

ASHLEY PARISH COUNCIL ON BEHALF OF ASHLEY PARISH

SUBMISSION TO THE HS2 DESIGN REFINEMENT CONSULTATION ON QUESTIONS 7 & 11

Ashley Parish Council objects to the proposals as they stand not least because HS2 has not considered the ecological and cost savings which would be achieved were the railway to be placed in a cutting.

Ashley is a small rural, largely agricultural, unlit community located on greenbelt land of the highest order. It acts as an effective buffer zone preventing urban spread from Hale and Altrincham.

The proposed HS2 railway, together with the Railhead and separate Infrastructure Maintenance Base – Rail (IMB-R), and proposed changes to the existing local road network, will have a devastating impact on residents from noise, visual, vibration and light pollution, as well as leading to the destruction of important local ecological sites

Q7: What are your comments about the proposed location of the temporary railhead and the permanent maintenance facility near Ashley?

Statement: The location of the proposed railhead and the IMB-R are in Ashley, as is Thorns Green

Ashley Parish Council has the following issues with the refinements:

1. Decision to Select Option 2 as the preferred site for the Railhead
 - The considerations for choosing this site at 2.2.25 to 2.2.27 in the Consultation Document are grossly inaccurate.
 - The earthworks required to create Option 2 would be far greater than Option 1 - where the site is level and the environmental effects on Ancient Woodlands and environmental diversity would either be significantly reduced or avoided altogether.
 - Parts of field SJ7783 4325 are over 2.5 metres below the level of neighbouring field SJ7783 3211 and would require large amounts of imported soil to level it up.
 - There will be a need to require the culverting of three watercourses. The topography of this site is very uneven due to the extraction of clay used to make bricks and land drainage tiles at the Brickworks (Erlam's Meadow)
 - The Consultation Document states that Option 2 would be cheaper to construct but no evidence has been provided in support of this claim. It is also hard to understand how the much greater environmental impact of Option 2 can possibly be justified
2. The proposed Railhead is located on land that is separate from the proposed IMB-R resulting in the industrialisation of two separate sites. As currently proposed it will:
 - be floodlit and in operation 24 hours a day causing visual and light pollution over a considerable distance and much further afield than just the village of Ashley
 - take 50 acres of greenbelt agricultural land - the equivalent of 35 football pitches
 - destroy the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and Site of Biological Interest(SBI) at Erlam's Meadow (Ashley Brickworks) and also a large part of the LWS and Grade A SBI at Arden Wood which is classified as Ancient Woodland **
 - result in additional environmental destruction including Little Wood on Mobberley Road and at the southern end of the construction site. This woodland, is locally known as Dingle Wood. Dingle Wood is unusual in that it shows indicator ground plant species of Ancient Woodland with mature Beech trees and a stream running through it on a flagstone bed. Cheshire Wildlife Trust have recently designated the Dingle Wood and nearby fields as a Local Wildlife Site named Sugar Brook. **
 - adversely affect, or destroy, a well (from which spring water flows) in field SJ7783 4325. This is an environmental and historical feature that should not be considered for a construction site. Note there is an exclusion zone around the well **
 - destroy land that has been part of a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme since 2003 and has been farmed organically since 1999.
 - be constructed and operational for at least 7 years, leading to the land being irrevocably damaged and unlikely to be capable of reverting to its previous agricultural and ecologically sensitive status.
 - almost certainly result in additional noise and pollution caused by the huge number of heavy goods vehicles required to bring in the materials required to construct the railhead
 - cost in excess of £50 - £100 million to construct and decommission based on the costs of similar facilities located elsewhere

*** Apart from Erlam's Meadow, there is no reference to these environmental issues in the consultation document nor are any shown on maps*

3. The IMB-R

- The proposed IMBR is wholly within the village of Ashley, not 300 metres south west of the village. It is not a suitable construction to be sited so close to Ashley residents and an alternative site should be considered
- The IMB-R is being constructed on land which contains important nesting sites for RSPB red listed endangered bird species including tree sparrows, lapwings and yellowhammers
- The proposed auto transformer substation, apart from being unsightly, should not be sited so close to Ashley residents. There are concerns about the spread and strength of the electro-magnetic fields surrounding the structure and whether the many existing overhead electricity lines in Ashley should be taken into account
- Significant noise due to heavy freight trains which could be in operation 24 hours per day

