet them. So, you don’t have an asset, so generally speaking, compensation will not be paid for the value of land to individual residential tenancies, where their property is acquired compulsorily. However, obviously they are entitled generally to disturbance and reasonable removal costs if their property is acquired and they have to move to another property. And generally speaking, they are entitled to home loss payments where, again, same
principles apply. So, I just wanted to raise this, knowing you have limited time. I don’t want to go back over that again, but that applies to residential tenancies. So, just to be clear, in terms of obviously a non-statutory scheme for residential tenancies, the purpose of the non-statutory property schemes that HS2 has introduced has been to regularise the property market so that people affected by the generalised blight of HS2 coming and especially people who would have wished to sell their property anywhere and move, but are unable because of the blight, their position is protected. But these are mainly people that have assets. They have either the freehold or a long leasehold interest in the property. So, that is the purpose, generally speaking, of the non-statutory schemes.

197. If we can put up slide P724, under the statutory scheme, this is part of my previous presentation where I mentioned to you that blight notices can be served. If your property is to be acquired, an owner can apply for the property to be acquired early under a blight notice where they are a qualifying owner, a residential owner occupier. If you look under this slide, it has to be a business owner or an occupier with three years of a lease unexpired at the valuation date and a rateable value less than £36,000. So, it can be a number of these things, but the qualification – the main thing is the qualification for the blight notice applications were included as the basis for the non-statutory scheme, the qualifications to apply to those people who wanted HS2 to make an application to buy under the non-statutory scheme. So, those non-statutory schemes apply these same qualifying conditions. So, they apply mainly to the freeholders and the long leaseholders who are owner occupiers. They do not apply to freeholders, leaseholders who are investment owners. So, they only apply to owner occupiers.

198. So, in terms of a tenant who may be an occupier of an investment property, again, that property is not included in the non-statutory scheme. Generally speaking, the non-statutory scheme applies where the promoter will buy at the unblighted market value the asset in advance enabling an owner who is unable to sell it, except at either a huge discount or just unable to sell it, to move on where there is a need for him to sell, where he can show compelling reasons to sell.

199. In terms of a tenant, obviously there is no land value in the asset as I’ve previously described, and it doesn’t qualify under the qualifying conditions. So, it isn’t included in the scheme and a tenant obviously can, if necessary, move to another property through actually terminating the tenancy and moving. That has not been included in HS2’s
scheme. So, I just wanted to be clear that there is statutory and non-statutory compensation and how tenants can claim statutory compensation but they can’t apply, along with other investment owners, under the non-statutory scheme. I just wanted to make that clear. I just wanted to clarify that.

200. THE CHAIR: Very helpful. Thank you very much. I think we’ll exchange you for Mr Smart, if that’s okay.

201. MR SMITH: Thank you.

202. THE CHAIR: Over to you, Mr Smart.

Evidence of Mr Smart

203. MR SMART: Yes, sir. I will start on the issues with the M6 junction proposals, the roundabout. So, if we just go to the next slide. I think the Committee are probably quite aware of some of this from the previous discussions we had when we talked about Stone. So if we were to construct the roundabout here at the new junction on the A51, apart from the fact this is taking new land and those issues, we would not be able to construct that to the same timescales that we would be able to construct our proposed M6 slips at the Stone maintenance facility because those are temporary provisions. They aren’t going to be turned into permanent highway standard slips. Therefore they are going to be – well, one of them is going to be used only for maintenance access in the future and is not a full standard highway.

204. If we constructed this, this would have to be done to highway standards. There would be a more significant disruption to the M6. In order to get down this new road, which we have to build, we’d have to get a bridge over the M6 in order to allow us to come off and then down this road.

205. THE CHAIR: All the red and the yellow area is not being proposed by HS2, but is being proposed by others and you’re making the case as to why that can’t happen.

206. MR SMART: This is our view on how we would implement. If we were going to have a new roundabout on the M6 and the A51, this is what we would have to do to implement it. But I think the key thing as far as we’re concerned, when the Committee was discussing the issues at Stone, was the amount of traffic on Yarnfield Lane prior to
us getting in the M6 slips, which is the big mitigation for Yarnfield Lane. If we were to build this, the timescales involved would mean that either Yarnfield Lane would experience the traffic for a lot longer, or, indeed, we have to build the M6 slips anyway before we were to build this facility. In case you’re wondering what that is, this leg here, there was talk here of a proposed development, which is on MoD land and, as far as I’m aware, is not declassified by the MoD. It will take some time for it to be able to be used because of the MoD use of it in terms of what was kept there. Therefore, if we are building our railway, this road would have to be of quite a significant height to go over our railway and this would be a road that would have to be into our IMB-R. So, in other words, although we’ve got a temporary roundabout and a haul road on this route, this would now have to be a proper road to highway standards. So, it is a significant cost and from our point of view, HS2 I mean, it doesn’t really give you any benefits in terms of time and taking traffic off the roads.

207. So, if I go through the next slide, the final one on this, this really summarises the key reasons, if you like, why this would not be something HS2 would want to do. Arguably, it would be something more for a developer, if that proposal was put in. So, there’s quite significant cost and, as I said, it would mean that we would have more traffic issues around Stone and Yarnfield. It would take us some time to put in, some number of years.

208. THE CHAIR: Sandy, any questions?

209. MR MARTIN: There is an issue, Mr Smart, isn’t there, with the number and congestion of junctions on the M6 in this general area?

210. MR SMART: Yes.

211. MR MARTIN: Are you satisfied that the work that you’re going to be doing on other junctions on the M6 – I think junction 15 was the most problematic – is that going to make a significant difference to the capacity on junction 15? There is a question of how much traffic you can get on and off the M6 anyway.

212. MR SMART: Yes, yes. In terms of how we view it, we always try and use the best available road and that basically means you’re on a trunk road if you can, or at least on an A road. So, we’re aware. Obviously, there are issues we have to manage and
some of that is in our own hands. You’ve heard before, we don’t want any of our wagons held up in traffic any more than any of the local residents want to be held up in traffic. It is in our interest to make sure we keep traffic moving as best we possibly can. So, I’m not aware that there are any issues with the M6 and certainly by putting the slips in in discussions with Highways England, they’re satisfied with that proposal. I think their stated position on any new roundabout on a major trunk road like the M6 would be, ‘Well, normally, it is up for development etc to meet the existing infrastructure. Will they do something about it?’ You wouldn’t do this sort of thing on something that would be a potential speculation, if I can use that term.

213. MR MARTIN: There are sufficient capacity constraints on the M6 at the moment that they are already doing work on reintroducing the hard shoulders.

214. MR SMART: The smart motorways schemes, yes. That’s right, yes. We spoke to the highways authority about that and that’s one of the issues there was a discussion about, whether to bring our work forward to coincide with that, but the timings unfortunately don’t work.


216. MRS MURRAY: I was just going to raise the point on motorway works. Mr Smart has answered that.

217. THE CHAIR: It’s covered. Actually, although it’s been quite a short session, actually it’s quite useful because we’ve covered this from a number of angles and a number of times. Actually, the more we’ve covered it, the less clear it became.

218. MR SMART: Often the way, sir.

219. THE CHAIR: Focusing on something on its own, without looking through the specific petitioner’s eyes, is most helpful. So, thank you very much. The Committee will now sit in private.