

(At 14.00)

1. CHAIR: Order, order. Welcome back to the HS2 Select Committee. I call 966 Julius Hogben? Not here. 968 North Westminster Action Group against HS2, 968, North Westminster Action Group against HS2? 1440, Michael Bone, 1440 Michael Bone? Not here. In that case, I call Tulip Siddiq. Who's here! Welcome. Thank you for taking the time to come to the Select Committee to represent your constituents. Do you have a straight statement or –?

Tulip Siddiq MP

2. MS SIDDIQ: Yes, thank you. Mr Chairman, thanks for giving me the opportunity to provide evidence at this Select Committee. From the outset, I will declare that I'm not directly affected by the AP4 proposals, but I'm speaking as the MP for Hampstead and Kilburn on behalf of my constituents, who are affected by AP4.

3. Today, I will respect the terms of reference of this Committee, by using this session to outline my specific objections to AP4, but I wish to make it clear that my overall view is that the HS2 project is an expensive mistake, that will devastate our local environment, and thousands of homes in both Camden and Brent, both boroughs which are in my constituency.

4. Moving onto the issue at hand; AP4, proposes a ventilation shaft to be built at the Canterbury works estate. I understand the works associated for the construction will take approximately six years, of which two and a half years will be excavation, approximately 50 metres below ground.

5. I believe the quality of life of our children and residents must come first and I have serious concerns regarding air, noise pollution and increased traffic in the area. My primary concern is also with the effect that this venture will have on St Mary's catholic primary school.

6. I will use my time to speak about the following topics, the general deprivation of South Kilburn, the communication of HS2 with residents and St Mary's School.

7. For background, I wanted to share a few facts and figures, taken from the index of

multiple deprivation. Overall, South Kilburn is ranked in the top 8% of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. It's ranked in the top 4% for income deprivation and ranks 7.5% for employment deprivation and amongst the top 30% for health deprivation.

8. When considering building a vent shaft in the area, particularly with regard to the welfare of people for the school I've mentioned, Committee members should be aware that for environmental deprivation, the area around South Kilburn is in the top 0.75% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. For the specific area around Canterbury works, the deprivation is clear and explains why any risk needs to be taken very seriously. By any conceivable indicator, this area is in need of serious support rather than increased disruption to their lives.

9. In addition to the figures that I've outlined, most people on the Committee will be aware of the intense regeneration of the area. The combination of Government cutbacks and the constant building work that has taken place over the last six years, are having a pronounced effect on the local community already. Residents have said to me, and I quote, 'To add on another six year project by HS2 in this area would be wholly unacceptable', and who can blame them? The endless redevelopment is leaving many with the impression that they're being forced out and the main concern that the residents are having is that they are unable to have their voices heard. The increasing lack of social housing and constant need to fend off new developments of luxury flats requires incredible commitment and brings undue stress for long term residents in the area.

10. Thirty percent of all the housing cases that I deal with in my constituency come from the two wards in question. And speaking to those who live in the housing blocks around the site, one gets the impression that the provisions in AP4, as they currently stand, will only increase the genuine sense of grievance that is being felt.

11. This is the area that's the most deprived in my constituency, but also heavily populated, and this is something that HS2 alluded to when they first rejected a vent shaft in the area back in 2010. In Arup report, stated, 'HS2 were looking at areas which would be located in less densely residential parts and where disruption of a ventilation shaft should be less as an issue. My question is whether – why this was changed and why the Arup report was disregarded when this decision was made to relocate the vent shaft.

12. I fail to see how HS2 has arrived at such a dramatic change in assessment, when deciding the suitability of this site. Having dealt with thousands of cases of overcrowding at my constituency surgeries, since being elected, only in May last year, I fail to see how this has changed. And though many residents in this part of South Kilburn are unemployed, as you heard from the figures, I have received correspondence from those that believe HS2's proposals directly threaten their livelihoods. One constituent told me that the part of land required by HS2 for the construction, constitutes her sole source of income.

13. Her dismay is increased by the complete disregard that HS2 have shown towards their previous promise regarding the site. In prior correspondence, HS2 told her, and many others, that their premises, I quote, 'Did not form any part of the HS2 proposals'.

