

MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE

taken before the

HIGH SPEED RAIL (CREWE - MANCHESTER) BILL SELECT COMMITTEE

PETITIONS AGAINST THE BILL

Monday, 26 June 2023 (Afternoon) - In Committee Room 8

A video of the proceedings can be found [here](#).

PRESENT:

Andrew Percy (Chair)
Dr Lisa Cameron
Antony Higginbotham
Grahame Morris
Holly Mumby-Croft
Martin Vickers

FOR THE PROMOTER:

Timothy Mould KC, Lead Counsel, Department for Transport
Tim Smart, Phase Two Managing Director, HS2 Ltd

Exhibits referred to by the promoter during the hearing with Hoo Green Residents Group can be found [here](#), Christopher and Elizabeth Hough can be found [here](#), Gabriella Manning and Jon O'Reilly can be found [here](#) and Pickmere Parish Council can be found [here](#).

FOR THE PETITIONERS:

1. Hoo Green Residents Group

- Greg Marshall
- Christopher Hough

Exhibits referred to by the petitioner during the hearing can be found [here](#).

2. Gabriella Manning and Jon O'Reilly

- Christopher Hough

Exhibits referred to by the petitioner during the hearing can be found [here](#).

3. Christopher and Elizabeth Hough

- Christopher Hough

Exhibits referred to by the petitioner during the hearing can be found [here](#).

4. Pickmere Parish Council

- Sarah Flannery
- Chris Tarrant

Exhibits referred to by the petitioner during the hearing can be found [here](#).

IN PUBLIC SESSION

INDEX

Subject	Page
Hoo Green Residents Group	3
Submissions by Mr Marshall	6
Submissions by Mr Hough	13
Response by Mr Mould	29
Evidence of Mr Smart	29
 Pickmere Parish Council	 45
Submissions by Ms Flannery	45
Submissions by Mr Tarrant	55
Submissions by Ms Flannery	59
Response by Mr Mould	61

(At 4.15 p.m.)

1. CHAIR: Order, order. Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to this afternoon's sitting of the High Speed Rail Hybrid Bill Committee. We have a number of petitioners today so, before we start, I'll just make my usual comments about people trying to be brief and ensure that the Committee is abreast of what it is the petitioners want from the Committee. We don't need a great deal of background detail on most of the issues we're looking at here. We would just like to know what the ask is although, again, I do make the point that we're not going to get ourselves as a Committee involved in traffic management issues. We've been very clear about that in previous Committees.

2. So we have a number of petitioners. We're going to hear the first three petitioners in order and then I think HS2, the promoter, will respond to all three as they do cover roughly similar issues and then, of course, we'll go on to the final one, which is Pickmere Parish Council. So if people can be cognisant of time. You can do the math of working out how many of us there are and how much time we have for Committee and also ensuring that is enough time for the promoter to respond. So the first petitioners will be Hoo Green Residents Group who Mr Marshall and Mr Hough respond to as the petitioners who will be speaking on behalf of. Before we do that, I'll start as we normally do with the promoter just giving us a brief overview of the petitioner areas and key issues and then we'll pass on to the petitioners. Mr Mould?

Hoo Green Residents Group

3. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Thank you very much indeed. If I put up slide P489. The Committee will immediately recognise this area. We're again at the location of the Hoo Green junction and, as the Committee will recall, the railway works at this location are very significant indeed, because as well as accommodating the main railway line from Crewe to Manchester, the junction also makes provision for a connection to the West Coast Main Line and for a connection for Northern Powerhouse Rail services to Liverpool. And so this is necessarily a major piece of civil engineering and railway fit out works.

4. Today, we're focusing, I think, not so much upon those engineering works per se, although they form an inescapable context for the issues we're going to consider today, because of the scale and complexity of those civil engineering works, but instead we're

focusing on the area that is shown with the yellow notation on either side of Hoo Green Lane. So if we can just – there we are. That area, which straddles Hoo Green Lane, if the cursor just moves from one side of the – there we are – and that is an area, which is identified as the location of a satellite compound, although that rather belies its function, because it's going to be a major works site that will serve those engineering construction works at Hoo Green. But it will also, on our current plans, serve as the main compound, essentially as the nerve centre, for the administration of the railway works between Crewe to the south and Manchester Airport to the north east, and also earmarked to accommodate site workers' accommodation for up to 155 site workers, who will be engaged not only in working on the works at this location but, to some degree, works elsewhere along this part of the route. And it's that compound that is the focus of the petitioners' concerns.

5. The project has responded to those concerns in a number of ways. First of all, at the request of the petitioners, earlier this year, the promoter carried out an assessment of potential alternative locations for that compound and that was reported in a technical report that was provided to the petitioners, I think, early in May of this year. That report, so far as the promoter was concerned, confirmed this is the appropriate location in preference to the others that were considered. I think you may hear some more about that a little later.

6. Secondly, the promoter has put forward a number of commitments, with a view to mitigating the effects of that construction compound, which will be in place, to accommodate main civil works, for four years and then to accommodate rail systems and fit out for a further two and a half years. So it's a compound, which will have a very substantial duration. There's no doubt about that in terms of its location there and it will be used obviously quite intensively, given the scale of works it is intended to serve.

7. So a number of specific points of mitigation have been put forward. I won't take time now to outline those to you. We can come back to those as necessary in the course of the hearing, unless you'd like me to do so, but what I will just mention is this. One of those assurances involves the creation of what is known as a special management zone and that is, essentially, a more intensive process of community relations and community engagement than is ordinarily the norm once the HS2 construction works get going.

And it would involve, for example, the identification of a single point of contact, a dedicated official on the part of the nominated undertaker and a line to the contractor who is managing the compound.

8. And it will also provide, amongst other things, for the identification of appropriate measures, which might be identified during the course of construction works, in order to assist in mitigating the effects of the works, to foreshadow when some form of respite might be required, that kind of thing. Again, we can come back to that a little later but that special management zone has been put into place in recognition of the fact that this is an area of the railway where the construction phase is going to be very significant in terms of its scale and duration. The only area, which has had such a zone introduced, as you will recall, is in the area of the rolling stock depot to the north of Crewe and those are the foci, if you like, of the two most significant and major surface construction activities on this length of the HS2 route.

9. I won't seek in opening to identify any specific points that have been raised by either Mr & Mrs Hough or Ms Manning and Mr O'Reilly. I'm sure they'll be brought to your attention as we progress through but what I've sought to do is to identify what I understand to be the principal source of common concern, which is common to all of these petitioners and I don't propose, unless you'd find it helpful, to say any more than that at this stage.

10. CHAIR: Thank you, that's fine, Mr Mould, thank you. So just to be clear, Mr Marshall and Mr Hough, you're speaking on behalf of the residents' association. Mr Marshall, you are also on behalf of Gabriella Manning and John O'Reilly. Is that correct?

11. MR MARSHALL: Right, Mr Percy, I'll be speaking purely from the context of the Hoo Green Residents.

12. CHAIR: Right, okay.

13. MR MARSHALL: Mr Hough will share some of that delivery of the Hoo Green petition responses and then Mr Hough will act on behalf of Mrs Manning and Mr O'Reilly and then himself.

14. CHAIR: Then himself. Okay, right, okay, right. That's fine, okay. Well, so it's over to you anyway, Mr Marshall.

Submissions by Mr Marshall

15. MR MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr Percy. Actually, you could probably go straight to slide number 2, 'Background'. Just in respect of presentation content, Mr Percy and the Committee, I just want to very briefly cover some background, because it is rather relevant. We then, as you'd requested, are going to move straight on to the asks, what we want. I'll then explain why we want these and Mr Hough will then come in and explain to the Committee why we believe HS2 can achieve these and I'll just do a wrap up the end.

16. CHAIR: Sorry, this briefing covers all three of you.

17. MR MARSHALL: This is specific to the Hoo Green Residents and I think it's probably important to point out, Mr Percy, that Mr Hough, when speaking on behalf of the O'Reillys and himself, we've made only specific reference in those petitions to individual needs. There won't be any repetition to the detail that I'll be sharing on behalf of the overall community because they are community affecting.

18. CHAIR: No, sure, that's helpful.

19. MR MARSHALL: Thank you. Sorry, the other thing to point out on that is, to avoid repetition, we'll take the three presentations holistically so there's no repetition. We're trying to cover all bases through the three of them so mine may be a little bit away from my original petition but it covers the overall community asks.

20. CHAIR: Okay, alright, thank you.

21. MR MARSHALL: Thank you. So just by way of background, our relationship with HS2 dates back to September 2018, during some of the first consultations. This included meetings with HS2 engagement managers, engineers, also partners such as Mott MacDonald – that's Mr Steven Thompson who is still relevant today – and we continued throughout consultations, working very hard with them until the pandemic. We really would like to think that we were collaborating very, very positively with HS2 to seek alternative solutions to a main site compound immediately on our doorstep. At

that time, one of the Hoo Green Residents Group members was actually a construction director of a major UK plc.

22. Just in respect of more recent background, bringing us up to date, summer of 2022, when Mr Draper, Ben Draper, first contacted me in response to the Hoo Green petition. I'd like to take this opportunity to commend Mr Draper on behalf of our group, with this professional and continued facilitation of both virtual meetings and face to face meetings with not only our group but also with individual households.

23. So meetings with Hoo Green Residents have included the HS2 engagement teams, engineers, partners like Mott MacDonald again and departments such as land and property. I'm sure these meetings were able to clearly allow HS2 to understand the fears and anxieties of our community and from our viewpoint, during the petitioning engagement meetings, our community has a much more detailed picture of what we're going to be facing. I must emphasise that we underestimated the magnitude of the impacts that we face in the future, following these more detailed discussions with HS2. The outlook, we feel, is significantly more distressing than what we ever expected at the point of submitting our petition, based on the HS2 documents and understanding available at the time.

24. So during this petition engagement process, we've come to a new understanding. It's highlighted our fears, our worries and our anxieties. So it revealed aspects such as enabling works. Previously we'd thought that references to enabling works was maybe just preparing the main site compound but it's much more than that. It includes works such as the removal of pylons and electricity utilities from the location, which is very near to our homes, and there will be underground ducts and elsewhere. More to point, we believe these enabling works could commence as early as 2025. So the programme of works will start to have an impact, significantly earlier than we would have ever anticipated. So this means it's a longer project and it's longer to live with.

25. We learned more about the intensity and magnitude of the construction programme in and around Hoo Green where there will be four years of very significant construction work to be executed. More importantly, this dialogue, facilitated by Ben Draper, enabled that understanding that we do have to accept that there's got to be a compound at Hoo Green but that's a compound of some sorts. So this is an example of

our community reflecting on and understanding HS2's position during our recent petitioner meetings and coming to a point of acceptance. A compound is needed. However, the magnitude of work over four years, plus enabling works, is still a very fearful and distressing picture for our future.

26. Despite this new understanding, we've always had a sense of hope that HS2 would respond more positively when looking at scaling down the compound at Hoo Green and we held on to this hope until finally receiving the promoter's response document, which followed several assurance documents. I'll comment more on these shortly but the overall position of HS2 set out in the PRD leaves major issues of concern for our community. Our asks are therefore more specific than our original petition. They've been shaped to reflect the outcomes of the HS2 petitioning engagement, resulting in the promoter's response document.

27. So this is what we want. Slide 8, please. Issues of concern and what Hoo Green families want to happen. We want to reduce the scale of the A50 site compound to a satellite compound. We don't see any reason why there should be a head office for 32 satellite compounds in the area. We don't see any reason why there has to be accommodation for 155 construction workers. We'd like a compound that's limited to the provision of office, health, welfare facilities to support the Hoo Green area construction programme, which is largely over a four-year period.

28. We want HS2 to provide enhanced property support programmes to the families. Now, Mr Percy, I could have made several references here but one example is respite support. By that I mean, fully funded local rental accommodation to families suffering from the impact of the project on their mental wellbeing and, on behalf of the community, I'd like to thank HS2 for one of the assurances that has now been given, that actually followed on from submission of my documents to HS2, and this is the provision of a new footpath. We would like further dialogue with HS2 to look at this but we do thank them for allowing this assurance.

29. So the aim of our asks is to enable the community of Hoo Green to live through the duration of the project. We don't feel that HS2 has really, really understood the risk to our mental health. This is that concern that worries everyone significantly in our community. The questions that a few Hoo Green residents ask are such as, how can we

be expected to live with such a catastrophic change on our doorstep? What sort of organisation could propose this kind of change to a community for such a long time? It's almost a decade and we don't feel there's any real, tangible solutions to support us through the mental stress it's going to bring.

30. Presently, about 32 residents live on Hoo Green Lane and Oakwood Road. The main site compound will be virtually a construction town. It's got a population of at least 12 times our number, all with their own transport. There will be large construction vehicles, probability of large silos, maintenance and manufacturing workshops, plant garaging, and there's worker accommodation as well as the offices. It's seven years plus of catastrophic change at best but with the enabling works as early as mid-2025, and possibly project creep and overrun, seven years can become 10 years. That's a decade.

31. Let's assume it goes on for just eight years and that's 10% of a lifetime. That's 10% of your lifetime suffering this stress from catastrophic change on your doorstep. If it were two years, it would be reasonable and manageable to live with. Four years duration, still quite long for anyone but with the right support options for respite, that becomes manageable. We feel that seven, eight years or more, it's immoral. It's inhumane. There will be serious mental health consequences to some of the Hoo Green families because of this catastrophic change to our lives.

32. We recognise that there's substantial work to do at Hoo Green, the four years or so, and this is timeline where we think families will be most vulnerable to the stress of trying to live healthy lives with the change. I made a reference to temporarily blighted, Mr Percy. I don't think there's anything such as temporary blight. You're either blighted or you're not so I apologise for that oversight.

33. So I'd like to come to the HS2 solutions aimed at reducing the impact of the project on the mental and physical wellbeing from families in Hoo Green. Now, most responses from HS2 about mental health concerns refer to the construction code of practice. Now this really states minimising effects from noise, dust, emissions, air quality, visual impacts and such like, and that has been the narrative from HS2 for a long time in our meetings, over years. But I need to emphasise that these construction standards alone will not have any bearing on the mental health outcomes. Regarding the

assurances, although we welcome these, in the context of what we really need to happen, we feel they're minimal proposals. And I've got a point to make here from my community.

34. To be honest, we'd expect that the assurances given to Hoo Green Residents should have been in the plan already. Aspects such as height restrictions in compounds, perimeter screening, hedgerow planting, lane access, in our view, we'd expect these as the minimum standards anyway in a situation like ours. And that point dates our confidence in what HS2 have been presenting as a solution to reduce health risks, the construction code of practice. In our view, it should already define the standard that we've been given as assurances.

35. We've been referred to HS2 mental health publications, like the mental health and wellbeing reports and the Phase 2B mental health and wellbeing. These are documents that talk about data gathering and important initiatives, and I accept that, but there's nothing of real relevance to the plight of Hoo Green families. It's good to read that the data helps with training to help their staff and maybe the promotion of a dedicated point of contact for Hoo Green to escalate concerns to. But there's no real solutions offered for serious mental health deterioration that's directly linked to long-term construction projects on the community's doorstep.

36. Now the only solution that's been offered by HS2, that's really tangible, is sell your home. I'd like to acknowledge Mr Draper's efforts again in his facilitation of virtual and face to face meetings with HS2 land and properties. They've been very helpful and insightful, enabling Hoo Green families to better understand the purchase schemes that are available but our reality is that this solution won't work for everyone and, in this case, it delivers unreasonable outcomes. Realities of where we live when considering moving home, to relocate to a semi-rural location near Knutsford means an average of at least another £100,000 on a like for like property. The average market value of a property in Hoo Green is probably around £400,000 if it's not been extended and there's a few examples that have just snatched from properties for sale in and around Knutsford that look like ours and you can see they're much more expensive, unless you downsize. So selling your home either means a lot more expenditure or it means settling for much less, if you want to replicate a rural location in and around Knutsford, and do consider that that's kind of the centre of our universe.

37. Please understand that anyone who chose to live at Hoo Green did so as a lifestyle choice. There's little noise pollution, just the sound of birds, sheep, just an occasional distant drone of an aircraft. It's pleasant countryside views. There's very little traffic. We've got immediate access to walking, cycling routes on the doorstep. We've got clean air, clear skies and that's why we chose to live there. Peaceful, serene, and a nice quality of life.

38. Now the inevitable stress that the project will impact our mental wellbeing is very real to the families of Hoo Green and HS2 must provide enhanced home purchase options and, more importantly, options for respite housing during the project, for those who don't want to or can't sell their homes. The existing HS2 property schemes fall short and it's unacceptable to expect a family suffering from stress to be forced to sell and downsize their home or face unwanted additional financial burden to buy an additional home near Knutsford.

39. As I said earlier, during meetings over the last few months, we've come to a very clear understanding about what HS2 want to do and what they intend to do regarding the site and the location of the main site compound. And throughout our meetings, we've heard the same message over an extended period of time, that they won't reduce the size of the compound by relocating central office functions and worker accommodation. Mr Hough's going to focus on this aspect, shortly.

40. I do want to share our disappointment in some meetings with HS2 when they were giving feedback on some of the alternative locations for the compound that we'd put forward and the disappointment was because they just didn't address the topic of mental health. The emphasis instead was being on the best engineering solutions and best construction practice rationale for the location of the site compound.

41. So I've just presented an example with this slide from a presentation received earlier in the year. There's no reference to mental health impact in Hoo Green. It's a proximity disadvantage that the compound is 80 metres away from the nearest home yet there's reference to Yew Tree dairy farm, and I quote, 'adverse effects', relating to a suggestion we made to locate the compound further to our west, on the opposite side of the route. Now, Mr Hough will comment on this shortly but I just want to emphasise to the Committee that the alternative location for the compound we'd proposed west of the

tracks, would not be on Mr Wright's doorstep, and that's Yew Tree Farm. We're not NIMBYs. If this location were to be considered for all or part of the compound, we'd recommend that this be much further to the south of Yew Tree Farm. I guess my point is, it's an example of HS2 not understanding or accepting our mental health concerns. It suited them to use terminology like, 'adverse effects', for a dairy farm through an optional compound location, but there's no reference on this slide to impacts on the Hoo Green community, except proximity.

42. Now, having said that, and despite our disappointments during the petitioning meetings, we always held out some hope that the promoter's response document would recognise our greatest fears about our future mental health and propose real solutions to help us live healthily throughout the project. What we'd hoped for didn't materialise. There were very few references to mental health in the PRD. However, we'd read comments, which I think is the first written acknowledgement from HS2, that we faced conditions that, 'has the potential to adversely affect wellbeing'. There are a few other extracts on my slide on the right and on the left.

43. The other assurance of property schemes proposed, our hope for specific solutions to address mental health impacts, hasn't been dealt with. The focus on the PRD and the Annex A, it continues to reference the construction code of practice as the gold standard, stating it will minimise impacts on receptors. Therefore, our asks of the Committee reflect what we believe can be done to help families in Hoo Green live with the project. What hasn't been forward by HS2, to my knowledge, are individually tailored solutions and I'm not sure what's meant by, 'special circumstances', or 'atypical properties', which is in one of the land and property documents.

44. Now, HS2 rightly promotes themselves as a world-class organisation in health and safety. They are a great company in this aspect, especially for their employees, for the suppliers, partners and for the public, in terms of health and safety. Several reports have been commissioned but these don't go far enough in respect of mental health on impacts of distress that the community faces, with solutions. The reports highlight better ways of community engagement and upskilling HS2 resources to deal with the impact of the construction in a community.

45. So in coming to near completion of my first introductory section, I just want to

briefly present an image of now and then. I didn't have a graphic of HS2 construction in Hoo Green or any modelling of that so the graphic on the right is from an HS2 archive, but I'm sure it's pretty close to what we might face. The image on the left is an aerial shot of Hoo Green. I realise the Committee has visited the area when going to see our Winterbottom neighbours. I'd like Matt to present a quick drone view that shows our homes and fields and also where the compound's going to be located.

46. Thank you, Matt. Slide 20, please. That's just a quick reflection on what could be for the future with what exists now. I'd like to hand over to Chris, Mr Hough, now to explain to the Committee why we believe HS2 can achieve change.

Submissions by Mr Hough

47. MR HOUGH: Thank you, Greg. Good afternoon, everybody. I would just like to start – so, Matt, please could you go to reference P463(4)? Thank you. Before we go into the main slides, I just, because of an email that we received on 21 June, that was received as part 2 from – well, certainly from my petition hearing – it mentions the potential or likely requirements for a concrete batching plant at the A50 Warrington compound. An extract from the part 2 says, 'As a precautionary measure, the environmental statement has evaluated the possibility of establishing these facilities at the A50 Warrington Road main compound, which the promoter expects to be likely, given the presence of significant structures near the main compound'.

48. So my first point on this is that this is going to add to the asks that were previously on the slides because, to my knowledge, there is no documents in the engagement documentation that states the requirement for a concrete batching plant. So it actually does conflict some of the other assurances made, such as height restrictions, if we're going to expect to see a 12-18-metre-high concrete batching plant with silo in the compound. This actually is important. On the left-hand side, it shows potential indicative location for the silo and the batching plant, which is right in front of the Hoo Green residents, the point being that when I show you the rest of the slides, it shows otherwise in terms of height restrictions and what's actually being proposed. So this will lead to an additional ask.

49. Okay, so if I return to the main slides, please, Matt. So A84(21). Okay. So just to reiterate, in the context of this part of the presentation, we want to re-assign the

proposed main compound to a satellite compound. We want to locate, and I'll go on to more detail on this, the project back office staff – and what I mean by that is the support staff for all of the satellite compounds – to an alternative siting. We want to locate the worker accommodation to the A556 alternative siting, the workshops to the M6 viaduct compound, and the railway systems area to the M6 viaduct compound, and this will help in the mitigation of the impacts to the community: shorter duration, earlier reinstatement of the lands, which form use as much as possible; and hopefully no use of Hoo Green Lane for HS2 construction traffic or staff or private cars. Next slide please, Matt. Sorry, just for that record, and also no concrete batching plants at the A50 main compound.

50. In order to provide you a little bit of context for us as residents, and a little bit of perspective, I just wanted to give you a very quick chronological order of events of the documentation that we've been referencing to for the D2 document construction compounds. When we actually started our dialogue with HS2, our reference point was a version 1.5 document, 'High Speed Two Phase One Information Paper', and in there, as you can see on the slide, section 4, 'Criteria for the Selection of Sites', the primary criteria for the selection of sites was their proximity to sensitive receptors.

51. In 2022, however, after a significant period of engagement and information gathering, version 2 of the document came out. Now section 4 for the criteria for selection of sites is stating, 'The site in a construction compound has been influenced by a number of factors, including avoidance to proximity of sensitive receptors'. The main document that we are now referencing, that we actually have been sent as part of the PRD response, is the technical note, 'The Selection and Placement of the A50 Warrington Road Main Compound', where now, it's alluded to that the, shall I say, there are two areas of consideration for HS2 now. One is operational factors and the primary consideration for the operational viability of a main compound are – and there is a list – and environmental and engagement factors are also something that's considered.

52. So the point being in this slide is that, from being the primary criteria for selection of a compound, we have, as sensitive receptors been eroded to also-rans. It makes the intention clear that the impact to the mental wellbeing of the Hoo Green community during construction and, in particular, the proposed location of the compound, are not

that important anymore, in comparison to the criteria that's been set out in this retrospective document. I will make a note that we asked for a document in the engagement process around Q4 last year, to actually help with the decision-making process, to actually document it to help us understand. That document is this technical note that has just arrived for this hearing. So that is why we're going to give this a lot of focus.

53. As mentioned, the request was made last year for the A50 – I apologise for the spelling mistake as well, by the way, on the top of this, on the header of this slide – the response was given by HS2 in the form of the technical note. We're going to reference the technical note now as the main engagement document for the rest of the points in my presentation, the point being that the whole of the rationale for the location of the A50 compound is within this document. This is the rationale that HS2 propose and it's my intention to hopefully throw a little doubt on that selection and throw a little doubt on that decision-making process, by the following slides.

54. In the document, there are four alternatives that are given consideration. There's the current location; there's the Yew Tree Farm location to the west; there is the alternative 2 location, which is the M6 viaducts and A556 hub, as I will call it from now; and then the one north of Bowden View. We're not going to go through all of these. The thing that I would like to try and do is to compare the current location with that of alternate location number 2, which is the viaduct and the A556 hub.

55. For information then, the technical note provides the promoter's view on the current rationale for the selection of compounds. It interprets the current version of the D2 information paper and, in our view, puts a bias on the criteria that benefit HS2 in terms of operational convenience. So it's a dilution to this as the main and primary criteria.

56. Now rather than going through the document, the document can be pretty much summarised by the output, which is two tables. Table 2 in the document, which is the operational performance summary of the potential main compound locations in the Hoo Green area; and number 3, which is the environmental and engagement performance summary. So just one point of note before we go on to this slide that's showing at the moment.

57. As Greg did say, Mr Marshall did say, during the engagement process, just for clarification, the location for the alternative location 1 for Yew Tree Farm, was actually much further south, so as to minimise or have no impact on Yew Tree Farm. So the location is reasonably inaccurate on the slide – on HS2's plan.

58. Could you please go to P462(15)? While we're doing that, the output of the document is introduced within the document as all of the points within D2. The construction compound document can be summarised into two areas: operational performance and the environmental and engagement performance of the sites. This table here, which is around operational performance, we're looking at the whole slide here, or the whole table. Just for reference, red is something that fails to meet the operational requirements and makes it unviable; amber is a constraint that is manageable; and green doesn't pose any material constraints. So if we look there, we're going to go to now look at the AP1/SES position and the west of Old Hall Lane, which are the two alternatives.

59. Please can you return to the slide A84(24), Matt? So our proposal is to look at four areas from that whole table. In the whole table, there's eight point of operational factors used as a comparison. In the summary that supports the table, HS2 state that from an operational viewpoint, the A50 compound is the preferred compound as it meets the greatest number of location operational requirements. As you can see, there's four items on this slide where, as Hoo Green residents, we actually differ in our assignment that HS2 has put forward. The first one, in terms of proximity to proposed works that it is to manage, that's unviable for the alternative location that we propose, if we actually go through the Hoo Green asks, I think that will demonstrate that it is actually viable. So we'll deal with that in some slides going forward.

60. The next one, which is around adequate space and suitability of existing topology or topography, for alternative 2, there is a statement that is amber because there is additional land required. A significant portion of land has unfortunately been – will be taken for the M6 viaduct compound. We feel that it's minimal, the amount of effort to increase that amount of land. However unfortunate it may be, the actual land has minimum impact to any sensitive receptors so we don't think that that actually does pose an issue.

61. The second part in that is that it's suggested then that from our perspective, that rather than being amber, we could actually be a green in that case.

62. The next one in terms of existing utilities. HS2 state that they've got onsite provisions for power and foul water that's a requirement, but state that it's optimal. Well, we say that it's not optimal because there is onsite provision required so that should be amber as well.

63. And then the access to the construction works, the access to the construction works and satellite compounds it is to support with minimal use of public roads. So the proposed location, although they're green, we don't think it's optimal. We think that this should be actually amber.

64. So if we take into account, apart from the proximity to proposed works, which was the first item on that slide, which we will address in the slides to come, we don't feel, from an operational perspective, there's any real benefit of the A50 location over the alternative option 2, from an operational perspective.

65. If we move on to the next slide, please, I'll move again a little bit more of a pace. The minimal use of public roads that I mentioned on the previous slide, if we go very quickly to this, it's the blue shape on the – it's not showing as blue on there, unfortunately. In the centre of the screen is the A50 main compound indicative location and towards the bottom, which is red or orangey on our presentation, it shows the alternative 2 compound. The motorway junctions that are referenced by HS2 are in the dashed areas. From our perspective, without going through all of the points, for us, the proposed location at the moment doesn't make minimum use of public roads. The use of the A50 is required to go anywhere. Going to the west, it goes through Hoo Green; High Legh; it goes past a garden centre; it goes past school traffic; it goes – well, two garden centres; it goes past Lymm fire station. There is a bottleneck down that road quite significantly a number of times a year. Basically, without going into too much detail, wherever you go from that compound, you are causing a nuisance, for want of a better phrase, on the public roads. It also, in order to get access to the M6 junction 9 junction, you need to use a B road. So that B road is the B5569 Chester Road.

66. If we look at the alternative, our alternative, you'll see that it's absolutely on M6 junction 19. It's within a stone's throw of the main junction. If we want to go to the

M56, either with a simple slip road or using the roundabout at junction 29, you go straight on to the A556 and you go to the M56 junction 7 and 8, to go east and west.

67. One thing that is mentioned in the documentation and the technical note, it's stated by the promoter that the current location, in the centre of the slide, actually brings in excessive travel – sorry, it's stated that the current location reduces excessive travel and improves productivity. Well, what we're saying is, there is no excessive travel. If, as we propose, you actually have worker accommodation at the A556 hub, then you will go to work like anybody else does, you will commute to work and start work at your assigned time. If that means leaving 10 minutes earlier, so be it. I commute to work. My productivity isn't affected because my productivity is based on the hours that I work from my start time to finish time.

68. And one other point of note that I'd like to raise is, one of the criteria that's set for operational factors is the proximity to major road network. Now, I think we've just demonstrated that we're directly on the motorway here from this proposed location but also, if you do remember in previous dialogue, the purpose of the A556 link road was to take traffic away from local roads, including the A50. Is it not fair to say then that it's better to avoid using the A50 as far as reasonably practicable?

69. The next part of the technical note, if you go to 462(16). Okay, in this table, very quickly, you'll see there's eight points of consideration used as a comparison. The west of Old Hall Lane, which is the alternative option 2, in this case, is shown as the more favourable as it meets the greater number of environmental and engagement requirements if you use the same logic as the statement made by HS2 for the operational factors.

70. Please could you return to slide 84(26)? Thank you. Okay, so as you can see, there's three points of difference, i.e. colour, between the two locations. We're going to focus on the two that have a red perimeter, shall we call it. This is where we, as Hoo Green Residents Group, don't agree with the assignments made. In the summary narrative to the table that we've just seen, HS2 state that the main differentiator is the, 'proximity to residential receptors'. In each case here, in the table, it simply states that the compound is in close proximity to Hoo Green Lane and Oakwood Road residents. It considers this as amber, which is, 'a minor negative impact on the environmental

engagement criteria, that is manageable’.

71. So if you take this into consideration now and think that if the current proposed location is 65 metres away from residents, it doesn’t acknowledge the overall impact to residents in the changes that we are going to see from light pollution, noise, etc without going through the whole gamut. There will be working from 7.00 a.m. in the morning until 7.00 p.m. at night, including the start up and close out. There will be work on Saturdays until 2.00. There will be the requirement for maintenance in the evenings and on Sunday, on vehicles. So, effectively, we’re now moving into almost a 24/7 situation, 65 metres away, for seven plus years. So we suggest that that is not a manageable amber; it is a red in both cases.

72. It’s absolutely apparent to us, from these two tables, that the selection of the site as a main compound has been formally based on operational convenience. There’s minimal cognisance to the importance of the wellbeing of the residents.

73. Please can you move to the next slide? Thank you. This is one is, if you actually reference back to the start, you will see or remember, if you see in your mind’s eye, the location of the batching plant, the concrete batching plant. The left-hand part of the slide shows Appendix B to the technical note, which gives an indicative proposed layout. You’ll see in there that we’ve got nine-metre high, three storey offices accommodation, nine-metre-high workshops, nine-metre-high maintenance and storage facilities and railway facilities. If we actually adopt the alternative 2 approach, we feel that the office accommodation that is kept – we’re not saying, ‘Don’t have it’. We’re saying keep it as a satellite compound and have the essential construction, delivery, engineering personnel on site, we believe we can get down to a single storey. The single storey welfare then would only be required. If we move the M6 workshops to the M6 viaducts compound, and the storage to the area either vacated by the accommodation or even better, to the M6 viaduct compound, we would take that out of the line of site of the residents and give them some respite from that nine-metre view for seven years.

74. One other thing is, if you look from the left and right-hand slides, on the left one at the bottom, it says, ‘Site Access Security’. It should be, ‘Temporary Site Access Security’. We don’t know when you look at this and you look at the proximity of Hoo

Green Lane, when we think about staff car parks and we think about worker accommodation, that Hoo Green Lane would be used.

75. One point that I'd like to make is – that we've already alluded to – that the likely requirement for a concrete batch plant actually makes a bit of a mockery of all the dialogue that we've had and the assurances that we've now received around height restrictions around – well, mainly around height restrictions – when in fact, in part 2 documentation, we are now told there it's very likely that we will now have, on that compound, a 12-18 metre silo and concrete batching plant for four years. It's an example of where we are being drip fed and drip fed and drip fed, another negative impact and another negative impact.

76. Please can you move to slide 28? I'm coming to the end of my rant. This one as a slide, basically gives a high-level view of the duration of construction works at the compound. There's just a couple of points of note. This actually doesn't include utilities works, which are due to start around Q2 in 2025. So the 132,000-volt diversion, gas main diversion; 400,000-volt pylon diversions that will all use Hoo Green Lane. There's a one year, in the red box there, there's a one-year area, period of time, in 2032. Well, there's no actual real construction works indicated here, yet we'll feel the impact of that compound.

77. If the rail systems work is managed from an alternative location, such as the M6 viaducts compound, then the A50 compound could be reinstated to lower the impact earlier, perhaps during Q1, 2031. And if the switching and crossing management are moved, then work will cease at Hoo Green Lane at the end of 2031. So including the enabling works, construction work at Hoo Green will run from Q2 2025 until Q3 2033. Just ask anybody sat in the room if they think that that is an acceptable duration of time to have to tolerate the amount of construction works and impacts that we're going to feel as a community.

78. Next slide, please. Okay, this is my final slide.

79. CHAIR: I do think we need to start moving on. We've got the point about the compound and your unhappiness and unease with the selection arrangements and your proposals for an alternative. We don't really need much more on the compound beyond that. We have got that point very clearly.

80. MR HOUGH: Okay, this point rounds it off, absolutely rounds it off and I'll be brief on this.

81. CHAIR: Because we do need to move on.

82. MR HOUGH: Okay.

83. CHAIR: Thank you.

84. MR HOUGH: So this is the technical note, Appendix A, and it shows the schematic of positioning of the main construction compounds. Now, the only thing that I've added here is, in the centre, is the A556 PMO and accommodation and put three red triangles on the slide. You can see that M6 viaduct is more centrally located. The M6 viaduct compound has less impact to any community because of its location next to the motorway. It has the light, the noise, the fumes, so the changes of impact is lower. It has direct links to the A556. As a consequence, we feel it should have more bias for the spoil moving as well, rather than using the A50 off the compound, and it has less impact on the local residents, due to its proximity to them.

85. So the proposal again at the high-level is: re-assign the A50 compound to a satellite compound; remove worker accommodation; remove non-essential project team from the compound; assume single storey height restriction; no traffic movements on Hoo Green Lane and minimise the duration to four years; and no concrete batching plant. Those are the asks.

86. For the M6 viaduct, locate the concrete batch plant, if it's required, at the M6 viaduct and use the haul road; locate the workshops and associated storage at the M6 viaduct; and locate the rail system works at the M6 viaduct. And what could be assigned from this point as the A556 hub, locate all the support offices and the worker accommodation at that A556 location that was previously used for the building of the A556 link road. It's there, it's available and it's fit for purpose.

87. So the overall proposal is to split the load, spread the load over three locations to minimise or lower the impact at Hoo Green and make life tolerable without the impact on the communities.

88. CHAIR: We've got that point, Mr Hough, thank you.

89. MR HOUGH: Right, I will hand back to –

90. CHAIR: Back to Mr Marshall.

91. MR MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr Percy. I'll wrap up very quickly. Thanks, Matt. If you could just go to slide 30. It is all about mental health, Mr Percy, and living with a long project. I guess what we're asking for is the Committee's understanding and to urge HS2 to rethink the project of the main compound design, scale it down, but more importantly, establish more dialogue with us so we can agree enhanced temporary and permanent home relocation options for those people who are going to suffer with their mental health. There are people who live in the community who have recognised health conditions. They're vulnerable. I guess we're asking you to think, well, if you were us.

92. So, in summary, Mr Hough's presented how we believe HS2 can achieve change through reducing the physical and mental health risks to the families in Hoo Green and if that's supported with enhanced temporary and permanent home relocation options, it's probably the only outcome for the community that can provide our families with hope for the future.

93. We're a small rural community, ranging from babies to people at retirement age. We believe that the package of measures we've outlined today would help us to live through it. So we're asking the Committee to urge HS2 to translate our asks into undertakings. We appreciated the assurances that have been given. I think I stated that we did feel many of them are minimal in relation to what should have happened, should happen anyway, and we're very, very worried that these just don't go far enough to reduce inevitable mental health impacts on our community. Thank you.

94. CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Marshall. Members, any questions at this point? No? Okay. Thank you. Well, so it's Mr Hough again for Gabriella Manning and John O'Reilly, correct?

95. MR HOUGH: Yes.

96. CHAIR: Okay, over to you.

97. MR HOUGH: Okay, thank you. So this is on behalf of Gabriella and Jonathan O'Reilly who live at 5 Hoo Green Lane. I'll just open up by saying, everything that's

been put forward by the previous presentation, stands for Jonathan and Gabriella and it stands as their response as well.

98. So the next slide, please, 86(2). The contents of this presentation, and please forgive me, I am reading some of this verbatim, so I hope it all makes sense, but the contents is that I'm going to introduce both the petitioners, the impacts to their household as they see it, a few comments on the assessment method, the mitigation measures and closing conclusions and requests.

99. CHAIR: Is it in relation to the compound again? The assessment measures, is that what you're – What do the points relate to in relation to this petition? Is it the compound?

100. MR HOUGH: It is to the impacts to the community.

101. CHAIR: Okay, well we don't want any repetition of what's already happened and what's already been said in relation to the compound. So if you can proceed with any additional information, that would be helpful for us, please. Thank you.

102. MR HOUGH: Okay, so I'll just introduce –

103. CHAIR: Presumably they support the comments made previously?

104. MR HOUGH: Exactly. That's why we're trying to avoid any repetition. So Jonathan is an IT security consultant who works from home and he has glaucoma, which means he's at the risk of going blind. He's in his mid-30s, which makes this particularly concerning for his quality of life and ability to work. Gabriella's a senior engineer and geologist. She cycles to her office in the week, works from home or is on construction sites. She has awareness of the impact of construction works, risk assessments and mitigation measures. She values her lifestyle at Hoo Green Lane to help relieve her stress. She also goes to make the points that she's got two dogs and a cat, two cats buried in the garden due to road traffic accidents on Hoo Green Lane and the A50 and the dogs require daily walks. They both enjoy walking their dogs. So that is setting the context for how they live.

105. The impacts are, yes, we understand there is a compact in front of their home but their point is that this, now, will remove access to places and exercise and their stress

reducing because we will be landlocked between HS2, the A556 and the A50. The air pollution etc is all – that is a repeat so I will not go through that anymore.

106. Gabriella does note in correspondence with HS2, all they recognise is the residents nearby. They don't identify these individual impacts in their overall assessment and that's why they felt it was important to give the context of their situation at this point. So Jon, who has glaucoma, very, very high pressure in the eyes, meaning that his eyes are sensitive to anything that impacts this pressure, for example dust, air etc. Exercise and good sleep reduces this and if his eyesight is exacerbated, this will also have a mental health impact. Also then if he can't work, it will have a financial impact. This view is from his office that he uses every day because he's permanently working from home. It's down-wind of the compound so there will be no respite from the construction activities, especially given the location of the concrete silo batching.

107. This is a little bit negated now because we now have a footpath being offered as assurance in the final completed construction but one thing that is worth mentioning is that during construction, HS2 have, in the promoter's response document, have said that there is a pavement on the A50 that can be used for your recreation or activities, and the photographs on the right basically are showing you the A50 that's being proposed. It's a 60 mile an hour limit. You can see that it's not very well managed. The path is very, very narrow and it's quite dangerous. The other aspect that should be given consideration to is that actually to use that footpath, you have to cross the A50 to get to it, walk 800 metres to the next point of entry into the lanes and then cross the A50 again. So overall, you're doing that four times every walk that you would make.

108. Sorry, I'm just trying to make sure I don't repeat anything by reading what's in here. Cycling routes. This basically again is talking about the impact on cyclists. Hoo Green Lane and Woodworth Lane are proposed to be closed. Hulseheath Lane will be crossed by plant. HS2 are forcing not only pedestrians but cyclists on to busier and faster roads, which does risk lives regardless of measures to reduce the risks. This is why cyclists use Hoo Green Lane, for example. So not only is HS2 risking people being struck by vehicles but there is also reduced lifespan by forcing cyclists into air pollution. Gabriella notes she will no longer be able to cycle to work because it will be felt to be unsafe and unpleasant. This is unlikely to be individual to her and will have a wider impact.

109. One point that she makes is that it would exacerbate the real problem in this country which is local transport. Sustrans, on the right-hand side of that slide, is a national charity that promotes the use of sustainable transport. She wants to make reference to that, that it's not reasonable to expect cyclists to share road space with high volumes of fast-moving traffic.

110. I think there is reference in one of the documents from HS2 that by 2030, 19% additional traffic will be in place on the A50 due to construction works and that HS2 think that that should be able to be managed. It certainly won't be a place for cyclists, pedestrians or people wanting to use it as a walk way.

111. I think the method of assessment we will leave. If you go to the next slide, please, Matt. The only point I will make on that one – or two points – is the consideration for us leaving our homes, and other recreational users of Hoo Green Lane of which there are a significant proportion, because there's no consideration of what staff do outside work.

112. This is where I mention the Hoo Green Lane into a temporary site access for accommodation. If there's 155 staff in there and during the time before stop up of Hoo Green Lane or maybe after, if they're going out for dinner and entertainment every night, there's going to be a significant amount of traffic down Hoo Green Lane. Next slide, please.

113. Okay. Mitigation measures; they're both grateful for the assurances provided but they feel the measures provided by HS2 are not considered to be appropriate or sufficient. Despite working to the Code of Construction Practice, HS2 have a significant number of complaints which demonstrate that the measures are not sufficient.

114. She goes on to reference that there were 800 complaints in six months reported in March last year and 1,400 complaints in 2020. That is an indication, in her mind, that the Code of Construction Practice is not working. I think we're going to go into some of these mitigation measures in the next slide deck so I will ask for the next slide, Matt, please, and we will leave that there.

115. So, in closing, HS2 is reducing our quality of life significantly. We're not

NIMBYs because of views; HS2 is actually reducing our quality of life. We will be landlocked and our houses directly overlook the main compound for over seven years. We are, as has been acknowledged, probably the worst hit than any other community; we're next to the main compound because we are landlocked and our houses overlook it. It's not the case anywhere except for one other location on the route and until now, there's been no acknowledgement of that.

116. We've had no specific or demonstrable mitigation measures to the community that have been committed to by HS2 which aren't primarily to reduce HS2 risk or standard construction practice. The request is at minimum they commit to a footpath which has now been sent; this is after the slide deck. Move all works associated with the main compound, okay. Move the railway systems away from any residents to reduce duration, and tree planting between the community and the compound to reduce light, noise and air pollution will also help maintain social capital.

117. These additional mitigation measures will help to ensure safety, improve our health and increase social capital. The health benefits to ourselves, immediate and wider local community far outweigh any costs that might be considered restrictive.

118. That concludes the presentation for Gabriella and Jonathan O'Reilly.

119. CHAIR: Thank you. Obviously, we've only got an hour and a half left for today's meeting and we haven't yet had the response to these three petitions from HS2. And it's you again, Mr Hough, I believe, and we do obviously have the parish council to hear as well. I'll hand over to you – to continue with you, Mr Hough, for what I will have to require to be a brief presentation, please.

120. MR HOUGH: This is brevity.

121. CHAIR: Thank you.

122. MR HOUGH: Okay. My name is Chris Hough. I live at 9 Hoo Green Lane and if, Matt, you could bring up the first slide, please, that'd be great. So, from my perspective, again, the presentation that I'm going to give compliments the first two presentations that you have been on the receiving end of, shall we say, so please take the three presentations as a whole. We have tried to minimise any repetition and I hope that

this won't give you any more repetition –

123. CHAIR: I mean, what we're interested in is what do you want as opposed to any greater context or history.

124. MR HOUGH: Okay.

125. CHAIR: And I think you've made clear what you want in terms of the compound, possible alternative locations for the compound. You've made some requests in relation to the mental health impacts, and of course you've referenced the footpaths issue, which I think you've said have also been partially resolved through the assurance you received recently.

126. So really, I suppose the question is, is there anything in addition to those requests you've already made that you wish to make on behalf of yourself as a petitioner that's not already been requested or made? Otherwise we're just treading over the same ground again which isn't a very valuable –

127. MR HOUGH: My presentation focus is on the assurances.

128. CHAIR: Okay. In regards to?

129. MR HOUGH: The assurances that have been put forward –

130. CHAIR: On the footpath or the –

131. MR HOUGH: No, the footpath is not included.

132. CHAIR: Okay.

133. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Can I just say? The presentation asks a series of questions about the assurances. Do they do this, do they do that? HS2 has written back. When I saw these questions, I said, 'Look, write back to the petitioner and give the answer' because it's not going to be a helpful use of your time to hear a question and answer session of that kind. So, I just thought I'd mention that because I hope Mr Hough has received that email.

134. MR HOUGH: I have.

135. MR MOULD KC (DfT): It may be that it would be convenient just to focus on any residual points that remain in the light of the answer that was received on Friday by email from HS2

136. MR HOUGH: I think there's only one then that I will bring forward because that one does require further clarification. So, this is slide 85(5), please, Matt. While he's bringing that one up, just to give you my context; I've lived at Hoo Green Lane since 2005 with my wife Libby.

137. In January 2013 when we were given the notice that HS2 is going to come to our vicinity, our community, we've now lived with that stress for 10 years already. If we actually get through to 2033, that will be 20 years of my life that has had this hanging over it for want of a better phrase and I want to make that clear. So, it's not just the construction period, it's far longer.

138. If we look at the assurance for the A50 compound access, I'm not expecting the full answer because I did get an email and to be honest, it was over the weekend. I haven't had that much time to digest it all. From my perspective, the assurances for the A50 compound access is confusing and needs some explanation.

139. There's three parts ostensibly. The petitioner's response document in May states in paragraph 49, that once the A50 compound is in place, traffic would stop using Hoo Green. In Annex B that was enclosed with the PRD in May, an assurance is put forward for the nominated undertaker to construct access to the A50 compound off the A50 as soon as reasonably practicable so the compound can be accessed off the A50.

140. It then states that, if access can be made, then to stop using Hoo Green Lane apart from the crossing point. In the final assurance on 16 June, the promoter requires the nominated undertaker to restrict HS2 from using large goods vehicles during construction unless used to construct site-specific works until the stop update, which is the date that Hoo Green Lane is blocked off.

141. It's a little bit unclear and I think that all of those assurances need to be taken into one simple worded document or assurance that actually makes some sense that states exactly what it should be because there's three statements there that actually leaves us a little bit confused as to what is being there being proposed.

142. I have plenty more to say but I think because of time, I think we'll call it a close there.

143. CHAIR: Thank you. Members, any questions? Mr Mould.

Response by Mr Mould

144. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Thank you. I think I'm responding on three main topics; firstly, the case for scaling down the compound at the A50 alongside the Hoo Green works. Secondly, the adequacy of mitigation measures and in particular in relation to the risk to mental health and wellbeing, and thirdly, the more specific points made on behalf of Mr O'Reilly and Ms Manning, and by Mr Hough on behalf of himself and his wife.

145. So in relation to the first of them, I'd like Mr Smart, if I may, just to come into the witness box. While we do that, can I put up please information paper D2 which sets out the basic arrangements for the location of work sites? Because I want there to be no doubt in the minds of Members of the Committee, or indeed the petitioners, about the basic criterion that governs the location of a worksite for the purposes of constructing a major railway scheme. I think we've got that up. I can't read it very well, I'm afraid. I wonder if we can blow up the page a bit.

146. 3.1 is under the heading, 'Location and use of compounds', you can see, 'Construction compounds will be required at various locations along the route and will generally be sited alongside or adjacent to the relevant proposed works'. Mr Smart, the first question, what are the relevant proposed works in the case of the compound we're concerned with here?

Evidence of Mr Smart

147. MR SMART: It's the central gravity of the work that's going on in Hoo Green with the earthworks and the box structures and the spurs.

148. MR MOULD KC (DfT): It's that major area of railway construction to create the Hoo Green junction, effectively.

149. MR SMART: That's correct, yes.

150. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Right. If that construction compound were located elsewhere, would that alternative site be suboptimal, no better or worse than, or better than the proposed location at Hoo Green for the purposes of serving those works?

151. MR SMART: It would be suboptimal.

152. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Why?

153. MR SMART: Because we have to have a major satellite compound, if you want to call it that, here anyway because of the scale of activity that's happening. So, the likes of the maintenance compound, the batching plant and welfare facilities, etc, would still be required irrespective of whether it was a main compound or a construction compound.

154. What the main compound does is it just has offices for administration and in this case because we're in a rural location, we do have worker accommodation onsite. That's to be efficient in terms of construction and cutdown workers traveling to the site because it's in a more rural area.

155. So actually, the scale of activity that would be reduced by making it satellite compound and not a main compound would be not significant.

156. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Can just put up P507(15), please? I'm going to come on to ask you a little more about that, the idea of scaling down to exclude certain activities but just to set the Committee's bearings, if we may, this is a slide which I think the petitioners showed in the course of their presentation, which summarises the results of the comparative analysis set out in the technical report that Mr Hough spent some time on.

157. MR SMART: Correct.

158. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Look at the first line. This is to do with operational performance, 'Proximity to the proposed work it is to manage', first column, 'Current AP1/SE1 position' – that's the Bill scheme. It says, 'Optimal 550m', and look at the alternative that the petitioners have been focusing on, west of Old Hall Lane, yes? 'Unviable due to construction inefficiency, 2km'. Do you consider there to be any room for argument about that conclusion?

159. MR SMART: No, I don't.

160. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Thank you. So that essentially leads us to the conclusion, I think in fairness, Mr Marshall acknowledged at the outset, which is there needs to be a compound at this location. So, the question is what should it be, what should it do? Is there an opportunity to scale back into activities? On that, can we turn, please, to P508(1)?

161. We have a useful indicative layout of the elements that are to be accommodated within this compound. Now can you please identify for me those elements that, in your judgment, that are confined only to either its main compound function or to its provision of workers' accommodation.

162. MR SMART: Yes. First of all, on the very bottom of the page in the purple, it is the worker accommodation and we've got an up to six metre height limit on that and you can see it's a very small portion of the overall site. If you go to the top, we've got office accommodation, multi-story up to six metres; that's the sort of blue area you can see.

163. Now we would still require a proportion of that, but clearly not for – if it was not quite as large, we've got about, at the peak, 135 office workers that will be in there, because it's the main administrative hub for this overall area because there's quite a lot of work going on. Also there's welfare facilities. Well, we'd still require a proportion of that because even on the satellite compound we might provide welfare facilities, toilet, mess facilities, etc, so that could be slightly reduced.

164. We do need to have temporary fabrication and temporary buildings and workshops because this has a direct access to the trace and we obviously have fairly large earth moving plant and equipment on the trace, and we can bring them in here and do the maintenance at the site rather than have to take heavy construction plant offsite on low loaders or whatever, because we can do that here, so it minimises impact on roads and indeed on local residents.

165. So I guess the summation of my evidence is that it would not be much of a reduction in terms of the site. We've got to have concrete batching plants near where the point production of concrete is. If we didn't have a batching plant, we'd just be

bringing a lot more ready mixed wagons because typically, they're either six or eight cubic metres in a wagon and it's more efficient to have a batching plant here to cut down wagons on roads and make the construction itself much more efficient.

166. MR MOULD KC (DfT): If you were to remove those elements that are ultimately not required in order to serve the satellite compound function, you could remove the workers' accommodation, put that somewhere else, and to some extent, you could reduce the need for office accommodation and you could reduce, to some extent, the need for welfare facilities – they might be less extensive.

167. Now, the concern here is with the prolonged disturbance and disruption that will come from the presence of this compound in close proximity to these residents, an entirely understandable concern. We don't in any way shrink from that. If you were to reduce the scale of office accommodation, would that have any significant effect on the levels of activity, noise, lighting, etc that would be generated by this compound?

168. MR SMART: Not significantly; maybe minor lighting because the offices would be smaller. But in fact, the real issue here is the amount of construction we're doing and it's therefore the central activity that is vital. It's all that's going on to support the actual construction in this area which is an intensive area of construction because we've got the box and a lot of earthworks.

169. I think where there is – something we can come onto perhaps – is when we move into rail systems, then there is an opportunity to reduce both the size of the compound and indeed, from a local stakeholder's point of view, the effects that they would see.

170. MR MOULD KC (DfT): In saying that, are you flagging the possibility of moving those activities to another site, or are you identifying the fact that, when we get beyond the end of the main construction phase, after that period of four years, then the nature of the activities it would need to be managed from this site thereafter would be less intensive, would be of a smaller scale and therefore naturally, there will be an opportunity to reduce the impact from its more intensive earliest?

171. MR SMART: I'm not suggesting we move to another site, I'm suggesting that the activities on this site would be less intensive and we could reduce the size of the site, but we still have a lot of rail systems work going on. We've still got to do the portal

building in the box and there's good access from here. There's laydown areas for the fabrication of overhead line but the intensity of the activity would be a lot less than the main civil construction.

172. CHAIR: How much less would that be? Sorry to interrupt, Mr Mould. What are we talking about, what proportion less?

173. MR SMART: Well, significant really, because we still have to have workers here and we still have sort of welfare facilities, but the ballast and the track installation will be pretty much done from the trace as we roll that out. But we would still have to support that and we'd still have to get operatives onto the track. They wouldn't all come down the trace but it's not big earth moving plant, it's not concrete batching. It's supplies coming in for things like switch gear and more electrical cables and the like but it's not concrete, it's not earth moving. It's not big amounts of steel or force work to create the structures, it's more confined.

174. CHAIR: That would be after four years, you say.

175. MR SMART: Yes, So that would be really commencing two years from quarter two 2031. There's a period of two years there where we use it and it's not intensive. In fact, I think there's some periods where we've even got site security there off and on for 12 months where we might not be in that compound. We would use it, but not in any intensive way. It would be quite a low usage, but it does ramp up a bit more when we start to fitout; down to the trace, put switch gear into the portal building and the like, or set that up for switch gears, I should say.

176. MR MOULD KC (DfT): In terms of how the local community, particularly the residents who are before the Committee today, might be in the course of development of the detailed design, might be able to gain a greater understanding of these more detailed construction arrangements as they develop, do you think that the special management zone commitment is of assistance to them?

177. MR SMART: I do, and obviously this also has to be subject to planning approval as well. So both of those I think, yes.

178. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Coming to the question of workers' accommodation,

first of all it's right, isn't it, that the arrangements for the location and management worker's accommodation serving the site is subject to local authority control?

179. MR SMART: Yes.

180. MR MOULD KC (DfT): I wonder if we can just put up the Code of Construction Practice at page 24, paragraph 5.9.1 just to remind the Committee of those arrangements?

181. 'It would be considered and approved in advance by the local authority and be located in managing accordance with arrangements set out in that approval. Standards of temporary living accommodation will be approved by the relevant local authority, be subject of the same environmental control measures as set out in this draft Code for other construction works and be positioned with considerations to known flood risk areas, for example, surface water'.

182. That's supported, is it not, Mr Smart, by the statutory arrangements in the planning schedule? Schedule 17, paragraph 5 requires the nominated undertaker to obtain the express approval of the local planning authority to arrangements for construction camps.

183. MR SMART: Yes.

184. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Right.

185. CHAIR: Sorry, Mr Mould, on that; that's not a normal planning application, that's through the Bill process of the Schedule 17?

186. MR MOULD KC (DfT): That's right, paragraph 5 of Schedule 17 – you may remember when, we introduced the planning schedule very briefly in opening the case to you back in January, we mentioned the fact that some of those arrangements as they relate to the construction of the railway are subject to class approvals, that it's to say approvals which are granted by the Secretary of State which to some degree limit the role of the local authority.

187. The approval of the location and arrangements for construction camps is not subject to class approval, so this remains – under this Bill, this must remain with the

local authority, which gives a measure of comfort that the local authority will be able to make its own requirements as regards to those arrangements, and that's what paragraph 5.9 of the Code is there referring to.

188. CHAIR: It would be Cheshire East in this?

189. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Cheshire East, yes.

190. CHAIR: And the point we've made as a Committee, I think, is that we've tried not to interfere in matters which are reserved for the local authorities. They are the democratically elected local representatives.

191. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Yes.

192. CHAIR: So that has been the position we've taken so far.

193. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Thank you. Mr Smart, just one more question on that. If the workers' accommodation were to be moved elsewhere, what would the effect be, in your view, on the efficient operation of this on any of you, this major work site serving a major surface element of these works?

194. MR SMART: Well it would be inefficient because you'd have to create all the welfare facilities again in another site and then you've got the inefficient travel for the operatives to the point of production. So it's an inefficient way of setting up the site.

195. MR MOULD KC (DfT): There's a particular concern about the presence of a concrete batching plant. First of all, the environmental statement does actually identify the concrete batching facilities as one of those elements that is likely to be considered for inclusion in work sites. The references are paragraph 6.2.1 and 6.7.7 in volume one of the Environmental Statement. Obviously, that was a document that was subject to public consultation when the Bill was first introduced into the House.

196. You've shown on page 508(3), P508(3), I think you've produced an example of the kind of facility that we might be talking about.

197. MR SMART: Yes, that's right. Those are the silos for aggregate and cement, so although they are – this is noted on the slide 12-18 metres tall, all the actual activity is down at ground level, because you were just really storing aggregates, which allows us

to bring cement and aggregate to site at convenient times and then batch the ready mixed wagons to go out locally rather than have to have ready mixed wagons coming in over some distance from concrete plants to be determined.

198. MR MOULD KC (DfT): So far as this kind of plant has the propensity to create noise, is it subject to local authority licensing controls in accordance with the British standards?

199. MR SMART: Yes.

200. MR MOULD KC (DfT): That's Section 61, Control of Pollution Act.

201. MR SMART: Yes. As I say, as most of the activity is at low level compared to the height, and bearing in mind our sites will have bunding and screening etc. I'm not anticipating that that will create any problems in terms of being particularly an intrusive activity, so to speak.

202. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Can I just ask you finally please to turn to P507(17), I think it is? There's a summary of HS2's position in relation to the credentials of the compound which is shown on the Bill plans as opposed to alternative locations considered in the technical report published on 18 May. Of the three alternative locations considered and dismissed is the second bullet west of Old Hall Lane that we're concerned with.

203. MR SMART: Yes.

204. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Does what this slide says about the comparative credentials of the location of the location of Hoo Green Lane and the Bill over other locations, does this slide summarise your position?

205. MR SMART: It does.

206. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr Smart. That's what I wanted to ask Mr Smart.

207. CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Mould. Just before Mr Smart leaves, any questions? No? Could I maybe just raise the issue of – obviously HS2, the promoter, have accepted this is a very significant compound and a very significant amount of work going on; the

petitioners have raised the issue of mitigation measures. Perhaps you could just briefly say something to those measures and also what the special management zone will provide in relation to the petitioner's request for greater mitigation which I think run throughout. I don't know whether...

208. MR MOULD KC (DfT): I was going to deal with that, myself, if that's alright.

209. CHAIR: That's up to you, Mr Mould. It's not that we don't want to hear from you, but it's – I thought, before Mr Smart left, I'd just ask the question.

210. MR MOULD KC (DfT): No, no, not at all. Unless Mr Smart's burning to do it, I thought I'd summarise where we are.

211. CHAIR: Sure.

212. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Are you happy with me to do it?

213. MR SMART: I think it goes to broader aspects, I think, in terms of the special zone. What I would say in terms of mitigation, we have offered to limit the height. I think one of the key issues, of Mr Marshall and Mr Hough, is being overlooked and I think that by bunding and fencing and the distance you have, although you're always going to have cranes on site and you're always going to be able to see something at a high level, we can't absolutely do away with that, we've got piling rig, etc. I do think we can certainly mitigate a lot of the visual effects on what the petitioners will see and that includes noise as well. And then I think there are other measures which Mr Mould will probably want to talk about.

214. CHAIR: Yes, that's fine. Thank you.

215. MR MOULD KC (DfT): I shall deal with this very quickly, as quickly as I may. First of all, dealing with the individual topics, because that's the obvious starting point.

216. So firstly noise. If you put up P501(2), the Committee will remember that the approach that is taken, which is a tried and trusted approach which HS2 has followed and which other projects also follow, is to set a series of noise thresholds or triggers, and then to assess the likely performance of the scheme against those triggers in order to see whether, firstly, the predicted noise level will exceed them and if they do, to decide

what mitigation is appropriate in order to address that exceedance.

217. So far as the predicted construction noise in our noise impact assessment for properties in Hoo Green Lane, if we can just blow up; you can see that the predicted levels of construction noise from general site works and highway works, middle of the page, are between 62 and 64 dB on the Leq index.

218. Now, the prescribed lowest observed adverse effect levels in our construction noise mitigation policy are 70-75 dB, so you can see that the predictive noise impacts on these properties from construction noise is about 5dB below that which is identified as the lowest observed adverse effect level. That's the first point of response.

219. Secondly, in terms of visual impacts, you've heard reference made to a height restriction and to a screening assurance. I can just show you those very quickly. At P507(23) and (24). The simple effect is this: P507(23), this is the assurance offered on restricting heights. The effect is that it will restrict that the heights of the workers' accommodation, the heights of the office accommodation, and the heights of the welfare facilities will be restricted in the way that it's set out here, limited to two stories. Those restrictions don't apply to the construction workshops and to the batching plant for the simple reason that if they were restricted in that way it wouldn't be possible to accommodate them on the site. That simply would be an unrealistic restriction and you saw that by reference to the photograph of the batching plant a few minutes ago.

220. The screening assurance on the next page is effectively an assurance to provide effective screening both on the eastern and the southern side of the compound. That is those boundaries which directly and indirectly face the Hoo Green residents.

221. The assurance leaves open for detailed discussion between the nominated undertaker and the local authority with engagement with the local community as to precisely what those screen arrangements would follow. Should they be a bund, should they be a fence? Should they be some landscape plants, some screen planting? Should they be a combination of the three? The watch word is that combination or method which is likely to be most effective in practice as achieving screening.

222. You can see if we turn to one of the cross sections which we have at P498(3). Very quickly; you can see east and the petitioners' properties are at the right-hand side.

An indicative bund and fence is shown in the centre of the image and you can see office accommodation limited to six metres in height and then a crane within the worksite itself.

223. As you can see, if you imagine that screen bund in place and you imagine the height restriction, you can see that the view from the upper floor of the petitioners' property is going to be very effectively screened across much of what is on the work site. It will not screen out high tall plant such as such as a crane but it will effectively screen out the buildings with the benefit of that height restriction.

224. In terms of the maintenance of vehicular access to properties on the lane, an assurance has been given to maintain vehicular and pedestrian access throughout the works to the occupiers of properties on Hoo Green Lane.

225. In terms of the restrictions and the management of construction vehicles, HS2 vehicles, and I can bring in an explanation for the point raised by Mr Hough here. The basic arrangement is this: it will be necessary to put a relatively small quantity of HS2 HGVs along Hoo Green Lane for the purposes of creating a direct access from the A50 onto the site compound.

226. Once that access has been created, it will no longer be necessary to run HS2 vehicles accessing or regressing the site compound along Hoo Green Lane, they will go in and out directly from the A50 through that new access. Therefore, we have been able to give an assurance that from that point onwards, site traffic will not be going along Hoo Green Lane.

227. Hoo Green Lane will need to be used for two or three specific purposes; two utilities works that can only be accessed from Hoo Green Lane and also some works to tie in the closure of Hoo Green Lane, which takes place during the course of the construction works. Again, in each case, the number of vehicles concerned are relatively few in number.

228. So that's the substantive effect of those assurances. I'm happy that we write again to Mr Hough or speak to him in order just to make sure that we've got complete clarity on those points in the assurances.

229. So far as environmental protection, we've given assurances about seeking to avoid damage to hedgerows. We've given assurances about reinstating any hedgerows that are damaged; that's in the pack as well.

230. The special management zone which you have at P507(26) builds on the conventional arrangements for community relations during construction, which I've shown you examples of already during the course of these hearings.

231. The key points, if you can just blow things up a bit on the left-hand side, that we have at 2.2, a deeper and wider community engagement team, single point of contact for local authorities, named individual point of contact for effective property owners within the designated areas, and a senior manager accountable for the effective implementation of the Code of Construction Practice.

232. The duties of those individuals are set out in 2.3 relating to a pretty intensive arrangement and process of community relations during the construction period.

233. If we go onto the right-hand side of the page, you can see that one of the key elements of the zone and one of the key responsibilities of those officials, 2.3.7, is advising on the appropriate support mechanisms to be provided by the nominated undertaker available to local businesses, property owners and voluntary and community organisations within the area.

234. Now, deliberately, there's no definition here of what might constitute an appropriate support mechanism. That's something that is best left over to be resolved on a case-by-case basis as the construction of the railway develops. But what we do know is that, in the event it is clear, and it may become clearer sooner, it may become clear later, that a particular resident, a particular owner occupier, a particular occupier, whoever it may be on Hoo Green Lane is particularly vulnerable to the effects of noise, to the effects of general disturbance and so forth because they work at home, they have a job which requires them to have a very quiet environment, because they have some health condition which makes them more vulnerable to prolonged construction activity than other members of the community might be. Those are matters that would fall within the scope of these arrangements.

235. Of course, it wouldn't simply be a case, if you like, of going cap in hand to the

official in question and saying, ‘Can I have some help? There is a particular duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty which you will be very familiar with, which binds both the Secretary of State and also the nominated undertaker. Under that duty, they have to have due regard to the need to advance the interests of those who display protected characteristics.

236. Those characteristics include health, for example, and so that provides a legal basis upon which somebody such as, for example if the circumstances arise, Mr O’Reilly, who we’ve heard has particular health needs, to say, ‘I have to work at home. My job entails it. I have health needs. I need some assistance’. It might be, for example, that some form of sound insulation is appropriate for Mr O’Reilly where ordinarily the sound measurements wouldn’t justify it under HS2’s ordinary sound construction noise policies.

237. That’s the kind of thing that these arrangements are designed to facilitate but they’re best dealt with on a case-by-case basis and they have been dealt with, before your predecessor Committees.

238. We had example, at least one example, in the Phase 2A Committee, for example, where there was a child who had respiratory disability and there was great concern on the part of her parents about whether the increasing traffic that was predicted through the village in which they lived might affect her condition, might make it more difficult for them to get from their property to the local hospital where she receives care. HS2 Ltd, in the exercise of its responsibilities under the Equality Act, agreed to give assurances in order to address those particular concerns.

239. So that’s the way in which one addresses, to use the petitioners’ language, individually tailored solutions. One approaches under the under the egis of the special cases regime which is set out in our policy position under information paper E13 and which is the obvious focus of the special management zone. But one also has that that statutory rootedness in the Public Sector Equality Duty.

240. So that’s how I would suggest the Committee should approach the concern that, notwithstanding all the specific mitigation measures that have been put in, notwithstanding the current relatively reassuring predictions in relation to noise effects and so forth, that there is a, if you like, an umbrella of protection that comes through

those routes that will give that extra reassurance in relation to wellbeing and access to remedy.

241. That sits over and above the Need to Sell Scheme which is available in principle to any of these residents on the basis, as I am sure is right, that they are resident owner occupiers of their premises. It sits above the fact that they are entitled, by virtue of where they are, to a payment under the Homeowner Protection Scheme; it's either £8,000 or £16,000. The zones are shown in the exhibits that are before you. So whether they stay or they decide that they wish to go, they have some policy protection from the Secretary of State in relation to wishing to go.

242. You know the Need to Sell scheme. If you can show a compelling case to sell and it's accepted through that scheme, you receive the unblighted market value of your property. That gives you the opportunity to move without the fear of having to deploy a lesser sum, if you like, in terms of moving that you would expect to have if the project wasn't coming along.

243. In relation to staying, there's that range of mitigation measures that are in the pack. Then there is that underlying range of statutory and policy responsibilities to which I've referred, which is best deployed on a case-by-case basis, as the detailed design and arrangements for construction become more clearly delineated as we move forward from this stage in the process to delivery of the railway itself. Those are the basic – that's the framework within which I would invite you to consider that aspect of the petitioner's case.

244. CHAIR: I'm conscious of time because the Committee finishes at 7.00 and we've got another petitioner to hear.

245. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Yes.

246. CHAIR: My final part I want to make on this before we do have to move on, unless any other colleague needs to, is obviously we have the two special management zones in this section. That is an admission, of course, of significant impact on residents, which HS2 have been very clear on. Taking an account of what you've said, Mr Mould, the appropriate support mechanisms, obviously, many of the petitioners' concerns were around obviously the mental health impacts.

247. So whilst that may offer a route, I suppose the question is, how early are those people identified there? Because, of course, the mental health impacts so far as the petitioners are concerned have already commenced, even though the schemes haven't commenced.

248. It's all very well having that support at some future time, but if the impact is already being felt now, what proactive work – and I have made a particular note of the appropriate support mechanism which may lead you to conclude where we might want some further work on this in relation to here, or certainly that'll be perhaps my suggestion – how early will that work commence?

249. MR MOULD KC (DfT): It will commence – I don't think there is a fixed point that I can direct you to for that. I think the implication of the assurance is that work will begin in earnest on the delivery of that special management zone once the Bill has received Royal ascent.

250. The arrangements that are in place – which, of course, are the conventional arrangements under any scheme of this kind, and dare I say it, are also the conventional arrangements that one would expect to see on a major scheme that is being promoted under the Planning Act or something of that kind – is focussed very much on engagement, on offering those who are concerned about the uncertainty of the impacts of the proposed development of their property and on their personal wellbeing, to offer them something more than the statutory compensation package, something more than the statutory blight regime.

251. The Secretary of State has done that with the non-statutory package that's available here. There is a comprehensive regime of petition management. There is a comprehensive engagement strategy which has been in place on the HS2 project now for some years. In this case I was very relieved to hear, and pleased to hear, what was said at the outset about the work that has been done by those behind me who have been involved in the petition management aspect of these petitions.

252. CHAIR: The special management zone will kick in on Royal Assent then?

253. MR MOULD KC (DfT): That I think is the earliest, as I understand it, that it will begin to be developed, yes. Yes. Yes.

254. CHAIR: Right. Anybody any further questions?

255. MR MOULD KC (DfT): The Need to Sell scheme, of course, is in place and operating now. Yes, yes.

256. CHAIR: Okay. I am really conscious of time. It's going to be very unfair to the other petitioners if I don't close now and move on to them, because we do finish at 7.00 and there are going to be votes on this business at some point, hopefully not before we conclude.

257. So on that base, I thank the petitioners for attending this afternoon. As I should have said at the beginning, but I think has been explained to you, we'll be issuing reports at various periods in which we will place our comments or any requirements in relation to your petitions into that document. So thank you very much for attending this afternoon.

258. MR MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr Percy. Just finally in closing, I'd like to thank Mr Mould and Mr Smart for giving us further insight into what to expect. I'd just urge the Committee to consider that despite what's been said, there will be mental health casualties at Hoo Green. I would urge you to prompt HS2 to engage with us quickly so we can have an understanding of what some of these options might be before Royal Assent. So thank you.

259. CHAIR: You'll have heard my questions on that –

260. MR MARSHALL: Yes.

261. CHAIR: – on where the processes begin and when engagement starts.

262. MR MARSHALL: And I thank you for that.

263. CHAIR: So you can assume where I may be on that issue. But anyway, thank you very much for saying that. We have previously, of course, made comment in Committee and directly to HS2 on the broader mental health study that's required, which our predecessor Committee required of HS2. So it is an issue we are alert to as a Committee.

264. MR MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr Percy.

Pickmere Parish Council

265. CHAIR: Thank you very much for that and we will now move on. I apologise for the time that it's taken us to get to the next petitioners. It's Pickmere Parish Council, I think represented by Sarah Flannery.

266. MS FLANNERY: Flannery.

267. CHAIR: Flannery. And Chris Tarrant as well.

268. MS FLANNERY: I am concerned that our petition might be seriously compromised by the lack of time.

269. CHAIR: I'm sorry about that, but the Committee meets and finishes at 7.00 today. If Members agree, we may go five or 10 minutes over, but we all have other appointments. I have an appointment from 7.30 onwards, so unfortunately we can't stay any longer.

270. But I do try and urge petitioners at the beginning of all of the sessions to drill down very quickly and very swiftly to the asks, as opposed to lots of contextual information that is not of any value to the Committee. So I can only do that, I'm afraid. So on that basis we'll try and proceed as best as we can.

271. MS FLANNERY: Right. As you know, I'm Sarah Flannery. I'm a Pickmere resident for 21 years and a former parish councillor.

272. MR TARRANT: I'm Chris Tarrant. I'm also a resident of Pickmere for nearly 34 years and also a former parish councillor. We're conscious of the time, so I'm not going to dwell any more on the introduction. We will try to get straight to the point. In terms of introducing the village and some of our issues, could I ask that we call up the first slide, A87(1)? Sarah will start to explain.

Submissions by Ms Flannery

273. MS FLANNERY: We'll give minimal background and context. We won't waste the time on that. This slide really shows that Pickmere is a tranquil and pretty semi-rural village. We have 300 households who live close to nearby Wincham, with the larger town of Knutsford some five miles away, and Northwich is three.

274. You rarely see HGVs along our country lanes due to the seven-and-a-half ton weight limits on most of them. But you are as likely to see tractors, walkers, runners, cyclists and horse-riders as cars. Surrounding us is valuable green belt, which is grassland with dairy and arable farming.

275. The beating heart of our village is Pickmere Lake. It's important that you recognize that because we will come onto Pickmere Lake specifically later on in this petition. It's a treasured village asset that's visited by tens of thousands of people every year. The showground for the county's premier agricultural event, the Royal Cheshire County Show, is also in the parish and attracts thousands of visitors, exhibitors and competitors every June. It was 80,000 last week.

276. It's important that you recognise we have no school, no shop, no healthcare nor local employment of any kind. So residents are wholly reliant on being able to travel to and from the village to adjacent locations for education, employment, shopping, healthcare and culture. It's fair to say we've felt like minnows during the entire process since proposals for Phase 2B were first announced.

277. It seems to us that you, the Select Committee, are our only bulwark against mitigating the massive disruption that HS2 will bring to our village. The promoter's response has ameliorated one of our primary concerns about Budworth Road, but it has added others.

278. New information previously unknown to us has been provided. Some assessments have been recategorised from moderate to severe, but it is the overriding tone that is most concerning to us.

279. HS2's specific figures for schedules, vehicle movements, etc, seem to be too precise, with no margin for error, to be credible across such a long timeframe. There are also numerous references to the promoter noting points with no further action described, and several references to issues being described as minor, moderate or significant without local context. These terms really are subjective.

280. Whilst we get that HS2's position can broadly be summarised as having an answer, budget and plan for everything, our petition really focuses on a real village with real people and their real concerns. You need to be confident that the promoter truly

understands and cares about the problems this massive project brings to our doorstep.

281. One other short point I'd like to make is that although the promoter might imply that those who haven't petitioned can be regarded as broadly being in approval of their plans, that doesn't acknowledge that the petitioning process itself puts a huge onus on petitioner. That might explain why some parties have simply not had the energy to participate in a process where they feel the odds are stacked against them.

282. Without the benefit of proactive engagement with the promotion until October 2022 – and it would be churlish of us not to record the efforts of Ben Draper and his team from the State – and lacking a collaborative approach from our local authority, Cheshire East, we have had to climb the vast data mountain without legal counsel or financial resources.

283. So our first ask is that the Select Committee, for reasons of fairness and transparency, request that the promoter identifies all material that has been specially prepared and presented for the petitioning process, because it has been galling for us to realise that people have been shown fresh tables, cross sections and maps, particularly relating to traffic impacts, that haven't been previously made available.

284. HS2 Ltd stated in a previous petition hearing that they hadn't adopted this format from the outset because local authorities have the data on road usage and local authorities are the experts on roads. But the same can't be said for small parish councils, residents and other stakeholders, who have been left trying to interpret the data themselves. No one factored in the real problems for communities such as ours, who are trying to understand the impacts on their locality without the active support and engagement from their local authority. Cheshire East Council effectively abandoned us when they withdrew from the petitioning process.

285. Moving on, we're going to highlight the following issues from our petition, the first one being fuel, security and water quality. I know you already know that Inovyn ChlorVinyls Limited uses purified brine to produce the chlorine which is used to purify 98% of the UK's drinking water. It's the building block for numerous other chemicals as well. A failure to supply brine to the ICV business would result in the cessation of the purification of water in the UK within two days.

286. The promoter's response is, and I'm quoting, 'The proposed scheme would be designed to allow the continued safe extraction and use of the existing Holford Brinefields, and as a result, the impact on salt resources and human health are not considered to be significant.'

287. 'However, the consented Springbank Farm extension to Holford Brinefields sits partially under the route of the proposed scheme, which could impact on the viability of five of the proposed 12 caverns. Therefore, it is anticipated that significant residual effects may occur with respect to sterilisation of the salt resources associated with the Springbank Farm extension to Holford Brinefields.'

288. So in layman's terms, does this mean that there could be a negative impact? We request that the promoter is required to provide clarity because we couldn't understand it.

289. On a similar vein, we also request that the promoter is required to give an undertaking to publish, at the earliest opportunity, the results of those ground investigations already undertaken.

290. Fuel security is also a significant concern for residents of Pickmere and the whole country. On nationally strategic secure gas storages and local salt cavities, which again, you know, HS2 Phase 2B directly compromise plans to add 50% additional capacity due to the sterilisation in 2013 of the £300-million King Street Energy gas storage project, all set to go with planning permission, which would've added to 10 new cavities, equating to five additional days' storage, to our national capacity.

291. The promoter's response was thus, and I quote, 'As outlined in 10.4.47 of volume 2, MA02 of the main ES, the consented King Street Energy extension to Holford Brinefields sits partially under the land required for the construction of the proposed scheme. Once built, the route of the proposed scheme would not impact on the proposed cavern locations. This would result in a negligible impact on a very high value resource, resulting in a negligible effect.'

292. In effect, HS2 says the new route does not affect gas storage expansion. The chief executive officer of NPL Group, which owns King Street Energy, completely contradicts that. I have John Lewsley the chief executive officer's permission to quote

him verbatim as follows.

293. ‘1. The current line placement of HS2, last updated in October 2022, safeguards approximately 86 acres of our 240-acre site at King Street, some on a temporary and some on a permanent basis. Planning permission has been secured and implemented for a gas storage project on King Street, but it is not possible to build the consented scheme given the land-take safeguarded by HS2.’

294. So we request that the promoter is required to give an undertaking to explain this disparity at the earliest opportunity. For clarity, when the then-Secretary of State, John Prescott, granted planning permission in 2009, he did so due to the national need, a need that’s far greater now. It was the 2013 preferred route that completely sterilised any possible expansion to gas storage in mid-Cheshire, HS2 Ltd having failed to adhere to their own route selection criteria by not identifying the salt mineral reserves. That cost the country and King Street Energy dear.

295. The 2016 realignment went some way towards de-sterilisation, but construction of safeguarded land means the outcome remains the same. Expansion of the King Street Energy site is not currently considered viable by the owners. So HS2 Ltd has effectively sterilised the site.

296. Second, ground conditions and existing infrastructure. I can practically hear the groans, but please indulge me for just a couple of minutes. No one has ever said that HS2 Phase 2B cannot be built, with the technology to put man on the moon, but the real equation is risk and safety versus value for money. HS2 clearly accepts that there is the element of risk given Cheshire’s geology. But until the final ground investigations are done and the design complete, the cost of mitigating that risk is unknown.

297. The design is in its infancy, and we estimate at least 85% of the ground investigations have yet to be undertaken. Ultra-high speed rail requires very small tolerance of ground movement, measured in millimetres, which is why the risk/cost balance is so critical in an area of persistent ground movement.

298. As Professor Emeritus Peter Styles, the past president of the Geological Society of London, says, it is possible to deal with almost any adverse ground conditions, but the question is, is it economic? So the question for the Select Committee really is, can the

present route be justified on cost and safety grounds, or must an alternative be recommended?

299. Mr Mould said in a previous hearing that ‘We do not want a collapse under our railway.’ When the New York office of the White Star Line was informed that the Titanic was in trouble, the White Star Line Vice President Franklin announced ‘We place absolute confidence in the Titanic. We believe the boat is unsinkable.’ By then the Titanic was already at the bottom of the ocean. So we should not even contemplate the possibility of these unknown risks.

300. Mr Mould also previously referred to existing infrastructure safely crossing the same geology. I don’t think we can take much comfort from this example of the current adjustments in place for rail infrastructure to cope with ground movements. Matt, could we have our slide two, please. A872? Thank you.

301. This is the reality. This image is taken from Elton Flashes near Sandbach, on the Crewe to Manchester line. It shows the jacking-up arrangements in place to cope with the River Wheelock and subsiding land, which is continuously monitored. I remind the Select Committee that the tolerance for ground movement for ultra-high speed rail is measured in millimetres.

302. No matter how sophisticated the monitoring arrangements that HS2 claims, the as-yet undesignated adjustment mechanisms will be very, very expensive. With regard to the Winsford salt mine – because the promoter acknowledges that that is one of the impacted areas – the Committee might also like to reflect on the expert opinion of Caroline Warburton, a geologist and geotechnical engineer, a Fellow of the Geological Society with a degree in Geology, and an MSc in geological and geotechnical engineering, and an MA in land use planning. You’re ahead of me, Matt, thank you so much.

303. I’m quoting, ‘Salt extraction and potential pillar failure in the Winsford mine. The proposed HS2 route crosses the Winsford mine. The salt pillars carry the load of the roof and are subject to compression. Pillars will deteriorate with time due to both chemical and physical processes, which are difficult to characterise or predict. The voids in the collapsed rock above may or may not reach the surface with a sudden catastrophic failure. The stakes are too high for anything less than total confidence in

the route choice.’

