

DAVENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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30th March 2022

HS2 PHASE 2B - High Speed Rail (Crewe- Manchester) Environmental Statement **In particular MA02 report Wimboldsey to Lostock Gralam**

By email: HS2BiLLES@Ipsos-Mori.com

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Consultation on the Environmental Statement re the route of HS2 between Crewe and Manchester

The following is the response from Davenham Parish Council to the Environmental Statement for High Speed 2 (HS2) rail route between Crewe and Manchester Phase 2B.

Davenham Parish Council remain opposed to the route, because of the environmental and safety implications on our village for the following reasons:

(In particular the route from Wimboldsley to Lostock Gralam as set out in the MA02 report of HS2 Phase 2b)
Taking each of our key points in turn:

- The disproportionate impact on the environment and heritage.
 - The extensive and prolonged Impact on Local Traffic and Business/Economy (3 years as a minimum)
 - The destruction of a proposed economic area
 - The structural stability of the line, as it passes through an area of high instability
 - The risks posed by the line passing over or very close to an underground gas storage works

Impact on the Environment and Heritage

Notwithstanding the potential for track collapse, initiating a gas explosion and the reduction of jobs, the proposed route of HS2 cuts through some of the most picturesque countryside in the Parish of Davenham, enjoyed both by local residents and visitors from further afield. It will result in the loss of hedgerows and partial destruction of the mature woodland at Marshall's Gorse, to the South of Gadbrook Park. The removal of hedgerows and woodland will reduce biodiversity and will have a significant negative impact on wildlife habitats.

Significant woodland planting will be required, though this will not mitigate for the damage to the landscape character or loss of wildlife habitat. A minimum of 25m wide belt of mixed woodland either side of the embankment within open countryside is suggested, as appropriate, comprising at least 40% evergreen conifer species to provide some noise buffering during winter. Due to the height of the embankments, it will be many years before such planting will provide any noise reduction or screening of the track, potentially as long as 15- 20 years!

Whilst HS2 intends to carry out some planting during the "Enabling Works" phase, it is not currently clear whether this will be the case for the affected area within Davenham Parish Council. Without such an established and mature planting barrier, the infrastructure would be a visible eyesore with noise pollution significantly likely.

The Trent and Mersey Canal, which will be impacted by the construction of the line, is stunningly beautiful and the home for plenty of wildlife. A walk along the banks of the canal, which is a conservation area in the Cheshire West and Chester local plan, not only promotes a healthy lifestyle but gives the opportunity to see a plethora of wildfowl, a landscape enhanced by mature trees and/or simply enjoy the peace and quiet of the countryside. The canal also attracts holiday makers and day trippers on canal barges throughout the year, the trade from which some local businesses rely.

The proposed route for HS2 not only cuts through this picturesque landscape, but it does so raised for a significant proportion of the length (1.2 miles) through the Parish, crossing the canal in several places. As such, it is expected that it will not only be an eyesore to those who live in the area but also the noise pollution associated with the new line will be in stark contrast to the current rural scene. The intended viaduct also passes within metres of Grade II

Listed buildings in the Parish, namely Whatcroft Hall and related cottages, that form an important part of the local heritage alongside the other Listed buildings in the Davenham village centre.

The impact of up to three access points (single track roads) to build and service HS2 Communication Depots remain unknown, particularly re the size, height, noise pollution and impact on the environment of these access roads etc. Is there a proposal to screen these?

Extensive Impact on Local Traffic and Business/Economy

The development proposed for the A556 / Morrisons roundabout, whilst outside the Davenham Parish Council boundaries, will have a significant impact on the residents of Davenham. This is a busy road that already suffers from congestion and delays in the Gadbrook Park area during peak times. Access diversions will increase traffic in and around Davenham on local lanes and roads (e.g. Church Street) which are already at considerable strain whenever there are temporary roadworks let alone the significant infrastructural change that HS2 will bring. The proposed 6-month diversion across Whatcroft lane will also need to be fully impact assessed to understand any knock-on effect to the village. NB Many of our village residents also use Davenham Road/ Crowders lane to travel to Knustford (Barclays IT Centre)- If this is closed it will force traffic on an already busy A556

It is difficult to see how such major work as re-aligning this road, along with the amount of construction traffic in the area, could not cause considerable congestion, disruption and delays over a prolonged period. This will also inevitably impact air quality to the nearby housing and Industrial Park and cause economic impact on the supply of goods and services from and to Gadbrook Business Park and the wider Northwich area.

