

To the House of Lords
Session 2015–16

PETITION against the

High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill

THE PETITION OF CALVERT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

Declares that:

1. The petitioner is specially and directly adversely affected the whole Bill.
2. *Your petitioner*

The petitioner is Calvert Green Parish Council. The Bill would authorise the compulsory acquisition of land belonging to your petitioner's parishioners, to which your petitioner objects. Furthermore, part of the area for which your petitioner is a local authority will be injuriously affected by the provisions of the Bill, and your petitioners accordingly object thereto for reasons, amongst others, hereinafter appearing.

Your petitioners' Parish of Calvert Green in North Buckinghamshire, part of CF13, is located in a quiet rural setting. It is a civil parish in Aylesbury Vale and was created in 2003 from parts of Charndon and Steeple Claydon civil parishes. Parish boundaries for the parishes of Calvert Green, Charndon and Steeple Claydon now meet at Brackley Lane in Calvert, around 117 metres from the proposed HS2 line.

Almost all of your petitioners' parishioners live in the village of Calvert Green, built in the early 21st Century on the former London Brickworks in Calvert. Calvert Green Parish comprises of just over 400 domestic dwellings, a farm and operational landfill facility, managed by FCC Environmental Ltd (FCCL). The parish boundary borders and crosses the proposed HS2 route and all dwellings in your petitioners' parish are within a mile of the proposed HS2 line. Many dwellings are in extremely close proximity, from just 130 metres away.

Your petitioners' parish also includes Sheephause Wood (SSSI), a large, well-structured block of ancient pedunculate oak woodland carrying a wide range of stand types, some of which are relatively uncommon in the region. The site has a characteristically diverse woodland flora, a typical range of breeding birds and is of particular interest for its invertebrate fauna which includes notable and local species. Land-take from this rare ancient woodland by HS2 is identified in the HS2 Environmental Statement.

Your petitioners' parish also abuts Decoypond wood, an ancient woodland and Calvert Railway Station, a local wildlife site (LWS) with wet grassland habitat that is now home to many amphibians including the common lizard, diverse butterflies including marbled white, common blue and meadow brown, and many dragonflies. Both sites will also be significantly adversely affected by HS2 Plans.

Some 200 metres to the north of your petitioners' parish is Calvert Jubilee nature reserve, with its abundance of flora and fauna, and home to some of the very rarest species in the UK, whose outlook is bleak as the proposed high speed line will be cutting across its eastern side, with the proposed major HS2 Infrastructure Maintenance Depot (IMD) running along its north eastern edge. This tranquil Buckinghamshire reserve is a delightful place to watch wintering wildfowl such as mallard, tufted duck and pochard.

3. Your petitioner's concerns

Residential Blight and Environmental Destruction

As outlined in our introduction, Calvert Green is fortunate to have an LWS on its doorstep, adjacent to newly identified ancient woodland. Unfortunately, this is the location chosen by the promoter as an appropriate site for: an eight-year satellite construction depot, a construction materials stockpile and a permanent waste transfer rail siding and associated HGV overbridge and access routes.

We have previously presented to the House of Commons High Speed Rail Select Committee (HoCSC) our solution for saving this valuable environmental asset and protecting the health and sanity of residents. We are informed that East/West Rail (EWR) will not now be constructed separately but under the aegis of HS2. This significantly advances our recommendations. We are concerned that there has been no joint environmental survey and to date the promised joint report has yet to be published. From the very outset of this project, we have raised concerns on the cumulative impact of the many proposals.

Rather than having separate satellite compounds and materials stockpiles, we require that the EWR depot area is utilised by both projects. This location is equidistant between the two bridges it is required to construct, adjacent to the HS2 trace and alongside the IMD railhead. The promoter agreed to investigate this possibility but there is no acknowledgment to us that this has been considered. An added benefit to sharing infrastructure in this way could lead to a dramatic reduction in construction traffic through the village. By this single action, noise would reduce, pollution would reduce, our LWS and ancient woodland would remain undisturbed and residents could retain a part of their way of life.

