MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE
taken before the

HIGH SPEED RAIL BILL COMMITTEE

on the

HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS – CREWE) BILL

Wednesday 1 May 2019 (Morning)

In Committee Room 5

PRESENT:

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

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IN ATTENDANCE:

Timothy Mould QC, Lead Counsel, Department for Transport

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WITNESSES:

Councillor Billingsley and Councillor Whitfield

IN PUBLIC SESSION
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1. THE CHAIR: Mr Mould, welcome back. I understand you may have a short statement for us?

2. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I do indeed, sir. Yes, it relates to the petitions of Maximus Limited and Brandon, Muir & Williams and indeed the Stafford Borough Council. We’ll put it up. It’s P137(1). Members of the Committee will recall that these petitions against the main Bill related to a substantial land holding to the northeast of Stafford which has been earmarked for major housing development and so that’s the context in which this statement is read.

3. HS2, Maximus Strategic Stafford LLP and the landowners have reached an agreement which allows the proposed development to be granted planning permission and implemented alongside the HS2 railway. The agreement is currently being signed by the parties. The promoter will sign and complete the safeguarding agreement within 14 days, or sooner if reasonably practicable, of being provided with a copy signed by the petitioner and the required landowners and will provide copies to the petitioners as soon as reasonably practicable after completion.

4. Upon completion, Maximus will withdraw their petition against the Bill and the landowners will withdraw their petition so far as it relates to the planning permission and the development. Stafford Borough Council, the local planning authority for the planning application, have confirmed that they will also withdraw their petition to the Bill upon the completion of the agreement. HS2 will inform the Committee of the progress of the agreement and confirm once it has been completed.

5. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. So obviously today was their opportunity to petition, so that ends the Committee’s direct involvement in receiving information.

6. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes, thank you.

Colwich Parish Council

Submissions by Councillor Billingsley

7. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. If we can now move to Colwich Parish Council. Welcome, Councillor.
8. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Thank you.

9. THE CHAIR: The floor’s over to you. I’ll then come to HS2 to respond. If the Committee have any questions we’ll try not to intervene mid-flow – but sometimes feel the need to do so – and then give you the opportunity to come back if there are any remaining points.

10. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Okay.

11. THE CHAIR: Over to you, sir.

12. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Thank you. Okay, as to objection one, this is A458(1), do you want me to read the background out to this or just come straight in?

13. THE CHAIR: Get straight in with what you want. So, we need a list of what you want and then we’ll see if HS2 can give it to you or whether we can assist, as a Committee.

14. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Thank you. Right, okay. On point two of P1352(2), we haven’t requested a permanent widening of the road or relocation of a roundabout. This is stated in error and we have no wish for this to be undertaken. We are happy with the reassurance that the road will be reinstated and returned to the current width, letter of assurances 26 April 2019 reference P1352(9).

15. Point 3, reference A459(2) through to (11) inclusive, these are the photographs of the canal towpath. We’re asking if we can get the towpath improved, the surface of the towpath improved. As you see on 459(5), the towpath has been improved at this section and this is just outside Stafford where the towpath joins up to a national cycle route. We wish the towpath to be – the full extent of the towpath, so if we can see the next picture on (6) and (7) or photo 6. Yes, there again you see the towpath there has an all-weather surface and then if we can move on to (7) please, thank you. This shows the state of the towpath, the majority of the length between Stafford and Great Haywood Junction, canal junction. We wish the towpath to be improved mainly for helping commuters get from Great Haywood to Stafford and vice versa. It’s used as a cycle route. A lot of commuters use this to cycle in to Stafford so we wish it to be improved. It would also encourage more people to get out and about, especially on cycling. Yes, we want to get
it improved. Sorry, can I move on to (8)? As you can see, this is a piece of the embankment ironwork sticking out of the towpath.

16. THE CHAIR: I think Bill has a question.

17. MR WIGGIN: Sorry, what is HS2 doing to the footpath or the towpath?

18. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: HS2 isn’t directly involved with the footpath.

19. MR WIGGIN: So, this is just a, ‘Please may I have’?

20. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: What we would like to have is if HS2 can just lend weight to the Parish Council in getting an improvement in the towpath. The reason why we want the towpath improved and get cyclists to use it, cyclists use the road between Great Haywood and Stafford, which is going to be heavily affected by HGV vehicles in the construction, sorry, to make it plain.

21. THE CHAIR: That’s the missing piece of the puzzle.

22. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: That’s the missing link. I do apologise.

23. THE CHAIR: Because otherwise we didn’t really understand what this had to do with HS2.

24. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Bear with me, I’m very nervous. This is the first time I’ve done this.

25. MR WIGGIN: Don’t worry. Don’t be nervous.

26. MR MARTIN: And if I may add, Councillor Billingsley, I think that the road via Tixall from Great Haywood will also be closed during construction.

27. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: That’s right.

28. MR MARTIN: And that would have been an alternative for cyclists?

29. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Well, this is it, yes. Sorry, yes, at the moment, a lot of cyclists use the road between Great Haywood and Stafford via Tixall.

30. THE CHAIR: That’s very helpful. Let’s move on to the next issue because we
will then hear from HS2 and then you can always come back depending. So, Martin first has a question.

31. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry, Chairman, if we put up P135(1) which is a map of the area, presumably what you’re talking about is the towpath, the entire extent that falls within the Council area, is that right, that you’re looking for the improvement?

32. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: So, we’re looking from the towpath from Great Haywood Junction to –

33. MR WIGGIN: Give him the mouse. You can have the mouse and show us. It’s quite helpful.

34. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Right, thank you. So, we are going from Great Haywood Junction here and we are following the canal down this route, it crosses the Sow up to – we’re talking to this point here.

35. MR WIGGIN: Sorry to ask, but isn’t the red box your Parish?

36. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: It is.

37. MR WIGGIN: So, almost all of this is out of your Parish?

38. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Some of the towpath will be outside of our Parish, that’s right.


40. MR MARTIN: But it is predominantly Colwich parishioners who will benefit?

41. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: It is Colwich parishioners will benefit from this, yes.

42. MR MARTIN: Yes.

43. THE CHAIR: Have you got any idea of length and cost?

44. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: There has been some costings given. HS2 have put some costings forward of between £500,000 and £600,000. Personally, I don’t
believe it’s going to cost that sort of money. I don’t know whether HS2 were thinking of tarmacking the surface but all we’re thinking is a –

45. THE CHAIR: Sounds like they’re laying it in gold. Sheryll?

46. MRS MURRAY: I take it the Parish Council hasn’t got their own costings for this or approached the primary authority to see if they would be able to provide costings?

47. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: We haven’t approached the primary authority, which would be the Rivers and Canals.

48. MRS MURRAY: Have you got costings yourself?

49. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Can I just come back to you on that one, just quickly? No, we haven’t any costings I’m afraid, no.

50. MRS MURRAY: Okay.

51. THE CHAIR: Shall we move on to the next issue?

52. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Yes, thank you.

53. THE CHAIR: Is that okay?

54. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Yes, point four. Excuse me, bear with me.

55. THE CHAIR: It’s okay.

56. MR WIGGIN: We could hear from Mr Mould while he gets his thoughts together.

57. THE CHAIR: A very good suggestion. If you want, if it’s convenient for everyone, we could hear from Mr Mould on the footpath issue to allow the petitioner to gather their thoughts on other issues. Is that acceptable, Mr Mould?

Response by Mr Mould

58. MR MOULD QC (DfT): It is. I would like Mr Miller to help you on that.

59. THE CHAIR: Yes, absolutely, that would be very convenient and then we’ll come back to the other issues, Councillor.
60. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Whilst Mr Miller is taking his seat, if we put up A459 (1). Mr Miller, what we’ll do first I think is just to set this in the context of HS2. I know you’ve probably seen these plans already so you’re familiar with the simplicity of the notation. But, Mr Miller, let’s just orient ourselves. We’ve got Great Haywood Road which is running through the Tixall Ingestre area and we can see that that is one of HS2’s construction routes, isn’t it?

61. MR MILLER: That’s correct, yes.

62. MR MOULD QC (DfT): And that takes us then through the area here. We can see that on this plan there is a utility compound which is just here, Trent North Utility Compound, that’s an AP2 addition.

63. MR MILLER: Yes, we’ve got two new utility compounds.

64. MR MOULD QC (DfT): And another utility compound here and just to get the context, as Mr Billingsley will have in mind, the context for the petition against AP2 from this Council was their concerns about the additional traffic on the Great Haywood Road, generated by the operation of those two compounds.

65. MR MILLER: That’s correct, yes.

66. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Now, the canal is just off plan to the bottom here but I think the Committee has in mind the general geography and the suggestion is that the way of remedying the effect of the additional traffic generated by the compounds on Great Haywood Road, the way of remedying that for cyclists and pedestrians and so forth is that HS2 should contribute towards the cost of upgrading the canal towpath. So, it’s a route for cyclists and pedestrians which avoids the need to use the Great Haywood Road.

67. MR MILLER: Yes.

68. MR MOULD QC (DfT): That’s the point, okay. Well, let’s just see then what the position is as regards the increase in traffic. Can we just put up please P1352(4)? Now, can we blow this up a bit? We’re looking at I and J. Just tell us, first of all, what’s the overall pattern in terms of traffic on the Great Haywood Road in the baseline?
69. MR MILLER: Yes, I think the Committee may have seen some of these diagrams before but if you look at the line for I and the line for J, those are showing the movements in either direction on that particular road. So for the current situation, for all vehicles here in the I direction and the J direction, it’s just under 4,000, all vehicle movements, and then we split that, splitting up the current existing HGVs, sorry, the future baseline HGVs from our traffic measurements and then we talk about the HS2 traffic which is then added in. And if we can just scoot across to one side, we then look at the percentage increases both for all traffic and the HGV additional contribution. So, it’s a relatively modest contribution overall. I think we’ve got some.

70. MR WIGGIN: Come on, Mr Miller, that’s just manipulation. It’s a doubling in the number of HGVs.

71. THE CHAIR: But thank you for that information.

72. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I just want to give you the numbers. That’s the basic picture. Now, let’s come to the nub of the petition which is the traffic generated by the utility compound and for that we turn to P1352(5). These are daily flows by the way. So, what is this telling us about duration and numbers?

73. MR MILLER: So, then you come to how long the construction is taking place and the maximum contribution in the busy months is one month over that period and your contribution during that time is up to 78 HGVs and a lesser general traffic increase over those numbers on I and J which we’re predicting to exist overall.

74. MR WHITFIELD: So, that’s 78 additional HGVs just for that compound?

75. MR MILLER: Yes, just for that compound but within that month.

76. MR WHITFIELD: One month.

77. MR MILLER: And I think if we can go to the histogram, you can see what’s happening over the duration of the construction and hopefully you will get the idea of why I’m saying this is a relatively modest increase overall. So, if you look at the Trent North utility compound, that peak is occurring on our prediction at the moment in April 2021 so when we get to that point, it is that month which is the most busy and then below that you can see that the traffic is somewhat less over that duration.
78. MRS MURRAY: Well you’re predicting 40% there and 25%, I would have said over quite a long period of time.

79. MR MILLER: Those are numbers.

80. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Actual numbers, aren’t they, rather than percentages?

81. MR MILLER: Yes, and they’re two-way movements. So there, you’re looking at 20 in each direction in those sorts of circumstances. So, when you’re thinking about that, if we go back to the overall I and J diagram there, you’re looking at what’s happening in this sort of mix overall and, yes, there is a peak but it’s that short duration as that utility work is taking place. Now, what we would ordinarily expect in those circumstances –

82. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry, I’m maybe being stupid about this, that one month increase for this compound is 78 vehicle movements?

83. MR MILLER: Yes, two-way.

84. MR WHITFIELD: And yet on your flow chart for that month you showed an increase of only, was it 10 or 11? On the previous screen, you showed a peak, 108. But if there were 78 on top of the baseline, that will take it well over 108.

85. MR MILLER: I’m sorry, I’m not with you.

86. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry, no, that’s why I say it’s –

87. MR WIGGIN: 1352 had a peak of around – well, it’s hard to see, combined two-way HGV traffic of over 1,000 or maybe I’m looking at the wrong –

88. MR WHITFIELD: Right, sorry. The Trent North utility compound peak there shows a maximum of just under 100 and yet your previous screen said this additional compound was going to add 78.

89. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Can we go back to 5?

90. MR WHITFIELD: Yes, so 78 additional, so the entire peak is occasioned by this compound, is that what you’re saying?
91. MR MILLER: Yes

92. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Are these one-way or two-way figures?

93. MR WHITFIELD: Two-way.

94. MR MILLER: Two-way.

95. MR MOULD QC (DfT): So, if we go back to slide 6.

96. MR WHITFIELD: I presume these are two-way figures as well.

97. MR MILLER: Yes.

98. MR WHITFIELD: And so that entire peak above the red line is occasioned by this new compound?

99. MR MILLER: Yes, it is, yes, on that particular bar there.

100. MR WHITFIELD: In that month, yes.

101. MR MILLER: Yes.

102. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I think we accept that for those two short periods, each of those compounds will generate a significant additional volume of traffic and the question is, as you will have gathered, do you spend hundreds of thousands of pounds upgrading a towpath to accommodate the impact of a couple of months of undoubtedly noticeable and significant increase in traffic on that road.

103. THE CHAIR: Sandy?

104. MR MARTIN: Yes, can we look at A459(1) again please? I know it’s a complicated diagram but, actually, that’s part of the point. If you look at the junction between Great Haywood Road and Mill Lane with the compound immediately north of it and the embankment immediately to the west of it, first of all, can you give me an absolute assurance, Mr Miller, that you are not going to have to close that junction to traffic at some stage? Because if I was involved in construction of that embankment and that compound, I would find it extremely difficult to do that and keep traffic flowing on all three of those roads at the same time.
105. MR MILLER: I think that’s the reason why we’ve got a roundabout in this location, to make sure that traffic flow actually operates properly with all of the traffic during construction.

106. MR MARTIN: Right, do you mind me asking, are you a cyclist at all?

107. MR MILLER: I have cycled, but I’m not a cyclist.

108. MR WIGGINS: That’s a very good answer.

109. MR MARTIN: Do you regularly cycle round roundabouts?

110. MR MILLER: I have cycled round roundabouts, yes.

111. MR MARTIN: Because as a cyclist, I can tell you roundabouts are not particularly cycle friendly. And do you know the number of cyclists killed in this country, as a proportion of number of cyclists killed, that are killed by heavy goods vehicles turning left?

112. MR MILLER: I do not.

113. MR MARTIN: It’s a very high proportion. A very high proportion of cyclists’ deaths caused in this country are caused by heavy goods vehicles turning left.

114. MR MILLER: And we have accounted for that in our code of construction practice and the practice around the vehicles that we will use for our construction. There’s a lot of practice which is ongoing at the moment to improve driver training. The vehicles have warning sounds on them and, indeed, a lot of the HGV vehicles now have a verbal warning saying that a vehicle is turning left. That’s all in our code of construction practice.

115. THE CHAIR: Carry on.

116. MR MARTIN: One more little question. Do you think it will make it easier for you to carry out the quite complicated and difficult longstanding construction of the embankment and the viaduct if there was a reduction in car traffic on Great Haywood Road and Mill Lane and, if that is to take place, don’t you think it would actually be helpful to you if more people would have travelled from Great Haywood to Stafford on
bicycles rather than in cars?

117. MR MILLER: I don’t have an answer to that.

118. MR MARTIN: I mean because there’s probably going to be quite a lot of congestion on this road.

119. MR MILLER: We’re trying to deal with the existing traffic and the traffic projections on there and to deal with that. If there was a traffic reduction on there for whatever reason, that could come about for all sorts of reasons.

120. MR MARTIN: Well one of the reasons might be because you’ve enabled people to cycle to work rather than having to drive.

121. THE CHAIR: Other people want to come in. We’ll come back to you Sandy. I think it was Bill and then Sheryll?

122. MR WIGGIN: Yes, if you don’t mind. One of the things that we haven’t established yet is whether all bicycle traffic will go along the towpath or not and whether it will make any – the size of the towpath and the quality of the towpath may not need to alter dramatically if the quantity of traffic doesn’t change, but it may and we’d like to know what you think about that.

123. MR MOULD QC (DfT): In order to allow him to answer that question, shall we put up slide P1352(7) so you can some facts on the actual assumed dimensions and cost of upgrading this towpath.

124. MR WIGGIN: Excellent.

125. MR WIGGIN: It seems to me that there’s one bit of metal sticking out that needs to be dealt with but the rest of it is entirely driven by –

126. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I think that may be a misunderstanding, if I may say so, based on a photograph that you’ve seen.

127. MR WIGGIN: Well, that’s what we’re trying to establish.

128. MR MOULD QC (DfT): These are the facts, Mr Miller, aren’t they?
129. MR MILLER: Yes, so the upgrade if you were to do it all would be 6.5 kilometres, that’s quite a significant towpath upgrade except that there are some parts of it which have probably been upgraded as being shown and then our estimate is for the whole lot so you can see that that gives rise to quite a substantial sum of money. It would look at a single lane improvement and, of course, we would then need to get the approval from the Canal and River Trust. Now, as I understand it, they’re not averse to having these sorts of things improved and they’re always improving these sorts of things.

130. MR WIGGIN: Of course

131. MR MILLER: But we’ve got to establish the need for it.

132. MR MOULD QC (DfT): So, just to be clear, we’re assuming at 1.5 metre single lane. That’s the dimension that would be created by the upgrade and the indicative cost, there is no other before the Committee, is between £500,000 to £600,000 for that work. I’m assuming that Mr Martin will confirm that 1.5 metres is probably the minimum you would need for safe cycling along a towpath.

133. THE CHAIR: Sorry, this is not your witness.

134. MR MOULD QC (DfT): No, no, okay.

135. THE CHAIR: So, let’s stop there; don’t reply, take a different tack.

136. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Mr Miller, assuming that that is right, what’s HS2’s position on this? It’s obviously for the Committee to decide.

137. MR MILLER: Yes, you’ve got to provide enough space on the towpath for all of those users and it’s not just cycling users, it’s people who are walking along that towpath. So, you’ve got to accommodate everybody if you’re going to do this at all and so that leads you to a place where you have a large cost outlay.

138. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes, so essentially that’s the issue. You’ve seen the numbers. We’re not denying that for a short period of time there will be –

139. THE CHAIR: Very clear. I think Sheryll has a question rather than repeating ourselves, then I’m going to allow myself a question.
140. MRS MURRAY: Yes, I do. Two questions, Chairman. The first one is, with the HGVs, presumably you will be looking to put the contracts for these HGVs out to tender?

141. MR MILLER: Yes.

142. MRS MURRAY: Would part of that tender require a certain level of vehicles so that they are cycle friendly, or as cycle friendly as can be possible?

143. MR MILLER: Yes, that’s correct. I don’t know if we can bring up the code of construction practice, the traffic side of that sort of thing, on the screen but, yes, the drivers will have driver training, the vehicles have improved greatly. There’s much more visibility to the side of the vehicles and down below where cabins are on HGV vehicles and there’s greater sight behind vehicles. We will also be encouraging skirts on the vehicles to stop people actually getting underneath the vehicle and being effectively run over by the lorry’s wheels.

144. MRS MURRAY: How will you enforce that? How will you police it? How will you ensure that that’s adhered to?

145. MR MILLER: Well, we are monitoring provisions and we will know what vehicles are turning up on our sites. A lot of work is just in time provision so we know what vehicles are turning up on our sites at any one moment in time. There may be things that go wrong if a contractor uses the wrong vehicle but that will be taken up and that will be corrected in the ordinary course of events.

146. MRS MURRAY: That doesn’t help the fact that if they caused a cyclist to have an accident because they used the wrong vehicle, that doesn’t really resolve the issue, does it?

147. MR MILLER: We are doing everything that we can to ensure that the HGV vehicles that we use on HS2 are safe and they are safe for cyclists when we’re using the roads and using the accesses on our sites.

148. MRS MURRAY: Thank you very much for that. The other question I have is, what sort of surface does this £500,000/£600,000 – what sort of surface would be on the towpath? Would it be tarmac? Would it be hardcore? And have you had any
discussions with the local highways authority or whoever is responsible, the local authority then, to see if they would make a contribution as they will benefit eventually from an improved facility if it were put in place?

149. MR MILLER: I believe, I would have to double check the surface but I believe the surface is of a similar surface to the better pathway that has been shown on the photographs so it’s not a tarmac, it’s a sort of a clinker type of surface. The funding of it, as I understand, the Canal and River Trust who are responsible for the towpath would be amenable to an upgrade but I don’t think they have the money to do it. It is possible through this project to put forward a bid to another scheme that hasn’t been before this Committee at the moment. We have a community and environment fund and that is to encourage local initiatives, just like this, to come forward for parish councils, local organisations, local groups, to put forward bids to get local amenity projects off the ground, off the back of HS2.

150. MRS MURRAY: Has the Parish Council been made aware of that?

151. MR MILLER: I believe they have.

152. MR WIGGIN: But they haven’t replied?

153. MR MILLER: They scheme doesn’t open until the Act of Parliament comes into effect.

154. MR WIGGIN: I’m sorry, thank you.

155. MRS MURRAY: Thank you very much, Mr Miller.

156. THE CHAIR: Thank you. I was going to come on to the community fund so just to probe in a little bit more detail. From memory, there’s a maximum of £50,000, is that correct? Can you remind us a bit more about the scheme and how applicable this would be to the scheme?

157. MR MILLER: I helped construct the scheme, so there are two schemes. There is an easy entry level which is up to £75,000 where, provided there is a local community need that can be demonstrated, we don’t want to put any onerous conditions on people, they can bring forward a local scheme just like this, or a smaller upgrade, and they could
get £75,000. They do have to satisfy certain criteria because of the way that public money works. Beyond that, and up to £1,000,000, there is more rigour behind those processes and so we would look at a business case for a scheme coming forward for greater sums of money but it’s quite possible that a scheme of this magnitude could come forward to the community and environment fund. I cannot say whether it would be successful at this stage, it would be subject to that process, but we have had successful schemes of £500,000 and more agreed on Phase One of the scheme. There are things in woodlands and that sort of thing at the moment.

158. I am also having conversations with Sustrans who are the non-governmental organisation who are interested in access to the countryside both for cycling and for pedestrians. I understand that they have gained some additional funds for improving access to go alongside roads and alongside HS2. It’s early days. We have another conversation with them this week and that may be another source of funding for a scheme like this. What they’re interested in is actually joining up a lot of different cycleways and footpaths so you could see a connected network alongside HS2. There’s a lot in play and a lot which, in the background, you don’t get to hear about really here, so thank you for the opportunity to bring that forward but there are other opportunities here that may satisfy this particular concern.

159. THE CHAIR: It strikes me that the Committee is sympathetic to the Parish Council’s proposition that HS2 should do something. It also strikes me that the community fund is a great possibility. Is there anything the Committee can do in their report to make sure public funds are used correctly and support comes in the right way, whether that’s the Committee directing HS2 in some regard, to helping their application to the fund? But I’m very conscious this is part of a bigger picture and, actually, we want to solve the problems that you’ve highlighted throughout the line in a sustainable way because it is all government expenditure and how can we make that joined up?

160. MR MILLER: The one thing that you might think about is that the community and environment fund is geared around supporting the more general disruption which occurs as a result of HS2. HS2 makes a huge amount of effort, or goes to great lengths, to try to resolve a wide range of issues. These sorts of things which are perhaps a little bit more peripheral, albeit you can see in these construction plans there’s a lot going on, that sort of more general disruption, that’s the emphasis of the community environment
fund. So were you to write something to say that you were mindful of that and, actually, this seems to be a scheme which warrants further consideration then that would be, I think, a step which you could make. But how far further you could go, I’m not sure. It’s outside of my hands.

161. THE CHAIR: Are the Committee happy to move on? Martin?

162. MR WHITFIELD: Yes, I was just going to comment, really raising from what you said, Mr Miller, because throughout this there’s been a number of concerns from cycle organisations, from cyclists, from individual practitioners about the fracturing of cycle routes by HS2 and I know HS2 are aware of that and are aware of the sensitivity and the damage it causes. And this is an interesting example which albeit on your evidence is only partially within AP2 and only of a tiny and almost insignificant nature, but it is an interesting cross between something that’s specifically being affected by the construction of HS2 and the surrounding role that the community fund is supposed to play and I wonder whether you would be able to comment on what financial extent there is to the community fund because this has an element of direct effect by construction rather than peripheral but, actually, the suggestion from the Council is one that would have a long term benefit on lots and lots of levels of things that this Committee have looked at from mental health, the access and the travel. So, my understanding is there isn’t actually a ring-fenced lump sum for the community trust.

163. MR MILLER: Yes, there is. I think it’s £5,000,000.

164. MR MOULD QC (DfT): £5,000,000.

165. MR WHITFIELD: £5,000,000.

166. MR MILLER: £5,000,000 for Phase 2A alone so there’s quite a lot to go for. I think what we can perhaps do is have more of an organisational discussion with Colwich, with the Canal and River Trust, get this on the radar of the panel who look at CEF, the Community Environmental Fund, that is something we can do.

167. MR WHITFIELD: That would be useful.

168. MR MILLER: I do have to emphasise that, coming back to the award of public funds, that is subject to quite strict controls which I think most of you will probably be
familiar with but, you know, we found a way through that.

169. MR WHITFIELD: Yes.

170. MR MILLER: But it does require a good plan to come forward.

171. THE CHAIR: Bill.

172. MR WIGGIN: Yes, if I didn’t want to improve the cycle path I would do exactly as you’ve done and produce huge figures and things like that. What I really would like to know is what a realistic price is to do the minimum but necessary repairs so that HS2 can turn to the public and say, ‘At every opportunity we encouraged cyclists to come out of the roads that we were using for our HGV traffic and I think £500,000 is bonkers. It must be a much smaller figure than that and we could probably find something realistic, just to ensure that we never have that one casualty and when you evaluate what a casualty costs, actually, it probably will turn out to be quite good value.

173. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Well, I appreciate –

174. MR WIGGIN: Any answer’s always helpful.

175. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Well, I hope this will be a helpful answer. I’m certainly happy to ask that we provide you with a more detailed breakdown of costs including a spec which was assumed and I appreciate the point that the numbers that one shows for these things often look instinctively quite high. I’m told whilst you’ve been posing that point that one of the assumptions is that one would have to dig down to some degree along the length of the towpath to form a satisfactory base because although the towpath in its current form is no doubt the natural result of many years of partial filling in of gaps and so forth and natural wastage, but if public money is going to be spent on actually improving it so that it’s safe and useable by cyclists, it has to meet a certain level of specification. So, what I will do, Mr Wiggin, if I may, is I will ask that we produce for you a short note which may also assist in illustrating the point that Mr Whitfield raised about the broader picture, if you like, and then perhaps that will inform the Committee’s –

176. MR WIGGIN: That’s very kind, but could I just check with Councillor Billingsley whether or not a small amount of money spent by the Parish Council wouldn’t be a
better way of solving this problem.

177. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: The funding is – we’ve not got that sort of money, unfortunately.

178. MR WIGGIN: That’s not the opportunity I gave you there.

179. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Sorry.

180. MR WIGGIN: If you came back and said, ‘For a few thousand pounds we will fix the towpath so that bicyclists who at the moment are using it visibly’, because there’s no overgrow, then we could argue that instead of putting HS2 to a spurious task which should eventually come out of the community fund, a small but practical step could be taken to try and save a potential accident. If you dodge it altogether, then you’ll have to go into the sausage machine that will decide whether or not you qualify for some of that £5,000,000 pot, and so this is a chance to change that and simply say, ‘In order to avoid any potential accidents by doubling the HGV for those particular short periods, we can fix the lump of metal sticking out and a few other things’.

181. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Yes.

182. THE CHAIR: Before you answer that question, you do have the ability to call a witness if you wanted to. I noticed you were consulting. It would be very easy for Mr Miller to slip away and call a witness. You don’t have to do that but that option’s open to you and then we’ll move on to another issue, but it’s entirely within your –

183. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Alright. Do you mind if I just have a quick word?

184. THE CHAIR: Absolutely, that’s fine.

185. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Can I introduce a Council colleague of mine, Councillor Neil Whitfield?

186. THE CHAIR: Yes, so Mr Miller is going to go and sit down and if your colleague just sits there.

187. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Thank you.
188. THE CHAIR: And let’s take it from there and I will come back to Mr Mould after this witness.

Submissions by Councillor Whitfield

189. COUNCILLOR WHITFIELD: Hello there. I’m Councillor Neil Whitfield, also of Colwich Parish Council. Our big concern with the use of the community fund would be that it would be after the horse has bolted. The road widening work which would be necessary to access the Trent South compound, I’m not quite sure of the naming of it, but the Ingestre bend between Mill Lane and Great Haywood Road, that compound, in order to access that, requires extensive road widening works along between Tixall and Great Haywood, therefore those works would also put cycle users at risk commuting through to Stafford. So, therefore, to say that we could deal with this through the community fund, that would not give sufficient time before that enabling work was carried out to prepare the road for that; and, secondly, the metalwork sections, a large amount of that falls outside of our Parish boundaries so we would not be able to fund removing that metalwork because that falls –

190. THE CHAIR: Sorry, Sheryll’s got a question first and then Sandy.

191. MRS MURRAY: Can I just ask, have you spoken to the neighbouring parish councils?

192. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: We have not been in contact with the neighbouring parish councils as yet but it is something that we are looking to do.

193. MRS MURRAY: I wondered whether you sort of had communications with them before you put your petition in but you haven’t.

194. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: No.

195. THE CHAIR: Sandy’s got a question.

196. MR MARTIN: Chair, it’s more a point of information rather than a question which is that it’s, I believe that the towpath is under the control of the Trent Canal Trust. The Trent Canal Trust has actually done all the previous works on the Trent Canal, on the towpath, and the Trent Canal Trust would be the most sensible body to do any
improvement works themselves and, as a non-profit making trust, I am sure that they would do it in the most inexpensive way possible.

197. MR WHITFIELD: Yes.

198. THE CHAIR: So, we could ask HS2 to speak to them about costings.

199. MR MARTIN: Speak to the Trent Canal Trust, I think would be sensible, yes.

200. THE CHAIR: And then we could take a decision. I’m going to let Mr Mould, with the Committee’s permission – I do think we need to make some progress out of Mr Mould’s speech as there may be some more substantive issues even. Mr Mould?

Response by Mr Mould

201. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes, so as part of the work that I’ve promised to Mr Wiggin, I will also take up the point made by Mr Martin. It’s the Canal and River Trust but that’s just a question of labelling. It was simply though, I wanted to draw your attention to these paragraphs which are in a letter of assurance which was sent to the Parish Council on 26 April. It relates to Ms Murray’s points. You’ll see that we’ve given an assurance under the aegis of the code of construction practice about the clear identification of vehicles over 3.5 tonnes and also that an assurance regarding the fleet used by our principal contractors should operate within an approved and audited fleet quality plan which will undoubtedly address the concerns that you raise there.

