Mr and Mrs J Loescher

Mr James Duddridge MP
Chair of the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Bill Select Committee
Private Bill Office, House of Commons

Dear Mr Duddridge,

**Our Hearing on Wednesday 13 June 2018 - Petitioner Number 1 – Further Evidence**

We are writing following our hearing on 13 June. Firstly, we would like to thank the committee for their time and attention on Wednesday morning. We do appreciate the arduous nature of your task.

There are a couple of points we wish to make in response to the Counsel for the promotors suggestion that benefits of a dedicated Ombudsman for HS2 would be “illusory”.

We do not believe that a specialist HS2 Ltd Ombudsman would be illusory for three very clear reasons. The first two of these were put to the Committee at the meeting but not the third and most important one.

1) Complaints are handled quicker. (It takes 2 years to get the PHSO) It should be possible to get to a specialist Ombudsman in 40 days!
2) It will be dealt with by a “specialist”. (The PHSO are not specialist and have little experience in infrastructure projects).
3) Finally (and not mentioned at the hearing) a specialist HS2 Ombudsman would be able to offer a far wider range of remedies than the PHSO. The PHSO are only allowed to offer compensation in retrospect for maladministration. They cannot order HS2 Ltd “to put things right” or ask HS2 Ltd to “engage” or deal with other practical issues at the appropriate time.

In fact, it has occurred to us that an “infrastructure” Ombudsman may be beneficial for all national infrastructure projects (Heathrow, HS3, Northern Link). This is particularly so where Government (perhaps for good reasons) chooses to carry infrastructure projects through commercial entities. This is perhaps a matter for the PACAC.

We are very clear why the Promotor will not wish to see a dedicated Ombudsman. This would involve far greater scrutiny and thereby potentially increase costs as the imbalance of power and conflicts of interest are redressed.

The Counsel for the Promotor did not appear to recognise the quote regarding it not being worth taking matters to the Lands Tribunal for differences of less than £250,000. The attached article from Estates Gazette may assist.

We are happy for this response to be made public and if necessary passed to the Promotor.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan and Elaine Loescher
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Mr C Pincher MP

15 June 2018