14. I would speak about communication by HS2 and residents shortly, but there is a general point to be made about the vent shaft's relocation to Canterbury works, which betray the promises many were may prior to AP4's publication.

15. As I'm sure you've heard in previous sessions, there is real anger about the broken promises and residents must receive an explanation as to why their site has suddenly become the desired option.

16. In terms of communication with local residents, which I feel is the biggest failing in this whole process, it's been dismal. Along with my staff, in October 2015, I delivered over 500 letters to the homes of residents in the area, and for many, it was the first time they had ever heard of the plans that were going to take place. The consistency and clarity of communication efforts have fallen short of what is acceptable for a scheme like this, which is going to cost billions of pounds.

17. Those residents that are engaged in the process have reported back to me that there have only been two information events, with one resident telling me, one was three days before AP4 was deposited, and one three hours after AP4 was deposited. If this is accurate, then it is clearly inefficient, and insufficient. Those in the Canterbury tenants and residents association, who I believe have appeared in the Committee already, have told my office that they received letters from HS2 which I've seen copies of, saying they were liable for compulsory acquisition before the sitting of the vent shaft had even become an issue.

18. This caused great anxiety amongst residents. The letters were not worded properly, they caused alarm amongst people who were worried that they were going to lose their homes. And since then, despite repeated questions from residents, there's been a complete lack of clarity from HS2 on whether their properties, and acquiring them, is still necessary, and I'm sure they would receive an update on where this stands.

19. There is also a problem in that the inadequate communication from HS2 is problematic for people who live in an area where English is a second language for lots of hard to reach individuals. It is not clear what special effort has taken to communicate with residents who do not speak English as a first language. They certainly didn't in Regents Park, where I was a councillor and the predominant languages were Somali and Bengali and they haven't done so in South Kilburn either, which creates more anxiety amongst those who are not sure what's going to happen to their homes and their jobs.

20. The public bills office has been helpful to my parliamentary office but I fear that the petition process is unduly complicated and acts as a deterrent from local engagement in the proposals. In addition, although the Transport Minister disagreed with me in the Commons chamber, I believe that £20 cost to be too much, especially in light of the deprivation I have outlined earlier.

21. In my opinion, when the vent shaft was relocated to this area, HS2 needed to go above and beyond in communicating with residents effectively, and from the correspondence I have received, this doesn't seem to be the case, which means that we're in danger of losing the local community.

22. I'll go onto St Mary's school. I'm sure you're aware that there is an immense degree of concern from parents of pupils at St Mary's catholic primary school. They have told me how detrimental these changes will be to their children's education, health and welfare due to fundamental effects from construction of the vent shaft. Though it is positive that HS2 has made efforts to mitigate noise impacts, greater clarity regarding HS2's accommodation with the school would be well received by parents and indeed, by me.

23. There is deep frustration regarding a lack of cooperation from both parents, in explaining the process undertaken, with some telling me that they've gone as far as submitting freedom of information requests to date, which have remained unanswered

because they simply do not know what's happening with the future of their children who go to the school.

24. I, of course, have sympathy for governors who are bound by confidentiality but it is the job of HS2 to ensure that all parents and residents have been consulted and kept up to date. It's fair to say that the agreement, which is said to have happened, came as a big surprise to a lot of parents who have complained to me.

25. The school will, undeniably benefit from the improvements to mitigate increases in noise, but it remains a cause for anxiety. Pupils are also local residents and they will experience disruptive noise levels in their neighbourhood, and this will affect their concentration during home learning tasks that are essential to their education.

26. Increased traffic chaos in this area will impact children at the beginning and end of the school day. Your petitioners have children aged between four and 11 and many walk, unaccompanied by an adult, both to and from school. A recent report said that the school run was the most stressful time of a parent's day. This will just increase that stress for parents who are struggling between jobs. At present, there are no pedestrian crossings at the junction of Canterbury Terrace and Canterbury Road, or at the junction of Chester Road and Canterbury Road which raises significant fears for parents.

