MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE
taken before the

HIGH SPEED RAIL BILL COMMITTEE

on the

HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS – CREWE) BILL

Wednesday 8 May 2019 (Morning)

In Committee Room 5

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Timothy Mould QC, Lead Counsel, Department for Transport

WITNESSES:

Mel Jones and Bob Hunt
Alan Walker
Dr Anne Andrews
Jeremy Lefroy MP

IN PUBLIC SESSION
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1. THE CHAIR: There have been a number of withdrawals so today the Committee will only be meeting this morning. We will hear from Ingestre Park Golf Club, the parish council and then Jeremy Lefroy, Member of Parliament, I notice is already here. So, without further ado, we will call Mr Jones. Welcome back.

Ingestre Park Golf Club

Submissions by Mr Jones

2. MR JONES: Good morning. The slide we’re showing you there is a reminder of the quite beautiful parkland course of Ingestre Park set in rural Staffordshire. Before I proceed, Mr Chairman, can you confirm that in accordance with the guidelines notes that we can cross-examine HS2 witnesses and be given the opportunity to present a closing statement?

3. THE CHAIR: Let’s see how it goes. No, I’m not confirming. I’m saying see how it goes. So, the same process: you speak; you call the witnesses; HS2 speak; if necessary call their witnesses; the Committee chip in at any time. I think providing you with any assurance beyond that would be unwise.

4. MR JONES: Thank you.

5. THE CHAIR: So, let’s stick to the process.

6. MR JONES: Okay, thank you. We are representing a community of circa 690 members and 32 full and part-time staff of Ingestre Park Golf Club. Now, based on previous hearings, can we move to slide 473(2) please? So, what are we asking for? We want to be treated fairly: dismissal of AP2 in relation to Ingestre Park Golf Club; confirmation of compensation on the same basis of equivalent reinstatement as agreed with Whittington Heath Golf Club, achievable only by way of complete relocation. We want direction to HS2 to provide a means of funding, a timetable and a construction programme that ensure continuity of 18 holes of golf and the community asset provision.

7. Can we move on to 473(3) please? Your decision following our appearance last year is shown in red. We have also added the definition of community, shown in green,
because we believe HS2’s interpretation of your directive holds greater weight to the survival of the community asset, by way of the clubhouse only, rather than the golf club itself. The club’s viability is reliant on income from members, golf fees, visitors’ green fees, bar takings, social events, as well as other events such as wakes, and various celebrations including wedding breakfasts. We are, sadly, losing bookings for 2021 on wedding breakfasts because we cannot give the couple concerned guarantees that the facilities will be the same or even at all.

8. AP2 fails to find a solution. Updating and validating of costs has been undertaken and complete relocation remains the solution, and we will show Whittington Heath Golf Club comparisons.

9. If we could move to 473(4), please: why AP2 does not work. Bearing in mind that this was prepared based on AP2, this submission, the works to reconfigure the golf course will take one year and three months during which it is assumed that the outdoor space, including the golf course, will be shut but the clubhouse will remain open. I mean, how they expected the club house to stay open with no members, just the odd community facility being used, how we were to pay 32 staff and keep a franchise caterer and a professional golf team, I have no idea. So, they were not offering any continuity of 18 holes or community asset. They’re not offering an equivalent course. It’s severed by a roadway. It’s bordered by HS2. It’s got a disjointed golf layout. It’s proposed on poor land drainage and irrigation proposals. The land is featureless. The outlook from our clubhouse currently is regarded as one of the best in Staffordshire for a closing hole. It is quite beautiful and stunning. Across that will go an embankment 40 metres high. The clubhouse and the pro shop would need alterations and relocation in order to come anywhere close to equivalence. We also had a viability study done and this came out with a negative result which stated that the club would suffer huge losses and close very quickly.

10. Could we go on to 473(5), the club’s preferred relocated site? It’s in Tixall which is within the Tixall and Ingestre parish. I’ll show this in the next slide. We’ve had a series of meaningful discussions with owners willing to sell. It’s a great site, close to our existing home, scope for a wonderful course, great sandstone drainage and undulating landscape. Screening confirms, which we’ve had done, that no environmental impact assessment is necessary.
11. So, if we move on to the next slide, if we look at the area in red, that is our existing course. If we look at the area in yellow, that is the land involved in AP2 and part of our existing course. The site in bright green at the top there, obviously we lose perspective on this but that is the location of our proposed new site, okay?

12. So, if we move on to 473(7). This is the design that was forwarded by HS2 to our experts, or the joint experts, Independent Design Golf, and it is this layout that you’re looking at here that was used for the costings that you will see later in the presentation. That’s using part of the existing land and moving on to the other side of the road for the remainder of the holes and also, if you look at holes 1 and 12, they are at the back of the existing clubhouse. So, hole one, our pro shop would have no idea who was going on the course, no idea at all, and yet HS2 say that our golf pro shop does not need moving.

13. THE CHAIR: Sandy?

14. MR MARTIN: Sorry, Mr Jones, as a non-golfer, I don’t really understand the argument. Can you go over it again?

15. MR JONES: Yes, certainly. At the moment, on our existing course, when anyone comes, either members, visitors or whatever, they walk past the pro shop, the professional’s shop, he can then view any people going on to our golf course. With this proposal, it’s hidden behind our existing clubhouse so the professional would have no control on who was going on to the golf course, where his shop is at present.

16. MR MARTIN: Well can you point out which is hole number one at the moment? So, this is the proposed hole number one?

17. MR JONES: Hole number 14 on the plan – 13 sorry.

18. MR MARTIN: Thirteen, right, so you start just near the club house and tee off?


20. MR MARTIN: Right, okay.

21. MR JONES: Now, if we move on to 473(8), this is the design of the new site but this design has been based on the yardages used by HS2 in their proposal. That’s in order to maintain equivalence, okay? A473(9), please. The statement highlighted in red
is to emphasise the importance of these words. You may recall last July, Mr Whitfield asked HS2 if Whittington Heath Golf Club is a case of equivalent reinstatement. Although their QC replied, ‘We didn’t accept the principle but we are paying their costs to move sideways’, it is clearly admitted in their response. Let’s look at the comparisons. Whittington Heath Golf Club has five new holes. In order for this scheme to work, we would need 12 to 13 new holes. They are having five holes reworked. We’re having two holes reworked. They have eight holes that are unaltered. We have four holes that are unaltered. They’re being offered and guaranteed continuous golf. At the time of this preparation, we were being offered 15 months’ closure.

22. MR MARTIN: Mr Jones, can I ask you there, was it explained to you why the proposal was for a 15-month closure?

23. MR JONES: No.

24. THE CHAIR: Right, carry on.

25. MR JONES: Thank you. Whittington Heath Golf Club are being provided with a new clubhouse and a pro shop. The clubhouse is something to believe. We’ve seen the drawings. It’s a fantastic building and good luck to them. They’ve got a consistent style of course and it’s being built to a good specification. We have a utility pipeline diversion problem and we’re looking at extensive disruption. Phase 2A has the same framework as Phase One. As we’ve already said, until last Friday we believed we were facing a 15-month closure period. HS2 are now saying that a minimum of nine holes of golf will be in operation. We believe actually, Mr Chairman, that that may have changed since last night. They may be telling something different today. Nine holes would be kept in play until the reconfigured course is brought into play. Their plan seems to change almost by the hour, seemingly to appease you. We are also aware that the costs of Whittington Heath Golf Club have been given to you.

26. Would it be possible to look at HS2’s exhibit slides, P1478(1) and (2) please? This is a report that was put into a golf magazine. I’d like to extract some of it from there. I’d just like to draw your attention to a few quotes from this article which are examples of the treatment being experienced by Whittington Heath Golf Club. ‘Construction work is in full progress to create a memorable and remarkable course. What is key is maintaining consistent style throughout, replacing like for like. Eighteen
holes will be kept in play throughout their project. They will be provided with a new clubhouse, greenkeeper’s facility, car park and even a halfway house’. Mr Chairman, their new clubhouse and car park alone is better than equivalence.