4. An Alternative Site for the Railhead and IMB-R

- the need to take 50 acres of land in Ashley to build the railhead and the additional acreage required to build the IMB-R would be completely avoided if a railhead/IMB-R is built at Aldersley's Rough near Keele Services instead of the proposed location at Stone
- Aldersley's Rough is ideally located to install rail systems and maintain the HS2 Phase 2b railway between Crewe and Manchester. Unlike Stone which is located 13km further south, Aldersley's Rough is located exactly halfway between the Delta Junction on Phase 1 and Manchester Piccadilly. This means that it is located 71km from each location and would have 3 hours 40 minutes maintenance time at each end of the railway, which is more than the 3 hours minimum time required by HS2.
- Aldersley's Rough would also be easier and substantially cheaper (by £10s of millions) to construct than the facility at Stone and could be more easily accessed from the M6 motorway.
- Unlike Stone, Aldersley's Rough has the capability of accommodating the 800m long ballast trains that will be required to maintain the Phase 2b railway between Crewe and Manchester.
- Not building two separate facilities at Ashley would save the taxpayer in excess of £100 million and would greatly reduce the adverse environmental effects that would otherwise be experienced by the residents of Ashley.

5. Roads in Ashley

- General Comments
 - All four arterial roads in and out of Ashley are narrow, winding country roads whose speed limit is set at the national speed limit (excluding Ashley Village centre which is 30mph) nation speed limit.
 - None of the roads could possibly sustain the proposed number of heavy goods vehicles that construction of HS2 will require. It is not clear which route the HGVs will take to reach Ashley. However, whichever route is taken will result in the lorries being driven on wholly unsuitable roads whose surfaces will quickly deteriorate
 - There is great concern that the proposed high density of traffic will impede emergency services from getting to their destination in a timely manner
- Closing off Ashley Road and the New Road Connecting with Mobberley Road
 - Ashley Parish Council does not accept the closure of Ashley Road, the new road connecting the Ashley Road diversion at Lamb Lane to Mobberley Road or the demolition of Mobberley Road Bridge
 - The currently open Ashley Road is used as a rat run and there are frequent, sometimes long, delays at rush hour times. In addition, extra traffic is generated by events at Tatton Park (such as the RHS Flower Show) and, following an incident on the M6 and/or the M56, vehicles travel through Ashley as an alternative route which can result in queues up to one mile long.
 - All the traffic described in the above point will have to be accommodated by the new T junction on Mobberley Road, which would be in addition to the regular Mobberley Road traffic.
 - A field next to Mobberley Road, close to the proposed demolition of Mobberley Road Bridge is an example of the ancient practice of ridge and furrow (or ridge and rean) ploughing. Will provision be made to protect this archaeological feature?
- Ashley Road from the Closure to Hale

- There is a listed bridge over the River Bollin at the border between Ashley and Hale which is unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles. Note Ashley Road is called Cow Lane in the centre of the village but then reverts back to Ashley Road
- Ashley Road from the closure towards Tatton Park and Knutsford
 - Travelling on Ashley Road towards Tatton Park and Knutsford necessitates travelling across a very narrow bridge over the Birkin. This bridge is unlikely to support heavy goods vehicles for very long
- Back Lane through Castle Mill Lane towards Wilmslow Road and M56 Junction
 - In 2.2,23 of the consultation it is stated that [Ashley] has good access to the strategic road network through its proximity to the M56. HS2 has not considered the significant problems in using this road to support the rail systems construction
 - Castle Mill Lane has a number of very bad bends and is so narrow in parts that it would be impossible for two lorries to pass each other. There are virtually no passing points
 - There is a listed bridge at Castle Mill on Castle Mill Lane which would be unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles

6. Connection to the Mid-Cheshire Line

- Point 2.2,29 of the consultation states "The railhead will consist of ten temporary rail sidings with a connection to the Mid-Cheshire Line"
- Although there is very little detail provided regarding this new connection, Ashley Parish Council must object to its presence as it facilitates the Railhead. The Council would also object if this proposed connection were to be made permanent feature.

