



Twenty Years of Blight and Uncertainty?

Welcome to our final newsletter of the year, bringing you up to date with the government's proposed High Speed Train project (HS2) between London, Birmingham and the north, set to pass through the Colne Valley close to Denham and south Harefield, with trains reaching speeds of 225mph.

The last few weeks have been full of news, but not much good cheer. In October the government announced its compensation arrangements for affected householders (*see page 2*) and launched a three-month consultation. Inside we'll explain how to lodge your objections with the Department for Transport. In early December, opponents of the scheme presented five judicial reviews to the High Court. A ruling is expected in January, which might delay things for months.

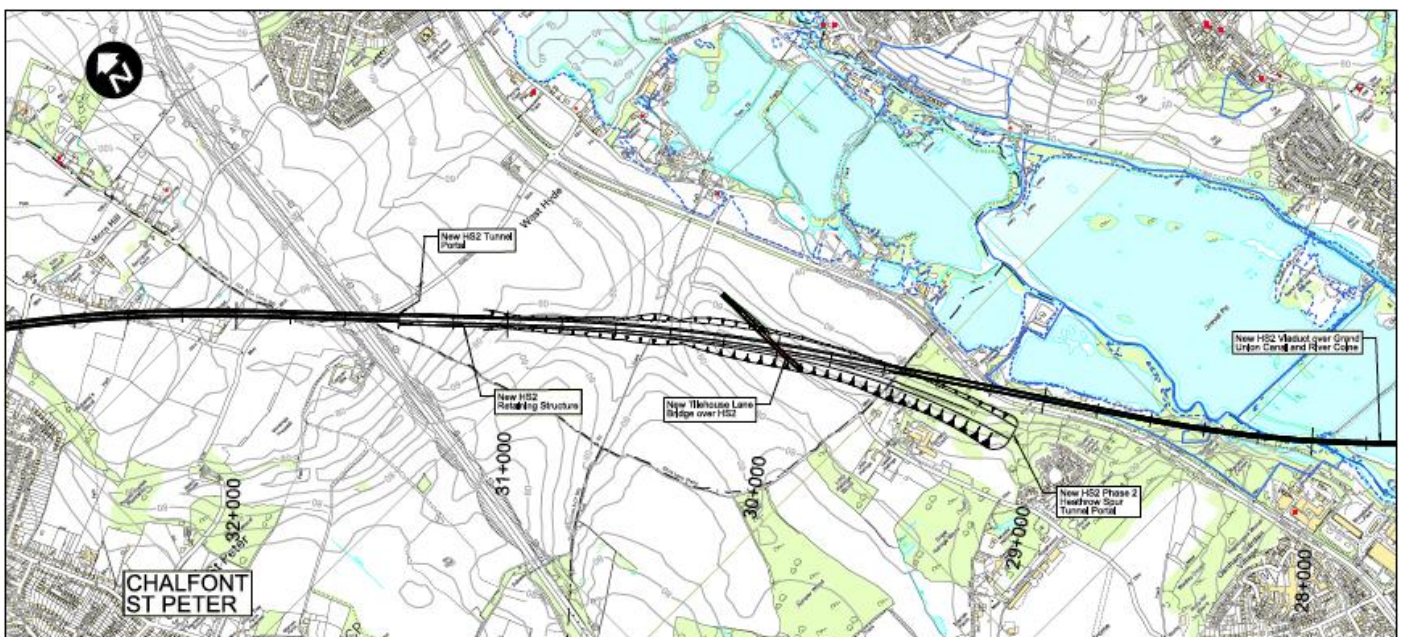
More details have also emerged, in dribs and drabs, about road and footpath closures planned for the Denham area, as well as the possible location of construction camps that would become a permanent fixture for years if HS2 is built. Construction of the £33billion line is due to begin in 2016, and the second phase, which includes a proposed 'spur' to Heathrow running through a tunnel under the village, is not due for completion until 2033. Even at this early planning

stage, HS2 is already hurting our community by causing the property market to stall. People wishing to buy or sell homes have found themselves stranded because of the uncertainty; local house values have fallen sharply. Those prepared to stay and put up with the noise, pollution, traffic congestion and diversions are not due to receive any compensation until 2027, a year after the London-Birmingham link opens. That's a delay of *fifteen* years.