304. We request that in the interests of safety and cost, the Select Committee takes this opportunity to use its powers to make the appropriate amendments to the Bill to recommend that, at least, no further work on Phase 2B should be undertaken until the promoter has completed and reported on the ground investigations upon which everything depends.

305. Parliament and the people need confidence in the claims that the proposed route can be safely and affordably built across a landscape of ongoing ground movement. I think the publication of the ground investigations would do much to repair public confidence in this regard. I’m going as fast as I can.

306. Community isolation. We have no reason to doubt that the environmental statement accompanying the Bill is fully compliant with legal requirements and developed in accordance with the accepted best practice methodologies. But what is up for legitimate debate is whether or not the communities afflicted by the scheme have felt that there’s been sufficient engagement with them, to use their local knowledge to input their concerns, and sufficient commitment put into reducing the stress and negative impacts. This is a continuing theme.

307. HS2 Phase 2B will never serve the Pickmere community. The construction phase will see our village surrounded by six construction compounds in existence for up to six years and three months. The proposed Pickmere Lane satellite compound is within the parish and there are two further satellite construction compounds within neighbouring areas. The Pickmere Lane satellite compound is expected to be operational for four years, with an average of 70 workers per day, increasing to 120 workers and 45 staff at peak times. That represents an increase of 28% on our current village population of 600.

308. The promoter’s measures for managing the impact of the compound are frankly unworkable. I refer to page 42, paragraph 25, of the promoter’s response document. I’ll just cut through it.

309. ‘The number of private car trips to and from the construction compounds, both workforce and visitors, would be reduced by encouraging alternative, sustainable modes

of transport or vehicle sharing. These would be supported by an overarching framework travel plan that will require construction workforce travel plans to be produced. It will hold a range of measures, particularly a provision of information on, and promotion of, public transport services, provision of good bicycle and pedestrian facilities, liaison with public transport operators, promotion of car-sharing and the appointment of a travel plan coordinator.’

310. The reality is that anyone with local knowledge would know that these statements are meaningless. You can promote public transport as much as you like, but that won’t change the fact that there’s only one public transport operator, who currently runs four services a day from Pickmere to Knutsford: 07.05, 10.10, 12.10, 14.10, and three in the opposite direction.

311. Likewise, you can talk about providing good pedestrian and cycling facilities, but we don’t have the roads for cycle routes, and anyway, unless people are close enough to contemplate walking or cycling in all weathers, this is a non-starter.

312. So rather than talking about impractical and vague aims, we therefore request that the Select Committee requires the contractor to produce a transport service for staff. The construction industry has well-established site traffic management protocols. A coach service to and from the compound will eliminate hundreds of vehicle movements, reduce congestion and reduce pollution. Next slide, please. Thank you. Number four, 874. Thanks.

313. Please try to imagine the impact of a huge embankment ,with a railroad line on top, bisecting your previously pretty and quiet village would have on you, your neighbours and your quality of life. Pickmere’s community viability and wellbeing relies on accessibility to other community facilities, such as public transport, shops and schools.

314. The access to these would be seriously compromised due to the numerous diversions, changes to the road network and congestion due to high volumes of HGVs carrying construction materials. The Royal Cheshire Show is an example where Wincham, Tabley and Pickmere are all significantly impacted by the increase in HGVs. We have a four-day inconvenience for 80,000 vehicles. It’s hard to understand the impact of something that will go on for the best part of a decade.

315. Also, words such as ‘moderate’ to describe the impact of a three-kilometre increase in journey times are completely inappropriate for somebody who’s facing that three-kilometre detour twice a day every day for more than three years. That’s an additional one-and-a-half thousand kilometres annually per vehicle. So it’s certainly not a moderate impact and that’s just one route.

316. We also can’t agree with the promoter that, as set out in section six, ‘Community’, the assessment of the MA03 community area report within volume two of the main environmental statement. The assessment did not identify community isolation effects to the village of Pickmere. If we can have the next slide please. Thank you.

317. This is a bird’s eye view of Pickmere surrounded by HS2 activity. The large red areas are the satellite compounds. Isolation effects arise from either physical islanding of properties or an increase in journey times, and both are evident for residents in the village.

318. So what we’re really looking for is some effective and constructive mitigation measures to offset the impact on community isolation and wellbeing, and to make an undertaking to engage with our community to ensure these measures are appropriate and relevant for us.

319. We’d also request that, given that we feel effectively abandoned by Cheshire East Council’s decision to withdraw from the petitioning process, that HS2 Ltd is required to treat Pickmere Parish Council as a key stakeholder on mental health and community wellbeing issues, and undertake to guarantee engagement with the parish council on all associated issues. This has been missing for a long time.

320. We also have to take into account loss of visual amenity and noise impact. I think because we’ve got so much to say, we’re trying to squish it in. Let’s skip to slide six, Matt, and we’ll go straight to slide seven, if we may. You’re happy with that, Chris?

321. MR TARRANT: Yes.

322. MS FLANNERY: Yes. This just gives an example. Running trains on the raised embankments in our area. It’s two and a half kilometres long, up to 12 metres high, with an additional six and a half metres for catenary – it’s enormous – compounded by

all of the major engineering works right across the parish. It's going to have a serious impact on our visual amenity. We're worried that the consequent sound transmission will impact significantly as well. The large-scale structure will be very out of character with our existing views.

323. In terms of mitigation for the loss of visual amenity, we do not consider the minimal planting proposed to be in any way sufficient. We recently received another assurance talking about additional hedgerows. Hedgerows cannot replace trees and we are not – we're looking for more than a reasonable endeavour. We're looking for something more substantive and robust in terms of the mitigation that we need.

324. Construction noise, I mentioned is a big issue. We noted with concern that the SES1 had identified operational noise effects on the acoustic character in the residential community of Pickmere at approximately 45 dwellings in the vicinity of Pickmere Lane, School Lane and Hall Lane. I quote. 'The noise effect is likely to result in a significant community effect, identified as MA03-0-C5 on SES1 and AP1 ES map.'

325. 45 dwellings is 17% of our village homes. It's a very significant proportion. The parish council was completely unaware of this number until we saw it included in the promoter's response document.

326. So can the promoter confirm the affected households will be contacted personally, with the engagement of the parish council? So further ask: we request that the promoter is required to propose additional mitigation measures to provide effective sound and visual acoustic improvements, to provide more creative and extensive planting designs and provide noise insulation and ventilation from the construction phase – not operational phase – for those 45 dwellings identified, to ensure that the noise and air quality impacts are minimised from the outset?

327. Right, I think at this point it's probably going to be useful, if you don't mind, Chris, to switch to you. If we can have slide eight please, Matt. Thank you very much.

328. CHAIR: We've just to be cognisant of time, of course. We've got to get HS2 to respond as well.

329. MR TARRANT: I'm very cognisant of time.

330. CHAIR: Does this relate to transport?

331. MR TARRANT: This relates to transport. So this is really just to build on what Sarah said, to show that there are significant vehicle movements.

332. MS FLANNERY: There are two glaring issues that haven't been taken into account by Cheshire East either.

333. CHAIR: All I would say on that is we have made clear, as a Committee, that we will not engage in transport management issues, because they are the preserve of the highway authority, who are Cheshire East, who have obviously withdrawn their petition on that. If you wish to raise them, please do, but as a Committee, we've determined we're not going to engage ourselves in transport.

Submissions by Mr Tarrant

334. MR TARRANT: I think in the interests of time, let's respect that. You understand the issue.

335. CHAIR: Yes.

336. MR TARRANT: It's a burden we have to bear. Can we move on then and look at slide nine? Sarah mentioned Pickmere Lake. It's important that the Committee understands the significance of Pickmere Lake, which is called Pickmere Lake for a very good reason. The issue isn't that it doesn't fall within the area potentially impacted by the proposed scheme. It's that anything to do with the lake has a massive impact on our village. It's vital that the promoter takes this into account.

337. The lake is a leisure destination, has been for decades, and is visited annually by thousands of visitors that come from way outside the area, particularly from Manchester and the Liverpool conurbations.

338. This slide shows the local paper reporting the congestion that we get during peak months, and believe me, it's very bad. As recently as last weekend the police were imposing dispersal orders and are ticketing cars that are parked illegally. This is just another factor on our current country lanes which doesn't appear to have been taken into account by the promoter.

339. MS FLANNERY: Or indeed Cheshire East.

340. MR TARRANT: Or indeed Cheshire East, and it is very significant on our village. I think also we should refer as well to the Cheshire showground. I don't want to dwell on that, particularly because the highline figures are, we've just had the annual Cheshire show. 80,000 visitors have attended that in two days, with all of the setting up and the dismantling.

341. That, though, is a small scale problem compared to the six, seven years of construction that we've talked about and that we're aware of, notwithstanding the fact that the actual show itself is threatened by the arrival of the railway, which will probably make the showground, as it stands, unsuitable. Once it's relocated, it's unlikely ever to return, which then in turn has a significant effect on the local economy.

342. Let me just go to number 10. I think you'll all be familiar with this. This is the peak movement tables. Behind this, and in the interests of brevity, there is an awful lot of work that is actually scheduled to take place, which is to do with diversion of gas mains, diversion of Flittogate Lane, access roads to carrying Pickmere Lane over Waterless Brook, realignment of Pickmere Lane, realignment of School Lane, Frog Lane, temporary bridge, etc, etc.

343. So our concern with these figures are that they almost seem to be too precise to be credible. There is a methodology behind the way that the promoter has produced these figures. But they're averages really, and I don't think we, as a community, can accept the figures as they stand, because the reality is, our roads are narrow. They carry quite a high volume of local traffic. There's a rat run effect as well with people that use Pickmere Lane when there's a problem on the Chester Road.

344. And as it's been mentioned by the previous petitioners, and we would emphasise as well, these lanes are shared with horse-riders, cyclists, pedestrians. They're really insubstantial B roads, and they also currently carry weight limits restricting their use to HGVs.

345. So we acknowledge these figures, but we can't accept them, in the sense that they seem very precise. They're predicated on a formula that we don't recognise. Even on an average basis, the volume of traffic that that suggests in and around the village is

considerable on roads that we really don't feel are suitable to carry that volume of traffic.

346. MS FLANNERY: I think I'll go straight on to Budworth Road.

347. MR TARRANT: Yes. We'll jump through some of the other things that were said, but we'll just talk to you about Budworth Road. We have met with Ben Draper and his team. We have suggested an alternative to the stopping-up of Budworth Road, which is something that concerned us, and I think concerns other petitioners, some of whom you may have heard, some of whom are yet to present their concerns.

348. We feel that we have actually found a workable solution. Although there is no current assurance on that basis, we would ask that the promoter gives us an undertaking that the work as proposed to avoid the stopping up of Budworth Road will form part of the additional provisions that may be needed to be introduced to avoid that.

349. In doing so, what it also does is it removes the need for HGVs to be routed along some of these substandard roads that I've referred to. If it would help, I've got a few photographs. I'll leave the photographs for the moment.

350. CHAIR: Sure.

351. MR TARRANT: They're narrow lanes. Suffice it to say there are dog leg bends and an HGV competing with a 4-by-4 or a private car makes it very difficult. I think you can see from those slides, that's the type of road that we have in the village, and it's current unsuitability.

352. The other advantage, of course, is that if we avoid stopping up Budworth Road, there's no need to actually widen these roads, which we understand would not then be restored to their country nature. So we would avoid the urbanising effect in the village and avoid the use of all those HGVs.

353. Moving on to wildlife and the environment, HS2 makes many claims about its green credentials. We have independently, as part of our Neighbourhood Plan, commissioned Cheshire Wildlife Trust to write a report on the nature. Their conclusions in their report conclude that much of what has been concluded by the promoter is 'fundamentally flawed, amateurish and riddled with inaccuracies.' Those

are quotes.

354. So can HS2 confirm that it has 100% confidence in the measures that it's used to calculate the value of nature affected by Phase 2B, and that it hasn't missed water courses, ponds and trees out of the data in our area?

355. MS FLANNERY: Slide 15 please, Matt. Thanks.

356. MR TARRANT: There are two maps that have been produced for us by Cheshire Wildlife Trust, which you can see now. The top image shows our habitat distinctiveness in relation to the proposed route of HS2. The second identifies our wildlife corridors.

357. We believe the primary proposed mitigation measures of woodland habitat creation to replace ancient woodlands and to provide connectivity between habitats and the provision to maintain vehicle and pedestrian access to the Cheshire showground during construction fall woefully below the measures that will be required to minimise the impact of this massively extended construction.

358. CHAIR: I'm really conscious of time, and we have to have the promoter respond.

359. MR TARRANT: Okay.

360. CHAIR: So if you could maybe wrap up within three minutes.

361. MS FLANNERY: We'll summarise, okay.

362. CHAIR: As I said at the beginning, what are the asks? So if you've any remaining outstanding asks, and then we'll get to the petitioners – to the promoter.

363. MS FLANNERY: Okay. Community relations. It's an open secret that community relations have never been HS2 Ltd's strong suit. We've been underwhelmed by HS2's attempts at community engagement thus far. We've found them difficult to deal with and –

364. CHAIR: Are these – sorry to just interrupt again, but we're very short.

365. MS FLANNERY: Okay, so –

366. CHAIR: This is commentary. What we really require is, what are the asks,

please.

Submissions by Ms Flannery

367. MS FLANNERY: What we want, we want the Select Committee to make recommendations that will ensure lessons have been learned. We want the same formal, dedicated liaison arrangements that the previous petitioner has asked for, because we think that that's the only way forward for villages such as ours.

368. We need to guarantee a minimum level of engagement between Pickmere Parish Council, HS2 Ltd, their contractors, Cheshire East Council and other stakeholders. A nice diagram is not sufficient.

