



1. Petitioner information

In the box below, give the name and address of each individual, business or organisation submitting the petition. Please note that addresses here will be provided to the Bill's promoter, but will be redacted in the version of the petition published on the Parliamentary Website.

Mersey Meadows Residents
Manchester

In the box below, give a description of the petitioners. For example, "We are the owners/tenants of the addresses above"; "My company has offices at the address above"; "Our organisation represents the interests of..."; "We are the parish council of...".

We are an informal grouping of the residents and owners of Mersey Meadows, Manchester.

2. Objections to the Second Additional Provision to the Bill

In the box below, write your objections to the Second Additional Provision to the Bill and why your property or other interests are **directly and specially affected**. Please number each paragraph.

Only objections outlined in this petition can be presented when giving evidence to the Committee. You will not be entitled to be heard by the Committee on new matters not included in your written petition.

1. *Mersey Meadows and the Hollies fields*
 - 1.1. Mersey Meadows is a residential estate of 31 detached houses built around 1990 on the site of the former Hollies' convent school.
 - 1.2. About 10 houses lie directly adjacent to the newly proposed Hollies vent shaft, which is located on the old playing fields next to the River Mersey. These houses are located on a raised embankment, constructed in the 19th century, about 7m above the level of the fields.
 - 1.3. The closest property to the ventilation shaft is 50 meters from the shaft; the proposed site boundary is about 15 meters from the nearest property. No property on Mersey Meadows lies more than 100 meters from the proposed construction site.
 - 1.4. The land on which the ventilation shaft is intended to be built, currently owned by the Britannia group, was previously used by the YMCA as playing fields until the late 1990's; it has since been abandoned and has been used by the wider local community for informal recreation. Furthermore there may be a restrictive covenant on the land (see 6.2 below).
 - 1.5. In the intervening 25 years, the site has seen substantial rewilding, and has been colonised by plants, trees and wildlife.
 - 1.6. The Hollies path, a footpath across the fields, connects the estate to the River Mersey and the local walking networks (Trans Pennine Trail and Manchester Green Trail), and is an important resource for the wider local community: there is no nearby access to these Trails within easy walking distance.
 - 1.7. There are a substantial number of mature trees on the site.
2. *Petitioners' affected property*
 - 2.1. The Petitioners hold no legal rights to the Hollies playing fields; however, as this is both green-belt land and lies in the Mersey flood plain, they had a reasonable expectation this land would not be used for a major building project.
 - 2.2. The Petitioners' direct interest is the effect on their property and their well-being due to both the construction and operation of the proposed Ventilation Shaft at the Hollies.
 - 2.3. We strongly disagree with HS2 Ltd statement that "*The amendment will result in a new moderate adverse significant effect on residents of approximately six residential properties on Mersey Meadows*" [16.2, SES2 and AP2 Environmental Statement, Non-technical summary, 5.3.27,

Supplementary environmental Statement, Vol 2], both in number of properties affected and severity of impact.

- 2.4. Several Petitioners (about 10 properties) are directly affected by HS2 Limited tunnelling under their properties; this is **not** the subject of this Petition.

3. *Hollies' ventilation shaft*

- 3.1. The Petitioners understand that the tallest of the ventilation-shaft headhouses will be 7m in height and located on a raised earthwork about 4.5m in height, [HS2 2PT27-MWJ-EN-REP-M003-000006; referred to below as *Sift 2.5* and 2DE01-MWJ-EN-REP-M003-000034; referred to below as *Sift 3.0*] bringing the top of the headhouse in line with the gable height of the houses on the Mersey Meadows estate. One headhouse will be 34m in length and 28m in width and the other headhouse will be 22m in length and 7m in width.
- 3.2. To raise the building site, holding yard and roadway to the requisite level requires about 40,000 cubic meter of infill (which requires 10,000 lorry journeys) [Sift 2.5]
- 3.3. Petitioners estimate the amount of material to be excavated at about 80,000 cubic meters based on the design of the shaft, which would require a further 20,000 journeys.
- 3.4. The 60x41m opening [Sift 2.5] of the ventilation shaft seems to be dictated by the requirement to remove four tunnel boring machines at the site. We are not aware of another HS2 vertical shaft of such a large diameter in any other area.