7. Environmental Impact

Some of the negative environmental impacts have already been stated in point 2. above. They are repeated here for completeness sake

- The impacts from noise, vibration, visual and light pollution are on a mammoth scale
- The proposal to construct the HS2 mainline and associated infrastructure at elevations that will stand above the village will increase its visibility and potential noise impacts. Further design work should be undertaken to lower the railway and construct it within a cutting thus reducing its environmental effects.
- Much of Ashley's housing stock is very old and includes a number of listed buildings from 17th and 18th century, including Sycamore Cottage (17th century) which is in very close proximity to Stock Farm - the site of the proposed IMB-R. Ashley Parish Council is very concerned about damage to such buildings from Rail and Road traffic and a comprehensive vibration assessment needs to be carried out
- There will be destruction of the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and Site of Biological Interest(SBI) at Erlam's Meadow (Ashley Brickworks) and also a large part of the LWS and Grade A SBI at Arden Wood which is classified as Ancient Woodland
- There will be additional environmental destruction including Little Wood on Mobberley Road and at the southern end of the construction site. This woodland is locally known as Dingle Wood. Dingle Wood is unusual in that it shows indicator ground plant species of Ancient Woodland with mature Beech trees and a stream running through it on a flagstone bed. The wood and the nearby fields have recently been as a Local Wildlife Site named Sugar Brook.
- The IMB-R is being constructed on land which contains important nesting sites for RSPB red listed endangered bird species including tree sparrows, lapwings and yellowhammers red listed species. This is not just a loss to Ashley but a loss for wildlife in general
- The destruction of ancient woodland such as Arden Wood, which no amount of mitigation could replace
- The adversely affected well (from which spring water flows). This is an environmental and historical feature that should not be considered for a construction site. Note there is an exclusion zone around the well
- Potential for the damage to, or destruction of a field next to Mobberley Road, close to the proposed demolition of Mobberley Road Bridge which is an example of the ancient practice of ridge and furrow (or ridge and rean) ploughing.

8. Drainage of the Land

- The HS2 railway will be entering from the west and leaving to the East, whereas all the water courses run from West to East. Ergo, all the water flow needs to be taken in a westerly direction to the nearest watercourse
- The land to be used by the railway rises from the West to the East. If the track was placed in a cutting for most of the route through Ashley, the water would follow the natural fall in the land
- It will be necessary to require the piping of three existing watercourses. The topography of this site, which is intended for construction of the railhead, is very uneven due to the extraction of clay used to make bricks and land drainage tiles at the Brickworks (Erlam's Meadow)
- The fact that there are two spring fed ponds and a well, indicates an unusual water table under the proposed site of the railhead. This will incur additional expense to negate a constant pollution issue throughout the life of the railhead
- There are three streams providing drainage outlets for surrounding fields. Ashley Parish Council is concerned that, due to the temporary nature of the railhead, insufficient priority and attention will be given to the drainage of the land surrounding the railhead
- It is of great concern that Rostherne Mere (a National Nature Reserve, a Ramsar site and a Site of Special Scientific Interest) could be polluted by water run off during construction and operation of the railway, railhead and IMB-R. The streams mentioned above all drain into Birkin Brook and the River Bollin
- There is also great concern that, under certain weather conditions, Birkin Brook can reverse its flow and run back into Rostherne Mere via Blackburn Brook, thus significantly increasing the risk of pollution of the Mere

Q11: What are your comments on the proposals to include passive provision for Manchester to Liverpool and London to Liverpool junctions near High Legh?

1. General

- Yet again consultees are being asked to comment on information that is incomplete but could have an impact on Ashley. This is another instance of being drip fed information by HS2. There is insufficient information on the NPR integration with HS2 to make a considered assessment without referring to NPR documentation
- Notwithstanding the above comment, if the HS2 proposals at Ashley form part of the NPR proposals, then our the concerns mentioned previously would apply.

2. NPR Hubs

- The following is an extract from Q11 point 2.3.7. "It is proposed that the earthworks and civil engineering structures required to support a junction with NPR are added to the HS2 Manchester Spur in the vicinity of Ashley and extended west, under the A556 to a point near Millington Lane". Why is this not mentioned, or at least referred to in Q7 of the consultation since it affects the construction of the spur?
- Will the hubs be built at the same time as creating the HS2 railway?

3. Birkin Brook

- The following is also an extract from Q11 point 2.3.7. "Under this proposal, the HS2 Manchester Spur remains in the same location, while a future Manchester to Liverpool line would cross over the Manchester Spur near Birkin Brook at a height of approximately 14m".
- Exactly where will the line cross Birkin Brook? Will it, as suspected, affect Ashley?
- Successful work on Birkin Brook was carried out in 2016 to create extra flow to clean gravel beds, which - which need to be silt and sand free to enable trout eggs to develop into baby fish.
- Will HS2 ensure that the quality of the river will not be impacted by the construction of the 14m high 'bridge' (?) - it is not specified