Thank you very much for inviting me to appear before the HS2 Committee to discuss HS2 Phase 2A. As you are aware the High Speed Railway does not pass through my constituency. I did not, therefore, formally petition the Committee.

The first time I became aware of the impact of HS2 on North Shropshire was when I began to receive letters from concerned constituents in the parish of Woore in the North East of my constituency. I attended a Public Meeting with the Parish Council and local residents on the 11th August 2017 at the Victory Hall in Woore. Two representatives from HS2 attended and did their best to answer questions about the impact of construction traffic on the village. There was real anger at the meeting that the residents’ concerns were not being addressed by HS2.

At the meeting, HS2 confirmed that between 2020 and 2021 there will be up to 500 truck movements per day on the A525 and A51, on top of the daily traffic. These roads are already inadequate for the volume of traffic and local people feel very strongly that there is little room to take mitigating action because there are currently no footpaths in places and there are private residential developments along both sides of the road making it difficult to build passing places or widen the road. Despite numerous requests, HS2 have so far not been clear as to how they would tackle this problem.

Madeley Chord

One of the proposed solutions is to reinstate the Madeley Chord as a means of reducing construction traffic. We have so far not had a clear answer as to whether this is either a viable option or if it would reduce traffic.
**Madeley and Whitmore Tunnels**

There has also been a suggestion that the Madeley and Whitmore tunnels could be extended. At the meeting, Richard Johnston of HS2 confirmed that if the Whitmore Tunnel were extended, Woore would not be impacted. I had planned a meeting with Bill Cash, MP for Stone and the Parish Council to visit the site to discuss these proposals. Sadly, due to my accident I had to cancel that meeting.

Despite the statement from Mr Johnston, I had received no clear answers from HS2 on the impact of these options until I met Lizzie Smith at an event in my constituency. She said that she would have someone contact me. On 25th April I received an email from Simon Knight, Head of Petition Management & Technical Teams at the Hybrid Bill Delivery Directorate, who explained that “Only once that work has been completed [a further Environmental Statement] would we be able to say what the likely impacts on Woore as a result of the tunnel would be. At this early stage then we cannot say exactly what the impact of construction traffic on Woore would be if the longer tunnel were to be adopted”.

I would be most grateful if your Committee could press HS2 to make it clear the exact nature of the mitigation they propose for Woore and the expected impact on traffic movement if the tunnels were extended. It is vital for my constituents to know that HS2 is seriously considering what steps to take mitigate the impact on what is already very busy road.

Thank you once again for taking the time to listen to my concerns.

Yours ever,

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The Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP