

FREEPOST Working Draft Equality Impact Assessment 2A

7th November 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: High Speed Two Phase 2a: West Midlands to Crewe: Working Draft Equality Impact Assessment Report

As the time limit for this consultation has been rather tight, I have submitted this response within the deadline, but as issues are continuing to come to light along the line, I consider this response to be in draft form and I reserve the right to alter it and re-submit in the future.

Since the announcement of the HS2 project, it has been clear that there would be severe inequalities across the Stafford constituency. In many cases, individuals have already suffered, having to sell their homes through the 'Exceptional Hardship Scheme', but even after having been accepted on the scheme, some homeowners then had to run the gauntlet of solicitors, who in some cases nit-picked about the standard of paintwork on a house, or the state of the garden, in order to get a few thousand pounds more off the price. The whole idea of the EH Scheme meant that people were approaching HS2 at a difficult time, and I have to say, in some cases people have been taken advantage of.

The current situation is equally as critical. For example, the villages of Marston and Hopton find themselves as two of the very few number of villages and communities that will be split by the proposed route. In both cases, these villages will be changed forever and in Marston's case, completely devastated, possibly beyond recovery. That is why, I would again emphasise that I find it incomprehensible that the extensive tunnelling in Buckinghamshire is not matched in these areas. It is perfectly possible to tunnel under Hopton and Marston, saving villages and beautiful countryside. I would urge HS2 to consider this again. I am equally astonished with the attitude that HS2 takes with regard to compensating my constituents along the route. I have lost count of the amount of constituents who currently have disagreement with HS2 over the amount of compensation they will receive. In the majority of cases, it is clear to me that HS2 are attempting to save money by cutting back on the compensation that my constituents deserve. Professional advisors (chartered surveyors etc.) who should be paid by HS2, as was the case on Phase 1, are currently unable to access payment for work undertaken for clients on phase HS2a. This has led to a number of local firms undertaking extensive work for clients without being paid, and has also left a number of my constituents without representation as their professional representatives have refused to do any more HS2a related work until payments are confirmed. This situation must be rectified immediately so that my constituents can access full and fair compensation. This multibillion pound project MUST NOT be built on the backs of my constituents.

I could go on regarding the serious situations that so many of my constituents face, but instead I would refer you to my responses to the Design and Environmental consultations, to which I have responded.

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in this consultation.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Lefroy MP
Member of Parliament for the Stafford Constituency