Denham and the Colne Valley are arguably facing more disruption than virtually anywhere along the line, yet HS2 Ltd failed to select the community for one of its 22 information days on compensation at different venues between London and Birmingham. Denham Against HS2 has lodged a protest, but we have a relatively small population and we need as much vocal and written support as we can muster. This newsletter will tell you about our activities and how you can help our campaign. Until the HS2 bill reaches parliament, nothing is set in stone. The government has done U-turns before, and if we make enough noise, we might just force another one. It's not too late to join the fight.

Frank Partridge, Chair, Denham Against HS2

Plan of HS2 mainline and Heathrow spur junction and tunnel near Tilehouse Lane and Wyatt's Covert

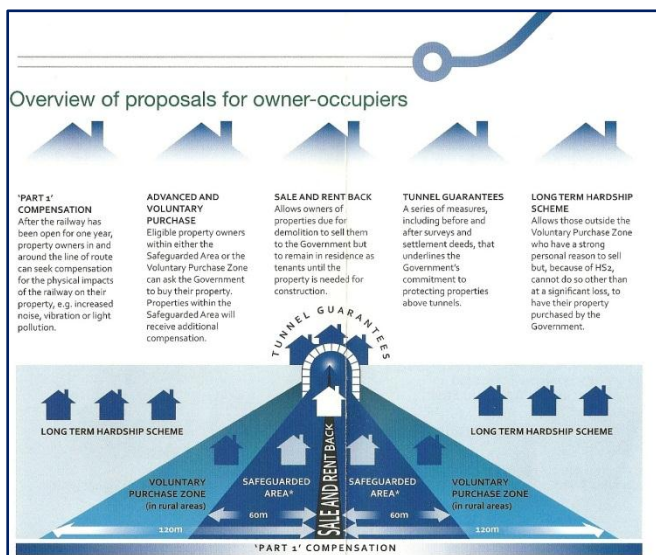


The black line shows the mainline (*Phase 1: 2016-23*) crossing the M25 and heading S-E towards the Colne Valley Park. The shaded shape shows a cutting containing the planned four-line junction with the western spur to Heathrow (*Phase 2: 2026-33*) passing under Tilehouse Lane and entering a tunnel near Wyatt's Covert.

COMPENSATION FOR HOUSEHOLDERS & LANDOWNERS

In October, the government finally published its compensation plans for people living near the proposed route of the first phase of HS2. These are now the subject of an official consultation.

Full details, including maps of the potentially blighted areas, can be found if you click on the HS2 website here: <http://www.hs2.org.uk/consultations>. You may have received a leaflet through the post outlining the main points and including the diagram below, showing how residents will be able to seek compensation for the increased noise, vibration and light pollution experienced during the construction period – but only after the line has been open for one year. If the railway is built on time, that would be in 2027.



The leaflet makes it all look very simple. If you live within 60 metres of the track your property will be in a 'Safeguarded Area'; within 120 metres of the track you'll be in a 'Voluntary Purchase Zone'. Eligible property owners can serve the government a blight notice to buy their house, and if they live inside the narrower, Safeguarded Area they'll receive additional compensation, up to £47,000. Those with properties directly above tunnels will receive safety guarantees, and there will be a 'hardship scheme' for people who have to move during the construction period but are unable to sell their homes because of the market blight. The Department for Transport hailed this package as 'generous', but if you scrutinise the details carefully you'll realise that it's anything but, especially where Denham is concerned.

The small print shows that the Voluntary Purchase Zone applies only to people living in rural areas, and although the worst of the blight will be felt by those living along

leafy Tilehouse Lane and on the Wyatt's Covert park home estate, neither of these is classified as rural because they lie inside the M25. This is manifestly unfair. Take a walk through the Country Park, or along Shire Lane, or into Northmoor Hill Wood near the aerodrome and you'll appreciate what an absurd decision it is to classify Denham as urban. We've asked HS2 to consider re-classifying the area as 'semi-rural' so that more people will be eligible for fair compensation.

"I am going to lose a 300-acre field for the tunnel and the spoil that comes out of it, so I lose the rent, the farmer loses part of his livelihood and we all lose the crops that come off it. I want to shout and scream!"

Gill Dutfield, Denham landowner

The latest planning maps also show that large swathes of green land, way beyond the 60 metre limit, have been earmarked for possible construction compounds to service the Chalfont tunnel at the M25, the Heathrow spur tunnel (see page 1) and the Colne Valley viaduct, perhaps the most damaging construction project of all.

And there are further grounds for objecting to the government's plans:

- No compensation or assistance will be given during the construction period, which could be from 2017-33.
- The hardship scheme will require people to try to sell their house for 12 months before becoming eligible. They should not have to prove hardship: the government should be accountable. It is the right of every home-owner to sell on the market and make life choices.

Nothing has been decided yet. The consultation period for all these proposals runs until 31 January, and you can have your say by responding to the seven questions listed in the consultation document. There are three ways to do this:

1. Ask HS2 to send you a copy of the document and post it back. They'll send you a Freepost envelope.
2. Answer the questions online at: <http://highspeedrail.dft.gov.uk/consultations/property-compensation-london-to-west-midlands>.
3. Send an email to: hs2propertyconsultation@dialoguebydesign.com.

WE SAY: If the government believes HS2 is worth the money it is worth doing fairly.

GIVE US HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND NOT HS2

The rise in audio and visual conferencing and cloud-based applications further undermines the HS2 business case, writes Tara Farley of Denham Against HS2

One of the central arguments used to justify HS2 is that all those precious minutes saved as it hurtles between our major cities would translate into increased productivity for the UK economy. As it happens, the calculation used to support this ignores the fact that many tech-savvy business people already use the train as their mobile office. And the government has also overlooked the astonishing rise in video and audio-conferencing that is persuading more and more companies that there is a faster, cheaper and greener alternative to taking the train.



To take a few examples: insurance giant AXA has slashed about £60 million off its travel budget in the last three years by increasing its use of video conferencing. Oxford University last year announced the use of video conferencing to reduce the travel burden on students travelling across campus and wider afield from home and overseas. Swiss banking firm Helvetia Wealth has saved 100 travel hours a fortnight and shaved more than £40,000 a year from its annual travel costs by using teleconferencing. North Wales Police have been investing in a range of technologies to reduce travel burdens since 2008.

And there are many more like that: a raft of small, medium and large private and public sector companies creating a better work/life balance for employees. Moreover, as city centre office rents spiral, businesses no longer want or need to provide a dedicated desk for employees.

Audio and video technology has been around for some time but it is the explosion in cloud-based and Software as a Service (SaaS) applications, which enable even tiny firms without IT departments to benefit. Anyone with a laptop can now access simple collaboration tools such as Skype and WebEx. The days of having to attend every meeting in person are fading fast. Anyone who has used advance teleconferencing already knows that with mega-pixel

cameras and stable infrastructures your colleagues on the other side of the world are tangibly in the same room. That the government is hell bent on ignoring the explosion of these technologies when assessing the need for HS2 is truly dumbfounding.

Many people already enjoy home working. Personally, I have worked from home for nearly fifteen years while employed by some of the largest corporations in the world. A recent survey published in the Evening Standard demonstrated that London-based workers would also relish a couple of days a week working from the comfort of their home. It may not be long before commuting to an office five days of the week, just because it's there, becomes as dated as sitting in your employer's office smoking a cigarette. And it's not only the business world that's benefitting: universities are seeing students using online distance learning outperforming those who are campus-based.