4. *Alternative solutions*

- 4.1. The Petitioners accept that the site originally proposed in the Bill, at Withington Golf Club in the Flood Basin, was untenable, especially in the light of climate change and the elevated risk of adverse flooding events.
- 4.2. In [Vol 5, Appendix CT-003-00000, section 2.4] the alternatives considered are set out as: The original proposal in the flood basin (called Baseline+), a second site on Withington Golf Course (GC3), and the Hollies site (B1).
- 4.3. Petitioners have only very recently been granted access to HS2's Sift 2.5 and Sift 3.0 documents; Sift 2.5 shows many alternative sites have been considered in varying detail. We note that Promoters have failed to short-list one alternative site (GC5, on Northenden golf course) which they state was preferred on ecological, but not on engineering grounds—and was preferred over GC3 (the second site on Withington Golf Course). The latter seems to have only entered the shortlist on a special instruction from HS2 Ltd.
- 4.4. Petitioners are deeply concerned that the final short-list of three sites as given by HS2 limited [Vol 5, Appendix CT-003-00000, section 2.4], was not a fair weighing of alternatives. Any site in the flood basin is unviable without substantial and expensive re-engineering of the flood basin, which is not proposed by HS2 Limited, and thus the shortlist only contains one viable option, the Hollies Field.

- 4.5. In informal discussions with HS2, Petitioners and others have offered many alternative sites. We note that many—but not all—have been considered in the long shortlist [Sift 2.5]. Several were deemed unsuitable due to Centrica’s high-pressure gas main which crosses Palatine Road and the Britannia Hotel site from Withington to Northenden golf course; however, we have been assured by a contractor for the utility companies that much of the 50-year-old cast-iron pipe work used for such gas mains is routinely and proactively being replaced.
 - 4.6. Also, HS2 have explained [meeting with residents on 2nd August] that the size of the proposed shaft is a conservative over-estimate, and that the final design will likely be smaller. However, since size is a key driver to site selection, this may have biased HS2 to disregard sites that seem too small but may actually be appropriate for the final design adopted.
 - 4.7. The risk of typical desk-based assessments as executed by HS2 and their contractors is a lack of local knowledge, as is evident in many places in the papers provided. One example is the effect of the COVID-19 epidemic on the nature of some of the businesses near the potential locations of the ventilation shaft. Material changes to those businesses must inform the economic arguments for site selection. This does not seem to have been addressed in any of the documentation underlying the AP2 provision.
 - 4.8. The alternative of using only two boring machines would substantially reduce the required size of the vent shaft and thus the site selection, since no TBM extraction would be required at this site.
 - 4.9. Burying the tunnelling machines is an alternative that has been considered—but has been rejected [Sift 2.5]. There is no reason this could not be reconsidered at this stage.
5. *Site hydrology*
- 5.1. There is a Japanese pond on the edge of the former playing fields, near the location of the vent shaft, as shown on HS2’s site map. This pond is likely receiving its water from some of the ponds and small streams higher up the slope, and, as far as we know, releases water into the River Mersey through a small culvert and a sizeable holding area ending in concrete culvert covered by a flap gate near the steps to the footpath in the River Mersey.
 - 5.2. This may be a contributing factor to flooding of the site during periods of heavy rainfall: this would add to the likelihood of water seeping under the river embankment and may mean that the flood risk on the site has been underestimated. This is not included in any of the flooding scenarios presented by the Promoters, and thus its effect is not assessed—it seems that this will only be considered when a contractor has been assigned to the project.
6. *Flood Risk and Green Belt*
- 6.1. Petitioners note the most recent flood maps presented in Sift 3.0; we are especially concerned with the increased flood risk between the works and the embankment our estate is located on during the building phase,

potentially exacerbated by the nature of the infill used to raise the estate. Also, see 5.1 and 5.2 above.

- 6.2. The recreational value of the land, that seems to have been given in “trust of the youth of Manchester” [<https://www.hollies-fcj.org/resources/Against%20the%20Odds%20by%20Pat%20Harris.pdf>] by the Catholic Church when the Convent School was abandoned, will be seriously undermined by HS2’s actions. We urge Promoters to investigate whether such a restrictive covenant exists.

7. *Vibration and Settlement*

- 7.1. Compaction of the 40,000 m³ infill for the road and site will give rise to a substantial risk of subsidence and differential settlement on the estate and, due to the steep slope from estate to fields, also of even more damaging differential settlement. Neither HS2 nor petitioners have a clear understanding of the subsoils in our estate. Considering this area was developed as a new residential estate in the 19th century, this probably consists Victorian landfill over the virgin alluvial plain.
- 7.2. The embankment between Mersey Meadows and the playing fields contains many mature trees, which are protected by a tree-protection order, since they are key to the stability of the embankment. Any damage due to the works may lead to further subsidence issues. However, HS2 Limited suggests removal of trees near the new emergency access road to Mersey Meadows.
- 7.3. No detailed noise, vibration or pollution assessment has been undertaken; we note that documents SES2 and AP2 ES Volume 5: Appendix SV-002-00000 and Volume 5: Appendix SV-003-00000 only refer to MA07 on the title page.