27. THE CHAIR: Can I encourage you to move on? We’re not considering Whittington Heath. You’ve drawn the comparison between the two.


29. THE CHAIR: We understand that. That’s documented very clearly in your summary slide. I don’t think the nuance of detail is the point of difference that you’re asserting.

30. MR JONES: Okay, that’s fine.

31. THE CHAIR: And we’ve got all the detail in our documentation. So, can we move on?

32. MR JONES: Okay.

33. THE CHAIR: Thank you.

34. MR JONES: 473(10), please.

35. MR WIGGIN: I don’t think we should just go straight to the estimates.

36. MR JONES: No, quite honestly, no. I think the timeline is equally important. If it’s not achievable then there’s no point in talking about costs and we need to show the failings on that timeline as well.

37. THE CHAIR: Okay.

38. MR JONES: At this point, Mr Chairman, can I introduce our witness, Mr Bob Hunt?

**Evidence by Mr Hunt**

39. MR HUNT: Good morning ladies and gentlemen, Mr Chairman. After the last hearing, and in view of the Committee’s comments about cost, we agreed a
methodology with HS2’s representatives. We would take their existing indicative routing plan and we would prepare a routing plan for the club’s preferred site. So, we’d have two routing plans showing the route of the golf course on the site.

40. Those are the only two pieces of documentation that are certain. In other words, this is how it works on the AP2 site, this is how it works on the Tixall site. From those, we created a series of very detailed designs to enable us to understand the exact quantities of drainage, of cut and fill, of earth moving requirements for the whole site, so they were done in phenomenal detail at this stage. You wouldn’t normally do it at this stage in the process but, in order to be able to compare like for like, we designed a course on the Tixall site, the club’s preferred site, otherwise referred to as option one, which was as equivalent as we could be: same area of sand on the bunkers; same area for greens and so forth. We tried to do this process in conjunction with HS2’s golf expert on the basis that there was information that we had asked for which was not forthcoming and we were given to understand that, as part of the process, much of the ecology and environmental study work which would normally have been undertaken, which we understood had been undertaken, actually hadn’t been undertaken. So, we knew that there was no information on soils or topography, things which were, in terms of trying to generate fixed costs, were absolutely required in order to fix the prices.

41. So, what we agreed was that we would make our best assumptions, in discussion with HS2; where the assumptions were, we’d just use those as best we possibly could. What we would do was produce a budget based upon those two schemes, based upon the detailed design which was shown to HS2 during the process and which, when we had got to the bottom line, included every item that we could see as being attributable to the problem. In other words, you wouldn’t need necessarily to divert a pipeline if you weren’t going to build a golf hall across it so it had to be a cost within the budget.

42. So, we prepared a budget of similarities, as far as we possibly could, comparing like for like and we arrived at a bottom-line figure for the golf course, for the infrastructure, for the buildings and ended up with two bottom line numbers. Now, that process included a series of assumptions but the assumptions were always kept the same. So the numbers may not be 100% accurate but they are as near as it’s physically possible to do. In order that we could not be accused of trying to massage the numbers one way or the other, we sent those un-notified plans to one of the best golf course
contractors in the UK and we asked them to verify the costs. We sent them to irrigation engineers to verify the cost from the two biggest irrigation suppliers. So, the numbers that you see before you in the bills that we have produced – the bill of quantities, the comparisons – have been verified commercially, include all of the items which we found attributable to each of the projects and therefore gave you, as a Committee, a level of certainty which you didn’t have last time because last time they were best estimates. We didn’t know what the scope was and we didn’t know what the detailed design work was.

43. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry, can I just interrupt there a second?

44. MR HUNT: Yes.

45. MR WHITFIELD: You are aware last time that one of the concerns that we had here on the Committee – and I know why you’ve done the work – is that the figures that we were being presented with just seemed wholly unrealistic.

46. MR HUNT: Yes.

47. MR WHITFIELD: All the work that’s been undertaken between then and now has been based on assertions but what you’re saying is that HS2, you have discovered, haven’t done – I use the word carefully – ground work to go beyond those still being assumptions. In your opinion, what is the variable percentage on the figures that were being produced about what you will find? Is there an industry standard for what you work on for when you cut that first lump of turf and discover something you don’t know?

48. MR HUNT: There’s not really.

49. MR WHITFIELD: Right.

50. MR HUNT: I mean, normally, when you’re trying to design a golf course, the first thing you would do would be a topographical survey.

51. MR WHITFIELD: Yes, absolutely.

52. MR HUNT: The second thing would be a soil survey.
53. MR WHITFIELD: Yes.

54. MR HUNT: And, unfortunately, that’s not been done.

55. MR WHITFIELD: Yes, the fundamentals haven’t been done.

56. MR HUNT: What we could do is that I could walk on to the ground at the AP2 site, the adjacent site, and I could look at the dirt and from that I would know that it wouldn’t drain very well, I could talk to the farmer and so forth. But I couldn’t say to you we will need liners for the lakes or that we might find sand a metre down, I just don’t know.

57. MR WHITFIELD: So, what we have are two different plans that are as similarly based in their financial estimate of the cost.

58. MR HUNT: Yes.

59. MR WHITFIELD: But both actually are slightly divorced from the reality because we don’t know?

60. MR HUNT: Yes, exactly right.

61. THE CHAIR: Yes, I mean, that was a really good summary. We don’t need much more detail. Mr Jones?

62. MR JONES: Can we have 473(11)?

63. THE CHAIR: Let’s move on.

64. MR JONES: So, we’ve moved to 473(11). These were prepared by a jointly appointed golf design consultant and commercially verified. Mr Hunt has just explained that these estimates were sent off to Southern Golf to be verified. Now, we approached HS2 following your findings last year and instigated a meeting in August of last year. We arrived at that meeting and asked them what plans they had to move this forward. In truth, they had none. So we set forward a plan and said, ‘Why don’t we have both courses, both options professionally assessed and a proper report done so that we can come back to you with actual accurate figures?’

65. Based on experience, I asked HS2, ‘When will you be able to give us an answer?’
‘Because of annual leave, it’ll be 14 days.’ It was actually six weeks. It took six months to get this agreement in place in order for Mr Hunt to do the work and he was not able to do it as he wanted to do it because they did not obtain permission for access to the site.

66. THE CHAIR: You’ve got another witness you want to call?

67. MR JONES: Not at this stage, no.

68. THE CHAIR: Okay, this is your opportunity to call witnesses. We haven’t at any point used witnesses after a petitioner has given evidence.

69. MR JONES: With respect, Mr Chairman, if you let me finish going through these figures then the witness may be necessary; you may ask to speak to him.

70. THE CHAIR: I thought you made the point on the figures. I thought your underlying point is the figures are similar for both courses?

71. MR JONES: No, those figures there are what have been prepared. What also needs to be borne in mind is that there is a compensation issue.

72. THE CHAIR: Carry on.

73. MR JONES: Based on paperwork that we’ve received from HS2 and advice from our compensation expert, we believe that the true cost to the public purse would in fact be £7.877 million on the new proposed course because the £3 million compensation would have to be deducted from that. Conversely, if you look at the sideways course, the cost to the public purse of the whole project would be somewhere in the region of £13 million when you add on the compensation that would be payable if we stay where we are. So, those are the figures, Mr Chairman. If you want to challenge the compensation statement, we have a witness available. If you don’t then we’ll move on.

74. THE CHAIR: Let’s hear from HS2. Mr Mould?

Response by Mr Mould

75. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Thank you. What I’m going to do, with your leave, and I’ll need some space because I’ve got someone who needs to sit in one of those chairs.
76. THE CHAIR: Yes, if the witnesses could sit back in the public gallery.

