



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

7 March 2022

Dear Mr. Andrews,

Objection to Planning Application PL/2022/00256/HS2DIS

On behalf of my constituents I am writing to object to the Schedule 17 Planning application 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, in particular Kelsey Lane and Waste Lane. 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 been approached by a number of residents who have confirmed that my assessment is consistent with their experiences too. I have listed their 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.

This application 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.

Residents have informed me that they are unaware of any attempt by HS2 Ltd to consult residents, contrary to the Written Statement for Information, paragraph 4.1.1

Also, paragraph 2.1.4 describes Kelsey Lane as ‘predominately residential in nature with infrequent side roads’. The road is totally residential in nature. Nearly all the houses have driveways directly onto the road. Kelsey Lane has frequent side roads – eight within a distance of approximately 700 yards. All of these lead to further houses. There is therefore a significant number of householders’ vehicles negotiating a way onto and off Kelsey Lane, which can already be difficult to access.

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 application that has 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, the application proposes up to 400 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.

In addition, one of the reasons the previous planning application PL/2021/00471/HS2DIS was refused was due to the width of Kelsey Lane being too narrow to allow free flow of traffic and the required volume of HS2 lorries without compromising pedestrian safety. This was also referred to in the Planning Inspector's decision notice in dismissing HS2's appeal. Nothing in this application changes that - the width of Kelsey Lane remains the same regardless of the road safety measures that HS2 have proposed.

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 or similar 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 new petition has been launched by local residents against these applications. 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 respect and much better than they are being offered.

Yours sincerely,



Saqib Bhatti MBE MP