

29. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Right.

30. CHAIR: Okay. Thank you Mr Latham. We now move onto AP4: 172, residents of London Road, Wendover. Hi.

Residents of London Road, Wendover

31. MR ADAM: Good afternoon, chair, good afternoon members. Here we are again, with the same team but a different spokesperson. Sara Dixon, that you may remember, has retired as our agent, and I'm representing myself and my fellow petitioners and neighbours in London Road, Wendover, who have filed one joint petition, AP4 172. Could we have the next slide, please?

32. So, just in case you forgot; we're 26 households, one mile to the south of Wendover, on the A413, London Road. You can see from this slide that we're a mixed community, with a bias towards older residents of whom 16 are aged between 70 and 90.

33. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: Mr Adam, would it just help if we just looked, for a moment, a 15483? So those who don't know where you live, know where you live?

34. MR ADAM: Oh yes okay.

35. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: That gives us the context.

36. MR ADAM: There you are, straight onto it, and in fact, I think the one after that is an even better one. No.

37. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: No, that's eight four.

38. MR ADAM: Yes, 15484 is bigger scale, there we are, yes, does that help you, Sir Peter?

39. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: I'm familiar with it; we met some of you on the roadside.

40. MR ADAM: Well indeed, yes.

41. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: We can now return to your slide, but I thought for

those who are not so familiar, it would help.

42. MR ADAM: Right. So that's us. And I'd like to let you know that 16 of us are here today, just to support me.

43. So, if we can then go onto that one, thank you, number three; here's a bird's eye view of us looking north, past Wendover, and towards Aylesbury. The route of HS2 runs from just off the bottom right hand corner of this picture, to the top of the middle of the picture.

44. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: You can use your finger if you want, on the screen, just to indicate.

45. MR ADAM: Right, okay, thank you. So, it starts down here and then it moves up across there, crossing the road just down here and then up to the horizon, where the arrow is pointing now. Thank you for your help.

46. So, HS2 has caused extreme consternation amongst our little community, and of the 26 houses, two have already sold to HS2, and moved away, one resident died some time ago, and his house was bought by HS2. One has agreed to sell to HS2 but hasn't yet completed, two are in negotiation, and three are on the market, awaiting the expiration of their three month waiting period.

47. Now that's a total of nine properties already, three more of our tiny community are contemplating applying under the need to sell scheme, and if they're successful, that would be 48% of our community that's moving away.

48. Now, you may possibly remember that when we last came before you here in September Mrs Julie Lue, who's sitting somewhere behind me gave evidence as to how she'd been very badly treated by HS2 in her and her husband's application to sell. You, chair, addressed some very strong advice at that hearing, to the promoters, and that has been acted on, to a certain extent.

49. Last week, you heard some examples from David Lidington, of his concerns about HS2's engagement with residents, and Mr and Mrs Lue are another example. The problem appears to be that HS2 insist on using non-locally-based valuers, who don't understand the local market. Mr and Mrs Lue's experience, is that their house has been

undervalued compared to a realistic sale value in the current market.

50. Mrs Lue said that, 'One of the surveyors was ill prepared and his conduct gave me no confidence that he would represent a fair judgment on the valuation of our property'. Well, whilst it must be said that HS2 have since apologised for his conduct, Mr and Mrs Lue feel that they've been dealt a double whammy in that HS2 have caused the blight in the first place, and they are now exploiting their financial position by offering a derisory value, based on opinion, rather than market trends.

51. The valuation process is deeply flawed in that prior to the announcement of HS2, the Lue's property was on the market for £695,000 and HS2 valuers have now proposed a valuation of £592,000. Negotiations are continuing, but property prices in Bucks have risen, on average, by 24% since 2010, and that's contained in HS2's valuation report, that figure of 24%, but their offer reflects devaluation by some 15% over the same period. Something's wrong somewhere.