The promoter conducted baseline noise assessment readings in Calvert which were later acknowledged by the Promoter to be flawed. This error on the promoter's part led to incorrect information which had a knock-on impact with serious implications for residents of Calvert. It is our assertion that had the correct information been available, Calvert would not have been selected as a location for the waste transfer sidings.

The promoter is now pursuing the preferred relocation of this malodorous waste transfer rail siding and associated infrastructure to the south of Calvert through a TWAO. However, our concern is that AP4 is still written into the hybrid bill and should the TWAO be delayed, the fall-back position is still covered within AP4. Should this be the case, the blight to Calvert will be all consuming. *We require the southern siding location to be written into the bill.*

Environmental Mitigation

Based on the assertion above, we require that a new baseline noise assessment is undertaken in Calvert which reflects the correct baseline noise for all HS2 calculations.

Although faced with the aforementioned HS2-imposed industrialisation, it has been confirmed that industrial noise is covered by BS4142:2014 which is very different to passing train noise in the way it is assessed. We understand that the AP4 cumulative noise figures don't conform to BS4142:2014. The promoter should have also have taken into account noise mitigation to the highest window of an affected dwelling; contrary to the promoter's current practice.

Your petitioner requests accurate noise calculations which represent the full cumulative impact to our community.

Our parish sits on heavy Oxford clay. Your petitioner is deeply concerned that the specific impacts of ground borne noise and vibration have not been properly considered and no amelioration measures have been suggested to deal with this problem. This is particularly pertinent in the light of the recent report on Rayleigh waves. Your petitioner is disappointed that the promoter discounted the evidential concerns we raised during the HS2 community forum meetings on this issue.

The issue of Rayleigh waves also raises anxiety about the type of track bed to be used: ballast or concrete slab. There are enormous noise and environmental implications if a slab is used.

Your Petitioner requests that a vibration assessment for Calvert be carried out as per commitment by the promoter during a site visit on 28th April 2013.

The promoter has acknowledged that no mitigation is planned for the south side of the IMD and railhead which leaves parishioners with no protection; separated by the open water of the Calvert Jubilee Nature Reserve. This reserve is a very important site for rare birds, plants and insects. The overall impact of situating the 24-hour operational IMD and railhead adjacent to this special reserve creates a level of light pollution detrimental to breeding patterns. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) identifies our area as benefiting from one of Britain's darkest skies.

Your Petitioner wishes to Petition that the promoter provides the maximum mitigation to the entire IMD site, and does not exclude that part of its site backing on to the Jubilee Nature Reserve, Jubilee Lake and thence to Calvert.

The location of the proposed pumping station in Calvert is currently hidden behind a copse of mature trees. The promoter intends felling these trees to provide a permanent service track to the pumping station resulting in an open corridor overlooking the railway. Consequently, residents will lose the pleasure of the view and the screening they offer. There is an alternative access to the pumping station, admitted by the promoter at the HoCSC but which so far they have failed to pursue.

We require that the promoter uses an existing, less intrusive access to this pumping station.

Code of Construction Practice (CoCP)

Your petitioner is aware of ongoing discussions between the Promoter and our local authorities. We require the final CoCP to be rigorously monitored and enforced with appropriate funding for the local authority. Without such local authority funding, the CoCP would be flouted.

Compensation

The HoCSC recommended: “amendments to the operation of the discretionary compensation schemes, with a view toward greater fairness and a more functional property market in areas near to the proposed line”. In the promoter’s response, only the Need to Sell scheme was referenced. However, the levels of compensation on offer through the Homeowner Payment Scheme are inadequate for the suffering our parishioners will be subjected to. *We request that this scheme be included for improvement as well.*

Note:

We support the petitions of Charndon Parish Council, Steeple Claydon Parish Council, Twyford Parish Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council who are all petitioning for the best mitigation for our scattered communities.

4. The prayer

The petitioner therefore asks the House of Lords that Calvert Green Parish Council, or someone representing it in accordance with the rules and Standing Orders of the House, be given an opportunity to give evidence on all or some of the issues raised in this petition to the Select Committee which considers this Bill.

AND the petitioner remains, etc.

Signed

PHILIP LESLIE JOHN GASKIN (AGENT)

On behalf of Calvert Green Parish Council

14th April 2016