The destruction of a proposed Economic Development Area

A large amount has been made about the economic advantages of HS2. Similarly, the HS2 community are very vocal about their compensation schemes for communities and people impacted by HS2. Within Davenham Parish, HS2 transits through an area proposed for economic development adjacent to Gadbrook Park. This would suppress economic development and there are no current schemes in place for HS2 to compensate the impacted communities.

Therefore, while the economic benefits to the North of England as a whole are entirely questionable, the impact locally within the Parish of Davenham could be significantly worse from an economic perspective. The Northwich Urban area, within which the land identified falls, has been highlighted as strategically important to the development of the town by Cheshire West and Chester Council. Further, the Parish Council have received representation from developers looking to increase the size of Gadbrook Park by extending the site to the south, across the land identified by HS2 for the line.

As such, at a local level, the economic detriment of HS2 is significant and the local communities must surely be compensated when the scheme destroys the potential for job and wealth creation in the area.

Concerns over the structural stability of the line and potential impacts on the environment

By design HS2 intends to transport many thousands of people at high speed through the Cheshire countryside. This requires a firm foundation upon which to build the track and supporting infrastructure. The land in Davenham Parish is not a firm foundation. It lies within the salt mining areas of mid Cheshire where every house buyer will know is subject to subsidence and the occasional collapse of old mines. That is why property purchases in the area are subject to additional registry searches.

To route a train of hundreds of people, potentially every 6 minutes (10 times hour) for 18 hours each day, over an area of known land instability is irresponsible. The location of the mines and the geological voids are not widely known and the process of stabilising the land in the area is significant. Add to the equation the recent announcements concerning the rights for fracking in the area and the whole issue becomes dangerous with the perception that disturbing the land in the vicinity could actively lead to the collapse of a void.

Putting the scenario aside, the structural stability of land over which HS2 is proposing to traverse is incompatible with building a modern and efficient railway. From a safety perspective, the safety principle of as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) directs that safer options should continue to be pursued.

Reassurances regarding the consideration of high levels of salt in the immediate area have not been provided. Whilst it has been suggested that cuttings will be minimal, this does not negate the potential for ground movements to occur.

Risks associated with routing near the underground Gas Storage Works at Stublach

The Stublach Gas Storage area is located on the boundary of Davenham Parish. Within this facility over 216 million cubic metres of natural gas can be stored below ground. While it is acknowledged that the route of HS2 has been altered to move the line away from this facility, it has increased the land stability risk above.

However, there remains a significant risk with respect to the gas storage works at Stublach and its proximity to HS2. While the location of the gas storage voids are at least known, the facility would not have been designed to take into consideration the vibrations and movement associated with HS2 either from the high frequency geotechnical disturbance which may be expected from operations and the passing of high speed trains or the low frequency disturbance from construction including the construction of the foundations. Both of these have the potential to damage the fabric of the gas storage facility and lead to a catastrophic failure.

These operational risks are proposed prior to the fault scenario of electrical failure of sparks in the proximity of highly flammable gas. Again, a potentially explosive situation, literally and politically, when you are proposing the transiting of thousands of people near to an explosive environment.

It is further noted that HS2 have made no proposals with respect to the safety case for transiting the gas storage works or the unstable land, or even whether there would be one. Again, drawing on the Safety Assessment Principles, alternatives to transiting the Mid-Cheshire salt mining areas exist, as detailed above, and these should be progressed as the favoured routes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Davenham Parish Council cannot support the proposed routing of HS2 Phase 2b (MA02) through the Parish of Davenham because of:

- The disproportionate impact on the environment and local economy e.g. Oakwood Marina & Gadbrook Park to name but two
- The destruction of the stunning countryside in our Parish.
- The extensive Impact on Local Traffic and Business/Economy
- The destruction of a proposed economic area
- The potential for a major gas explosion and its environmental impacts on the wider area

The potential negative impacts on the environment and long-term job creation for the area, run counter to the very purpose of HS2.

We look forward to hearing that our feedback and that of other Parish Councils will encourage a complete rethink on the route and see full consideration to the environmental & economic impacts we have articulated in our feedback

Our preference remains for the project be routed away from the Parish of Davenham

Yours sincerely

Elaine Hamlett

On behalf of Davenham Parish Council