27. These are vital crossing points close to school but currently have no road safety provisions in place, such as one of a school crossing patrol office. The traffic chaos that these developments will bring accentuate the risk of crossing.

28. I raised this with HS2 myself, and the response I received surprised me. HS2 said to me in an email, 'The peak HGV traffic of 100 movements per day, 50 in each direction, are expected to last for six months only. Exiting HGV traffic will be routed away from the school, and restrictions on HGV movements at pick up and drop off times will be agreed with the school'. I'm seriously not sure why they thought I'd be comforted by these figures, because I'm not. Six months is a long time, and 100 HGVs a day is dangerous.

29. Beyond traffic, health concerns remain prevalent, particularly with regard to the increase in air pollution accompanying construction. These developments are being planned at a time when there's widespread concerns over air pollution in the capital. A

Sunday Times article in October said that pollution in London was stunting children's lungs. The article went on to state that children between eight and nine, living in areas with high levels of particulates in nitrogen dioxide, have up to 10% less lung capacity than normal. They will never get that capacity back. In addition, HS2 have said the effects of dust will be mitigated but parents and pupils with breathing conditions will still be at particular risk.

30. Arancha, a constituent and parent of a pupil raised specific concerns about air pollution, particularly during PE lessons and outdoors recreation. She said, 'Children will be directly affected by the impact of noise levels from construction, causing disruption to their learning experience and opportunities, in particular for the percentage of pupils at the school with special educational needs.

31. And as a result, which is very concerning, parents have expressed to me a reluctance to continue sending their children to this primary school. This is distressing, particularly at a time when Brent is suffering from a chronic shortage of primary school places. Just in 2013, it was reported that 600 children didn't have a primary school place and the following year, saw reports of overcrowded classrooms. Many parents do not have a choice of another school, and will be forced to send their children to one where they feel the health risks are evident, which is appalling. And parents want their children to go to the local authority school but they've having their hand forced by the negative effects of endless regeneration.

32. HS2 wrote to me, and I'll quote from the email that they sent to me, 'HS2 has given a letter of comfort, attached, committing to providing funding to allow improvements to school building to help reduce the impact of noise from construction and other noise sources. Dust will be managed on site within line of Code of Construction Practice. And as a result, no significant air quality affects are predicted for the school users or local residents'. I'm afraid, this isn't good enough.

33. When I last met with HS2, I asked what kind of equalities impact assessment they had made, whether they had done an environmental assessment for the inside of the school, especially in the playground, not just from the outside. There is no point in saying that no significant air quality affects are predicted, if there's no basis for that, so I would urge HS2 Limited, or the Select Committee to undertake a proper equalities and

environmental risk assessment for the site.

34. And to confront the outstanding concerns that the residents are burdened with. This is an area that's seriously deprived. And the lack of respect shown by HS2 has angered residents who feel disenfranchised anyway, and this vent shaft should not go ahead without the support of local residents. Thank you.

35. CHAIR: Thank you very much, Ms Siddiq. Is it you, Mr Turney, or are you...

36. MR TURNEY (DfT): This is my patch for today. Ms Siddiq, I think it's – it's probably just worth starting off by reminding the Committee as we heard this morning why we have relocated this vent shaft. There has to be a vent shaft within the proximity of the proposed location of Canterbury works. It was to be on Salisbury Road, but there was opposition to that by the local authority, by Brent Council, and indeed, by the petitioners, who we heard from this morning. So, the proposal is to relocate it in AP4 to the Canterbury works site.

37. The concern that HS2 had in respect of that site, was the school. We have engaged with the school; it's obviously a source of concern for parents and for others that the school perhaps haven't communicated that to them, but we have engaged directly with the school, with the diocese and with the local education authority, to agree a package of specific mitigation by way of provision of doors, windows, mechanical ventilation at the school site itself.

38. In terms of the impact in the open areas of the school, well that's addressed by the Code of Construction Practice and management of the site itself. The erection of a hoarding around the site. I think there's a quite important question of scale here, as well. It might be worth just looking to P151328. The vent shaft is located here, as you can see, to the side and to the rear of the school buildings, the work site is in this area, but the traffic, to serve the vent shaft is directed away from the school.

