

makes sense.

231. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: Yes. Fair enough.

232. CHAIR: Thank you very much. You've got it on the record. You've got it off your chest, anyway. That's the main thing.

233. MR LIDINGTON: Well, it's not me that's important.

234. CHAIR: Yeah. I know.

235. MR LIDINGTON: It's the, you know, 2000 constituents who have written to me about this, and the others who are also affected.

236. CHAIR: And member staff.

237. MR LIDINGTON: And indeed members of staff.

Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP

238. CHAIR: Right. We now move on to the Right Honourable Dominic Grieve, who has been sitting patiently listening to his Buckinghamshire colleague. Welcome, Dominic. We did, when we heard from some of your constituents on Thursday, point out that you had important works taking the safety of our nation.

239. MR GRIEVE: Well, I'm very grateful, Chairman, for having a brief opportunity - and I think it really will be brief - to pick up a few points specifically. I've given evidence before about HS2 going through Denham in my constituency, and the consequences of that. But specifically about the - that Heathrow Express terminal at Iver.

240. Some of you have had the opportunity of visiting and have seen for yourself the area, and can I just highlight what are my continuing concerns? Firstly I should make clear that I have seen - it's only in draft form - a letter coming from the promoter to Buckinghamshire County Council giving a number of undertakings about how the Heathrow Express project would be managed.

241. That includes an undertaking that prior to the construction and during the construction of the Heathrow Express depot, with a view to further mitigating the

impacts of the construction where necessary and reasonably practicable, insofar as it doesn't impact the timely, economic and safe delivery and operation of the proposed scheme they will engage between the promoter and the County Council. And they will also look at the cumulative traffic impacts in Iver, Iver Heath and Richings Park to understand the environmental impacts of these projects, with a view to the promoters reducing their projects' cumulative impact.

242. Now, all that is rather welcome. The trouble is, it's remarkably unspecific. Now, my understanding is that partly perhaps as a result of the Committee coming along to Iver the one aspect which has been specifically dropped is bringing traffic into Iver along Bangors Road South. If that is the case and can be confirmed I'm extremely grateful, because you will recall that this was an attempt to get heavy goods vehicles through a narrow gap of a twisting village road, where in fact two cars can't pass each other.

243. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Should I just explain precisely -

244. MR GRIEVE: Yes. It might be helpful to know what's happened on that. It will be helpful to know whether I'm right in that or not.

245. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Well, I'll certainly help you with that. The map, if we put up P14847. The Committee did actually hear about this in some detail on Thursday last.

246. MR GRIEVE: I appreciate. I wasn't there.

247. MR MOULD QC (DfT): No, no. Of course. But the Committee - that's just for their reference. This is the - the position - just to set the context again. We have three proposed access routes into the depot site. The first and the main access is this route by Wood Lane and Langley Park, which we propose should accommodate 70 per cent of the construction vehicles. And then we have - in order to try and balance the effects on traffic we had proposed it - of the remaining 30 per cent 15 would come by Bangors Road South and 15 per cent would come from the M4 via Sutton Lane and past - due north past Richings Park.

248. Now, what we have - because of the concerns that were raised about the ability of

Bangors Road South, particularly in this area, and indeed Iver High Street in this area, to accommodate any appreciable increase in HGV traffic from HS2. We have given an assurance to Buckinghamshire County Council, that I mentioned last Thursday morning, that we would look to avoid using Bangor Road South. The only qualification to that is that we have to be able to stay within the environment envelope of the planning permission that we would have under the HS2 bill.

249. And it may be that in order to achieve that obvious and important objective we would need to maintain some very residual running of HGVs down that road. And we're talking about the order of one or two HGVs a day, but our objective is to avoid that and to avoid using that road completely, because that is what has been impressed upon us by the County Council and the local community. It is only with that qualification that we have given that assurance.

250. CHAIR: Okay. Well, that's progress.

251. MR GRIEVE: Well, Chairman, that is very helpful and actually goes slightly further than my understanding had gone. If it is indeed the case that it's going to be confined to one or two heavy goods vehicles a day - and I still question the ability to use Bangors Road South. You saw the entrance into the village. I think you got out and stood by the roundabout and saw how narrow the village road is at that point of access into the High Street. My personal view has always been - and the villagers' view - that it's completely unsuitable to run heavy goods vehicles through at all, and I think that remains my position.

