

4th March 2022

Re: Calvert HS2 Green Tunnel Proposal

Dear Mr Smith,

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for your support on the Calvert HS2 green tunnel proposal, and for writing to the minister of state for transport and sharing his response with me. I am disappointed by Mr Stephenson's response but have taken the opportunity to consult with others with more specialised civil engineering knowledge.

Since my previous correspondence, I note that HS2 Ltd. Has agreed to erect an 850m bat mitigation tunnel structure over the proposed HS2 track at Sheephouse Wood, Buckinghamshire. It was on the original Sheephouse Wood tunnel proposal that Calvert Green Parish Council and Charndon Parish Council based their tunnel extension requests in their respective petitions. Consequently, a precedent has now been set to build a £40m additional tunnel structure mid-way through the delivery.

The schedule 17 application for Calvert South was only partially approved because of noise mitigation concerns that were raised by Calvert Green Parish Council and upheld by Buckinghamshire Council.

Unlike the original petitioning proposal, the new tunnel would terminate a long way south of the IMD because the change in gradients and access to the IMD were considered, and shouldn't cause any concerns. This was to provide the best noise mitigation for Calvert while still allowing rail access to the IMD, and within the existing land take at Calvert Jubilee Nature Reserve. This is at a point where all proposed lines are at the same level, including the non-HS2 tracks being implemented under the act.

Whilst not subterranean, the Environmental Statement does have the HS2 line at 3m below ground passing Calvert and consequently did already allow for pumping stations and associated infrastructure, including ponds. Whilst maybe

just semantics, a green tunnel at normal ground level isn't really subterranean, and although it will have different challenges, it wouldn't be excessively more difficult than a deep cutting to maintain. The proposed tunnel also passes by an active landfill site with permits in place for disposal of construction spoil. While this facility could easily take tunnel earthworks, mass excavation shouldn't really be a major concern for a tunnel at ground level.

Contrary to Mr Stephenson's point about loss of habitat in a sensitive area, a green tunnel would in fact increase habitat over an area otherwise lost to a railway. I do appreciate that safe slopes are required for a green tunnel, but in light of the proposed green bridge structures being in place, less impact on land is required for wildlife to access the tunnel covering and slopes could be steeper.

Following a recent poll, Calvert Green residents voted unanimously in favour of worsened visual impact over increased operation noise impacts. We also cannot accept that a green tunnel has an adverse visual impact over the acres of woodland destroyed by HS2 in our area. So, even a cut and cover concrete tunnel requiring less land would be better than the proposed scheme design, although it will not benefit wildlife in the same way that a green tunnel would.

Noise impact was our motivation to revisit a green tunnel scheme, and it is frustrating that we still do not have an answer from EKFB on the potential increased noise impact and mitigation had the proper baseline figures been used. HS2's *Methodology, assumptions and assessment (route-wide) (SV-001-000)* clearly states that, "Information on baseline sound and vibration is required to inform both the operation and construction assessments".

Based on the baseline data, the following are taken into account as additional evidence when assessing the significance of the effect caused by the introduction of the Proposed Scheme into an existing sound environment:

- *the identification by a competent and qualified surveyor that based on their professional listening and completion of a survey record, the existing sound environment has a 'unique feature' (in terms of soundscape). The potential effect of sound from the Proposed Scheme on the unique feature is qualitatively assessed based on the reported character of the feature as discussed in the next sub-section;*
- *for operational rail sound, greater weight is given to a sound level change between 1 and 3 dB if the area is already exposed to levels of*

noise that exceed the criteria contained in the Noise Insulation (Railway and Other Guided Transport Systems) Regulations 1996;"

We know the baseline noise anomaly is significant because around 130 HGV movements along Brackley Lane per day were carried out at the time of baseline noise assessment (Monday through Saturday). This is why it was raised during petitioning and worryingly, incorrect data has been used throughout the design process.

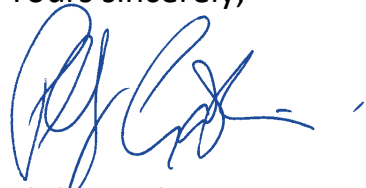
I'm reliably informed that a 3dB noise increase is equivalent to doubling the number of trains, so although it might still be deemed as acceptable to HS2, this increase is only because of HS2 cost saving measures, and not part of the original scheme design which we were told would be designed to conform.

We acknowledge that green tunnel construction costs would be higher than the current scheme, and probably in the region of £100m+, but the local communities have already suffered excessively from the HS2 impact - and main construction is yet to start. In the early days of HS2 community engagement, it was highlighted (and disregarded) that bat and other wildlife mitigation was being prioritised over the health and wellbeing of our human population. With the recent £40m bat tunnel announcement, in addition to all the other millions of pounds spent of bat connectivity mitigation in the area, this additional cost is only a small price to pay for protection of our valuable community.

Fundamentally, the HS2 scheme changes to save money in the Calvert area have undermined and contradicted original mitigation provided during the petitioning process and increased the impact and blight on our community which has already suffered excessively. A tunnel should therefore be considered as proper mitigation.

I'd appreciate if you would support us with these additional points in response to Mr Stephenson's correspondence to you.

Yours sincerely,



Philip Gaskin

Chairman, Calvert Green Parish Council.