



Mr. Mark Andrews
Head of Planning
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Council House
Manor Square
Solihull B91 3QB

28 June 2021

Dear Mr. Andrews,

Objection to planning applications:

**PL/2021/00276/CLOPUD Site construction access for HS2 purposes off Hallmeadow Road
PL/2021/00473/HS2DIS and PL/2021/00471/HS2DIS Use of Hallmeadow Rd and A452 for
HS2 construction traffic**

On behalf of my constituents I am writing to object to the Schedule 17 Planning applications above on the grounds of environmental impact, noise, road safety and air pollution. I would be grateful if this letter could be passed on to the Planning Committee and recorded as part of the consideration process. It is my view that HS2 Limited and its contractor, BBV have exercised serious disregard for the community of Balsall Common. Despite representations indicating that their intention is to work with communities, I have found both HS2 Limited and BBV wanting in this regard and I have listed my reasons for this below.

The significant increase in the number of vehicles proposed will result in congestion on local roads and will be detrimental to air quality in a residential area. Hallmeadow Road itself is unsuitable in terms of the proposed increase in traffic volume and will be dangerous for pedestrians and residential traffic.

There is no provision in the plans for overspill parking at Berkswell station. This had been repeatedly promised to the residents of Balsall Common but this promise has not been kept. Instead these applications will result in a loss of amenity for Balsall Common residents with no replacement. This is simply not good enough and falls short of the commitment that HS2 made to be a "good neighbour". In the HS2 Community Engagement Strategy, HS2 state "Our aspiration is to be a good neighbour every single day, by respecting the people and communities we impact and being sensitive to their needs, earning our social licence to operate." HS2 Limited and BBV's conduct in relation to the people of Balsall Common has not been that of a "good neighbour" and they have failed to earn their social licence to operate.

These applications will also directly impact one local business, the Annora Guest House, where the route will run just a few metres from their boundary and is facing the possibility of closure as a result due to the noise, dust and constant construction traffic that will result. Neither HS2 Limited nor BBV Limited have come up with adequate proposals to mitigate the impact on Annora Guest House.

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Schedule 17(6 (5)) of the HS2 Act 2017 states:

“The relevant planning authority may only refuse to approve arrangements for the purpose of this paragraph on the ground that-

(b) the arrangements ought to be modified –

- i. To preserve the local environment or local amenity,*
- ii. To prevent or reduce prejudicial effects on road safety or on the free flow of traffic in the local area,*

and are reasonably capable of being so modified.”

The applications that have been submitted will impact on the local environment and the local amenity with the increase in volume of HGV movements on local roads, near to residential properties and schools, and will affect the free flow of traffic in the local area. In particular, application 00471 proposes up to 200 HGVs on the A452, the main arterial route through the village and then routes then along residential roads, Kelsey Lane/Waste Lane with some continuing on the narrow rural lanes of Hodgetts Lane and Truggist Lane. This volume of HGVs on residential roads and rural lanes is inherently unsafe.

There has been a failure to evaluate credible alternatives which have been put forward by local residents and parish councils for a number of years. I have now attended several meetings with HS2, BBV and members of the community at which HS2 Ltd and BBV have offered to go away and look again at the problem, only for them to return and put forward the exact same damaging proposals. In my view, the approach of HS2 Limited and BBV has been to use these meetings as a way of ignoring the legitimate concerns of the local community rather than to work with them to find collaborative ways forward.

There is a clear alternative by providing a continuous trace-line haul route using the Truggist Hill Farm bridge or a temporary structure that would remove construction traffic from the local road and lane networks. This would mitigate many of the concerns residents are highlighting i.e. huge increase in HGVs on local residential roads and increased air pollution. The provision of the cross country haul route over the West Coast Mainline would remove large numbers of HGVs and other associated construction traffic off residential roads and narrow lanes and appears a viable option.

The alternative route could and should be given more consideration. This would have less environmental impact, cause less environmental damage and less impact on the health, safety and well-being of my constituents living on the proposed residential and rural lane haul routes. The alternative route would keep large volumes of traffic away from Balsall Common and off local roads altogether. With compounds already established at Park Lane and Waste Lane, an internal haul route rather than using public roads would minimise further disruption for residents.

You will be aware that a petition has been launched by local residents against these applications which now totals over 3,700 signatures. The strength of this petition is a damning indictment of the attitude that HS2 Limited and BBV have had towards the residents of Balsall Common.

There is clearly significant local opposition to this planning application and I stand with my constituents, who are rightly worried.

Quite simply, if these plans go ahead my constituents will suffer significant disruption with losses of amenity, an increase in noise and air pollution and increased dangers to health, safety and wellbeing. The above applications are in the wrong location and the impact they will cause local residents is unacceptable.

Having attended briefings from HS2 and BBV on a number of occasions it is clear that they have failed to do adequate work to assess alternative routes put forward which would have less impact on the village of Balsall Common. I urge the committee to reject this application and I urge HS2 Limited and BBV to come up with alternative solutions in collaboration with the local community in Balsall Common. The people of Balsall Common deserve much better than what they are being offered.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Saqib', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Saqib Bhatti MBE, MP for Meriden