MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE
taken before the
HIGH SPEED RAIL BILL COMMITTEE

on the
HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS – CREWE) BILL

Tuesday 30 April 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:

James Strachan QC, Counsel, Department for Transport

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WITNESSES:

Sian Froggatt and David Froggatt
Hugh Reynolds
Rupert Thornely-Taylor (HS2)
Peter Miller (HS2)

IN PUBLIC SESSION
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1. THE CHAIR: Mr Strachan?

2. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Thank you very much. I got a statement from June Baskerville, Barbara Baskerville, Gordon Baskerville & Company and Richard Bolton, all of which were petitioners otherwise appearing today. This is a statement from them and, if you’re happy, I’ll just read it out. I’ve put it on the screen.

3. ‘The petitioners acknowledge the joint statement made in the Select Committee on 29 April 2019 by Mrs Fielding, Mr Cliffe and the promoter. The petitioners support Staffordshire County Council, Lichfield District Council and King’s Bromley Parish Council in their desire to see a solution implemented that would allow Common Lane to be kept open during construction. The petitioners are not withdrawing their petitions but are supportive of progress made to date by the promoter, and the petitioners would like to see a satisfactory conclusion to the negotiations, and the petitioners are potentially willing to make land available, subject to agreeing reasonable terms.’

4. THE CHAIR: Bill?

5. MR WIGGIN: From this, there are two things that I’m curious about: first of all, that they appear to have asked not to withdraw their petition on the basis that, presumably, HS2 have led them to believe that Common Lane will be kept open. Well, we know Common Lane is being diverted rather than being kept open. Have they misunderstood you?

6. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): This is their statement so it’s not a joint statement. I don’t believe they’ve misunderstood.

7. MR WIGGIN: They couldn’t have made it up though, could they?

8. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): No, I believe that they’re fully aware of, for example, option 7 which is –


10. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Off Crawley Lane. But you’re right. This statement might be said, in referring to allowing Common Lane to remain open, strictly speaking
it’s via that diversion and this statement doesn’t make that explicit but my understanding is that they are completely aware of the diversion and the last sentence about making land available ‘subject to reasonable terms’ reflects what I was referring to yesterday about the other alternative which would require, as I indicated I think, land in the control of the Baskervilles which would, again, not be Common Lane but a diversion through Crawley Lane. So, I believe they are aware of that.

11. THE CHAIR: Sandy?

12. MR MARTIN: Well, I’m very glad to hear that very last sentence from you, Mr Strachan, but it is not even a diversion to Common Lane, is it? It’s an alternative to Common Lane. Common Lane will be closed, it will be closed permanently and there will be an alternative via Crawley Lane which will be put forward. The original AP2 was for an alternative location for Common Lane but this won’t be an alternative location for Common Lane; it will be the use of an alternative route, which is not the same thing. So, if the petitioners fully understand what is actually being proposed then I’m extremely happy but I’m just hoping that this is not going to come back and bite us when they realise that it isn’t.

13. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): What we can do is confirm that but I’m pretty confident that they are aware of that situation. I’m getting nods from the petition manager who deals with them directly but, put it this way, we will certainly let you know. We can let you know either way or we can let you know if we’ve misunderstood the position.

14. THE CHAIR: I think that would reassure the Committee. Thank you for that and I know that you kindly read out the statement; it’s not your statement, but it does read ‘the petitioners are not withdrawing their petition’ but of course in terms of the process and this Committee, that is the end of their petition. They have petitioned, they’ve chosen not to come, there is no other point at which the Committee can take representations but actually I think progress has been made. It will be convenient for the Committee to adjourn until 10.15 a.m. when we’ll see another petitioner and we will not be sitting this afternoon.

Sitting suspended.
On resuming –

15. THE CHAIR: Welcome. Thank you for your flexibility in being here earlier than I think you were expecting.

16. MS FROGGATT: Yes.

17. THE CHAIR: We had lots of petitioners drop out so it was convenient to take you early so thank you for doing that. Thank you for petitioning and I’ll hand over to you to make your case. We’ll then go to the promoter and we may ask questions, we’re quite a curious Committee, throughout but we’ll try to listen to you before we ask questions. So, very much over to you.

David and Sian Froggatt

Submissions by Ms Froggatt

18. MS FROGGATT: Thank you very much. Thank you. I’d like to thank you all for hearing my petition today. It may be a little bit rushed because we were so rushed. I’m conscious of maybe missing a few things out that I wanted to make but if we start off, possibly, with the replacement facility for Mayfield Children’s Home and I want to explain to you the potential impact it will have upon us and I would be grateful if the Committee would request our requests.

19. Number one is the impact on the bungalow and I would be grateful if you could show slide A462(1) please. This slide confirms that the bungalow is owned in equal shares between ourselves and our children because HS2’s response document questions the accuracy of our information. The bungalow will be sold to release money for the children and we hope to have it completed by the end of the summer, 2019.

20. Can we have slide A462(2) please? You will see from this slide that the bungalow is actually 127 metres from the boundary of the existing Priory School and not directly adjacent to it as indicated by HS2.

21. And can we have slide A462(3) please? This is an aerial view of the former Westwood School and this was originally an evacuation camp during the war. You will see from this slide that they were modest, single storey, wooden buildings and this is the
site of our bungalow here.

22. We understand that Mayfield School is having to relocate because of the effect of HS2 construction work but the proposals are, for this Rugeley site, there might be buildings of up to 40 feet high but because there is no planning application at the moment, we’ve got no clarity on this. We’ve recently met with estate agents about marketing our bungalow and they believe and tell us that under normal circumstances it would be particularly sought after because of its rural location but the general knowledge of HS2 is already having a detrimental effect in the area and people know and/or will be made aware of not only the impact of construction, but the disruption to roads in the form of possible diversions, delays, noise etc and these issues are proving to be a major concern to potential buyers. In fact, ground investigation works have already started in the area and people have experienced lengthy delays due to traffic control measures as we have done ourselves. We would request that we are compensated for any reduction in the sale value of the bungalow if we find difficulty in selling it because of the impact of HS2 and the new school building work.

23. The second part of this refers to the impact on Longacre Farm and could we have A462(4) please? Slide 4 shows the location of Longacre Farm which is directly opposite from the school and you will see the proximity of the new school to it. Over the years, we’ve diversified the business and at Longacre Farm we have invested £1,000,000 into large scale drying facilities using biomass boilers. We have an environmental licence which is enabling us to diversify into a wide range of rural, agricultural and forestry-based activities. For example, the licence covers things like treatment of wood and waste plant matter by chipping, shredding, cutting or pulverising. We have therefore increased the commercial traffic coming on to the farm and we have installed our own weighbridge which is approximately here on the plan. We’ve taken advice from the fire brigade and they recommend that we store the bales and chip etc. in small separate blocks. So, currently, they’re pretty well spread out over the whole of the front field here.

