

SIR WILLIAM CASH, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling MP    LONDON SW1A 0AA  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DR

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016

Dear Chris,

**Re: extension of your consultation to build a temporary construction facility (railhead) near Stone**

I am very concerned about plans published by HS2 and the Department on 13th September to build a temporary construction facility (railhead) near Stone, in-between the proposed HS2 route and the M6, which has the potential to subsequently become a permanent maintenance facility to replace the Infrastructure Maintenance Depot (IMD) currently shown at Crewe. I am writing to you specifically as I am extremely concerned about the consultation period due to close on 7 November and I urge upon you as a matter of urgency to extend that consultation period to allow proper consultation.

When I specifically raised the issue of consultation during Cheryl Gillan's Adjournment debate last Thursday (27th October) on the subject of the effectiveness of communication and engagement by HS2 Ltd, Andrew Jones MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department for Transport was good enough to respond to me that –

*“... Consultation in the worst cases can simply be a tick-box exercise—a process that has to be undertaken for lots of different elements of public policy or for planning applications. That is not good enough, but during the progress of the Bill, we have seen many changes in the original proposals, the consultation and the route and the communication around it. We are not in that place where people are just going through the exercise and not listening, but I do not want people to think that their voices will not be heard. We must ensure that people recognise that their views are respected. That goes back to my earlier point about ensuring that, underpinning everything, there is an attitude of openness and respect for individuals.” (HC, 27 October 2016)*

I urge upon you therefore to extend that consultation period to allow proper consultation. In particular, I wanted to let you know that on Saturday (29th October), I held a public meeting with my constituents in Yarnfield Village Hall, focusing particularly on the this consultation, which was chaired by Councillor Roy James,

Chairman of Swynnerton Parish Council, and the depth of frustration and anger at the short duration of the consultation was evident to all my constituents present.

I understand that the proposal itself is a 'design refinement' of the HS2 Phase 2a scheme to Crewe which had previously been announced in November 2015. As the consultation which you are currently running, concentrates on this proposed facility (railhead) near Stone, in-between the proposed HS2 route and the M6 and runs only on 13 September 2016 and will close on 7 November, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this is less than the 12 weeks recommended in the Government's Code of Practice on Consultation. While the more recent Consultation Principles Guidance 2016 does not give a specific timeframe, it does however state:

***"Consultations should last for a proportionate amount of time***

*Judge the length of the consultation on the basis of legal advice and taking into account the nature and impact of the proposal. Consulting for too long will unnecessarily delay policy development. Consulting too quickly will not give enough time for consideration and will reduce the quality of responses."*

On this basis and given the serious impact on so many of my constituents, I urge upon you, as a matter of utmost urgency, to extend the consultation period. The proposals are significant to my constituents.

I will write separately in response to the consultation but what is clear is that I object to the proposed serious and substantive changes. The maintenance facility near Stone will lead to the realignment of Eccleshall Road to Yarnfield of a 1.3km section. The route will cross over the realigned Yarnfield Lane at approximately 10m above the existing ground level. The Yarnfield South embankment will be approximately 370m and up to 9 metres high. There is woodland and grassland habitat creation along the route. My constituents face a viaduct of 180m and up to 15m in height. The Yarnfield North embankment and associated landscaping earthworks will stand at 450m in length and 12m in height. There will be a diversion of Filly Brook.

Furthermore, on the Yarnfield Lane realignment to Meaford North embankment covering a 2.3km section, the Yarnfield North embankment and landscaping earthworks are approximately 450m in length and 12m in height.

The Stone Railhead main compound itself (sited adjacent to Yarnfield Lane) will receive full construction trains and it is intended to provide for construction activities for the full length of the proposed scheme. The main railhead compound I am also told seems to require the temporary closure of Yarnfield Lane for approximately three years. The area will be used for offices, storage, a rail marshalling yard, a pre-assembly depot, a reception loop for trains from the national network. It may also contain worker accommodation, sidings, 700m in length, storage and construction facilities for the track and overhead line equipment. It will be used to import bulk materials such as ballast, rail and sleepers where they would be stockpiled. Large earthmoving equipment will be used to transport materials through the compound. Offices and railway sidings lit by mast floodlights and the access roads will be lit by the same, 12m in height. The stockpiled areas will be lit when in use. All the construction traffic would utilise the existing roads. The Stone Railhead compound in

operation for 6 years, 9 months from 2020. There will be a temporary diversion of traffic on B5026 through Meece Road and Yarnfield Lane. I am told 180 to 290 workmen will be present throughout much of the period. With access via Yarnfield Lane and other roads, it will provide accommodation and welfare facilities for 240 workers for the whole construction period.

I understand also there will be a Satellite compound operational for 6 years and 9 months. This will support 90 civil engineers and up to 135 at peak times and again accessed from Yarnfield Lane. This again requires a three year closure of Yarnfield Lane, a diversion of public footpath and permanent diversion of the Filly Brook. These may become permanent maintenance facilities in operation 24/7.

The land referred to is liable to flooding, flood attenuation and provide habitats. Contractors must be required to manage dust, air pollution, odour and exhaust emissions during construction works, monitor measures to control dust etc., keep haul routes clean. There will be an inevitable increase in traffic in Yarnfield Lane and other local roads. A great deal of noise, vibration, poor air quality, HGV traffic and visual intrusion will result from the proposed construction work.

A part of High Lows meadow, a local wildlife site, will be required for construction site, which will be a permanent loss and is significant. The construction of the Yarnfield North embankment would result in loss of 3ha (100%) of 2 woodlands. It is a significant habitat loss at county/metropolitan level. There will be a loss of 44 ponds and 193 hedgerows, 28km of hedgerow permanently, which is important. The increase in traffic and heavy goods vehicles will reduce the interest in walking and cycling in the area. It will reduce levels of active travel caused by road closures and restrictions. Such road closures and diversions will impact upon access to services and emergency vehicle access. Diversions in rural areas are likely to be longer and there is great potential for existing local residents to experience difficulties in accessing shops and services e.g. library, banks, etc. as a result of increased journey times during construction.

I am therefore concerned that the proposal to re-locate the railhead main compound near to Stone is included in the proposed scheme but I will write separately to you with my objection. As the design refinement will feed into the design of the final Phase 2a scheme, to be put before Parliament in its own Hybrid Bill at a future stage in 2017, it is essential that many of my constituents have their say at this stage. As the Government is in effect consulting on these proposed changes before making a final decision on whether to include them within the design that will be submitted to Parliament alongside the Hybrid Bill, their voice in that consultation must be heard and the consultation run for a longer duration so that they have adequate time to respond to the matter and in sufficient detail. Their response must then be considered and incorporated into the consultation on design refinement in good time and at least well ahead of the commencement of the process for petitioning on the Hybrid Bill begins and the proposed railhead is just presented to them in the final scheme as published. In brief, they cannot be presented with a fait accompli.

I urge upon you therefore to extend this consultation period to allow proper consultation.

*Yarnfield, Bill*