



High Speed Two (HS2) Limited

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Hillingdon HS2 Residents Support Group
Ruislip Residents Association
Harefield Tenants and Residents Association
Ickenham Residents Association
Eastcote Residents Association
South Ruislip Residents Association
Ruislip Chamber of Commerce
North Uxbridge Residents Association

31st May 2019

Dear Mr Taylor,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the eight local community organisations, outlining your concerns about community engagement in Hillingdon. I am sorry that you felt you had to raise these concerns with me. HS2 strives to be a good neighbour every single day and work collaboratively with the local community. I know that the local team take their role very seriously.

As you will be aware, Phase One of HS2 received consent in February 2017. With over 9,000 jobs now supported by the project, work is taking place at over 250 locations alongside preparation for main works. I know this project is already having an impact on local communities, and as an organisation we are committed to minimising the disruption to people's lives and mitigating impacts where possible.

Being a good neighbour is at the heart of my organisation. This means that it is the entire organisation's responsibility to ensure that we are delivering against our commitments set out in the Community Engagement Strategy. The Community Engagement Team is empowered to act as your voice within the organisation and ensure your concerns are taken into account when decisions are being made. Sometimes we are in a position to change and adapt our works to lessen the impact on communities, however in some cases, regretfully, we are not able to do so.

Where we are not able to make changes to the programme, we are committed to letting you know. We must ensure we are giving you the reasons why we are taking these decisions and that colleagues across the organisation understand the impacts of our works on local people. I appreciate you are putting a huge amount of your own time into working with us and we want this relationship to be a respectful one and one which has your trust.

I have discussed the content of your letter with Julie King, Director of Community & Stakeholder Engagement, and we have asked the new Head of Community Engagement in this area, Maddelyn Sutton, to identify some practical measures we can take to demonstrate our commitment to being a better neighbour.

I also wanted to address each of the points you raise in your letter:

Breakspear Road South

You will be aware that HS2 has taken the decision to postpone the works that were due to start at Breakspear Road South today, 31 May 2019. We understand from the meetings with you and local residents that there was a strong desire to defer these works until after the exam period. This has not been an easy decision. The community engagement team strongly put forward the case from residents to defer the closure within the organisation. This was balanced against significant constraints around utility outages, an agreement with a third party and the associated costs of carrying out the works later in the year. We will continue to engage with the utility companies to identify a new date for these works to be undertaken and keep you informed. We will aim to provide as much notice as we can to local people and the wider public.

Settlement deeds

We know that this is an important issue for the community and that residents are seeking clarity and information and we have heard the strong views you have put forward to date. Within the current programme we expect the tunnel boring activity in this area to start in autumn 2020 at the very earliest. We have recently written to those residents who have pre-registered for a settlement deed to provide an update and we have made information on how to pre-register available on our local website www.hs2inhillington.co.uk.

Once the detailed design has been confirmed we will write to all those who may be eligible for a settlement deed to inform them of the process. In the meantime we will continue to signpost residents to our website so that they are able to pre-register ahead of time and if there are any individuals who require a face to face conversations please do let Maddelyn know.

The Helpdesk

I understand your concerns about the helpdesk and it was a priority for us to implement a new helpdesk to better meet the needs of local people. With this in mind, the new HS2 Helpdesk became operational on 1 April 2019 and sits within the heart of the organisation in our Snow Hill office in Birmingham. The helpdesk are now embedded directly within the Community Engagement team and are in regular contact with their colleagues in London. They have visited areas along the line of route, which included Hillington, to better understand some of the impacts local communities will face during the construction phase of the programme. Last year the Helpdesk responded to over 27,000 enquiries. Within the first month of operation of the new Helpdesk, it responded to 2,809 enquiries with over 68% resolved at first point of contact. We are committed to continuing to improve the service we provide and always welcome feedback from the community.

With regards to our complaints policy, we now have a dedicated team in place and a process that has been accredited with a Plain English Crystal Mark. The process has been made as simple as possible and by offering a dedicated case officer we are providing a more personal service. So far this year the team have managed 33 complaints from the Hillington area. All complaints have been responded to within our commitment of 20 working day or less. We have asked Maddelyn to discuss with you the type of information which would give you more confidence in this area.

Tunnel Boring Machine Power Supply

We understand that the rerouting of the power supply will have an impact on residents who previously believed that they would be unaffected by HS2. We have started engagement on this subject including presentations and discussion with some of your residents associations. Both your local MP Boris Johnson and the Leader of Hillingdon have made it clear they prefer the option of running the power supply along the route of the London Underground, which we did investigate. Unfortunately, because of our requirement to operate the tunnel boring machine for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, we will need unimpeded access to the cable route. This has presented a number of challenges such as third party land access rights and constraints when working close to the railway.

On further discussion we have only been able to identify a short 1.1km section of route that could be used alongside the railway corridor. However, to reach this short section would require diverting the work onto main roads which are congested and serve key bus routes. As a result the current solution which uses quieter roads as the preferred option with less overall impact.

We will continue to work with the local residents who will be affected by these works and we will ensure we share more information at your residents' association meetings. We will also hold a series of specific events which will be advertised locally and as well as the information on the local website www.hs2inhillington.co.uk.

I am aware that you have regular monthly meetings with our community engagement and construction teams and that you invest a lot of personal time and effort into these discussions. Please be assured that we are committed to working with you to ensure these meetings remain constructive and effective.

The engagement team are active in your area, holding regular drop-in sessions in Ickenham, Ruislip and Harefield where residents can come and meet the team and our contractors. You may also be aware of the Community and Environment Fund and Business and Local Enterprise Fund, which we promote locally; an award was made earlier this year for £72,200 to the Colne Valley Park. Additionally we have undertaken health and safety workshops at two of the local schools in the area and we are offering further sessions to others. Also to note, our mobile trailer giving information about the project will be visiting Uxbridge High Street on 19 June as part of a wider engagement initiative.

I hope the content of this response goes some way in demonstrating that we have taken your comments on board. I do hope we can take steps to improve the relationship with the community groups within Hillingdon.

Yours sincerely



Mark Thuston

Chief Executive
High Speed Two Limited