24. Our experience is that people with ASD are very sensitive to disruption, change and noise etc. and we know that HS2 have had to put in a noise bund to the north of Bentley Hall Farm to accommodate this school here. We are therefore very worried that there may be a potential block on our ability to develop Longacre site in the future and
this ability to develop is critical to our business due to the compound effect HS2 is having upon us. It now affects almost every block of land we farm at Quintons Orchard, Moreton, for example the haul road, and Newlands Lane.

25. So, on the advice of our planning consultant, we request that at the design stage the new school buildings are located as far as possible from Longacre Farm and that enough mitigation, i.e. noise bund or something is put in place to protect the school from any increased activities at Longacre Farm, both agriculture and non-agricultural.

26. Would it be possible to come back to the local placement of excavated materials once I’ve gone through the rest of them?

27. THE CHAIR: Yes.

28. MS FROGGATT: Thank you. I would like then to jump on to the broadband connection and I wonder if we can have the promoter’s slide, please, P326(6). Is that possible? On the promoter’s slide, it actually shows that we have a BT line coming across the field, with the little brown dots on it, to Quintons Orchard Farm but that’s actually incorrect. There’s no BT line over the neighbour’s field at all and there is also no line coming in from the east, along the bottom drive.

29. So, could we have A462(9) again, please? Our existing BT line, sorry, our petition is in respect of the existing and proposed line to Quintons Orchard Farm. The existing line is down here. The AP2 proposal is to disconnect our existing landline and replace it with a new one coming along the east drive here. However, HS2 are still proposing to take the landline to Bentley Hall Farm by continuing to use this north drive, come down over the bridge, come down the field and across this red area here, which is our best vegetable growing field, using overhead cabling. This will have a visual effect and will also reduce our ability for the ground’s rental income. We understand from Huntapac that we rent the ground to that every BT line there is, they have to allow a 12 metre margin around that line of non-cropping.

30. Can we have A462(8), please? Our existing BT line comes way over here, to the right, from Hamstall Ridware which is 3.5 kilometres away and the internet speed obviously is very slow over that distance. BT recently installed a superfast broadband box in Blithbury which is half the distance away at 1.7 kilometres and this landline
already extends to our neighbour, here, with superfast broadband. There’s also an existing BT line to Bentley Cottages and it would therefore be sensible to extend this BT line along their own drive to Bentley Hall without the need of crossing over our best field. We understand that BT are more than prepared to provide cabling and connectors for this work so the groundwork would be quite modest. Can I have A462(9) please? We are, therefore, requesting the HS2 bring their BT landline from Blithbury, to continue to use the existing line over the bridge and down the north drive to our property, with enough capacity to future proof the needs for any additional services, i.e., the barn conversions.

31. Because it’s possible for BT to go over Bentley Hall’s own drive, we would request that the proposed BT line to Bentley instead come down over the bridge and run alongside the access road either side of the railway underground to minimise the effect that it would have upon us. Could we have A462(11) please? This is a diversion of an existing water supply. HS2 want to disconnect our existing water supply to bring a new one along the east drive. I’m just using this slide to illustrate how narrow the drive is. We were told by a Government agricultural rep from ADAS some 30 years ago that it would have taken centuries for the bluebells to establish along this drive, and HS2’s proposals will involve disturbing these bluebells and daffodils. If there’s a viable alternative, then this would not be necessary.

32. Can I have A462(9) please? We would like HS2, if possible, to fully investigate the proposal of bringing it across the bridge. They think that there might be a reduction in water pressure. Failing that, would it be possible to bring it across the culvert here, which is just in front of Woodhouse Farm, via a separate duct? It would need to be capable of meeting our future needs but the duct is already promised so I can’t see a problem with that.

33. Can we go on to A462(9) please? The issue here is that HS2 need to permanently divert an underground gas transmission line which will take nine months to complete and the work will involve a construction of a compound at the bottom of our drive here. The gas pipe is very close to our fish pools but we understand that this is going to be monitored by the Fish Action Group.

34. In June 2018, we learnt from our freedom of information request that there’s going
to be approximately 880 articulated dump trucks and 77 HGV movements a day along
the trace track which will be, I’m assuming, somewhere here, which crosses the north
drive. It follows that access to our farms up the north drive will at best be extremely
challenging, if not impossible, due to this constant stream of traffic, and this will be for
many years because it will be for the life of the borrow pit at Pipe Ridware next door.

35. The cumulative effect of this with a nine-month major construction work at our
other entrance will make moving between our farms extremely difficult. We’ve
received an assurance from the promoter in respect of the movements of the farm
associated vehicles; however, this only refers to the movements between Quintons
Orchard Farm and Longacre Farm. It doesn’t address the need to travel to our other
landholdings, particularly Yoxall and Kings Bromley, which form a large part of our
farming enterprise and total about 250 acres. We’re requesting preferential traffic lights
which we can control and that access for articulated lorries is maintained at all times
during this period.

36. Can we have A462?

37. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry to disturb you, I wonder if we could look at P1322,
which is a map that’s showing all of your three properties, and I wonder whether you
could just, I mean obviously the lower property’s bisected by the line, so it’s access to
these, or the routes to these other two properties that you’re talking about, that’s going
to be –

38. MS FROGGATT: Yes, we have about 40 acres of land at Kings Bromley, which
is not shown on this map, which is over here, and about 200 acres at Yoxall, seven or
eight miles away, which again we get to that from the bottom drive. And we also rent
some ground for fodder beet which is at Armitage which, again, we access from this
bottom drive.

39. MR WHITFIELD: So, the effect on you is greater than this map shows.

40. MS FROGGATT: Yes.

41. MR MARTIN: Chair, can I just ask you to indicate on this map how you get,
what the route is that you’re expected to use, to get from your property to the property
just outside Blithbury?

42. MS FROGGATT: Currently?

43. MR MARTIN: No, no, no, when the construction is going ahead and when the thing is finished.

44. MS FROGGATT: We don’t know. We’re hoping that, they assure us that we will have access along the top drive up to the drive, Pipe Lane and through the village back to Longacre. But when we asked about the traffic on the trace, we were told originally by HS2 that they wouldn’t give us any information, which was why we’ve had to go for the freedom of information request, 880 movements, so we’re failing to understand how we can maintain access.

45. THE CHAIR: Shall we allow the petitioner to carry on or is there any more questions at this juncture? Right, so let’s return to the petitioner.