39. I've already explained that the HGV traffic will not be on these roads, for the HS2 works, during the period of school drop off and pick up times, because we've given that comfort to the school, so that's already secured, so the risk of conflict of people going to and from school significantly reduced. So, this site, the key concern, as I say, was the school, we feel as though we have mitigated the effects on the school, to the point that

the school is satisfied that we have done what we can and that they don't feel it necessary oppose the vent shaft construction in that location.

40. MS SIDDIQ: Can I come back, or – how does it work?

41. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: When he's finished...

42. CHAIR: When he's finished, we'll come back to you.

43. MR TURNEY (DfT): I was just going to pick up a few more points. I think the reference to someone's sole source of income being there, must have been to the Clearys and as the Committee heard this morning, we're going to talk to them about whether we can look to assist in the relocation of Mr Cleary's business, prior to Royal Assent.

44. Engagement; the question was raised about engagement with those who don't speak English or who are otherwise hard to reach, and I think the Committee's already heard through the planning forum, HS2 is looking with local authorities at ways to engage with hard to reach communities, and indeed, the Code of Construction practice anticipates that information may have to be provided on a case by case basis in different languages. I think that addresses the main points, I hope, although if there's anything else of clarity that I can provide, I'll try and do so.

45. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: The last observation we heard, which isn't directly dealing with Tulip's points, which is that the dust and – advisor spotted that the Canterbury works site was liable to be open to redevelopment, which they thought might be much more intensive than having a vent shaft.

46. MR TURNEY (DfT): Sir, that's right. It was in some of the correspondence we saw this morning. I think the diocesan surveyor, I think his observation was that one would rather have HS2 or similar carrying out construction works, subject to a Code of Construction Practice, and a complaints process and strict duties in terms of environmental effects, mitigation of those effects, than a relatively uncontrolled commercial development, as a neighbour. I don't know whether it was extended to the length or intensity of the works, but certainly, this is a redevelopment site. I think the Clearys made the Committee aware that they would have, but for the scheme, sold the site to a commercial developer, so I think that is a relevant factor. But it really is a focus

on the management of the effects of construction.

47. In the operational phase, this, I think it's fair to say, will be relatively unnoticed within the overall setting of the area, but the construction effects, we do address through the COCP and the specific management measures at this site.

48. CHAIR: Tulip did raise the issue that we heard this morning about double glazing and a variety of things, you raised the issue about playground and open areas in the school. Is the project confident that they will be okay for the kids, or –?

49. MR TURNEY (DfT): Yes. I think that two effects are in mind. The first one is the air quality issue, and in terms of dust, the Committee's heard repeatedly, we consider that we can mitigate dust effects at source, preventing any significant effect here from airborne dust from the site by dealing with it within the site. In terms of road traffic commissions, they aren't significant effects predicted here, relatively low numbers of vehicles compared to what the Committee's seen elsewhere on the scheme.

50. Noise; our commitment to the school is to mitigate at the site in the first instance, and I think I mentioned earlier, we have looked at a significant hoarding here, we think it might be up to eight metres high, to ensure that we do as much as we can to mitigate the noise effects on the site, and then in terms of dealing with the receptor, obviously, that is based on the school buildings rather than the open areas. The noise environment here is not particularly tranquil, as one would expect in an urban area such as this. I think the background noise level is around 55dB on the measures that we normally use, and we are looking to provide mitigation to bring the noise experienced from our scheme during construction down towards 59dB, that's what we've said to the school will be what we work towards.

51. CHAIR: Okay. Tulip.

52. MS SIDDIQ: Thanks. I mean, I'll pick up on the last argument about whether it was already proposed for development.

53. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: Not already proposed, possible.

54. MS SIDDIQ: Yes, I think that's a very high stand to people to say, 'Potentially, in the future, we might be redeveloping this site, so we should just bring in a lesser evil, so

that you don't get disrupted by it', I just really think, if you want to understand the local community, that is not an argument we should be using. Also, we were told, by a developer, that if it did go ahead, and it was developed, there would be social housing, alongside private housing, which clearly, with the shaft, is not going to happen, that's the first point I've made.

