Dear Mr. Duddridge,

I write to you today, in my role as Chairman of Whitmore Parish Council, to raise a most serious concern about the total inaccuracy of information provided to the Select Committee by HS2, in response to one particular issue that I raised in my petition Number GWM 916536 which I presented on 24th April 2018.

The specific matter in question: the Noise and Visual Impact that the new railway will have upon the Madeley Park Wood development of 150+ dwellings, situated in Whitmore Parish, in close proximity to the line of route (ref slide A28(15) in my petition).

The response from HS2: In essence, HS2 explained that the matter had been addressed and that in fact the residents of Madeley Park Wood would not be able to see the trains, and noise levels would be minimal. In explanation, HS2 presented a detailed description of the topography of the section of the line between the Whitmore Tunnel and the Lea viaduct which is at issue for Madeley Park wood, and the features of mitigation that had been adopted. The concerns that I had raised were duly put aside as having been taken care of and avoided.

The misinformation: in fact, the mitigation features included in this presentation simply do not exist, and subsequent meetings with HS2 personnel locally have confirmed that they have never been envisaged.....(!)
The upset: we (I myself, and the residents affected) were ecstatic to have been told that HS2 had taken our concerns on board and had taken steps to ensure that our fears of disruption had been avoided. How much greater therefore, is our dismay to have since learned that this reassuring information is in fact totally unfounded. This is now a "major upset" issue for us. Local representatives from HS2 have confirmed the design of the rail line, between the Whitmore Tunnel and the Lea viaduct. It is clear that the trains will be both entirely visible from, and entirely audible to, the properties in Madeley Park Wood. They were unable, on the 21st January, 2019 to offer any explanation of how this misinformation came about other than that "a mistake must have been made..... (sic)".

What we are asking the Select Committee to do: we respectfully request that the Select Committee ask HS2 to explain how they managed to officially present a detailed description of two significant structural mitigation features which have in fact never been envisaged, and require them to make the adjustments to the topography of this section of the line that are necessary in order to provide the level of visual and noise mitigation that their presentation promised.

I include below, for your reference, the relevant passages both from my petition and from the response presented by HS2.

Yours sincerely, in the hope that you will be able to take steps to fully address this most unhappy situation.

Councillor Ian Webb
Chairman, Whitmore Parish Council

cc. Sir Bridget Cash M.P.
EXTRACTS FROM THE TRANSCRIPT OF MY PRESENTATION -

Paragraphs 64 through 80 (my highlighting):

64. There is also another issue which I need to talk about on that and that calls for the imported - (***) what we have got here is the current West Coast Main Line running down there. This is in the Lea Valley, the northern section of our parish. Here, we've got Madeley Park Wood and here we've got the line of HS2. Behind that, we're going to have Whitmore Heath that it goes under in a tunnel but there, we're going to have Whitmore Wood with the retaining wall behind to the right of this HS2 line.

(***) the imported slide was map LV-04-223 from map book July 2017 re CA4, identifying visually the location of Madeley Park Wood wrt the WCML and Whitmore Wood, illustrating my comments which followed

65. The problem we've got there is the impact that this is going to have on the residents of Madeley Park Wood .........It's accessed along Manor Road which we spoke about earlier.

66. When you come off Manor Road into Madeley Park Wood, the road quickly drops away, quite steeply in places, down into the valley here and the houses which are in this part of the dropping part of Madeley Park Wood are all on the downward slope, overlooking, geographically, the West Coast Main Line. Some of them can actually see it quite clearly: some of the sites are partially blocked by other houses.

71. "MRS MURRAY: Would that, in your opinion, the tree planting screen the retaining wall from the view of those houses?".

72. MR WEBB .................It would screen it visually but I understand from the people that deal with this sort of thing, the trees actually don't do much for noise abatement as such. They hide it from view but the noise comes through.

74. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Just while we're on that point, can I just make one other point of fact, not only with that embankment that you have been pointed to and where the cursor is now, not only will it be planted with trees, but also, its affect will be to place the railway in a four metre deep cutting.

( COMMENT, inserted for clarity: no such cutting is planned, only a 4m noise protection "fence").

77. MR WEBB:.......I've talked about the Lea Valley being a quiet, tranquil place. I had occasion in the last few weeks to be invited to come along and just listen to trains going past here, and this the one exception because they're so close to the trains with nothing between them, that actually, the trains are quite noisy at that point.

79. The concern is that once all this is built, we're going to have the noise coming from this line, added to what's already there. There's going to be reflected noise from the wall and while I take the point, it certainly won't make it entirely quiet. So, there is going to be a positive increase in the amount of noise there. And we're talking about the HS2 line ultimately targeting to be run by something like 18 trains in each direction an hour. That's sometime, admittedly in the future, but the picture for the people living here is going to be one of increased noise which is then going to steadily increase over the years because on
top of that, I also understand that the intention ultimately, is that freight traffic will be moved primarily to the West Coast Main Line. Freight traffic tends to run by easy evidence, by going to listening to one, on slower trains and makes a good deal more noise than the ordinary passenger trains.

80. So there is a combination, ........ if you add those three or four factors together, this is going to become quite a noisy little area."