46. MS FROGGATT: I’m really sorry, I’ve put this together and I deal mainly with the paperwork, but my husband, David, is probably best placed to answer the day to day questions; he’s far more knowledgeable really than I am. Parkgate, slide A462(12) please. We’ve tried our very hardest to do whatever we can to mitigate the effect on the farm and, in October 2017, we purchased 22 acres of land. We thought this land was well away from the proposed route of HS2 but we now find this land is going to be affected by pylons and also a temporary track which we assume is to plant ground at Ash Hill. We’re aware of the arguments that have already been heard and proposed by the Parkgate scheme and our request is that the cables be buried. If the undergrounding is not possible, we’d like HS2 to negotiate with us to put the pylons in the best possible position for us. If possible, they appear to be shown close to the boundary of the field, but we are aware that this may change due to the assurances elsewhere in design, etc. We also request assurances that the field is not damaged and it’s restored to its original order when the need for this track is over.

47. Now we get back to the really big issue that is probably having the greatest effect on us. If I could go back to A462(6) please? This is a briefing note from the Select Committee that we were not aware of actually until March this year, after a meeting with Mr Connolly. It suggests that Mr Mould has confirmed that the balancing pond
cannot be moved to the northern side of the line due to the noise bund which is being put in for Woodhouse Farm. However, he said that something, possibly, could be done to move the pond elsewhere. And he goes on to say that HS2 are also going to consider the request, or the case, for a noise bund.

48. We had no engagement regarding this but we were absolutely shocked to be told at our last meeting with HS2 that we wouldn’t be entitled to any form of noise mitigation and that it wasn’t possible to move the balancing pond. This was because HS2 had given an assurance to our neighbour for a reed bed and, as a result of this reed bed, the balancing pond couldn’t be moved and there wasn’t enough room for a noise bund.

49. The promoter’s map of this area, which we saw for the first time on Friday, now shows that tree planting has been replaced with grassland and no trees at all and, therefore, we will have no screen at all from the railway track. Mr Mould also went on to say that the reason that HS2 were definitely going to take ownership of our private drive because, giving the assurance of the reed bed, now gave them a need to give a third party right of way to our neighbour. We’re absolutely distraught because we flagged from the beginnings of our dealings with HS2 about the visual and noise effect to our property; we’ve got a stud farm, I’ve got mares and foals, and it’s going to have a massive impact upon us.

50. THE CHAIR: I’m happy to hear that, I’m conscious that we may be going back on the original Bill, rather than AP2, so could we move on to any additional points relating to additional provisions –

51. MS FROGGATT: We said we don’t understand why our neighbours have received noise mitigation, which we’re not entitled to any.

52. THE CHAIR: Let’s move on, sorry.

53. MS FROGGATT: Sorry, please show A462(13). This shows that our house and buildings are absolutely on the edge of our boundary and we’re actually powerless to mitigate against the noise and visual effect of HS2. We intend to start work on the barn conversions once we’ve sold the bungalow in the summer, but we’ve been told by our local agents that the barn conversions are considered unmarketable, and I do have a
copy of this on file. They consider it unmarketable because of the impact of HS2. Our property’s also down valued in value by only having a right of access and not owning its own drive.

54. My husband’s had heart problems for a number of years and he’s recently had a defibrillator fitted to control and restart his heart. The consultant has said he’s at high risk caused by the stress of HS2, but we’ve tried our best and we’ve agreed with our neighbour, Mr Daw, that he will sell us, or he’s prepared to sell us, if HS2 goes ahead, this strip of land here in order that we can use this strip of land to make a noise bund and plant trees. We’d like to suggest that we try and make the balancing pond rectangular, rather than round, to give more space for the noise bund. Our request is that HS2 provide us with this noise bund, using the surface soil and compensate us for the cost of this ground. If possible, it would be better for the balancing pond to be moved further east to give more space.

55. And, finally, we desperately want to retain ownership of the access drive and we are more than willing to grant a wayleave for access to the pond and the reed bed, if this is necessary. We’d also like to request that the relocation, sorry HS2 have identified the need for a soil placement area here, along this brown area. Can I just find my notes? SES 2 and AP2 ES have identified that local placement areas will be used to remove and store topsoil and subsoil to raise the level up to three metres using material unsuitable as engineering fill. It also states that these sites are partly needed because of the reduction of noise bunds which, in our case, seems very, very ironic. It goes on to say that they should avoid land where placement of this material could create local adverse visual or potentially significant effects.

56. Right next door to this field, we have a field of daffodils, tiny little daffodils that have been there for centuries. It does go on to say that the need for this local placement area will be subject to review as the design develops. We’d like to request that, if possible, instead of dumping soil over the whole of the field, that they landscape it and make a noise bund at the rear of the field to help get rid of some of this surplus soil. Also, we don’t know what the timeframe is for this site; it could be used as an open dumping ground for many years. If possible, we’d like it to be dealt with as quickly as possible and grassed over to just minimise the visual effect on our property really.
Thank you very much. I’m sorry it’s very muddled.

THE CHAIR: No that’s absolutely fine. I’m going to call Martin but I don’t know if you wanted to call any witnesses or whether David Froggatt wanted to say anything after. That would be an opportunity. We’ll then move to the promoter.

MR WHITFIELD: If we can look at P1325(1).

MS FROGGATT: Yes.

MR WHITFIELD: Right, so that’s the Orchard Farm there. Is the block of land that you’re talking about below the pond?

MS FROGGATT: Yes.

MR WHITFIELD: So, it wouldn’t include the pond.

MS FROGGATT: No, but if the pond could be made possibly rectangular, HS2 are saying that there’s no possibility of moving it which would give more space. We’re just wondering whether it would be possible to alter the shape of it.

MR WHITFIELD: The shape of it.

MS FROGGATT: Make it more rectangular and if we could then mitigate by planting trees around that area.

MR WHITFIELD: But it’s not, the purchase wouldn’t include the access road that they’re talking about, which is shown just above the pond there, that’s not the part that you were saying that you would grant leave over the –

MS FROGGATT: No, it’s a drive, the red line.

MR WHITFIELD: Yes, that is the edge of your property.

MS FROGGATT: Yes, I think this is required by HS2.

MR WHITFIELD: Yes, and sorry the last bit, the part of land that you’re talking about being able to purchase, which is just above the red line, that’s what you would like to see as a noise bund.
72. MS FROGGATT: Yes, if there’s no ability to place a bund from the top of the balancing pond up the track, yes.

73. MR WHITFIELD: That would be your preferred position.

74. MS FROGGATT: Yes, in fact, this plan still appears to show trees around it, but the other plan that the promoters have put forward shows that this whole area’s been replaced by grassland habitat, no trees at all.