Bear in mind, too, that all this is happening in a relatively new arena whose technical potential has still to be fully explored. We have little idea what we might be able to do in ten, let alone twenty years' time. Twitter did not exist five years ago, but now it's the everyday electronic forum of billions. Imagine how other communication tools might change the way we work, rest and play in the years ahead. Even if you are not already deploying these types of technologies in your workplace you probably already make use of internet shopping, which has changed the retailing landscape beyond recognition. The traditional high street is dying out; Amazon is one of the biggest retailers in the world. Gone are the days of driving to and from the video rental store and racking up late fees: now we simply stream film and video direct to our living rooms.



It is something this government really needs to assess before burdening the taxpayer with a £34 billion bill for HS2. I find it astounding that we no longer have a minister for technology as we did in the 1960s, when the internet, mobile phones and tablet devices were years away from being invented, let alone owned by almost everyone. The government needs to research how super-fast communications and related technologies are likely to affect the way we travel before the next generation starts paying for HS2, while many of them sit at home working and wondering why there is a train thundering through the countryside at 250mph, with only dinosaurs on board.

CAMPAIGN NEWS

Hot off the Press ... we're online!

Anyone who would like to read about our activities, contact us, help us, or catch up on the latest HS2 news, can now do so online. We now have a page on the informative Denham Parish Council website: www.denhampc.co.uk. You'll find us in the menu on the left of the home page, and we'll be updating our section regularly to keep you in touch.

COMING UP

We thought it better not to interrupt your seasonal festivities by organising something of our own, but we'll make up for that in the New Year with a series of public events aimed at keeping the community informed and raising some much-needed funds.

Following the success of the public meeting with our MP, Dominic Grieve at Higher Denham in January, we've invited him back to answer your questions and hear your concerns about HS2. The date and venue have still to be arranged, but we'll keep you posted. Look out for more information in the local press and 'In and Around Denham' magazine (don't miss our monthly column!)

Just when you thought the party season was over, we'll be raising your flagging spirits in late January or early February with a music, auction, food and drink extravaganza at Denham Village Hall. A number of local musicians and bands have expressed an interest, and we have some excellent items to auction off. Full details in our next newsletter.

And in the spring we'll be organising another protest walk against HS2, following the success of this year's event at the end of March, when more than 350 supporters walked six miles through the Country Park on just about the warmest day of the year. We'll be taking a different (shorter) route this time, following an ancient pathway to visit some more lakes, woods, and other cherished amenities that could be blighted or destroyed if HS2 gets the green light.

A reminder that our 32-page guide to the Country Park and its lakes, woodland and nature reserves, is still on sale at the [Information Centre](#), price £3. Or pick up a copy at one of our forthcoming events.



National Survey Puts HS2 in its Place

Far more of the British public consider building more homes to be the best way of boosting the economy rather than increasing airport capacity or building a high-speed railway line.

HS2 Action Alliance – one of the national campaign groups opposed to the scheme - commissioned Ipsos Mori to ask a carefully weighted sample of 1,442 adults aged 15 or over what form of infrastructure investment the government should be considering to turn things around.

Forty per cent believed a major house-building programme should be top of David Cameron's 'must do' list; 20 per cent opted for improving the national road network; 14% wanted the existing rail network to be upgraded. Trailing well behind were increased airport capacity (5%), while only 4% of respondents thought a new high-speed rail line was the best way to give the economy a shot in the arm.

The research was carried out online between 21 September and 8 October.

FIGHTING FUND

Our campaign relies on the generosity of local people and organisations who give their time and skills, or donate money, to support our events and cover our expenses. Printing, distribution and presentations are expensive, and every penny we receive goes towards the local or national campaign. In September, funds we raised enabled [STOP HS2](#) to buy a new white elephant to catch the eye at future public events: watch out for 'Ellie Mark II' in the Denham area soon!

If you'd like to contribute, please contact our treasurer Norman Dennis on 01895 834385, or make a BACS transfer to 'Denham Against HS2', HSBC (Amersham-on-the-Hill branch); Account No. 6150518; Sort Code 40-08-41.



Merry Christmas, everyone, from
Denham Against HS2!