77. MR MOULD QC (DfT): We have been advised throughout the process of designing the AP2 proposal by an experienced and expert golf course architect, Mr Alan Walker, and perhaps he can take his seat and then I’ll just introduce our response very briefly and then I’ll ask him to answer some questions for you. And, while we’re doing that, can we just turn please to P1475(2)? Just briefly to take our cue from what you directed us to do last time, P1475(2). Your direction was that we come to a solution that allows the golf club to continue as a community asset and we thought this point echoed this morning by Mr Whitfield that both HS2’s figures and the golf club’s figures were too high. Well, in a nutshell, AP2 is our proposal to create powers within the Act of Parliament, once it receives royal assent, that would allow the continuation of the golf club as a community asset. That’s the bottom line of this. I’m afraid that in terms of the costs of doing it, the costs are higher rather than lower than the figures you had last time and I’m afraid that’s just the inescapable reality of the situation. Our current estimate of the costs of the AP2 scheme are costed, have been prepared, by the gentleman who sits to my right, Mr Alan Walker, who has considerable experience of doing these things. So I’m afraid, like it or not, those are the numbers that come out of the meat mixer, if you like.

78. P1480, and I’m going to turn now if I may to moving from asserting to you to asking Mr Walker to answer questions. Mr Walker, first of all, how many golf courses have you been responsible for designing as a specialist golf club architect?

**Evidence by Mr Walker**

79. MR WALKER: Six.

80. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Six, thank you very much.

81. THE CHAIR: Can we just take the witness as being qualified and just leap straight in?

82. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Thank you. And then, having established that, on the screen in front of us, is that the outline of the AP2 reconfiguration scheme?

83. MR WALKER: Yes.
84. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Now, let’s turn then to P1475(6). We’ll come to a detailed schedule in a moment but there’s a headline number there for the AP2 reinstatement scheme at £4.88 million. Do you recognise that number?

85. MR WALKER: Yes.

86. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Who is responsible for a costing that results in that figure?

87. MR WALKER: Myself.

88. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Thank you. Let us go back to P1475(5). There’s an indicative layout shown there. Who’s responsible for the advice that resulted in that layout?

89. MR WALKER: I am.

90. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Thank you. Do you think that’s a deliverable scheme in principle?

91. MR WALKER: Yes, I do.

92. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Thank you. Can we turn then please to P147(6)?

93. MR WIGGIN: So, Mr Mould, the figure you showed us of £4.8 million, does that mean that the figures we’ve seen from Mr Jones are wrong?

94. MR MOULD QC (DfT): It means that they included things that are not necessary. Let me ask Mr Walker to explain.

95. MR WIGGIN: Okay, that’s quite clear.

96. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Let me just give you a couple of points in flavour. Mr Walker, the golf club’s estimate includes provision for a new clubhouse, doesn’t it?

97. MR WALKER: It does, yes.

98. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Is it necessary to provide a new clubhouse in your opinion?
99. MR WALKER: No.

100. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Does it include provision for a new groundkeeper’s facility and maintenance facility?

101. MR WALKER: It does.

102. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Is, in your opinion, that necessary?

103. MR WALKER: No.

104. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Does it include provision for diverting a utility beneath one of the holes?

105. MR WALKER: Yes.

106. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Is that, in your opinion, necessary?

107. MR WALKER: No.

108. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Does it include a substantial sum of money for extensive refurbishment to the holes that would be retained as part of the reconfigured golf course?

109. MR WALKER: Yes.

110. MR MOULD QC (DfT): In your view, is that figure over-inflated?

111. MR WALKER: Yes.

112. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Thank you very much. That was just a flavour. Turning then to programme, can we put up, please, AP1480? I’m so sorry, that’s the wrong slide. P1475(8). Mr Jones pointed out that for the purposes of environmental assessment, a reasonable worst-case assumption was made that we wouldn’t begin to do any works to the golf course until royal assent because then that would be the last date we could guarantee getting the land and also getting the planning permission. It was also based on an assumption that it would not be possible to accelerate any of the survey work or any of the construction work in order to make faster progress with reconfiguring the golf course.
113. Since that date, HS2 – and the golf course are well aware of this – since that date, HS2 has carried out considerable work with a view to accelerating the programme of delivery of a reconfigured course and the output of that work, as at today’s date, is that we expect to be able to bring the reconfigured golf course into use from September/October 2021. We will need to reduce the number of holes that are useable on the existing course from April 2021. So, what we are able to say is there will be, at most we think, a six-month hiatus when it may be necessary for the golf course to reduce in size to a minimum of nine holes. So, for six months it would need to operate as a nine-hole golf course rather than an 18-hole golf course.

114. THE CHAIR: Sheryl?

115. MRS MURRAY: So are you saying, Mr Mould, that it won’t be necessary for the golf course to be out of operation for the one year and three months that we’ve heard previously?

116. MR MOULD QC (DfT): That’s right, and can I just turn to Mr Walker. Mr Walker, based on your experience, is there any reason in principle why a golf course that ordinarily operates on an 18-hole basis can’t for a period of six months continue to operate on a nine-hole basis provided that adequate warning is given to members that that is likely to be the case?

117. MR WALKER: Yes, it definitely could operate on a smaller amount of holes, subject to members being fully advised and fully know what the outcome will be later.

118. THE CHAIR: Sandy, then Bill.

119. MR MARTIN: Yes, Mr Mould, can you explain why it will be necessary? Presumably the actual engineering works on the line will not be commencing from April 2021 will they, or am I wrong?

120. MR MOULD QC (DfT): There will be works, there are certainly significant works that would be required in order to set up haul roads in order to establish the construction site. None of this is set in stone and the basic message today to the Committee is you’ve asked us to include powers in the Bill effectively to ensure that there is a scheme for maintaining this golf course rather than forcing the golf course
only to accept its compensation. We’ve done that. We believe that with further work, the extent of that hiatus in terms of moving from 18 holes to 18 holes can be reduced considerably.

121. We think there may be further opportunities to reduce it or to limit the number of holes that are out of use. That will come at an extra cost to the project. The number we have at the moment is £655,000 but, again, that number, that’s moving downwards rather than upwards so the overall, if you like, impact or the hiatus is one that is not spoken to you accurately by the environmental statement because that was for a different purpose. That was for assessment rather than for delivery, and which we think can go down.

122. But critically, if this is going to work – and we believe that it can in the light of Mr Walker’s advice – if it’s going to work, we need the club to join with us in that process. We need them to join with us in delivering and, if they do, can we come please back to – forgive me sir if I test your patience – but can we just come back to slide P1478(1), just for one point? This is the Whittington Heath course. Whittington Heath caused a lot of anxiety during the Phase One committee process because it cuts through the middle of the course, the Phase One route. But look at the reaction, down the line, 1478(1). Look at the public position of the captain of the Whittington Heath Golf Course a couple of years down the line when early construction is well underway. Do you see the penultimate paragraph on the page? Richard Harding, captain at Whittington Heath said, ‘Whilst not our choice, the club wanted to seize the opportunities that the HS2 programme brings’. We suggest that AP2 enables this club to take the same course and to seize the opportunities that AP2 provides in order to reinstate those parts of this course that are disturbed by the coming of this railway.

123. THE CHAIR: Before we come to Mr Jones, I think some questions. Bill first and then Martin.

124. MR WIGGIN: Yes. Mr Walker, how many of the six courses you designed had the first hole away from the pro shop?

125. MR WALKER: Generally, the ones I’ve designed, the recent one I’ve just done is 200 yards.
126. MR WIGGIN: So, you could see who was coming on and off the course?

127. MR WALKER: Yes, I think the point that was made was that, at the moment, it’s 30 metres from the first tee. With the reconfiguration, the indicative reconfiguration, it’s 90 metres from the first tee, so we’re talking 60 metres. I think also there that the professional shop is so situated that it abuts the practice facility at Ingestre, therefore is a key focus point for the professional to coach close to the practice ground. But, in my opinion, I think it makes very little disruption to the operation of the golf course with the pro shop being 60, 90 metres away.

128. MR WIGGIN: Mr Mould, on this letter that you’ve got in front of us it says that, in the paragraph that you referred to, ‘this created a dynamic vision for the new course, new clubhouse and ancillary facilities’. This doesn’t really help, does it?

129. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Well it does because you see, in that case, the clubhouse had to go. In this case, the clubhouse can remain. But how far, Mr Walker, do you remember how far the clubhouse is from the railway line in this case?

130. MR WALKER: Approximately, from the balcony, about 175 metres.

131. MR MOULD QC (DfT): So, whilst one costs on a like for like basis, one has to allow for the factual differences between one scheme and another but the overarching point here is that this shows you that a reconfiguration scheme which was required under a previous phase of HS2, whilst initially causing anxiety to the course in question, has now been embraced.

132. THE CHAIR: Sandy?

133. MR MARTIN: Yes, Mr Walker, if we look at P1479. Actually we don’t need to look at P1479, but you can see that Ingestre Park Road actually goes through the middle of the new reconfigured course.

134. MR WALKER: Yes.

135. MR MARTIN: In your experience, have there been quite a few other courses with roads going through them? Do you think this is going to be a problem?

136. MR WALKER: No, I don’t. There are a number of golf course in the UK. My
last count was 100, where the crossing of a road to another tee is in place. Walton Heath Golf Club in Surrey, the clubhouse is on one side of the road and the first tee is on the other side of a main road and they held the Ryder Cup there and the European Open, so I don’t think it’s a problem.

137. MR WHITFIELD: Can I just pursue your point?

138. THE CHAIR: Yes.

139. MR WHITFIELD: I mean, I’ll vest an interest here. In East Lothian we have Gullane who cope.

140. MR WALKER: Yeah, it crosses a road.

141. MR WHITFIELD: And where the roads bisect the golf courses, it tends to be a very, very historic creation rather than the choice of a new design really.

142. MR WALKER: Gullane, two first greens and the second tee, I know, exactly.

143. MR WHITFIELD: Yes, absolutely. But to be fair, if you were designing a new golf course in Gullane, and you had all of the land available to you, it is unlikely that you would situate your golf club building one side and the second and third tee and vice versa. The reason that the road is bisecting this is that the road is there and this is the land that HS2 have looked to for the extension rather than by choice.

144. MR WALKER: And this road isn’t like the road at Gullane where there’s traffic coming round. There’s hardly any traffic that comes – local traffic.

145. MR MOULD QC (DfT): It’s a bridleway.

146. MR WHITFIELD: No, no, I appreciate that. Just to go back, the other golf course, the result of the train line going through was catastrophic to that golf course. I mean it was through the middle, it went through their clubhouse so that the benefits they’ve seen are enormous by the very nature of the extent of the destruction that they served. And in the report that we have, there is rightfully talk about the new clubhouse and the fact that those who play there and the members have the benefit of all of that and that is a result of where the train line went. But, to be fair, I would imagine that those members are more glad of their new golf course, clubhouse and other facilities
rather than less damage to the original course and the original facilities. Do you not accept as HS2 that there is a difference in the situation that the golf course that’s before us today find themselves in because, in essence, if the damage were greater, they would have had more benefit from a new golf course?

147. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Well, I can see that perspective but the bottom line surely is, does one seek to reconfigure the course in a way that we’re told is acceptable and which can be delivered and overcome any issues that are shown on the indicative layout, or does one, as it were, forego that opportunity and essentially, as I understand the golf course’s case, support something that is necessarily less certain, because it depends on planning permission, it depends on getting land which has not yet been got, it’s not within the powers of the Bill, and which comes on our estimate at effectively double the cost?

148. MR WHITFIELD: Okay, so if I go to that, if we look at A4738 – and I promise this is my last enquiry on that, Mr Walker – is that deliverable the IPGC’s preferred site? Not acceptable to HS2, but is that deliverable?

149. MR WALKER: This is the Tixall site. I’ve not seen the site but I believe that that golf course is deliverable.

150. MR WHITFIELD: Okay, thank you.

151. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I’m just reminded that the railway does still go through the middle of the Whittington Heath Golf Course.

152. THE CHAIR: I was going to hear form Mr Jones. I wanted to make some progress.

153. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I just wanted to – because you haven’t seen them, I just want to flash them up so that at least you have them before you. It’s P1476 which is, I promise you – I just put up the detailed schedule of costings which gives rise to the headline of £4.88 million. Mr Walker, just to confirm, is that the costing that you prepared for the AP2 reconfiguration scheme?

154. THE CHAIR: I think he’s already confirmed that right at the beginning. Mr Jones, let’s come to you.
155. MR JONES: Right, Mr Walker, you were questioned and asked if our costings for the reconfigured golf club included a new clubhouse.

156. THE CHAIR: Sorry, just to confirm, Mr Jones, this is an opportunity for you to come back, not to bring witnesses back in again.

157. MR JONES: I’m not asking for a witness. I’m asking Mr Walker, Mr Chairman. Okay, I’ll make a statement then if that makes it easier.

158. THE CHAIR: Yes, it’s an opportunity for you to come back rather than cross-examine the witness.

159. MR JONES: The figures that we presented to you do not include a new clubhouse. They include alterations to the clubhouse in order to stop our members sitting on a balcony looking at a railway line. We must remember that we have a railway line to one side and a road proposed to the other. Those costings of £4.8 million, they are not based on the findings of Southern Golf. Mr Walker and Mr Hunt agreed on a package of items that needed to be included in the costings. These were agreed in April. These costs were done on 26 March. Mr Chairman, they’re a guess. There is no substance to these costs. There is also a number of items that should be in these costs that have been conveniently allocated to another budget. If they don’t come on the golf course, there’s not a cost. So, to come on the golf course, those costs need apportioning to that project. They’re not in there. There is no basis for those figures. There are two parties here working: one is trying to act professionally and one is giving guesses. We have acted professionally and come up with professional costings. Mr Walker has come up with a complete guess. There are no figures to substantiate that.

160. MR WIGGIN: Having said that, Mr Jones, what’s missing for us lay folk?

161. MR JONES: Well, that would be very difficult to answer, Mr Wiggin, in individual items because, believe me, the actual inclusive items, in order to obtain an accurate costing, there’s 50, 60 items on there. Now, we would have to go through that and itemise individual items that have been missed. I mean, for example, he talks about 12 tees on there, in order to achieve the project you need 14 tees for a start. That’s a basic, fundamental error that’s in there. Also, that costing has been done without Southern Golf being checked, without any figures being checked, but also there’s no
routing plan for that costing because, in order to achieve those figures, he’s reduced it by 20 or 30 acres.

162. Now, the proposed scheme that they came with which we originally showed you, if you reduce the amount of acreage then that changes the whole scheme. So, there are no costs now for this scheme. There are no plans for this scheme. There are no routing plans and also, up until when the AP2 was lodged, we were closing for 15 months, then the next step was, ‘We’re going to provide you with a minimum closure’, then it’s, ‘We will give you 18 holes of golf and with a minimum of nine’.

163. THE CHAIR: Sheryll, and then we’re going to bring things to a close.

164. MRS MURRAY: Mr Jones, you’ve made quite a few statements there. Do you have the evidence to back up what you’ve said or is this just an assumption?

165. MR JONES: No, we had an email on Saturday from an HS2 representative, representing HS2, confirming that these costs were produced on 26 March and therefore did not use the figures that were agreed by Mr Walker and Mr Hunt to come to the costs.

166. MRS MURRAY: So, the statements you’re making are assumptions?

167. MR JONES: No.

168. MRS MURRAY: Because you don’t have like for like evidence to counter this?

169. MR JONES: No, we do. Yes, we do. We have evidence that has got validated estimates included in it. This does not have any validated estimates included in it.