75. MR WHITFIELD: Thank you.

76. THE CHAIR: Sandy?

77. MR MARTIN: Yes, Mrs Froggatt, just there’s a sliver, isn’t there, between the farm and the trees, which I think is –

78. MS FROGGATT: Yes.

79. MR MARTIN: Oh, that’s grassland habitat, it’s not marshland? So, there’s no drainage reason why that shouldn’t be part of the bund.

80. MS FROGGATT: No, I think that is, am I correct in saying, it was part of a scheme that Mr Daw had entered into?

81. MR FROGGATT: It was in stewardship, but it’s now come out, last October the neighbour said it was finished.

82. MR MARTIN: What I’m trying to get at, Mr Froggatt, is: is there any drainage reason why putting a bund on that piece of land would actually have an impact on Quintons Orchard Farm or, indeed, on the drainage of the rest of your land?

83. MR FROGGATT: If you look at the small pond, where there’s a little bit going into the neighbour’s, that little bit that’s in the neighbour’s actually carried on along the straight line towards our drive. That was the original moat that was there in 1066.

84. MR MARTIN: Ah, right.

85. MR FROGGATT: That was a moat that went all the way round and into the carrot field, I call it carrot field, and down round the new buildings and joined on with
the other little piece, the L piece. It was a moated site so, I mean, my idea really, if we could buy a piece of land, if HS2 won’t do anything with noise bunding, was to actually dig out the moat, the original moat, and put the soil outside and then plant trees on top of it.

86. MR MARTIN: Right.

87. MR FROGGATT: As a noise bund, if we can’t get HS2 to do something.

88. THE CHAIR: Any remaining points or shall we hear from the promoter?

89. MR FROGGATT: Sorry?

90. THE CHAIR: Are there any remaining points or shall we hear from the promoter?

91. MR FROGGATT: I noticed when my wife said about had said about a 12-metre strip, I was told yesterday by Huntapac that they would prefer Huntapac a 12-metre strip around a pole for harvesting. That was discussed, I think you were saying that’s not right.

92. THE CHAIR: Let’s hear from HS2. Mr Strachan?

Response by Mr Strachan

93. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Thank you. There are a number of different points, I’ll try and take them in turn. Mr Miller is here to deal with the environmental matters. Mr Thornely-Taylor is also here to deal with noise and the noise bund. Just before I call them, can I just help you with the balancing pond in chronology?

94. THE CHAIR: Just before you do that, can I ask Mr Froggatt to go into the public gallery and bring forward the HS2, so if you sit at the back, sorry sir, and you’re going to have two witnesses, is that correct?

95. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes.

96. THE CHAIR: Right, so Mr Froggatt, if you could now sit with the public and two HS2 people are going to sit where you’re sat. Thank you very much. Do you want to bring forward both of your witnesses now to avoid disturbance? And then even if you don’t call them, they’re in place, if needed. Let’s just pause while everyone gets settled.

15
and then we’re in place.

97. MR WIGGIN: Can I ask Mrs Froggatt a quick question while that’s going on?

98. THE CHAIR: Yes.

99. MR WIGGIN: I thought your evidence was excellent and it was very impressive, so thank you very much. The only bit I wasn’t quite sure about was the cottage at the beginning.

100. MS FROGGATT: Yes.

101. MR WIGGIN: And there are two, there’s your house and the cottage next to it, and it wasn’t clear whether you were trying to sell them or retain them.

102. MS FROGGATT: Sorry, the cottage, the bungalow?

103. MR WIGGIN: Yes.

104. MS FROGGATT: The bungalow, that was originally the bungalow that we lived in when we first married. It belonged to my husband and his brother who sadly died and my brother-in-law left his share of the bungalow to the children. We need to sell it because the children wanted to fund deposits. We were in discussions with Lichfield planning department because they were insisting that we had to build a single storey bungalow to be in keeping with the site. So, we’ve been waiting for two years for a builder to come and start, so we started in October to then be told by the neighbour that HS2 were proposing to relocate the site from Moreton to the site next door to the bungalow. We raised it with HS2 and said, ‘We might have an issue here’.

105. MR WIGGIN: So, my question was: do you want to sell it?

106. MS FROGGATT: Oh yes sorry, we need to sell it. The idea is it will be completed, it’s being built now, it will be completed by the end of July. That’s why we’ve been in discussion with the estate agents already.

107. MR WIGGIN: Thank you.

108. THE CHAIR: Absolutely fine, Mr Strachan?
109. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Thank you. I can deal with the topics in the same order they came up, or in reverse order. Perhaps I’ll just stick with the chronology you heard them in. Shall we go back then to the bungalow near the Mayfield Children’s Home relocation? At P1327, this may be very familiar to the Committee but just in case it’s not, you’ll be aware that the Mayfield Children’s Home was at Site A and, because of the proximity of the line to it, we have relocated, arranged for its relocation to the site of the school itself. And my understanding is the Mayfield Children’s Home is a boarding facility for Rugeley School. Rugeley School itself already accommodates special educational needs children. What we are doing is relocating one of the boarding facilities to co-locate with Rugeley School.

110. If we go back to the petitioners’ slide, PA462(2), the existing school here, it’s run by the Priory Group as you’ve heard and, adjacent to the school, was in fact a former school site which is what the petitioners were referring to, called the former Westwood School, and this is the proposed site for the relocated Mayfield Children’s Home I’ve just shown you. And Norman’s Bungalow is the property the petitioners own. I’ll ask Mr Miller to deal with the planning process. The current position is the Priory Group are seeking to promote their own planning application for that relocated boarding house on that site. If that doesn’t progress sufficiently, we will then progress detailed planning aspects under the Bill itself.

111. The supplementary environmental statement for that identifies that it would consist of four two-storey residential buildings and a communal building, and the pitched roof’s an assumed height, which we need to assess for the purposes of the environmental statement, of 12 metres. And the location within that site is a matter for planning control, whether pursued through the school directly or under the Bill.

112. THE CHAIR: Sandy?

113. MR MARTIN: Mr Strachan, it may be a matter for the planning authority when it comes to detailed plans; however, this is part of the AP2 land, is it not?

114. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): It is, yes.

115. MR MARTIN: And so there is nothing to prevent this Committee from putting conditions on the use of that land.
116. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): That’s certainly right; it’s part of AP2 and I can’t improve on that.

117. THE CHAIR: Yes, I don’t suppose you can guess. If you can’t improve on it, don’t say anything more. Sheryll?

118. MRS MURRAY: Could this Committee put certain conditions on, for example, the height of the buildings, or would that be outwith our authority and it would be left to the local planners?

119. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I think I have to be totally accurate, because the Priory Group are already submitting a planning application, this Committee can’t control that, because the planning authority can grant planning permission on this site, just as they could previously, it being a formerly developed site. Anyone could have applied for planning permission and the local planning authority could grant permission. And that’s what the Priory Group are doing. I would expect, as I’m sure you would, that in considering any such planning application, they will act in accordance with their planning functions, one of which will be to choose an appropriate height for the building and to consider the impact of any adjacent properties and amenities, just as the planning system always does.

120. But, in answer to the question, the Select Committee, my understanding, wouldn’t have control over the local planning authority.

121. MRS MURRAY: That’s very clear, thank you.

122. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): What the Select Committee has, obviously, power to do is control what’s in the Bill. As I’ve indicated, the Priory Group should seek their own planning permission.

123. THE CHAIR: Not quite as clear as you’re indicating, because if the buildings that the local planners would permit don’t satisfy the school, in terms of providing the accommodation they need to transfer, this site becomes unsuitable. Therefore, other arrangements have to be made. Can I just ask, has any consideration been given to purchasing the bungalow – either HS2 doing it directly or the Priory Group doing it?

124. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): No, I’m not aware of any such, but I wasn’t aware
that the petitioners were intending to sell it.

125. THE CHAIR: Would they be able to sell to HS2 under any of your schemes?

126. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): It would have to be – certainly it doesn’t fit within the conventional schemes, because it’s not an owner-occupied property. This, as I’ve understood it, is unoccupied.

127. THE CHAIR: We are in quite strange times, given the AP2 was truncated compared to the full Bill and the property, whilst it’s not occupied, is in the middle of being developed. So, it’s not a speculative piece of land on which one is thinking about, in the future, building. It’s just slightly ambiguous; it’s not one of those clear-cut case studies, is it?

128. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): No, if it were to be purchased, it would have to fall outside the conventional schemes because, as I’ve indicated, it’s not owner occupied. I believe the petitioners have had it in their possession since 2002.

129. THE CHAIR: I presume that would be within the right of the Secretary of State to make that exception decision.

130. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes, there’s always the ability to do that.

131. THE CHAIR: Shall we move that to one side and maybe at the end of your comments, having reflected, you might be able to say more?

132. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Certainly. If there’s any further information about the planning process that you would like, Mr Miller’s here to assist you on the bungalow. Just whilst we’ve got the plan, Longacre Farm you heard about, is off to that side and we’re not anticipating affecting Longacre Farm. I think there was concern expressed by the petitioner about their farming activities there. They take place already adjacent to the Rugeley School with its pupils; the only difference is that there’s an additional boarding facility being created. But Mr Miller, is there anything else you wanted to add?

133. THE CHAIR: Sorry, just before, Martin?

134. MR WHITFIELD: So, the initial planning application that’s been put in by the
Priory Group could see the property literally going – one would hope not – but literally on the fence with the bungalow, if that’s what the planners wanted.

135. MR MILLER: It could, yes, but it’s highly unlikely.

136. MR WHITFIELD: Highly unlikely? Similarly, this Committee could reach a verdict about this land which would effectively blight its planning potential, couldn’t we?

137. MR MILLER: It could, yes.

138. MR WHITFIELD: Right, okay, I’m grateful.

139. MR MILLER: This area for the school, it would have to take into account everything which is extant, which is happening now, so Longacre Farm, which Mr Strachan has just mentioned, and that operation would have to be taken into account with the planning application as it comes forward. And were that application to come forward and show something which was disruptive to that particular operation, then this petitioner would have the opportunity to bring forward that complaint to that planning process. But, given that we are trying to provide a solution here which is school-orientated, the Priory Group are looking at this site to be rural in nature, alongside the existing school, because of the pupils it’s trying to accommodate. Then I think what they’re trying to do is come up with a scheme which actually is going to work in those rural circumstances. We don’t have that design so it’s quite difficult to actually say what the massing of the buildings are and exactly where they’re going. All you can see on here is something from probably the war time era, which is showing an outline of dilapidated buildings frankly.

140. MR WHITFIELD: Is the current planning application, do you know, that’s been put in by the Priory, the two-storey –

141. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt. I’m just going to correct, there isn’t, the Priory Group are intending to put in a planning application. They haven’t put one in yet.

142. MR WHITFIELD: Is the intention for a two-storey building the same way as your intention, HS2’s intention, and the replacement, this is a two-storey building, or do you
not know?

143. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I don’t know that. All I know is what we’ve allowed for in the Bill in terms of assessment. It’s open to the Priory Group to, obviously, submit their own planning application and for that to be approved or not by the local planning authority, regardless of what happens.

144. THE CHAIR: There’s a number of issues, let’s move on from that issue to close down that issue, and move on to the next issue.

145. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I think the next issue in turn was –

146. MR WIGGIN: Sorry, I just wanted clear how you’d solved their challenge. We discussed who’s in charge of planning, but we didn’t actually deal with what’s going to happen to Norman’s Bungalow.

147. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): The conventional position with Norman’s Bungalow is that, if and when they complete the building, if they wish to sell it, they will be able to put it on the market and sell it.

148. MR WIGGIN: But they can’t because it’s so blighted by everything else you’ve done.

149. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Well, that’s not our understanding that it is blighted. In fact, it’s a bungalow adjacent to a site which was previously developed land located directly next door. And any planning application that’s approved by the local planning authority pursuant to the current, or the intended, application would reflect the normal principles that people can apply for planning permission.

150. MR WIGGIN: Sorry, I get all that. Does this fall into any of your blight criteria?

151. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): It only, no –

152. MR WIGGIN: No, there’s a lot of shaking of heads.

153. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): No, because the need-to-sell scheme, for example, arises when someone is an owner occupier of a property and they can’t move because of the generalised blight, as I think it’s referred to, of HS2.
154. MR WIGGIN: So, if I was to put a school in your garden, you wouldn’t have been affected by it? Because that’s essentially what you’re doing, isn’t it?

155. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Well, that former Westwood School is not in the bungalow’s garden. The bungalow’s garden, it has a large –

156. MR WIGGIN: I didn’t argue it was in their garden. It is as a function of HS2 that this school is moving.

157. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): That’s certainly true, yes.

158. MR WIGGIN: And, therefore, you have had an impact on this site, whether or not it goes through the normal planning process or not.

159. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): That’s also true. But the impact we’ve had in terms of what’s approved by the local planning authority, is the sort of impact, if it is one at all and one hopes that the design is sympathetic, but if it were to have that impact, is the sort that could occur on redevelopment of a site of this kind in the ordinary course. It’s a previously developed site for the former Westwood School which, under normal planning principles, would be a prime contender for new development just because it’s previously developed.