52. The formula for assessment is based on an academic exercise in the red book which you'll probably be familiar with, and personal opinion, rather than a realistic market value. And also the investment put into individual properties by their owners. What we'd like to see here, chair, is fairness and transparency. David Lidington's already been briefed with this particular resident's case and when he addressed this Committee last week, he undertook to come back with hard evidence, and I'm sure this case with form part of that. Could we have the next slide, please?

53. CHAIR: We have made recommendations to Government on the scheme and the valuer point is one which has come up time and time again, and we're expecting a response soon. So we'll see whether or not we can tweak it or not.

54. MR ADAM: Thank you very much, Chair. Doubtless, Mr Lidington will be aware of that. Next slide, yes, thank you. We've petitioned against AP4 on traffic during construction, and on pylon repositioning. The promoters have responded to our petition, but on the pylon repositioning only, we're satisfied with their response. Could we have the next slide, please?

55. We are, however, not at all happy with HS2's response on traffic, and we feel that our concerns haven't been noted or addressed to our satisfaction. Traffic flows on the

A413 cause exceptional problems to us as residents of London Road, because it's the only route we have for access to the outside world. To bring you up to date, we had a meeting with representatives of HS2 and Bucks County Council on 11 November and negotiations with Bucks County Council are continuing on the state of the road, which we say is inadequate to take the heavy construction traffic which HS2 will generate.

56. Bucks County Council have been out into an untenable position where they have no option but to allow the A413, that's the London Road on which we all live, as a suitable route for construction traffic. Could we have the next slide please?

57. In our original petitions, and in our representations to you on site on 11 June last year, and again here on 17 September, we highlighted the overuse of the road, and produced data that you can see here again to back it up. In fact, the figures which are shown in this slide agreed pretty well much with HS2's figures. In response to our petition, the promoters have referred us to volume 5 of the technical appendices environmental topics, planning and support information.

58. Bearing in mind that there are 18 documents containing 1313 pages in these appendices, we don't expect you to have read them all, let alone marked, learned and inwardly digested them. So, we'd like to draw your attention to some of the anomalies that we've found that affect us, because some of the information and data contained in these documents cause us very considerable concern. Could we have the next slide, please?

59. Here we have page 80 of volume five of the technical appendices; it's up there on the screen but I'd just like to read it through, 'The average peak daily two-way HGV trip generated from the Small Dean viaduct launch satellite compound is 20-30. In relation to 290 to 450 in the SES at AP2TA. Likewise, the HGV trip generation for Rocky Lane Rocky Bridge Wendover auto transformer station satellite is 140-230, in relation to less than 10 in the SES and AP2TA. These changes are due to the revised construction assumptions within this area, relating to 50% of excavated material trips previously using Rocky Lane, to be routed via the new A413 link road. It's also due to now assigning excavated material trips to the Rocky Lane under bridge Wendover auto transformer station satellite compound, rather than Small Dean viaduct launch satellite compound, to reflect site activities, although this has no impact upon the traffic and

transport assessment’.

60. That’s the end of my quotation. But these purported changes do not appear to be borne out by the subsequent data and tables. Could we have the next slide, please? I’ll ask you to take a look at the two right hand columns here and in particular, the far right hand column which shows the HS2’s percentage change from the 2021 baseline in HGVs. It shows a percentage change of 348% for lorries going northbound and 139% for them going southbound. And this is for our stretch of road, between Rocky Lane and the roundabout at Small Dean Lane. Could I have the next slide please?

61. Then again, we’re looking at the two right hand columns and in particular, the far right hand column, showing an increase in the HGVs of 398% and 542%. Now, my colleagues and I have spent hours trying to work these sums out and they just simply do not add up. So, could we have the next slide, please? Now, in the top box there, there are two boxes, the top box, again the two right hand columns, showing 50% and 68% and then 4221% change with the 2021 deadline, and 5655% change from the 2021 baseline. And then in the bottom box...

62. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: You’re surprised at the large number, aren’t you?