170. MR WIGGIN: Okay, can we go back to your estimated budget?

171. MR JONES: Yes.

172. MR WIGGIN: It was on A473(11) I think.

173. MRS MURRAY: Yes, that’s what I’m looking at.

174. MR JONES: Yes.

175. MR WIGGIN: Where you came up with a figure of £10.8 million.
176. MR JONES: Yes.

177. MR WIGGIN: And just, help us out, we’re a committee who want to help you –

178. MR JONES: I know.

179. MR WIGGIN: But we also have the taxpayer in mind.

180. MR JONES: I understand that.

181. MR WIGGIN: So, just help us out as to how there’s a £6 million difference.

182. MR JONES: Well, first of all, there isn’t £6 million difference because we had paperwork through from Mr Walker in a response to Mr Hunt’s calculations, which we’ve got here. On those calculations were a number of items identified in yellow that Mr Walker didn’t think were necessary or had been allocated to another budget. However, Mr Walker’s own figure was £5.98 million. Now, how can you go from £4.8 million to £5.98 million? The answer is that he’d got some sort of knowledge on the £5.98 million; he’d got no knowledge on the £4.88 million. We understand that the public purse is in question here. We also understand that, in fact, the net cost to the public purse would be something like £7.87 million. We understand that and we understand that that is a lot of money. But, if you want this golf club to survive, now they may sit here and say, ‘Members will accept nine holes’. We’ve got 650 members, there is no feasible way that you can ask a group of people to pay the fees that they’re paying to utilise nine holes.

183. THE CHAIR: Sorry, Bill first, then Sheryll.

184. MR WIGGIN: Shall I just ask Mr Mould the answer to the course construction of £5.869 million, why that appears as an HS2 proposal when you’ve told us it’s £4.8 million?

185. MR MOULD QC (DfT): That is the golf course’s estimate of the cost of construction of the HS2/AP2 scheme.

186. MR WIGGIN: Okay, so it’s just a simple difference in opinion as to what the cost would be.
187. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Effectively, what you have, as I understand what’s just been said, there is a range between £4.88 million and £5.8 million depending on whether you take Mr Walker’s estimate of the cost of the indicative scheme or you take Mr Hunt’s estimate of the cost once you’ve stripped out the elements that are unnecessary.

188. THE CHAIR: Sorry, I wanted to bring this shortly to a close. I think there were some additional figures. If you could leave those behind for us so we can consider them.

189. MR JONES: Of course, yes.

190. THE CHAIR: There’s also an ability for the Committee to come back and ask for more information via the clerk if we’re still unhappy but I think there’s a lot of information here for us to digest and review, and discuss and then come back to you, rather than get back into the detail. We are trying to have a summary. Sheryll, did you want to come in next?

191. MRS MURRAY: Yes, just basically it was the statement that the 600 odd members wouldn’t pay the fees and I’d just like to know whether there had been any soundings taken.

192. MR JONES: With all due respect, madam, we weren’t offered this position until Friday.

193. MRS MURRAY: So, you don’t know that they wouldn’t be –

194. MR JONES: We can only make an assumption because we were given this information on Friday.

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

196. THE CHAIR: Thank you for petitioning. We’ll now hear the next petitioner.

197. MR JONES: Okay, we can leave any information.

198. THE CHAIR: If you just leave it with the clerk and we’ll circulate it and be able to consider that. We now move to the second of three petitioners, Ingestre with Tixall
Parish Council, who we previously heard.

199. Right, we now come to the next petitioner, Anne Andrews. Over to you.

**Ingestre with Tixall Parish Council**

**Submissions by Dr Andrews**

200. DR ANDREWS: Good morning, I’m Dr Andrews. I have been a Parish Clerk and Parish Councillor and I’m usually voluntary Parish Clerk for the last 40 years for Ingestre and Tixall. Ingestre and Tixall are two small rural communities with a total of 349 electors and you’ve got a picture there of the things.

201. So far, we haven’t heard anything about what it’s going to do for our local residents and this is what I’m very concerned about. If we could have A472(11). Like the golf club, we are very concerned about the loss of playing facilities for 15 months. I know people that belong to the golf club. They pay a subscription of £1,000 and they’re not going to pay £1,000 not to play golf for 15 months. Now, this has come down but there are other local clubs which all have spaces at the moment so we’re very concerned to do something and we don’t understand why it has to be so long. I noticed that it has come down quite a bit, the actual closure time, and the nine months would be a help, obviously. But our main concern is that obviously we want to retain it as a community asset, it is the only licensed community space in the two parishes of Ingestre and Tixall and it was noted in the previous Select Committee’s response and we’re also particularly concerned about the future of the remnant of the golf course directly in front of the grade 2-star Ingestre Hall.

202. If we could have A472(12). That’s the view. There’s Ingestre Hall, grade two star listed and Ingestre church, grade one, and directly in front of it you can see that avenue going down the middle of the golf course. This was actually planted for the 21st birthday of the 21st Earl of Shrewsbury in the 1930s.

203. Now, you can see that that land there is very important from the view from Ingestre Hall and if the golf club up sticks and moves away, what do you do with that land? You’ve got all those trees in it. You can’t revert really to arable land. You might be able to use it for grazing. We’re slightly worried that at some stage in the future it
might be used for development, so this is a major concern of the local area and would be a major benefit of keeping the golf club on its current site. The other thing that hasn’t been mentioned at all is planning permission.

204. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry, Dr Andrews, just before you leave that with the golf club, how important is the employment to your Parish Council because of the 35 part-time and full-time staff that work at the golf courses?

205. DR ANDREWS: It is important and it also provides part-time work for bar staff, for young people, because in fact we have no local bus service so it’s useful for local people to be able to walk there. Yes, I was going to say about the planning permission. The extension site proposed by HS2 over the road, it’s not directly overlooked by any houses and I don’t think there would be very much local opposition. The local people are largely in favour of it. One of the other points that I’ve made in our petition, which I won’t bother to go into now to save you time, is that we would like to have a footway along the side of Ingestre Road, along this new part of the golf club and this would only be possible if the golf club takes over that land. This is because people with prams and things, walking along the road, there’s no verge and it’s really quite tricky.

206. THE CHAIR: Have you got that on the map? I wouldn’t encourage you to rush on. It seems a very valid point. I just want to make sure we understand about it.

207. DR ANDREWS: Yes, A472(5). So, you can see there where the golf course is and we would like this new footway, basically it’s joining up, there’s quite a few people live at Little Ingestre, the Dower House and behind that was the sawmills and then there’s people living in the village and Home Farm Court and in fact down by the church, that area. Now, in fact, at the moment, HS2 have said that they will only fund a footway from the Little Ingestre Road as far as the golf course because that’s the only part of the road that they are using HGVs on. But we would strongly ask that at least – well, that they extend it up to Home Farm Court if possible and also, if that’s not possible, at least that they set aside a sliver of land along the road. I don’t know if you want to see, there’s a picture that shows basically how tight the edge of the road is at that stage.

208. THE CHAIR: Yes, please.
209. DR ANDREWS: Sorry, I’ve come out of order to try and help you.

210. MR WHITFIELD: I wonder if we look at P146 (9).

211. DR ANDREWS: Yes, there we are, that’s the one, thank you. Yes, you can see there that if you’ve got a pram or if you’re in a wheelchair and you’ve got two vehicles coming the other way, it’s very tricky and we thought that this would be some compensation to the residents of Ingestre for the disruption, because they have got a number of utility compounds in the area. There’s actually four in that area, so there is going to be disruption.

212. So if we can now back to the golf club proposals, as I say, I don’t think there’d be a problem with planning application for HS2’s proposals. In contrast, there is very strong opposition from our residents in Tixall to the proposals for the golf club moving. If we could have P1479, which actually shows the two areas. Thank you. Right. The lower – so the top red line is the current golf course. The bottom red line is the proposed. Interestingly, I’m not sure if the golf club have corrected it, one of the – the actual landowner of the land that they’re proposing to buy is actually a member of the Parish Council and they have said that, in fact, the map that they showed was actually incorrect and that they didn’t own all the land that was shown. I think it’s only a small sliver but it does show that the golf club has been a bit sort of sloppy, really, in that regard.

213. As I say, there’s strong opposition from the people living in Holdiford Road, quite naturally, overlooking the golf course. The proposed golf course is also immediately adjacent to the Cannock Chase area of outstanding natural beauty; the boundary of which runs down that road. And, similarly, the conservation area at Tixall is also adjacent to the course. And the other major concern is that the highway access if they either go on to Holdiford Road, which is the sort of north/south road, or if they go on to Tixall Road, which is at the top, the east/west road, the one has blind bends on it and the Holdiford Road is one of these roads with humps so that you can’t actually see traffic coming. And we’re very concerned that the increased traffic of golf club stuff going in and out would be a major problem and we sort of reckon that there could well be – a planning application could well go to appeal and may or may not succeed on that basis.