160. THE CHAIR: Sheryll?

161. MRS MURRAY: Despite the fact that this doesn’t fit into any of your normal criteria, is it not within this Committee’s gift to make a decision or a recommendation?

162. THE CHAIR: We can direct the Secretary of State to consider this an exceptional case and the Secretary of State then, if he wanted to progress, will move things on. With that, I think we’re going to move forward.

163. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Thank you. We’ve touched on Longacre Farm which was next. I don’t know whether you need to hear more about Longacre Farm but, as I’ve already indicated, Longacre Farm is on the other side.

164. THE CHAIR: You’ve dealt with it – let’s move on.

165. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Utility diversions, which I think was the next topic.
If we could go to, and I’ll ask Mr Miller to assist you with these, P1326(6). The BT utility diversion, I’ll just tell you factually, the red on the left-hand side is what BT have told us are the connections that are. The petitioner says this red one doesn’t exist but we’re going on what BT utilities, we had understood them to tell us. It doesn’t particularly matter. If we turn to the right-hand plan, this was what was in AP1, not AP2, and under AP1 we were taking the BT utility diversion along that drive. So, that utility diversion doesn’t arise out of AP2.

166. And if we go to the next slide, P1326(7), what the BT utility diversion that’s come in is one from up here, across the accommodation bridge, and does cross the petitioners’ land to go to Bentley Farm. Mr Miller can assist, but I understand we’ve already had some positive discussions with the landowner of Bentley Farm as to the potential relocation of that.

167. MR MILLER: Yes, just to give you an indication of what that’s about, the connection here, the conversation we’ve had with Bentley Farm is to see whether we can bring the connection down in this direction, this is a general direction, and then bring it down on to their property in this area here, thereby avoiding the effect on the field itself. So, that looks as though it’s moving in the right direction with that farm owner there, so the next-door neighbour of the Froggatts.

168. What we’ve heard this morning is, I think, useful information and we need to have another chat with British Telecom, I think, and the line which Mrs Froggatt identified to Quintons Orchard, we need to verify that. And, providing everything is good, I think that we can look with BT to see whether we can get that back on to that particular alignment, if that’s what’s desired.

169. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): And then there was the South Staffordshire water diversion, which I can show you on P1326(8). This is, the existing water pipe is red, it currently goes along the orange and red, and then the connection to the petitioners’ property is across. That has to be diverted because of the railway and the proposal is to take the diversion from the red along the drive to the property. This is the other connection that goes to the Woodhouse Farm property so there are two connections. And I think the petitioners want us to take a diversionary route of this kind along here up and over the bridge and back down and Mr Miller can assist you. The slide tells you
that we have considered that but there’s a problem with pressure.

170. MR MILLER: Yes, our consideration has been, you will remember that we’ve altered the alignment of Dawson’s Lane, so we’ve got a dedicated water supply up to this point for Woodhouse Farm and, similarly, we’ve got a dedicated water supply to Quintons Orchard Farm as part of our arrangements. Our engineers have looked at that alternative option which was put forward by the petitioner, which would take a greater diversion of the water main through this route, the purple route, and it would also mean that we’ve got to go up and over the accommodation bridge, and back down to the farm. And our consideration is that we would not get the, it would result in a very low water pressure.

171. THE CHAIR: Bill?

172. MR WIGGIN: Can I just ask? The concern that the petitioners had was that you will disturb the bluebells, but water pipes don’t have to go at the side of the road, they can go up the middle of them.

173. MR MILLER: They can go up the middle of them.

174. MR WIGGIN: Because it’s not a surfaced road either.

175. MR MILLER: Yes, this is a three-and-a-half-inch kind of pipe, so it’s not that big. It does require a digger, it would require a digger with a bucket on the front of it, so it would have to dig it up and put a trench in. But then, once it’s in, it’s a pretty permanent feature.

176. MR WIGGIN: It would be nice to have a nice new drive perhaps.

177. MS FROGGATT: Like I said, we’re quite reasonable. I think what we’d said was, if it was possible, if it could be avoided, it would be. We just questioned whether it could come, as it was such a small pipe, through the culvert that was already coming from Woodhouse Farm. If it needs to come up the drive, it needs to come up the drive, but if there was an alternative, we requested that it would be looked at.

178. MR MILLER: I haven’t personally been along that drive or on the entrance to see it, but I don’t know if it’s made ground, concrete on either side, and then it’s just grass
in between. It may well be that you could put it up the middle. There is an access issue during construction but that will be dealt with in conjunction with the landowner. So, we’re not going to cut off their access for them. I think there’s room for a discussion.

179. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): And then could I go to the balancing pond issue?

180. MR WHITFIELD: Sorry, if we leave the balancing pond, in the original promoter’s response, there was discussion about improving the broadband generally to this area and taking the opportunity to do that. And I know we raised this earlier on; I’m just wondering if we could have an update on how that’s going.

181. MR MILLER: I think overall in the Bills, and indeed the Act that we put forward on Phase One, there’s a provision to assist, because we’re putting a piece of linear infrastructure across the structure, to assist with broadband provision. But that ultimately goes to the broadband provider themselves, so my guess is that wherever that can make improvements with the general improvements that are being made for broadband in rural areas, then the broadband provider will try and piggyback off –

182. MR WHITFIELD: Recent plans.

183. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): We don’t have a particular plan to put broadband down.

184. MR WHITFIELD: No, I appreciate that. The reason I raised it, is that R457(13) which was the specific response to this broadband, the promoter sought to rely on that assurance that was given earlier on to the people who petition. And I just wonder whether there is really genuinely any merit in that paragraph, or whether or not it’s perhaps something that is gone by-the-by now.

185. MR MILLER: Well I don’t think it has gone by-the-by. I think that the issue is getting broadband into rural areas. I live in a rural area and we’ve just had our broadband upgraded.

186. THE CHAIR: We’re straying off the Bill. Sheryll, then Sandy?

187. MRS MURRAY: Mine is, I think, within the confines. If you were going to work with BT to divert a BT connection, would it be appropriate for HS2 to actually finance
fibre to the premises’ connection, rather than using an existing copper connection, because that in itself would ensure that superfast broadband was available?

188. MR MILLER: I don’t think it’s HS2’s position to do that.

189. MRS MURRAY: I notice you’ve got some abandoned telephone connections there. If you’re going to re-use them, would it not be appropriate to make sure that they are replaced with fibre?