252. The other issue is of course Iver High Street. That is, as you were aware from your visit, a source of real concern to the locals, and rightly so because it's already saturated. Now, if in fact what's just been said is we're going to be down to one or two heavy goods vehicles a day as part of this project then I think my views, which I was about to express to you, may be somewhat tempered.

253. But the difficulty I have - and I think this is where I would ask the Committee perhaps to look at its conclusions carefully - is to what extent the undertakings, as they're currently - as I currently understand them - I felt that they're not worth the paper they're written on, but they're expressed in very general terms and they don't confine usage down to a position where I have confidence in going back to my own local

residence.

254. It does raise for me the further issue as to how we've got ourselves into this particular mess. The truth is that this project has been very poorly coordinated - on the Heathrow express depot - and thought through in relation to the other projects that are taking place in the vicinity. If it were possible, for example, to use Wood Lane and Mansion Lane to access this site then a lot of the problems that are associated with this project for the Heathrow Express depot would be reduced. They still of course will give problems to the local residence, but trying to look at this matter in the round and sensibly, they would be reduced.

255. But as you know, part of the anxiety is coordinating this with the western rail route into Heathrow, the potential building of a relief road from Thorney Lane South through the existing industrial site into - and out again, which Iver ultimately needs. And it does seem to me that we have this rather strange missed opportunity here. Actually, if these things were properly coordinated in time you could end up with the relief road as part of the project and you could avoid a large amount of the difficulties that we're now facing. Whereas actually what we have - and this seems to me to be clear from the assurances that have been given - is that we have a willingness to consider, as we go along, how these things can be put together.

256. So I suppose my plea to the Committee in coming here this afternoon is whether the Committee, in its conclusions, if it considers that there's any force or merit in my submissions, can go further in trying to induce a little bit more specificity into how this project is managed. Because ultimately if the project is dependent, for the Heathrow Express depot, on the current methods of access, then however much we try to do things properly it is going to be very burdensome on the local community. And that really is my specific point that I want to raise, because I think it is within the Committee's remit to make recommendations as to how this should proceed.

257. One of the other assurances I see here, as the Secretary of State for transport can confirm. He'll write to Network Rail Infrastructure Limited setting out the importance that any environmental impact assessment for the western rail route into Heathrow includes the transport effects of any other relevant existing or committed transport schemes in the area when developing baseline assumptions against which to assess

impact. And I come back to my point. There's then an undertaking that money will be contributed to the building of the relief road by HS2, insofar as the works they carry out make the construction of a relief road more difficult thereafter.

258. But I come back to my plea, which is that actually if this were properly coordinated the relief road would go in as part of the project. That would in fact facilitate access to the existing site. It would remove the problem which the industrial park has at the moment, that in fact the lorry movements that are going through are vastly over the capacity of the road to manage without it being substantially upgraded, and might contribute to smoothing this project out, whereas in my view, and the way it was originally presented, it simply has not been coordinated. And this is the Department for Transport. If they could be given a gentle kick I think it might be quite helpful.

259. So those, Mr Chairman, were in fact my basic points on this. And I don't want to take up the Committee's time. I mean, I accept that if one were to use Mansion Lane, for example, or Hollow Hill Lane, you'd have to put in a bailey bridge. But you could do that, and that would avoid a lot of the current construction problems that are currently present. And that's why I do worry about this, because the whole way in which this aspect of the project, an add-on to HS2, and it shows all the signs, in my view, of being such an add-on without real thought being given to what is in fact a substantial infrastructure project, and how it can be managed both to give an environmental benefit to the community and lessen what are very substantial adverse impacts while it is going ahead.

260. My final comments are about the wharf residents and those on the Mansion Hill caravan site. I'm pleased to hear about their relocation, but obviously the detail of that is going to be a very considerable problem in human terms, which is one of the spinoffs of this project. It illustrates to me just how severe the impact actually of this project is in fact going to be in the locality.

261. Chairman, those were my comments.

262. CHAIR: Okay. One brief point whilst you're here.

263. MR GRIEVE: Yes.

264. CHAIR: Heathrow spur, which is still a passive provision within the bill, presumably since that blights some of your constituents, you want it shot?

265. MR GRIEVE: Yes, I do. It's ridiculous it should still be in. It does blight my constituents, it's never going to be built, and if you could get rid of it, please, there would be quite a lot of very happy people who are being severely affected by its continued presence, whereas it seems to me abundantly clear it's never going to happen for very good reasons.