214. MARTIN WHITFIELD: Just before we leave that map, can you just confirm that
the top there on the Ingestre Park Road, the pathway that you’re talking about is effectively that blue line from the red line across to Ingestre Road? So it’s actually directly within the AP2 land that HS2 are seeking.

215. DR ANDREWS: Yes. We would like it to go all the way up.

216. MARTIN WHITFIELD: The whole length of that.

217. DR ANDREWS: The whole of that length.

218. MARTIN WHITFIELD: I’m grateful.

219. DR ANDREWS: And, as I say, if it can’t go the whole way we’d at least like that the land to be set aside but obviously that can only happen if that land is taken for HS2. So that would be a benefit from our point of view.

220. THE CHAIR: That seems quite comprehensive, Dr Andrews. I’ll allow you to come back if you want if there are any additional points. Are you happy for us to hear from HS2 now? Or would you like to –?

221. DR ANDREWS: Yes, on that one – there’s only just a minor other thing. Okay.

222. THE CHAIR: Well we’ll cover off the other minor thing now, sorry. I’m trying to be helpful.

223. DR ANDREWS: No, it was just the traffic on Hanyards Lane that we want – we’ve had an assurance from HS2 that they will use a haul route as soon as they can. It’s a single line and we just want to make sure – sorry, they’ve had an assurance that they will use the haul route but we want to make sure that this is done as soon as possible to minimise the time. The difficulty is with a single-track road there’s farm traffic and stuff and you have to back up quite a long way and they’re talking about sort of 190 vehicle movements up and down, which is a lot of backing to and fro.

224. THE CHAIR: Quite. Well let’s hear from HS2. Mr Mould, are you –

Response by Mr Mould

225. MR MOULD QC (DfT): On the last point that’s understood and agreed. The provision and use of a haul road, as with all haul roads but the provision and use of a
haul road that the petitioner has mentioned that will be brought into use as soon as we reasonably can so as to ensure we get as much of the traffic off the public highway and on to the part of the site roads. So that’s that point.

226. On the point about putting in a footway on the road in front of you, I can just show you where we’ve got to on that. It’s P1492(5). So far HS2 have given an assurance to provide a footway to the south side of the junction here and I think the petitioner is saying, ‘Well, if you go ahead with the reconfiguration scheme can you extend that westwards?’ The answer is yes. That certainly would be something that could be incorporated into the works for the reconfigured golf course.

227. THE CHAIR: And it shall be named Andrews Way.

228. MR MOULD QC (DfT): But obviously you get the implication of what I say.

229. THE CHAIR: Very good use.

230. MR MOULD QC (DfT): The other point is this, which really relates to the concerns about the commercial impact of the hiatus that I mentioned a few minutes ago when we had the golf club in. The Committee I’m sure have this point but let me just make it clear. We can expect that there will be some degree of commercial impact on the golf course of having to reduce its offer to its members, both existing and potential new members, for a period of time from nine holes, from 18 to nine or to 12 or whatever it may be. The losses that result from that will, of course, be recoverable through land compensation. And that would extend, for example, to this.

231. Supposing that, in order to encourage people to stay with the club or to encourage new members to join the reconfigured course, the golf club feel that it’s reasonable to offer favourable rates, for example, for the first year of new trading or something like that, that kind of arrangement would clearly be referable; clearly resulting from the disruption caused by having to shift from their existing course to a new course, the disruption during the hiatus and so on. Again, recoverable as land compensation because it’s a loss to their profits, a loss to their trading income that results from the impact of HS2.

232. So, whilst AP2 would provide the reconfigured course at the Secretary of State’s
cost, there would still be an element of compensation for disturbance that they would be able to claim to cover those points. They’re not deprived of those claims. Their loss is referable to the project and, therefore, the project must make them good. The only legal qualification to that is that any claim has to be reasonable but you can see what I’ve just said. It’s difficult to imagine that reasonable costs incurred in that way could be anything other than stated to be reasonable.

233. THE CHAIR: I suspect we’re speaking back to the previous petitioner.

234. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Well, I’m answering the point made by the –

235. MARTIN WHITFIELD: Well can I just pursue that on what this current petitioner has said and, in particular, the period of closure that’s being looked at now is obviously the most popular time for the golf course over the summer period?

236. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

237. MARTIN WHITFIELD: Which is also going to be the time when the community require the use of the community asset: the building. Now the building will still be open and available –

238. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Of course.

239. MARTIN WHITFIELD: But there is potential for, in those 35 jobs and part-time jobs, that certainly the number of green keepers and things that will be required will drop. Those individuals who form part of this community don’t have a claim themselves, do they, for their loss of earnings during the x-months’ closure. The golf club could keep them on and that earnings lost would be a legitimate compensatory claim.

240. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

241. MARTIN WHITFIELD: Am I right in that?

242. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes. That would certainly be – it would be a reasonably foreseeable loss consequential upon the impact of HS2.

243. MARTIN WHITFIELD: So there is some assurance to the parish community who
potentially have a period where they may not be employed that actually they can continue to be employed in some form but the cost of that won’t fall upon the golf club but will form part of the compensatory claim.

244. MR MOULD QC (DfT): It will be transferred straightaway to the Secretary of State as part of the overall cost.

245. MARTIN WHITFIELD: I’m grateful.

246. THE CHAIR: And given we’ve, through this petitioner, covered some additional issues on the last petitioner, it’s been orderly but I’ll ask the Clerk to make sure that the previous petitioner gets a copy of the discussions because I think they went off to consider what had been said whereas actually there’s been some useful information exchanged after.

247. Mr Mould, anything else?

248. MR MOULD QC (DfT): No, I mean it would be quite wrong of me to say anything more about the local community concerns because, as you say, that’s really for the petitioner to put forward.

249. THE CHAIR: Anything in summary, Dr Andrews?

250. DR ANDREWS: No. It’s just that the golf club, and we understand Mr Lefroy’s position that he’s got 680 golf club members and we’ve only got 390 local residents but we do feel that they should be considered and we are there.

251. THE CHAIR: And they’re very well represented by you, Dr Andrews. Thank you very – sorry, I didn’t intend to patronise you. I meant it to sound as a compliment. Thank you. If only we had more petitioners like you. You’ve set a high bar even for your Member of Parliament, who’s our next petitioner, excellent Member of Parliament, you’ve heard it all before, but an even higher bar. Let’s call Jeremy Lefroy. I’ll just give you a minute to get settled. Thank you very much for sitting through the previous petitions. I think that’s very helpful and I’m sure will assist the Committee in your positioning. So over to you, Mr Lefroy.

**Submissions by Mr Jeremy Lefroy MP**
252. JEREMY LEFROY: Thank you very much indeed, Chair and colleagues. You’ve heard a lot of the detail so I’m not going to repeat it. I’ll start with the Ingestre Golf Club, I’ll then move on to Yarlet and then to Hopton briefly, those will take less time, and then one or two other matters, if I may.

253. As far as the golf club is concerned, I think the main point, which you yourselves have made in your previous report, the club has made and I 100% accept, is the need for continuity. Now we’ve heard in HS2’s response to my petition dated in April there was the indication that the club would have to be closed for 15 months, which I believe to be completely unacceptable. Now, clearly, there has been a change. As far as I understand from what HS2 are saying, there would be continuity for nine holes for six months with 18 holes on either side of that. I’d like that to be confirmed. So clearly that is a better position than was the case before.

254. THE CHAIR: And HS2 nodded assent so we’ll take that as confirmed.

255. JEREMY LEFROY: So I think continuity is vital. Clearly continuity with 18 holes will be the best possible solution and I think that, given that there’s been a big move from 15 months with nothing to six months with nine holes, that HS2 and the club should work together to maintain 18 holes for the whole period. Given that there’s been such a major movement, it must be possible with further work on it to reduce that period of only nine holes even further because that is a major step, Chair.