63. MR ADAM: 14,125%. Well, if these figures are correct, we, as residents of London Road, will be totally in gridlocked scenario. Our worst fears of not being able to even get out of our own houses will be realised and we’ll be marooned in the biggest building site in Europe. If these figures are wrong, then we trust this Committee will direct HS2 to correct them and explain how this startling act of negligence in presenting such meaningless figures has been allowed to come about. Next slide, please. Thank you.

64. Whatever the situation regarding the flow of traffic on Rocky Lane, that particular country lane is simply too narrow for two HGVs to pass without driving over the grass verge and fracturing the services beneath. We have in mind particularly, the asbestos water main which has fractured recently, causing flooding on the A413 junction, and cutting off water supply to a number of our houses. Bucks County Council, at our meeting with them, and HS2 expressed concerns about the safety of that junction. Can I have the next slide, please? Thank you.

65. Whether HS2's traffic data are right or wrong, we consider that there is going to be a very significant increase in traffic on London Road, despite what HS2 say, and there is no doubt that as a result, we will fall into what HS2 defines as a severance community. Their definition is as follows – could I have the next slide please?

66. 'A situation where one part of a town or settlement would be cut off from another due to transportation infrastructure. The severed area typically contains properties that are cut off from the main community, or from essential services and the effects may be temporary or permanent'. In their recent email to me on this subject, HS2 said that as they did not intend to close the A413, we didn't qualify. We disagree with that judgment and look to HS2 for compensation for each and every one of us.

67. Even now, negotiating London Road isn't easy in the rush hours, and with the expected increase in traffic, and particularly the HGVs, our ability to use the A413 safely or easily to obtain access to services in Wendover and Great Missenden will be exacerbated as we, the residents of London Road will be virtually cut off from the rest of Wendover and Great Missenden for the duration of construction. Increases in traffic and the congestion caused by HS2 traffic will also cut off those of us living on the west side of London Road from our shop and petrol station, and mini supermarket on the east side.

68. We've witnessed, on numerous occasions that the slightest incident on the A413 will cause tailbacks and hold-ups that will severely impact on residents being able to get out of their homes by car, onto the A413, having emergency vehicles unable to get to the residents who require their services. Having a negative impact on air quality due to pollution from standing traffic and increased traffic noise from the HGVs. Could I have the next slide, please?

69. Even if, with difficulty, we are still able to cross the road to our petrol station and mini supermarket, access to Wendover itself is going to be difficult, if not impossible. At our negotiation meeting with HS2 and Bucks County Council in November, a suggested pedestrian footpath to join up those bits of route between us and Wendover was virtually ruled out by HS2 who said that if it were to be constructed, they would have to destroy it after completion. In any circumstances, this is a bureaucratic response and one that needs revisiting by HS2.

70. Bucks County Council were supportive of this solution, but as they're under

resourced, and lack funding to complete such a project, this could only happen if HS2 were to provide the resource and the funding. We're not asking this for no reason. It will be essential for us to have access to a pedestrian and/or a cycleway as an escape route when the traffic jams prevent us from accessing services in Wendover. Could I have the next slide, please?

71. Recognising our blight. During the construction of HS2, our community will be a severance community. We will be right in the middle of a vast construction site; you've seen the pictures. We will incur increased risk in going about our daily lives and businesses. For years, we will suffer nuisance from noise, blight, visual blight, increased air pollution, safety fears, reduced access to services, particularly emergency services, and detrimental change to our living environment both during and post construction. So, for these reasons, we say that the current schemes are inadequate to compensate our community for the blight which we're facing. Could I have the next slide please?

72. So, what we want, we want help. Could I have the next slide, please? Of course, chairman, and members, it almost goes without saying that we would like you to reconsider your interim report rejecting a tunnel past our little community. Up until now, we've been protected by the governance surrounding the AONB in which we live, and therefore, we would like you to accept that without a tunnel, an irreversible blight on the AONB will be caused that will change the character of the whole area for miles around by threatening communities in which people live, and the viability of both commercial and agricultural businesses.

73. Recommending a tunnel will finally put an end to the blight which is so badly affecting us, and save the expense of two enormous viaducts, a bridge, a green tunnel and about two miles of cuttings and embankments. The re-sale of the properties bought for millions by the promoter would go a long way towards funding it.