190. MR MILLER: Ordinarily that would be down to the telecom provider.

191. MRS MURRAY: It’s a matter of cost.

192. MR MILLER: It is a matter of cost, but it’s also part of their network as well. If you just put the fibre in a small piece of the network, and then you haven’t got fibre elsewhere, you’re never going to get fibre working.

193. MRS MURRAY: So, in effect, you could fund a new fibre line.

194. MR MILLER: Well, I suppose in theory.

195. MRS MURRAY: I think you could.

196. MR MILLER: In theory, within our limits, we could do that. Outside of our limits, we can’t do that; that would be down to the provider. And I would come back to my answer which is, if the provider was bringing fibre forward generally in that area, then it might be able to be linked up.

197. THE CHAIR: Can we move on?

198. MRS MURRAY: That’s fine.

199. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, it’s much appreciated. Mr Strachan, back to Mr Strachan, so it’s his opportunity. I allowed a bit of interaction and I think that was really worthwhile; however, Mr Strachan’s in the hot seat, as it were.

200. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Can I turn to the balancing pond?

201. THE CHAIR: Yes.
202. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): And the noise. If I can turn up P1326(2), this is a slightly more zoomed in, but I hope it helps. It’s important, I think, to understand what has happened in this context. Just, factually, the balancing pond for this location was previously off to the left here. On a pre-Bill stage, during the working draft, EIA, environmental impact assessment, on the petitioners’ land, they asked for it to be moved and we moved it. We moved it off their land on to Mr Daw’s and the Committee’s heard from Mr Daw, on the last time, he has a potato farming business, he has accepted the balancing pond on his land, subject to working with us to provide a reed bed solution around the balancing pond to facilitate his business. And the Committee may well recall the detail of that. It works in conjunction with his potato washing business.

203. And, therefore, having accommodated the request to move it off the petitioners’ land, now on to Mr Daw’s land, this was a matter really that arose under the Bill, not AP2; we haven’t moved the balancing pond under AP2, we’ve left it where it was. It’s fair to say the petitioners came in and petitioned against the balancing pond on the last occasion and what I understand we said we would look at, on that occasion, was the potential for using local placement, which is off here to the right, to potentially form a noise bund to this part. I should add, the other thing we did was respond to the petitioners’ request was to give an assurance that the balancing pond would be lined, because they were concerned about infiltration, and we’ve given that assurance.

204. So, we now have a lined balancing pond. As we said we’d do, we went away to look at the potential for a noise bund, or some screening, in this location. That work has been done. As you can see on this slide, we can’t physically accommodate a noise bund in this location, south of the balancing pond, of the type that the petitioners would like because of the location of the balancing pond and the reed beds that Mr Daw wishes to see around on this site, to address his concerns. And the Committee has a letter from Mr Daw, in withdrawing his AP2 petition, which I think it’s important that you are aware of, P1368 –

205. THE CHAIR: I didn’t quite hear what you said. You had a letter which –

206. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): He submitted a letter withdrawing his AP2 petition.

207. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Sorry, I didn’t hear what you said.
208. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I’m so sorry. P1368(1) which I think, as far as I know, has already gone to the Select Committee but there’s no reason why you would necessarily have it in mind at this point. He explains, I think in the fourth or fifth paragraph, about this point that the petitioners, Mr and Mrs Froggatt, have raised the question of the local placement of surplus excavated material, and that the net surplus would be used to construct a suitable noise bund, together with tree planting to provide screens at three properties, at Quintons Orchard Farm. Given the proximity of the boundary, there’s insufficient retained land at Quintons Orchard Farm from which to construct a bund between the properties and the railway. On the Monday of this week, Mr Froggatt rang Mr Daw to ask if he would agree to a soil bund being constructed upon his land. This was the first time an approach had been made or the request in the Froggatt’s petition made known to the Daw family. For the avoidance of doubt, the Daw family do not agree that their land should be used to provide the siting of a bund to protect Quintons Orchard Farm. And the next page, I think, ‘Throughout discussions with HS2 Ltd, and before the Select Committee last year, our clients have made known their intention to construct a reed bed water filtration system on land to the south of Woodhouse Farm. We’ve requested HS2 Ltd look at how that filtration system can be accommodated at part of the woodland and wetland habitat proposed on land which will be severed by the railway’.

209. I think it’s important I bring that to your attention because the petitioners suggested that there was agreement to sell and, so far as we’re aware, that’s not what we’ve been told.

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

211. MR MARTIN: Yes, if we go back to P1326(2) please, I’m very sorry I ought to have got my head round this by now, but the green area with the lollipops on it is –

212. MR WIGGIN: Up a bit.

213. MR MARTIN: Yes, on the right-hand side of the balancing, so that is, is that embankment or is that, because it’s not always clear which is embankment and which is cutting? That is absolutely crucial, isn’t it, and it’s not always clear. Is that cutting or embankment? That’s cutting, isn’t it?
214. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): To the south?

215. MR MARTIN: Yes.

216. MR WIGGIN: One’s a cutting and one’s an embankment.

217. MR MARTIN: Yes, I know, but which is which?

218. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Generally speaking, that on the right would be an embankment and I’ll ask Mr Miller to check that. The yellow, if I go to the left.

219. MR MARTIN: The yellow is cutting.

220. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Goes down into a cutting. You sometimes, of course, have embankments with false cuttings and that’s where the annotation is confusing, which might be the case on the other side of the line. I hope that helps you and then the green lollipops just here are woodland.

221. MR MARTIN: No, no, no, those look like little trees. No, when I say ‘lollipops’, I mean –

222. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I’m so sorry, the lozenges.

223. MR MARTIN: Those things. Oh, you want to call them ‘lozenges’, do you?

224. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): No, no, I’m happy.

225. MR MARTIN: Okay, whatever. So, the point being that, obviously, where the line is in a cutting, this is not going to have much impact on Quintons Orchard Farm. But where it’s on an embankment, it will. So, I am wondering whether it would be possible to have an acoustic fence between the point above the turning head on there, from there, up to the red line where the sluice is. Would that be possible to put an acoustic fence in?

226. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I’ll ask Mr Thornely-Taylor to help you with that. There is, just so that you are aware, that turning circle’s to serve an electrical station for HS2, so one has to fit it around that. I’ll ask Mr Thornely-Taylor to assist you on the noise issues.
227. MR THORNELEY-TAYLOR: We have looked at options for noise barriers through there. There is a possibility of getting a small effect which isn’t big enough to take the residential sensitive receptor out of the contour for lowest observed adverse effect level, the grey contour that we’ve seen on a number of noise maps. As a consequence of which it doesn’t change the environmental impact assessment, in terms of numbers of properties falling in the different impact classes, but there is a small reduction. And because this property is inside the lowest observed adverse effect level contour, the HS2 information paper, E9, which sets out the approach that is taken towards noise reduction, does require mitigation and minimisation of noise in this zone, and that approach doesn’t stop dead once we’ve finished the Committee process, and doesn’t stop at Royal Assent. And, as this design is developed, there will be a continuing process of looking to see whether there is a cost benefit case for noise reduction, through the introduction of a noise barrier in this location.