55. Secondly – so I really think that's a false argument, and it's not making anyone feel better, I would be very wary of using it, with the local community. To pick up some of your points, I understand Brent Council, as you've used many times and said they were in agreement; the local councillors were certainly not in agreement. It's been said many times, people were not in agreement with the decision that was made, and it's very difficult for local people to just think the local authority agrees, but the local councillors who represent them were not in agreement with the decision that was made.

56. I haven't had any response to the Arup report which, in 2010 said it was too densely populated as an area, why have they changed their mind in 2015? I know for a fact the population has gone up, so is there a reason why? Because that would be quite good to know.

57. MR TURNEY (DfT): I don't know if there's any – I don't know the specific report to which reference is made.

58. MS SIDDIQ: I've got it here.

59. MR TURNEY (DfT): What I would say is that in the most recent assessment, which is the AP4 Environmental Statement, actually the number of residential receptors where we identify significant effects, is slightly lower at this site than it is at Salisbury Road, but I didn't take that as a point this morning because I think it's fair to say that in most of the effects, there's not much between these sites in terms of those environmental effects on residential receptors in the vicinity. There are residential receptors around the Salisbury Road site as well, and I think numbers are slightly high, but of course, it's all in the individual perception of the – the occupiers of the location as to whether they're concerned about those effects, but I don't know of any particular reduction in immediately affected population if we were to revert to the Bill scheme.

60. MS SIDDIQ: Okay. Well my concern is, if there's a report saying this wasn't a

desirable site, I want to know why five years later, it suddenly becomes desirable, and I think that's a fair question to ask.

61. MR TURNEY (DfT): Well, I'll answer that because I hoped I had answered it, but maybe it's because I don't...

62. CHAIR: You certainly answered it this morning, anyway.

63. MR TURNEY (DfT): There were two reasons why this site was not considered, or was not preferred over Salisbury Road in the first instance, and that was because of the – an engineering reason, relating to the space in the vent shafts, and because of concerns as to the effect to St Mary's school. The engineering concern has been overcome, that was an internal concern of the project, so the outstanding concern, St Mary's school, and I hope I have answered why we think that that concern is overcome, through the site specific mitigation, for St Mary's school, meaning that this site was a suitable site for a vent shaft.

64. CHAIR: Okay.

65. MS SIDDIQ: Can you elaborate on the internal problem?

66. SIR PETER BOTTOMLEY: We aren't supposed to have too many questions and answers.

67. MS SIDDIQ: Okay. I'll just make a few other points. In terms of – I think it's very unfair to blame the school for not engaging with local residents. The school is a small school, HS2 is a billion pound organisation; if HS2 want to go in and build a shaft, in a deprived area like that, it is their job to communicate with local residents.

68. I haven't had a rebuttal to the fact that there were two engagement events that happened; three hours before AP4, and then three hours after. If that is the case, then it's deeply inefficient – insufficient, and finally, I'm shocked about the fact that the engagement events should include bi-lingual, or translated material has come as such a surprise to HS2 at this late stage. When you undertake an event like this, or a project like this, in a deprived area, I think the first thing that should be looked at is the number of languages that are spoken in the hard to reach communities. It's something HS2 should have done a long time ago. There's no point after everything's been decided to

say, 'Yes, we should have made more of an effort to reach the hard to reach communities'. Surely, it should have been a consideration right from the start, and they've had experience of this in Regents Park where I was a councillor before, and they know what the population's like. I mean, I think it's a huge failing and I'm shocked that they're saying, 'Oh, yes, we should do more of this at this stage'. Too little, too late.

69. And finally, I've been asking for an environmental assessment of the inside of the playground in the school and I really think that's something we should be doing, to see what impact the children's health will have, inside the playground, not from outside. I would give this as some advice to HS2; if they want the local community on side, it is something that will allay some fears of some parents who don't feel it's been taken seriously enough.

70. CHAIR: Mr Mould, when the construction starts, is that something that the budget could do, take some tests in the air quality, in the playground?

71. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I think we could do that.

72. CHAIR: Okay. Yes?

73. SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM: Is the witness noting having a full independent report into all of the environmental challenges and difficulties that might ensue?

74. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I don't think there's any justification for that, if I may say so at all, because it proceeds on the premise that the environmental assessment that's been carried out is anything other than an independent and fully professional assessment. It is an independent and fully professional assessment, we have an Environmental Statement, for both the hybrid Bill and for the Additional Provisions, that was commissioned from very well established, very highly respected, independent environmental consultants, who have been engaged by HS2 for that purpose and their work bears testimony to that.

75. The fact that there are aspects of that statement that are controversial, the fact that people have identified elements of that statement that might have been done in a different way is completely consistent with that proposition. Because we live in a world in which the whole purpose of an environmental impact assessment is for a statement to

be produced which then enables people to see what is predicted to be the environmental effect of the project, so that they can respond to it, in a forum, this being that forum, in which they bring forward their concerns about the impacts of the proposal on their own personal circumstances, and this body, the Committee, can then consider those concerns and decide whether something should be done in the context of the Bill itself, or in the policies that govern it, in order to remedy the concerns that have been put forward.

76. So, there's absolutely no case for any further work of that kind, it would simply be to waste money, to waste resources, and to delay the progress of this Bill.

77. CHAIR: Mr Mould, do you think the project could write to Tulip setting out what you do with air quality, in particular, as it relates to the school, when the Bill work starts, because of the proximity, and so at a later date, when we're all retired but Tulip's storming up the political ladder, she has a letter that she can go to the project and say, 'You said you were going to do this on behalf of my constituent'?

78. MR MOULD QC (DfT): Yes.

79. CHAIR: Okay.

80. MR MOULD QC (DfT): We can also, in that letter, record for her, the work that we've done hitherto, in seeking to understand and to engage with hard to reach communities, and the work that we're proposing to do hereafter, because, I'm sure she didn't mean to imply, but it's quite wrong to suggest that we've only just woken up to this point. We have been working on this, we have been seeking to re-engage, we have been assessing equalities throughout the gestation of this project, but we are continuing to build on that, and I'm very happy to provide her with information about that.

81. CHAIR: Okay. Last word, Tulip?

82. MS SIDDIQ: Well, I wasn't just implying it, I was saying it. I think HS2 has just woken up to it and I don't think saying things like, 'Oh, it will be a waste of money to do another assessment', actually, this is a billions and billions of pounds project, just gone up every year, to spend some money in the most deprived area that you are working in, I don't think is a waste of money.

83. I think it would allay some fears, I would welcome an independent report if there

is scope for one. I would also say, you can't just think of the Select Committee as the place where people come and make their voices heard, the engagement should have been done a long time ago, and HS2 do need to wake up to that, in any other place the communication engagement with the residents has to start early on. Again, I still haven't heard about a rebuttal to whether the engagement process really did take three hours before this was published, and three hours after; I still haven't had an answer to that, which I assume means it did happen.

84. So, look, I'm the local MP for this area, my only interest is to represent the concerns of local constituents. There is great grievance in this area about the vent shaft, and I think, if you want the local community to come on side, there has to be some direct communication and some evidence given to them, in an independent forum, that this is not going to harm the lives of their children, which is what they're worried about. In this area.

85. CHAIR: Okay. That's a good place to end, thank you very much for your contribution this afternoon. We now move onto the Right Honourable David Lidington. Who is – welcome, David.

Rt Hon David Lidington MP

86. MR LIDINGTON: Thank you. Thank you again for your time, chairman. I want to focus in more detail today, upon the issues other than the tunnelling question, that which I spoke at length in my previous appearance, although I shall may allusion to that, I'm not going to go in through all those arguments again. I want to structure my comments in terms of three themes.

87. First of all, I want to talk about the way in which public engagement has been handled by HS2 Limited, both to reflect the incredible depth of anger and frustration of my constituents, at how this has been done, but I hope constructively as well, to suggest ways in which lessons can be learned, both for the subsequent stages of this project, and for phase 2, but then also by ministers for the future public engagement of other large national infrastructure projects.

88. Secondly, I would like to take you through the route, through my constituency, from north to south, highlighting those problems that still remain unresolved, and third, I