**EXTRACTS (my highlighting) FROM THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY HS2 AND MR PETER MILLER, HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING, DESCRIBING TWO LANDSCAPE FEATURES WHICH WOULD VIRTUALLY ELIMINATE ANY NOISE/ VISUAL IMPACT (ITEM 1 - THE SLOT) OR AT LEAST SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE IT (ITEM 2 - the "FALSE CUTTING + TREES") BUT WILL NOT IN FACT EXIST:

**ITEM 1: THE "SLOT":**

Paragraph 21: ".......and then the railway passes in a north-westwards direction and it goes into a DEEP RETAINED CUTTING ....... "

Paragraph 22: "....So the railway in that location is about 13metres, it does go up to 20 metres in certain locations, but about **13 METRES DEEP IN A SLOT IN THE GROUND.** Yes. So the trees in the foreground there, those will largely be retained. And if you think where that red line*** is going, that red line is actually, in fact, deep into the ground: minimum 13 metres. So **YOU WON'T SEE THE RAILWAY. YOU WON'T SEE THE OVERHEAD ELECTRIFICATION IN THAT DEEP CUTTING THERE.**"

(*** the red line referred to here is that shown in slide A28(16) in my presentation, indicating the line of route through Whitmore Wood).  

Paragraph 22: "... we were told that there is concern not only about visual impact but also about **the noise impact on Madeley Park Wood..... "

Paragraph 23: "Mr Miller:...........the noise is not propagating across the landscape in the way that others have considered it would do. **And the reason for that is because the railway's DEEP INTO THE GROUND. IT'S NOT IN A TUNNEL BUT IT'S IN THE SLOT IN THE GROUND BEHIND THAT WOODLAND. SO IT'S VERY WELL MITIGATED......"
ITEM 2: The "FALSE CUTTING + TREES"

After discussing the woodland Mr Miller says:
Paragraph 37: "... we start coming out of that deep cutting" and "we start coming on to an embankment in this area here". "And that's quite complicated because what's happening with the railway as we're coming off those steep side slopes we're going down towards that valley floor that you've seen and in this sort of area, this is roughly where we were walking across those muddy fields, do you remember that?"
Paragraph 39: "...... So, what's happening here is the railway is partly on surface in this location, so it's meeting the ground contour, and then it's above the ground level. So it has to be built up onto an embankment. And then, in addition to that embankment, there will be further embankments built up on either side to create a false cutting, ...... of up to four metres in depth". "And so that will provide a good noise attenuation through this location and it also provides a framework for further planting alongside the railway.

==> COMMENT: we learn from HS2 representatives locally that in fact there will be no "further embankments built up on either side to create a false cutting" (in fact, a noise protection fence of up-to 4m height is planned= eyesore) and no extra planting. Clearly, earth embankments "camouflaged/ softened" with tree planting would be far less environmentally destructive.

LOCAL MEETINGS WITH HS2 REPRESENTATIVES

Since Mr. Miller's evidence, local residents tried to get clarification of the foregoing from HS2 on many occasions without success and sought clarification again at the public information event in Whitmore Village Hall on Saturday 27th October, 2018 where they spoke to engineers and petitioning staff. I learn that promised follow up contact never materialised.

A Parish led meeting was held with HS2 on the 27 November 2018 at which HS2 were still unable to give clarification to issues raised generally and specifically to the statement made to the Select Committee by Mr. Peter Miller regarding his evidence to the Select Committee on the 24th April, 2018.

Following that meeting, on 28th November 2018 I raised an official request for information from HS2 local representatives, regarding the Lea Valley and other matters and the following reply was received on the 10th January, 2019.
"4. An explanation of the railway features, including noise attenuation, between the Whitmore Heath tunnel and the River Lea Viaduct:

At our meeting, Shelia Ramage brought to our attention an apparent difference between what has been reported in the ES and what was said in Select Committee. This inaccuracy was identified from the transcript of the presentation to the Select Committee by the Promoter's witness Mr Peter Miller, Head of Environment and Planning at HS2 Ltd on 24 April 2018. The inaccuracy relates to the description of the design of the Lea South Embankment.

==> Comment: for clarity this paragraph in fact relates to the situation described in ITEM 2: The "FALSE CUTTING+ TREES" above.

In paragraph 21 of the transcript, Mr Miller indicated that as the railway passes in a north westerly direction from the porous tunnel portal at Whitton North, it passes through Whitmore Wood in the Whitmore North cutting. The railway then enters the valley of the River Lea on the Lea South Embankment. As the railway passes to the north west of the portal, Mr Miller describes it as being constructed in a deep retained cutting, the cutting being a 'false cutting' in order to minimise land take. In fact the design of the railway at this location is as stated in section 2.2.19 of the Community Area Report of the ES (2017)- Community Area 4 (Whitmore Heath to Madeley) which describes the provision of a retaining wall and a related noise barrier constructed along the southern boundary of the Whitmore North cutting and that at this location the railway will not be constructed in a deep retained cutting."

==> Comment: for clarity, this paragraph in fact relates to the situation described in ITEM 1: THE DEEP SLOT. above. The use of the term "false cutting" is a misquote. It was precisely the description of the retaining wall and noise barrier in the ES that caused such great concern, leading to our representation. This clearly demonstrates the inaccuracy of the HS2 presentation which described a non-existent "Deep Slot" instead ...
A further Parish meeting with HS2 was held on the 21st January 2019 where we received confirmation that neither of the visual and noise attenuation measures detailed above, that you were told about at the Select Committee hearing on the 24th April 2018, are planned to be provided.

END