228. MR MARTIN: Well, given that my question was ‘is it possible’, I’m taking that as a yes.

229. MR THORNELEY-TAYLOR: Possible in physical terms. In policy terms, obviously its effect has to be weighed against its cost.

230. THE CHAIR: What’s its cost?

231. MR THORNELEY-TAYLOR: It is quite substantial. We can put in a note on what the costs are.

232. THE CHAIR: Could you give me an estimate now please? With the normal, I don’t want to hold you to it, but I don’t want to pick numbers out of the air, but if you could give us an estimate or a range, and then I think Bill’s got a question as well.

233. MR WIGGIN: I was giving him a chance to have a think about it.

234. MR THORNELEY-TAYLOR: Well, we’re talking about the order of £1,000 to £2,000 per metre of noise barrier.

235. MRS MURRAY: And how many metres would it require?

236. MR WIGGIN: That’s what the question was going to be.
237. MR THORNELY-TAYLOR: We would need to fill in the gap between, about 100 to 120 metres.

238. MR WIGGIN: Could you give us the mouse and just show us on the map, because it does look to us lay folk that, from about where it says HS2 –

239. MR MILLER: It looks like about 120 to 130 metres.

240. MR WIGGIN: If you go from there to there.

241. MR MILLER: This is the cutting and so you’d have to join it up with the cutting, and it would go to somewhere –

242. THE CHAIR: We’re talking £200,000 to £250,000.

243. MR MILLER: Yes.

244. MR WIGGIN: But you are looking at, from my point of view here, of the sound coming straight across the balancing pond and, therefore, it will be flat, so acoustically it should hit Quintons Orchard Farm pretty squarely, shouldn’t it?

245. MR THORNELY-TAYLOR: It would be a noticeable improvement. It wouldn’t come through in terms of changes to the assessment under the formal environmental impact assessment process, but there would be a noticeable effect.

246. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): It sounds as if it would assist the Committee on this for us to give you a more detailed account of the cost and length of the necessary barrier and then the consequential noise reduction it would be expected to make, for the Committee to make an assessment.

247. THE CHAIR: Thank you, that’s very wise. Sheryll?

248. MRS MURRAY: The other thing is: would you be able to fit noise mitigation sort of things to the residential property?

249. MR THORNELY-TAYLOR: The residential property is well outside the contour that would normally trigger that kind of thing. And, generally speaking, it’s more desirable, if it is practicable, to do something close to the railway than it is to do something at the property.
250. MRS MURRAY: Okay, thank you.

251. THE CHAIR: Can you perhaps provide that information within a week? Then we will be able to actually take a decision in relation to that with the full information, as opposed to having to take the decision purely based on what we’ve heard today.

252. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes, sure.

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

254. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I just wanted Mr Thornely-Taylor to confirm what I –

255. THE CHAIR: Sorry, it’s more of a decision. Let’s move on to the next issue. You’ve got an ability to add anything in writing.

256. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): I believe the only other issue was – one was a question of access. I don’t believe that is something which is arising out of AP2, and I wasn’t aware that that was an issue coming today. There is an assurance that we had previously given about access arrangements. I think the petitioners have asked us to revisit that assurance because of some additional properties that they farm. We’re happy to look at that, whether the assurance can be updated to reflect those other properties, but I wasn’t aware of that before coming to Committee. I will have that looked at.

257. And then finally, I think it was Parkgate was the only other matter.

258. MR WIGGIN: There was one, just before you go to Parkgate. The petitioners very helpfully had decided to use the soil as a bund; if that isn’t possible, they still didn’t want the soil spread all over the fields, and I’m looking for an assurance that you will work with them to do sensible things with the soil that has been dug up, because despite all the assurances that it makes no difference, it does.

259. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Can I just then show you plan P1325(1)? The local placement that I think they were raising is not on the petitioner’s land, it’s on someone else’s land who, I always hesitate to say, they’re content with it, but I’m – at least, I’m not aware of any –

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260. MR WIGGIN: That’s fine, as long as it’s something –

261. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): We’re not intending local placement on the petitioner’s land. And then Parkgate, the question of undergrounding and over-grounding, I’m not going to go over.

262. THE CHAIR: We’ve covered that already.

263. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): The question of pylon location, as we’ve indicated with others, we would be content to offer an assurance of the type you’ve seen us give to others about the engagement about where the best location of pylons –

264. THE CHAIR: The Committee have already heard this; it may be that the petitioner hasn’t. I think the Committee don’t need to go through this again, but if you could write to the petitioner, outlining the discussions that we’ve had, I think that will square things off.

265. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Yes certainly.

266. THE CHAIR: I’m conscious we were supposed to finish at 11.25. One thing we haven’t covered, if the petitioners have any remaining issues rather than back this afternoon, with your permission, I’ll let you write to the Committee within five to seven days.

267. MS FROGGATT: Could I just clear up two –

268. THE CHAIR: I’m going to come to Bill first.

269. MR WIGGIN: Well, there was just – could we make sure that we have identified, truthfully, how much a BT post takes up, because it’s hard to believe it’s a 12-metre circuit.

270. THE CHAIR: We’ll get HS2 to come back. Very briefly.

271. MS FROGGATT: Finally, the broadband actually comes to within 200 metres of the top drive, they fitted a new superfast broadband box in Blithbury, so it’s actually only a very short distance that we’re talking about.

272. We’re stunned about our neighbour’s response about that contact, because before
we came to petition last year, David rang James twice and asked if we could buy some ground and he was quite agreeable, and he was agreeable last time. The only thing that he did say was that he would only sell it if HS2 was happening, and that we needed to make him a very exciting offer.

273. The balancing pond, when we had a meeting with Reading Agricultural Consultants in 2016, we obviously flagged the issue of the balancing pond. The site of the plan that we had then was that there was no bridge, and the maintenance track was still to be there at Blithbury. They recommended that the balancing pond be moved to the left. It obviously made sense to us that it should be moved to an area possibly below the pools, but we actually had no major influence on that, and our idea that it was moved to where it was, was because that site was effectively severed by the landline, and that was the sort of thing that HS2 were looking at.

274. THE CHAIR: Okay, thank you for making those remaining points. I’m going to draw things to a close. Thank you very much for petitioning. Thank you, HS2.