202. THE CHAIR: And we’ve seen that previously as well. Right, let’s move on.

Thank you. Back in your hands

203. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Thank you. The next point I’d like to raise is reference to P1352(16), the Main Road A51 roundabout. The roundabout here, we are concerned there is going to be an access route into the field. The access route to this compound is going to come off Main Road approximately here. We would argue for this roundabout to come in because we’re concerned that HGVs coming down the A51 and turning in to the current junction at the moment, if there’s two or three vehicles and they’re waiting to turn right into this access road, would create congestion for traffic coming off the A51 which would be obviously a danger to traffic on the A51 so we’d encourage a traffic island to be put in to alleviate that problem. Also, on the section, it’s
probably best shown on A460(1) please, the A51 here, we’d like to have assurance of a speed reduction on the A51.

204. As you come round the A51 and you’ve got the turning for Church Lane which is turning to Hixon, this section of the A51 is 50 miles an hour then, approximately here, it actually comes to 60 miles and hour and then it’s another speed reduction then at the junction here comes to 40. We have approached the local highways authority about this. We did ask them to extend the 40 miles and hour limit to the 50 so it’s a joined up, so 50 to 40 rather than 50, 60 40. They didn’t particularly heed our request and they put the 40 miles an hour in 200 metres off the junction. So, as part of the works done after the A51 is reinstated to its original state, we’d like to see a continuous speed restriction of 50, well 40 from the 50 through past the junction turning in to Great Hayward. We have been –

205. THE CHAIR: Just carry on. I’m not quite sure whether there are more points to come so I’d like you to finish in the normal way and then I hear promoter’s response unless there’s anything – I’m a little unclear whether you’re coming to a conclusion or not.

206. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: No. Well, let’s just quickly say, we had been quoted £7,500 for this work to be done so we would ask, you know, we’d like to see if HS2 would help us out with that.

207. THE CHAIR: Sherryl?

208. MRS MURRAY: Are you saying the speed restriction?

209. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Yes.

210. MRS MURRAY: And who gave you that quote? Did it come from the local highways authority?

211. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: We got a quote from Staffordshire Highways for that.

212. MRS MURRAY: Does that include the legal cost of the traffic regulation order?

213. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: That was including the legal questions, yes.
214. MRS MURRAY: And everything?

215. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Yes.

216. MRS MURRAY: Because that seems quite low. And was it Staffordshire County Council?

217. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: It was Staffordshire Highways, yes.

218. MRS MURRAY: Okay, thank you.

219. THE CHAIR: So, moving on from that point?

220. COUNCILLOR BILLINGSLEY: Moving on from that point, this diagram will show, as I say, where we have there again commuters coming out of Great Haywood on to the A51, they either cycle or walk up the A51 to Church Lane and into Hixton, we would request that a cycle path or cycle route of some sort be instated along the side of the A51. The footpath there at the moment is in a desperate state of repair if I can refer to A460(4). This is the footpath, main footpath, the only footpath between the two villages of Great Haywood and Hixton. Believe it or not, there is tarmac in parts underneath this lot. It has been left to fall into disrepair. We’d like funding to be brought forward for this. Our other main concern is just further up the road from this picture, approximately here, there will be a temporary roundabout put in for the works to be done. We’d like to ask for reassurances of what protections are going to be given for cyclists and pedestrians at this junction.

221. THE CHAIR: Excellent. Can I ask Mr Mould to respond on behalf of the promoter on these, I think three issues?

222. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes, again, could I ask Mr Miller to come back?

223. THE CHAIR: Most certainly.

224. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes, and we’ll put up P1352(12) I think. Again, the genesis for this is the provision of utility compounds, served from the A51 and from Main Road. Mr Miller, just before we come onto the slide that Mr Billingsley showed of the roundabout solution, can we just identify the two compounds? There’s the Main Road utility compound which is shown on the screen and that’s the one where there will
need to be a temporary access of Main Road, isn’t it?

225. MR MILLER: Yes. Main Road is here, Lichfield Road is here and the junction is just in here on this plan.

226. MR MOULD QC (DfT): And at the moment it’s a priority junction?

227. MR MILLER: It is, yes.

228. MR MOULD QC (DfT): With the A51 obviously being the Main Road?

229. MR MILLER: It is, yes.

230. THE CHAIR: Sandy?

231. MR MARTIN: Chair, can I just ask, have we got a large picture of that junction because, looking through all the red wiggly lines and all the rest of it, it looks as though it’s quite a substantial and carefully laid out junction already.

232. MR MILLER: I think we might have one.

233. MR MARTIN: I mean I can sort of see, like little ghosts coming through, I can see the outlines of islands and turn left lanes and turn right lanes.

234. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

235. MR MILLER: If you go to P1353(6), it’s a bit better.

236. MR MARTIN: Again, we’ve got lots of wiggly lines and so on.

237. MR MILLER: If we zoom in. Can we zoom in or not?

238. MR MARTIN: It’s still not that clear but it’s not just a simple T-junction at the moment, is it?

239. MR MILLER: No. So, it’s not straightforward.

240. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Tolldish Lane goes off to the right, doesn’t it?

241. MR MARTIN: Yes, I know, but that’s not the point I’m making. The point I’m making is the actual junction between Main Road and Lichfield Road already has
separate lanes for turning left and right and an island in the middle.

242. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes, I’m sure that’s right.

243. MR MILLER: Yes, that’s right, yes.

244. MR MOULD QC (DfT): And Mr Miller, we don’t – just to be clear, HS2 doesn’t propose any physical roadworks to that junction, it doesn’t propose to replace that junction with signals or with a roundabout, does it?

245. MR MILLER: No.

246. MR MOULD QC (DfT): No.

247. MR MILLER: No. We’ve got a junction which is – sorry, this is the final design scheme drawing, but in construction we’ve got an entrance way just around about there which takes you into that funny lozenge-shaped construction site.

248. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry, just before we leave that, the little junction that’s just to the left of the UT annotation, that’s the exit that you’re saying that’s going to be used to arrive at this compound?

249. MR MILLER: No, that is to go to the balancing pond.

250. MR WHITFIELD: That will go to the balancing pond?

251. MR MILLER: Yes, I haven’t actually got the – I’m just looking at the construction drawing and, unfortunately, that’s not particularly helpful either. But, broadly – sorry I need to grab the mouse.

252. MR MOULD QC (DfT): If we go back to P1353(5), I think the answer is we don’t have a precise point shown but you can see where the pink wash is, the access point into that compound, which is the Main Road Utility Compound shown on this plan.

253. MR MILLER: So, it’s going to be in there, so roughly where the permanent access will eventually come, and then it goes down to this utility compound in this location. So, there will be a left turn of HGVs in this direction, and then there will be from Lichfield Road a right turn and then a right turn in there.
254. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Can I just show you please, sir, briefly, the numbers? P1352(15), so the Committee has that part of the context as well? We’re just looking for the traffic generated which is making that turn to go into the compound. We can see the Main Road Utility Compound has been identified, and the peak month is shown on the histogram. We can see it’s around 80 vehicles, I think, isn’t it, on that – Main Road Utility Compound peak month?

255. MR MILLER: Oh sorry, down here. Yes, it’s about 100, or just under 100, I would have thought.

256. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I’m just trying to give the Committee the focus on the sharp point of the petitioner’s concern. So they say that traffic’s turning off the A51 into and out of the Main Road junction, they’re concerned about the operation of the existing junction, that Mr Martin has pointed us to, and they say, in order to resolve that, we need to introduce a roundabout into the scheme. So, let’s just turn to the implications of that, we’ll go to the slide the petitioner showed us, which was P1352(16).

257. THE CHAIR: I’m just wondering whether we’ve heard enough on this and we can move on to the speed limits. You’ve been very clear. In fact, sensing the Committee’s reaction to that suggestion, let’s move on to speed limits.

258. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Speed limits - I can deal with that very quickly – if you turn to P1352(18) – this is an assurance that’s been given to the petitioner in the letter I showed you a moment ago. The only point, I’m not going to argue about costs, the costs of speed restrictions are not at a level that would cause any concern. They might be somewhat higher as Mrs Murray suggested.

259. THE CHAIR: HS2 will pay?

260. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

261. THE CHAIR: Brilliant.

262. MR MOULD QC (DfT): The thing that we would have to do is we will have to – for obvious reasons, we would have to secure the agreement of the county council, who are the highway authority.
263. THE CHAIR: Very clear. Let’s move on to footpaths.

264. MR MOULD QC (DfT): And then footpaths, if we can go to A4601, that was – no, I’m sorry, that was the photograph we were looking at. I do apologise. I thought I had the right number.

265. MR BILLINGSLEY: 460(4).

266. MR MOULD QC (DfT): 460(4). The case we made in the slide, sir, was that, in order to achieve what we understood the petitioner was asking for, it would be necessary to go outside the Bill limits because, in order to achieve the width of cycle way that we understood they were seeking, we would need to go into some private land beyond the boundary of the highway. As I understand it, what is now being suggested is that we should remove some of the highway verge and expose the tarmac. Now we haven’t done a costing for that because that’s not the position we were understanding. And that would obviously avoid the powers point that I just mentioned to you because we’d be within the existing public way. Rather than take time speculating on that, what I would like to do, if I may, is to go away, get a costing for what the petitioner’s just said, see what it comes out at and see whether that’s something that we can absorb into the costs of the scheme. Essentially, just exposing the –

267. THE CHAIR: That’s very helpful. I’d ask HS2 to co-ordinate with the clerk to make sure we receive all of these bits of information in a timely way.

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

269. THE CHAIR: For our report, because we are not at the end, but nearing the end, and I want to make sure we take decisions with the best facts that are available at that juncture, even though they might not be the perfect set of facts. I think we’re coming to a conclusion. I don’t see any need to go back further. Councillor, are you happy?

270. MR BILLINGSLEY: Yes, happy. Just there was one other point I’d like to raise. With the construction traffic, we are anticipating parishioners to come out of Great Hayward, out of the Parish on another route, a different route, find another route into Stafford on the A513. This would mean using Meadow Lane at Little Hayward. The junction there is not particularly good. If I can refer to A460(10), probably the best, and
(11), but (10) first, this is the junction the A513 and ahead is Meadow Lane. As you can see from this, it’s a single-track bridge into Meadow Lane. The problem we do have here is – if we go to number (11) please – A460(11), you can see there’s two or more vehicles exiting the Meadow Lane onto the A513. There’s no room for vehicles coming off the 513 to get onto Meadow Lane. This is a danger; we’ve had a lot of near misses here at this junction due to the fact that the traffic coming down the 513 can’t turn in —

271. THE CHAIR: Can I just stop you there? I was really looking for you not to raise new points.

272. MR BILLINGSLEY: Oh sorry.

273. THE CHAIR: Because your opportunity for that had already passed. However, I’m conscious you are making rather good points, so I’m going to ask Mr Mould to reply to that substantive issue in writing, and I’m going to bring the meeting to a close. The Committee will take a short five-minute break and then sit in private.