74. If that is not to be, then we would like you to direct the promoter to look again, much more closely this time, at its data concerning traffic flows. And, we would like you to direct the promoter to consider the use of Rocky Lane by its HGV traffic referred to earlier.

75. We can continue to seek recognition that our community is in the middle of a vast

construction site. And that therefore, the current compensation schemes that measure from the track or safeguarded zone, are simply not appropriate for our community and the injurious circumstances we find ourselves in during the years of construction.

76. We ask that compensation is reviewed and the express purchase scheme is amended to recognise and acknowledge the real impact of blight on our community. To enable those that wish to move, as a consequence of the blight, due to construction, to qualify for the express purchase scheme, and move to a safer environment. At the moment, residents can only utilise the need to sell process if they qualify, and pay the considerable financial cost of moving themselves, including the far from insubstantial stamp duty. Currently, the only option people have is the need to sell scheme, if they qualify.

77. It should be accepted that all properties in this community are blighted, both during and after construction, and should be automatically accepted into the current need to sell scheme with HS2, irrespective of circumstances. Already, a possible 48% of our community either have or are considering moving away, due to the impact of HS2.

78. And we reiterate, that the valuation process is seriously flawed, due to lack of knowledge by valuers. Each property, in our opinion, should have to be assessed for the impact of increased noise, and all means made available to residents for home improvements to mitigate that impact, at no cost to the property owner whatsoever.

79. We are in ongoing discussions with HS2 on visual blight in the hope of agreeing suitable solutions. Now that we have the hard evidence from HS2 relating to the potential impact of construction traffic, we need it acknowledged that there will be real safety issues for us, as a community. There will be a detrimental effect on emergency services, accessing residents locally due to the A413 being used for construction traffic.

80. It also needs to be acknowledged that the general growth of Aylesbury, I think David Lidington's spoken to you about this, will have significantly increased the traffic flow by 2018, when construction is now likely to commence.

81. We continue to request an extension to the path, to have a walkable pedestrian access into Wendover. The current homeowners payment zone scheme does not adequately cover the injurious impact that our residents will have to put up with during

construction, and will require improving substantially. At present, of the 26 households, only three qualify for any compensation whatsoever. Could I have the last slide, please?

82. Members, thank you very much for listening to me.

83. CHAIR: Mr Adams. Mr Strachan?

84. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Thank you. Can I put up P15486? Just while it's coming up on screen, the petitioner referred a moment ago, to a meeting that we had in November of last year, I'll show you the meeting note of that. Just to pick up on that, that reflects what we discussed in the Committee on the last occasion that London Road residents came before you, where we indicated we needed to have a discussion with them about the traffic running along London Road, and potential measures to deal with the construction traffic; that meeting's taken place and I'll show you the minutes of that in a moment.

85. But can I just go back one step and just identify the effect of AP4 on London Road, because these are issues which the Committee's previously looked at. This is London Road during construction. As previously discussed, the AP4 change occurs principally further up – or further down, I should say, down the route, towards South Heath, where the tunnel has been extended, as the Committee is well aware. One of the consequences of that was a change in the construction traffic routing and whereas previously, we were proposing to bring most of our traffic going north down Rocky Lane, which would then turn onto the A413, under the current arrangements, the link road from the south east site, allows about 50% of that traffic to join the A4...

86. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: Five oh?

87. MR STRACHAN QC (DfT): Five oh, 50% to join the A413, in the vicinity of South Heath, Great Missenden, and 50% to come via Rocky Lane, along the trace and down Rocky Lane. So, the consequence of AP4 is not an increase in traffic for London Road, it is actually – one of the benefits of it is to split the traffic that was previously all coming down Rocky Lane, some of it will already be on – approximately 50% will already be on the A413, so there isn't a net increase in traffic; there isn't obviously a net reduction either, but it's not a change, of itself, which adversely affects the residents of London Road.