266. CHAIR: Okay. Do you want to add anything else to your comments about the road network, Mr Mould?

267. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I might just make a couple of points. First of all, as Mr Grieve will know there is a legal framework under this bill which will allow - which will give the County Council, as highway authority, the power to regulate and to approve the construction traffic routes that are finally adopted and used for the purposes of construction.

268. The second point is this element of the project - that is the depot here - is predicted to take about two years to construct, and the peak curve of the traffic is about six to nine months earlier in the program - 2017, 2018. The solution - the suggestion he makes for the use of Mansion Lane, as he says, would involve a Bailey Bridge.

269. That would be a bridge over the Grand Union Canal, essentially over those houseboats that you heard about - people are already concerned about the environmental impact of construction of this project - which we've heard a number of petitions of recently, whereas the proposal we have put forward is to bring the majority of the traffic around the existing road network, Langley Park Road, which is the road - which is the principle route through which existing commercial traffic uses. And you've heard about the sort of levels of traffic we're dealing with.

270. The other point is this. We have, as he says, agreed to make a contribution to a relief road if it comes forward within that timescale, which I should have thought is highly questionable, but if it does come forward within that timescale. It's a local authority promoted scheme which we think is best left to them to pursue, and it would be - it's one thing to say from the local residents' perspective that the department for

transport surely should get its act together, but there's public money involved here as well and that relief road will undoubtedly - the main beneficiaries of that in terms of developers and commercial users will not be HS2. HS2 will have completed this work within about two years and it will be gone.

271. But the reason - the real problem here, as you've heard, is the level of existing commercial traffic and the block that the existing saturation of roads puts on further development. And it would be wrong, in principle, for the public purse to fund that relief road without the opportunity being taken to secure contributions from all those people who ought to be making that contribution.

272. We've agreed - the promoter has agreed to make his contribution if it comes forward, but there are other stakeholders here who ought to be - from whom it would be right to retain the prospect of securing an appropriate contribution as well. So let's - that's an important perspective on that particular point. And the local - and the County Council, as highway authority, are best placed, through their own forward-planning procedures, to broker that process, which is the normal planning process for a new facility of that kind.

273. CHAIR: Okay. Final comments?

274. MR GRIEVE: Chairman, I think the - I don't disagree with much of what's been said, but of course the ability of the Department for Transport to knock heads together is very considerable, and it seems to me that there is a burden on the Department for Transport, or promoters, about trying to ensure that this could be properly coordinated. Without that this is all going to fall apart, and that's been my anxiety throughout this process.

275. The only other point I'd make is my understanding was that if the residents of the wharf are going to be relocated because of the noise of the works, it didn't seem to me that the bailey bridge going over their houseboats, if they're not in them, is going to be - would be the principle objection.

276. MR MOULD QC (DfT): We're trying to avoid relocating them if we can. We're not trying to contribute to a greater - because they don't want to go.

277. MR GRIEVE: No, I know they don't want to go. But the noise - this is, if I may say - the noise levels to which they are going to be subject - leaving aside the Bailey bridge; it's incidental - are very high, to the point where I understand that relocation is considered to be, in many ways, a realistic option. Obviously they can elect not to go. I certainly don't wish to add to their difficulties. But I want to try, insofar as possible, to have a scheme that minimises impact for all local residents. I'm very concerned about the houseboat residents, but they're going to have a pretty awful time forgetting about the Bailey bridge.

278. Perhaps, Mr Chairman, I can just say one thing before I go, as I probably won't have an opportunity of ever addressing you again, which you will be pleased about. And that is - and I will just say this. On the Denham issue, I know - I still remain utterly in the dark as to the noise levels that are going to be generated by the Colne viaduct, and I don't know whether there's been any further clarification in the course of these - The Committee's work, as to whether the modelling has - any further modelling as to how the baffles will work, in practice.

279. Because that is, for the residents of Denham, without doubt if this project is going ahead, going to be the single most important remaining, outstanding issue of great uncertainty. So perhaps I could just mention it.

280. CHAIR: Okay. All right, thank you very much, Dominic. That's the second suggestion this week about a bailey bridge. I'm not sure whether a load of royal engineers standing around with a bailey bridge will make our task any easier or worse, I think, going around the country, because -

281. MR GRIEVE: I only say, Chairman, that we have a bailey bridge at the moment on Thorney Lane because of the electrification of the railway. And I was actually struck at how remarkably easily it was put up.

282. CHAIR: Okay. There we are. Thank you very much. Right. We now move onto AP2 151, BNP Paribas, represented by Berwin Leighton Paisner and Reuben Taylor QC.

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