8. *Pollution and Environmental degradation*

- 8.1. All measures of pollution and environmental impacts seem based on low-level desk-based assessments, that as far Petitioners understand have not considered all complexities of the site: The openness to the prevailing westerly winds, how far sound and pollution carry in the bowl-like structure of the fields, etc.
- 8.2. In [5.3.171, SES2 and AP2 ES, Vol 2], HS2 states that levels of vibration will exceed their self-imposed limits for three months during compaction of sand. This will cause substantial hardship—several older and vulnerable residents will normally be at home in daytime. We fail to see how this can be acceptable.
- 8.3. Dust generated by the operation, due to the compaction work and with the amount of material transported in and out, risks being a severe problem. This has not been (adequately) assessed and will be hard to mitigate.
- 8.4. Prevailing westerly winds mean any pollution, including dust, from the construction will be blown directly towards the estate.
- 8.5. The structure of the site, surrounded by higher ground on all sides, means that pollution will not disperse as easily as elsewhere, and needs careful analysis.

- 8.6. There is no detailed analysis of the noise level caused by the operation of the shaft—the large diameter suggest that standard estimates may not apply.
 - 8.7. The number of trees being removed in this plan is not balanced by the very tepid approach to replanting using immature trees proposed by HS2. It may take 30 years for the trees to mature [Viewpoint 336-02-017, SES2 and AP2 ES Volume 5, Appendix: LV-001-0MA07]; the removal of trees along the new emergency access route will further enhance the blight felt by residents. Also, “the majority of the existing bank of trees to the west of the properties will be retained” [5.3.110, SES2 and AP2 Environmental Statement, Vol 2], showing that in fact not all these trees will be retained.
9. *Quality of Living and Blight*
- 9.1. The assessment made by HS2 Limited of the largest HS2 ventilation shaft in the country (by a factor of two), seriously underestimates at every stage the impact of building and operation on residents.
 - 9.2. As Proponents state “People in this community are likely to experience these effects as changing the quality of their neighbourhood and to regard that change as adverse, in diminishing the amenity of the settlement” [5.3.68, SES2 and AP2 Environmental Statement, Vol 2], which seems to suggest they have noted the serious adverse effects on residents and understand that this may not be sustainable, but try to hide these issues in a very complex and disingenuous statement. Also, “No avoidance or mitigation measures, additional to those reported in the main ES and draft CoCP are proposed.” [5.3.65, *ibid.*].
10. *Access Road and Footpath*
- 10.1. The proposed access road would sever the Hollies’ Path between the estate and the river and make local access on foot to the River Mersey impossible, with the nearest access points across the Britannia hotel site (1 km), or at Stanton Avenue (1 km).
 - 10.2. Even though SES and AP2 Appendix 5 material suggests the footpath will be reinstated after construction, we have been unable to find any details; current designs of the build will make this complex and probably impossible to achieve.

3. What do you want to be done in response?

In the box below, tell us what you think should be done in response to your objections to the Second Additional Provision to the Bill. You do not have to complete this box if you do not want to.

You can include this information in your response to section 3 'Objections to the Second Additional Provision to the Bill' if you prefer. Please number each paragraph.

1. Reconsider, with a fair, clear and open analysis of the alternatives, the siting of the ventilation shaft *before* the AP2 is approved. This should include further analysis of the GC5 (Northenden Golf Course) site.
2. Identify a new short-list, benchmarking against Baseline+ as required, without making the a-priori assumption that this list should include the Hollies.
3. Reconsider the size and design of the vent shaft needed to extract the TBMs.
4. Reconsider the sift based on *current* local business activity.
5. Perform rigorous due diligence, including full ecological and complete environmental assessments of the location and the effects on residents, before deciding on the placement of the ventilation shaft.
6. Fully consider the environmental degradation caused by Promoter's proposals before the proposals are incorporated in the Bill.
7. Create a realistic model of the site and hence of the flow of pollution and noise towards Mersey Meadows before deciding the site is acceptable.
8. Carefully consider the blight imposed on Mersey Meadows residents in the current proposal, and the lack of mitigation available.
9. Reconsider the extraction of the tunnel-boring machines at this site.
10. Publish any additional reports from the Environment Agency before approval.