256. THE CHAIR: Well I’ll leave it with you. I’d be hoping that Mr Mould would use terms of reasonable endeavours in relation to doing that, without making any promises. So we look forward to that.

257. JEREMY LEFROY: The second point is about local consent, which Dr Andrews has very able pointed out. I’ve also met the residents who will be affected by the alternative proposal and they’ve made their views quite clear and they were very well represented by Dr Andrews. So that would be the concern because clearly there would have to be planning permission in both cases but planning permission for the new site might be more problematic. The road, I don’t know if you’ve driven along that particular road but it has three very tight bridges over the canal, the river and the West Coast Main Line; all of which you are unable – you only have room for one car to pass at any one time. And they’re very steep hump-backed bridges so you cannot see the
traffic approaching from the other direction. I drive along it most weeks and it is a
difficult road. So the access to the course would have to be, if it was put there, would
have to be very carefully considered in that. But it wouldn’t be insurmountable at all.

258. But I think another thing that the Chair this morning has highlighted is the
differences in costs from HS2 and, indeed, from the club and I know that the club has
spent a great deal of time and effort in getting their best possible estimates and yet we
still seem to have major differences. And I think this has to be pinned down, as you
rightly say, from the point of view of the taxpayer but also to ensure that a real choice
can be made, because if choices are being made based on information which is divergent
then that is not a real choice. Now I know nothing more than I’ve been given in these
costs. That’s clearly something for you to consider.

259. I would also entirely agree with what Mr Whitfield was saying earlier that it is
vital for my constituents and, indeed, anybody who’s working at the club to be
guaranteed continuity of employment. They are very committed people. They have
given, in many cases, a lot of their lives to service to this club and if there is going to be
any kind of hiatus, which I hope there won’t be but if there was hiatus, in my view it is
vital that they be offered continuity of employment through that, compensated for fully
by HS2.

260. I don’t think there is really anything else that I want to add on Ingestre Park Golf
Club because I think it’s been very well covered.

261. MARTIN WHITFIELD: If I could just ask, can you confirm the situation of the
golf club house and the use that the community put that to? If the golf club was moved
that would cause a problem to the community by way of a community asset that they
wouldn’t have. Is that right? Or are there alternatives? So they talked about wedding
breakfasts and other events. We’re trying to get an idea of how important to that
community that building is outwith the golf club.

262. JEREMY LEFROY: Well I think it is an important community asset. The
proposal is not far away. It’s within the same parish, as you’ve heard. It’s not far away.
I think the key would be that it would be a like-for-like replacement enabling them to
provide –
263. MARTIN WHITFIELD: To continue with –

264. JEREMY LEFROY: Yes. So if I give an example, Stafford Rugby Club has just completely moved. The new place which has been built is actually better than the previous one. It’s been built through the landowner who wanted to take over the existing rugby club for housing development. They are actually going to be able to offer improved facilities at their new place. So these things can be dealt with. I don’t think that that would be a major consideration one way or the other.

265. MARTIN WHITFIELD: Thank you.

266. JEREMY LEFROY: But I fully understand the real concern of the golf club, particularly over the costings and also the real necessity to keep things going because if there is a delay of offering 18-hole golf for more than just a very brief period of time, if at all, then people will move and, clearly, that will mean moving right out of the area and not just from one golf course to another in the same parish.

267. THE CHAIR: Okay.

268. JEREMY LEFROY: May I move on to the –

269. THE CHAIR: Absolutely.

270. JEREMY LEFROY: If I may move on to Yarlet. You’ll be hearing from Yarlet School next week but I wanted to – having visited Yarlet over the Easter break, again to see the two alternatives, the one being put forward for access by HS2 and the one by Yarlet. Now you know the background; that it’s one of the oldest independent preparatory schools in the country. It’s been there since 1873. 20% of the children have attention difficulties. They offer their facilities to a local special needs school. All they are asking is that they have safe access and free flow of the A34 traffic in order to keep the school open. And it is vital. Now, the HS2 proposal, the proposed access scheme, in our view, and I would agree, having actually walked it and seen where it is, is unsafe access down a steep bank off the A34. If you know that place the A34 is right up there, the school is down here, so it would be down a steep –

271. THE CHAIR: We visited it twice so we’re very cognisant of the problem.
272. JEREMY LEFROY: The proposal also fails to keep commercial vehicles away from the school park and I don’t need to explain the problems that would cause. Inevitably there would be lane closures on the A34, which is a major road. And particularly at the moment with the M6 being widened, it’s the diversion between junctions 40 and 50. There would be the need to move the southbound carriageway 8 metres to the east, creating a massive new embankment on the campus and involving the destruction of a 250 metre screen of mature trees, need to redirect the asbestos water pipe and gas mains under the A34, re-profiling 750 metres of the A34 to level the two carriageways because at the moment they’re like that and need to rebuild a culvert at the foot of Yarlet Bank.

273. Yarlet have come back with an alternative scheme which they’ve costed at, and you’ll hear directly from them, much less than HS2’s scheme, which involves taking the access road a bit further north off the A34 where the topography is much more level, requiring much less of a link line and also less work on the two carriageways. So, as Yarlet say, this is safer, far less disruptive to both school and passing traffic and far less costly to the taxpayer. So to me, as an amateur in this but having seen the proposal, it is an obvious one for the Committee to consider and I will stop there because, obviously, you’ll be hearing in detail from Yarlet at another hearing.

274. THE CHAIR: And if, having heard everything today, we still have concerns you could always be called by Yarlet School as a witness.

275. JEREMY LEFROY: Absolutely.

276. THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you.

277. JEREMY LEFROY: I also mentioned a number of areas that the village of Hopton were concerned about. I understand that HS2 has, subsequent to that, been engaging with Hopton and providing reassurance and that Hopton has withdrawn their petition. Is that right? Is that correct?

278. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

279. JEREMY LEFROY: So I will not say anything about those matters other than again to stress the enormous strain which this whole process has put on Hopton village
with large numbers of people having to leave having their properties purchased. And, in that context, I’m still not – although there has been improvement and we will always recognise that, I’m still not satisfied with the way in which some of my constituents have been dealt with in terms of the purchase of their property; it seems to vary from one instance to another. And I would just ask that HS2 would listen to particularly my colleague James Cantrill who deals with all this and, indirectly, to me when we have a concern about the way in which a particular constituent has been treated.

280. THE CHAIR: Can I just check? You mentioned a colleague there. I missed the colleague’s name and –

281. JEREMY LEFROY: James Cantrill, who is my Chief of Staff who deals with all the matters of property in the constituency and HS2. We have had comparatively a large number of properties purchased so that obviously is a considerable workload. Some have gone through well, they’ve been handled relatively well; others have not. And we would just want all to be handled well. That’s a point I made when I last appeared before you.

282. Just two final points, outside my constituency but with a bearing on my constituency. I know you’ve heard evidence, I think, yesterday on this but the A34/A51 junction is still of considerable concern and we are worried that it could become dangerous, particularly for cyclists, and quite a lot of cyclists use that because it forms at least in part a little bit of the National Cycleway. So I think the road safety engineers need to have a real look at that.

283. And then further north I believe that the A50/M6 junction 15, which is in Jack Brereton’s constituency, Stoke North, that, which has an indirect impact on both myself and the Member for Stone, that is going to be a huge problem and I don’t think that sufficient attention has been given to the impact on the national road network because that is one of the major junctions in the national road network.

284. THE CHAIR: Sandy, I think, has a question.

285. SANDY MARTIN: Yes, Chair. Can I just go slightly backwards because this is something I hadn’t appreciated? You were talking about the National Cycleway. I mean does the National Cycleway actually go on the A34 at some stage?
286. JEREMY LEFROY: No. There is a path beside it they go on and they cut off to the east. However, you will find – and I was driving down the road yesterday – I passed two cyclists in a very short space, a lot of cyclists use the A34 and if you have a dedicated turnoff lane from the A51 on to the A34 and people are coming round at 30, 40 miles an hour and you’ve got cyclists coming from the Stone end of the A34 across the roundabout they can be sandwiched between vehicles moving at quite some speed.