369. And also, as problems will inevitably occur as this progresses, it's critical that this includes a clear chain of command in communication so problems can be identified and resolved as quickly as possible. That liaison role should not be a comms or PR role, because swift resolution will depend on a thorough operational understanding. I'm sure you get where we're coming from.

370. And just the final slide, please, 17, if I may. I just want to clarify something. At the hearing of the Lostock Gralam petition on 18 April, Mr Percy stated 'Obviously Parliament has decided that this line is to be built.'

371. But it hasn't. Huw Merriman, the Minister of State for Transport, clarified, 'I would also note that Parliament can reject or significantly amend the overarching Bill, or can decide not to proceed with the scheme were it to choose to do so.' It isn't a fait accompli, and we hope that you listen to the local knowledge and concerns of petitioners.

372. It is beyond the remit of us to discuss the scheme in principle, but I would say that one very serious concern for us is that unless a local authority, in our case Cheshire East, included in their undertaking document every single issue across the whole of the local authority area where they have responsibility – ground conditions, highways mitigation – you, the Select Committee, might consider their silence on these matters as being tantamount agreement that they were happy with all the plans.

373. Please do not misinterpret Cheshire East's reasons for withdrawing from the

petitioning process. It'd be a travesty if their withdrawal was allowed to undermine our petition and those of other petitioners who have worked very hard to raise their concerns on many vital issues. If you'd asked me at the beginning, could we reduce a one-and-a-half hour presentation to 30 minutes, I would've said, 'You're pushing it.' That, I think, is the best we can do.

374. CHAIR: You've done a very good job, apart from the error of correcting the Chair, which was a brave move, Mrs Flannery.

375. MS FLANNERY: I'm so sorry.

376. CHAIR: But just to reiterate that, Parliament has decided the principle of this Bill and has passed it at second reading and passed it to this. So the principle of this railway line is agreed by Parliament.

377. But of course, the legislative process hasn't concluded, and the Bill will return to the Commons at some stage. So I'm going to just briefly summarise where I think we need a response from HS2. I hope this is in line with where you were heading.

378. There's obviously the issue around the communication and dedicated liaison which the parish council have asked for. I have written down – I should say to Mr Tarrant and Ms Flannery, the issue of ground conditions is something the Committee has gone through in some detail before, so don't feel we haven't done that justice because that has come before us before. Indeed, I think we're still waiting for the final – there is something further coming forward from HS2. Or has that now been – next week, I think, in relation to the specific of the salt mine and the brine ground conditions. So we have dealt with that, or we are dealing with that.

379. The dedicated liaison: I had the issue of the screening and the request for more significant screening along that embankment. I believe the specific ask was the planting of trees. You asked questions about the environmental statements of HS2. Those are really for direct communication, I feel, rather than specific asks for us. I believe there was an issue around travel arrangements to the construction site which you also raised.

380. MR TARRANT: Yes.

381. CHAIR: In terms of the other issues around traffic, as I've said, we have already,

because there will have to be traffic management plans, which you, as a parish council, will be able to, to contribute to via the principal authority at some point.

382. So unless I've missed anything there, I think if we just can start with those, then if there's anything else – and I do commend you for getting that down from an hour-and-a-half to half an hour. It was very impressive. Mr Mould.

383. MR MOULD KC (DfT): I've got 30 seconds, I think.

384. CHAIR: We're going to – you've got two minutes.

385. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Two minutes, excellent.

386. CHAIR: But we're going to go beyond by five or 10 minutes, because I think that given you've come all this way and you've cut it down, I'm sure we can maintain a quorum for five or 10 minutes of additional time, he says forcefully looking at his colleagues and them all trying to avoid my gaze. But anyway, we will continue on so we can give some justice to the response please, Mr Mould.

Response by Mr Mould

387. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Right. Community relations and ensuring that the local communities are properly informed, engaged with during construction of the railway.

388. It's not true to say that it's an open secret that HS2 is considered to be no good at that. I'm not aware that that is an open secret at all. My understanding is that although we certainly don't claim that it's foolproof, that generally speaking, the process of community relations on Phase One, which is the part of the railway which has actually reached a significant state of construction, is considered to have been effective.

389. I've drawn your attention in previous hearings to the published community relations strategy. I've shown you some examples of the granularity, if you'll excuse that fashionable jargon word, the granularity of the information that is provided. I think we showed you a slide or two from East – from Northamptonshire in that respect. That is the approach that will be taken in relation to Phase 2B.

390. Contrary to the implication of what was being said on behalf of the petitioner, the impacts of this railway on Pickmere Village are not comparable in scale to those that we

acknowledged in relation to Hoo Green. So if one wants to draw a distinction, that is why the Hoo Green works merit the designation of a special management zone, and that is why the works in relation to Pickmere Parish do not.

391. If you turn up page P435, you can see Pickmere itself at the top of the page, and you can see the extent of the pink, which shows you the working area, the combined construction boundary for the railway.

392. Pickmere is in a very different situation in terms of its geography and its relationship to the railway line and its construction than the Hoo Green residents, just to illustrate the point.

393. What is happening here is, as you know, that the traffic is largely being run up and down the A556, that is to say the HS2 construction traffic. It comes in from the east to transfer nodes to the work sites at appropriate points along the primary route network. So Hoo Green, it comes in on the A50.

394. Here, it comes in on Pickmere Lane. Pickmere lane is not – that's the road which runs – that's the dashed green line that is just coming in from the bottom right-hand corner of the slide. Pickmere Lane is not as significant a route as the A50, but it is a route that has been judged as suitable to carry HS2 construction traffic as far as the railway line itself. And as you can see, it's coming into work sites on the trace itself, which lie significantly to the east of Pickmere Village.

395. The arrangements that have caused a great deal of concern to the local community, not only to this Parish council but also to others living in the vicinity of School Lane, was the proposal, which remains under the Bill, to close Budworth Road, in order to gain access to work sites to the west at the point where, if we just go up – it's very dark, my screen. I can't actually see. You need to run the cursor along there and then go cross the railway at that point. Go slightly to the right, to the work sites on either side. There we are.

396. To get to those work sites with Budworth Road closed was going to require the traffic to go on a loop around School Lane and then coming back on itself. That's still in the Bill, but HS2 is developing a proposal which would enable Budworth Road to remain open and thus avoid the need to go, with any significant degree of vehicles, to

the west of the trace in this area.

397. That, at a stroke, will considerably reduce the effects on the area of Pickmere Parish to the west, and we believe will significantly reduce the impacts that have caused concern to the local community.

398. We have offered an assurance to Cheshire East Council to make that change. It will need to come through as an AP, so it would need to come through a future AP. The initial informal response from Cheshire East Council is that they support it, and we expect the local community to support it as well, because it clearly responds to one of their major concerns.

399. I don't accept that Cheshire East Council, as it were, withdrew their petition, as it was put, on sinister grounds. They told you why they were able to express their satisfaction with the assurances that they had. They made a statement to that effect and that is, I'm sure, the basis on which this Committee will proceed.

400. If we turn to A87(7), turning to the visual impact point, I acknowledge that the presence of the Pickmere embankment will be visible in the landscape, because it is an embankment. It is proposing to raise the railway somewhat above the existing ground level.

401. As was made clear in the petition response document, the expected range of that raising from the existing ground level is between two metres and seven metres. The image you see on the screen, the computer generated image at the bottom of the screen, we think, significantly overstates that raising in height.

402. But there will be screen planting to the west. It's shown on the relevant plans. If we turn to P441(1), we can see two cross-sections across the Pickmere embankment from premises, isolated premises, which lie to the east I think, of the village. We can see that the combination of the flat nature of the landscape and the distance between the nearest premises to the railway line in this location, together with, as you can see on the screen, the screen planting that is proposed along the western line of the road, that that, combined with the relatively modest height of the embankment, will, to a very significant degree, screen the presence of the embankment.

403. Yes, of course, that screening will begin to have greater effect as it matures. So we're talking about a process that will increase in terms of effectiveness. But even at year one, you can see from the effect of the distance on the horizontal line of the graph here, you can see that the effect of distance itself will be significantly to diminish the visual effect of the railway line.

404. CHAIR: I think the simple ask was just whether they could, if the screening could include some trees, isn't it? Is there anything to prevent HS2 working with the parish council on that?

405. MR MOULD KC (DfT): There's nothing to stop the HS2 working with the local authority, with the district council, who will have the statutory responsibility for that, under schedule 17.

406. CHAIR: Obviously.

407. MR MOULD KC (DfT): And I've no doubt that the parish council will have an opportunity to engage with the district council as they make their decision.

408. What I'm very keen to avoid through these hearings is a situation where we have to, as it were, engage with directly, give assurances directly to a multiplicity of local authorities, where there's one local authority which actually bears responsibility for the matter in question.

409. Otherwise, we find that, unlike any other developer, instead of having to make sure that we satisfy the requirements of the local authority who is responsible for the matter in question, whether it be screen planting or noise mitigation, we find that we have to go to 25 other authorities who have no statutory responsibility for that. Those authorities are not excluded from the process. They've come here today, and they will continue to have a role, no doubt, in local community engagement.

410. But it's not appropriate, in my submission, or proportionate, to require, as a consistent theme of this presentation, that HS2 should give a whole series of far-reaching commitments to this Council, where it related to matters that are actually under the regulatory control of the district level authority. That simply isn't a sensible way of managing and regulating these matters. So I ask you to bear that thought in mind when

you're – it won't lead to ineffective regulation. It will actually be more likely to lead to effective regulation, because there's one source of regulatory decision-making rather than a whole number of them.

411. In terms of the travel arrangements, a very good example. Under the statutory regime of schedule 17, and indeed under the proposed, the arrangements under the Code of Construction practice for local traffic management planning, we engage with, and we seek the agreement, the approval of, the local highway authority. We can certainly – I'm sure we and the local highway authority will share our proposed arrangements for works like travel planning and so forth with the local community.

412. But the decision-making process in relation to that rests, and rests properly, with the local highway authority, as the responsible body. That would be – it's no different with an ordinary planning application. The parish council doesn't regulate travel plans on major development schemes. The environmental statement, there was ample opportunity to respond to that through the parliamentary process, so I'm not going to say any more about that. In terms of noise, which I think was another point that was raised –

413. CHAIR: Yes, the noise and potential for insulation.

414. MR MOULD KC (DfT): I've got a sheet that shows you the noise, the assessed position in relation to noise.

415. CHAIR: Your reference was to noise from the operation of the railway?

416. MR TARRANT: Yes.

417. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Yes.

418. MS FLANNERY: Yes. If I can just pick up on one of your points, Mr Mould.

419. MR MOULD KC (DfT): I'm just in the middle of my presentation.

420. CHAIR: Yes, Mr Mould does have the floor.

421. MS FLANNERY: Oh sorry, yes.

422. CHAIR: But you can just confirm with a 'yes' though, I think Mr Tarrant said it's

the operational noise. So there is obviously a scheme in place for operational noise, post-construction –

423. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Yes. Yes.

424. CHAIR: – for insulation or mitigation measures, correct?

425. MR MOULD KC (DfT): Absolutely. The very fact that P442(1) identifies by reference to noise impact assessment, those more isolated properties to the east of the village that are predicted to be affected by the operational noise of the railway, you can see those shown by the notations on the plan. If you look at the key in the bottom right-hand corner you'll see that the various stars and circles and so forth relate to a range of predicted impacts.

426. The short point is, as you know, where operational noise is predicted to exceed a certain level, then the property in question is eligible for sound insulation. Where the predictions don't exceed that level, but they exceed the lowest observed adverse effect level, there is a duty on the nominated undertaker, under the policy set out in information paper E9, so far as reasonably practicable, to seek to reduce those predicted impacts down to the lowest observed adverse effect level.

427. It doesn't guarantee the offer of sound installation, but what it does guarantee is that as we move through the detailed design, in order to fulfil the policy, which will form one of the environmental minimum requirements registered on the parliamentary register in relation to this Bill, it will be necessary for the nominated undertaker, working firstly with his or her contractors, but also under the overarching regulatory scrutiny of the local authority, again, in the exercise of its powers under schedule 17, to show that it has produced a range of mitigation measures that are in proportion to the impact.

428. By that, I mean deliver as far as possible, as reasonably possible, effective mitigation, but without disproportionate expenditure of public money. That is the policy that's set out in information paper E9. That is the policy against which the detail of the railway will be developed and that is the policy against which the nominated undertaker, in due course, when the right time arises, will submit its detailed mitigation proposals to the local authority, under paragraph 9 of schedule 17 to the Bill, for that local

authority's consideration and approval.

429. CHAIR: Okay, thank you. Any members, any questions? Ms Flannery, because you did cut yourself down from an hour-and-a-half, I will give you 30 seconds because you wanted to respond to something.

430. MS FLANNERY: 30 seconds, thank you. I simply wanted to make the point, to underline it, about the importance of engagement. Had HS2 and Cheshire East effectively engaged with us – we had already gone to them years ago with an effective plan, and alternatives to stopping-up Budworth Road. Now it's ended up going to an AP and all that expense and delay. It just seems so unnecessary that it's so difficult.

431. CHAIR: What was outlined on that would be in line with what you were asking, was it?

432. MS FLANNERY: Thank you.

433. CHAIR: That was correct?

434. MR TARRANT: Yes.

435. MS FLANNERY: Yes, so if we get that, that's great. Our only overriding message is, as anticipated, HS2 have a plan, a budget and an answer for everything. And we do feel that we have reason to be sceptical about some of the claims, looking at the history of the project since it was first announced. We'd just ask you to exert some critical faculties as I'm sure you will do. Thank you for your forbearance on the time.

436. CHAIR: No, thank you for bearing with us as we ended up taking more time than I'd hoped on the first petition. My apologies that you would cut down somewhat, but hopefully we've been able to provide a fair hearing this afternoon.

437. MS FLANNERY: You have, and we appreciate it. Thank you.

438. CHAIR: No, thank you for your time. I'd thank the promoters and everybody as well for attending. That's the end of today's Committee.