287. SANDY MARTIN: I mean, we went through that just yesterday.

288. JEREMY LEFROY: Right.

289. SANDY MARTIN: However, I hadn’t fully appreciated that there is a National Cycleway and, presumably, if there was some way of preventing people from having to go on the A34 at all at the junction that might actually make it much safer.

290. JEREMY LEFROY: I think that should definitely be looked at.

291. SANDY MARTIN: Thank you.

292. JEREMY LEFROY: Because the number of cyclists on the A34, certainly from the A34/A51 junction as far as Enson Lane, which is where I think the National Cycleway comes off, is quite considerable. The number has grown. As cycling has become much more popular the number has grown considerable in the last few years.

293. THE CHAIR: Okay. Shall we hear from HS2? Or have you any additional points?

294. JEREMY LEFROY: Those are all my points.

295. THE CHAIR: Okay. Well I’ll give you an opportunity to come back on HS2. Mr Mould?

Response by Mr Mould

296. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Thank you. I won’t say very much more about the golf club but what I will do is to say that HS2 is certainly ready to use its reasonable endeavours to accelerate yet further the period of delivery of the newly configured course under the AP2 scheme and to reduce during any hiatus period the loss of holes,
I’ve said a minimum of nine, to reduce that loss, if you like, yet further. In order to achieve that, both those things, that is to say to diminish the period of hiatus and to reduce the level of loss, we will be considerably assisted by the cooperation of the golf club because if we can move together as early as possible on a joint venture, effectively, then we have the opportunity to get this going.

297. Mr Lefroy mentioned that the alternative proposition at Tixall will require planning permission and you’ve heard something about local views about that. The critical point, of course, about the AP2 scheme is that if AP2 is taken forward, as we suggest it should be, planning permission for that scheme will be achieved when the Bill achieves royal ascent, and the land will be there.

298. So those two critical factors, land to build it and planning permission to do it, will be achieved on the current programme by the end of this calendar year, if the parliamentary process fulfils its expected course.

299. So I think you wanted me to say something about that and I do so.

300. THE CHAIR: Thank you. It’s appreciated.

301. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I won’t say anything more about costs, unless you want me to say something about them.

302. THE CHAIR: No.

303. MR MOULD QC (DfT): No. In terms of Yarlet School, I don’t propose to say anything about that beyond this, because you’re going to hear from that petitioner next week. I understand and accept that, although they welcome the AP2 scheme as far as it goes, Yarlet School have what they believe to be a yet further and, they say, better means of resolving the matter that you asked us to resolve; that is to say the alternative access that Mr Lefroy touched upon.

304. What I do want to say, just in anticipation of that debate, is this. We’ve not heard any suggestion from the highway authorities that the AP2 scheme is unsafe. I can accept the point that there may be an argument about relative cost and the need to carry out certain changes to the layout of the school car parking facilities may flow from one scheme and not from the other and so forth but we’ve not heard it said that the AP2
scheme is unsafe. And certainly, as you know, one of my tedious leitmotifs, as it were, is that safety audits and detailed design in order to ensure that our road works are safe to the satisfaction of the highway authorities is something that is –

305. THE CHAIR: Well, if we park that. It was something that concerned the Committee on their visit and perhaps when you come back to it we can turn a negative into a positive, i.e. there has been evidence of engagement and it is safe as opposed to there’s no evidence of it not deemed unsafe.

306. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I’ll see if I can translate it in that way for you.


308. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Just to reiterate on the A34/A51, I said yesterday that one of the solutions to that uncontrolled crossing could be to provide a signalised crossing at appropriate distance, which would obviously accommodate – would provide safe crossing points for cyclists as well. So that’s that point.

309. Insofar as the Hanchurch Interchange, junction 15, Mr Lefroy’s urging that parties do better will obviously be heard with positive feelings, I’m sure. But, as you know, Staffordshire County Council, the Highways England and HS2 are working on a quite ambitious and good-news story in relation to improving the free flow of traffic through that interchange. We had some discussion about it yesterday but my understanding is that all three parties support the principle of AP2 because it will not only enable HS2’s construction schedule to be accommodated within what is already a very busy interchange more effectively but also will leave something of a lasting legacy in terms of the overall improvement. So I hope that’s a positive response to that particular point.

310. As regards the final point, which was a perception of a variable degree of response to concerns about the performance of acquisition of properties that have been acquired for the railway, I’m not aware of any particular instances there but if Mr Lefroy wants to raise with me or through HS2’s offices that there are any particular proprietors who feel that there’s unfinished business in relation to the acquisition of their property then obviously, having heard him raise that concern, I’ll ensure that we respond to that. But we’ll respond on that probably most sensibly directly to him rather than to you.
311. I think that’s all I wanted to say in response.

312. THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Mould.

313. JEREMY LEFROY: If I may just come back on a couple of things, Chair. The first is regarding safety and highways. I have a lot of respect for Staffordshire Highways but they are overwhelmed at the moment by the number of schemes that they have. Apart from the M6 widening they’ve got various road construction projects on the A50 near Uttoxeter. In my own constituency there is a lot of housing development going on, on which they’re always asked for their views, clearly, as statutory consultees. And, frankly, I would ask them to take another look at this. When Mr Mould says they haven’t shown any objection to it I wonder if they’ve actually been able and had the time to take a positive look at the two alternatives. And that’s what I would ask; a positive assessment of the two alternatives, one of which Yarlet believes is cheaper and better than the other, be done because surely that’s in everybody’s interests. It’s in my constituents’ interest, the school’s interest and, indeed, HS2’s and the taxpayers’ interests.

314. Finally, just going back to the golf club, I think the key for me is that the golf club, its members and, indeed, the whole community feel that the solution is satisfactory, is fair, is reasonable and allows the golf club to continue in the area of either of those two sites. I fully understand why one site seems to be preferable to one party and one to the other but I do think that by really working closely together with the same numbers, with the same provisions and with the same objective, which is to ensure a healthy, thriving 18-hole golf course with associated clubhouse providing very good community facilities and a lot of work for my constituents, that there is a solution which comes within a reasonable cost envelope.

315. THE CHAIR: Bill?

316. MR WIGGIN: Jeremy, you were sitting here so you saw the rather confrontational approach taken by the golf club and, despite out best efforts to help them, they were a long way apart from the proposals that we were seeing. Do you think there’s anything that can be done to encourage them to be more user friendly with this approach to working together?
317. JEREMY LEFROY: Well I think there’s a lot of history in the sense that the golf club has not felt properly consulted over the time since HS2 first came on the scene really and was affecting the golf club in 2013. So that’s six years down the road. We’ve suddenly seen – as I say, the response I got in April effectively said, ‘Well, you can close for 15 months. That shouldn’t be a problem’. Now, a few weeks later, ‘Well, we can actually provide for a nine-hole course and that would only be for six months otherwise you’ll have an 18-hole course’. If I were them I would necessarily feel that this was not necessarily a constructive approach.

318. So I believe, as in all these things, that usually a solution can be found by getting together, by saying, ‘Look, we really want you. We’re not standing back as HS2 and saying, “Well, we can do this if we want”. We actually want you to thrive as an 18-hole course and we’ll do our utmost to ensure that you can provide 18 holes all the time. If there is a gap we will provide you with the compensation to ensure your staff don’t suffer and also perhaps you can cut the fees for that year because of the lack of amenity in the course’. Something like that, to me, would work but I think it needs everybody to get together round the table, with your encouragement, Chair and Committee, if I may, to say, ‘Look, let’s get this done’.

319. There are clearly issues around the parkland aspect of the new – because at the moment the north side of the road is fairly featureless, as they say, and it will take time for that to mature into the lovely course that they’ve got on the other side. So all those things need to be taken into account.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much. The Committee will now sit in private.