

High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill Select Committee

First Special Report of Session 2014–15

On 26 March 2015 the High Speed Rail Bill Select Committee published their First Special Report of 2014-2015.

The report includes reflections on progress and evidence heard by the Committee to date, while taking the opportunity to signal some sensible ways forward.

The full report is available to read on the [Parliament website](#). However, we have also put together a summary of points the Committee made on compensation, mitigation and communication that we feel have a particular relevance to Camden. You can read this below.

The full report also contains advice for petitioners on speaking before select committee. We have not included this in this document but will include this as part of our [advice and support of residents and businesses](#) ahead of Camden's appearance at select committee.

NB: Numbers in brackets refer to points in the committee report.

Compensation

On compensation, the Select Committee made these points which we consider are particularly relevant for residents and business owners in Camden.

- **Hope for those suffering long-term construction disruption:** There are 'special cases' where properties will not be compulsory purchased but may be particularly close to or surrounded by long-term construction activity. While acknowledging that the Homeowner Payment Scheme (which is only available in rural areas) assists some people in this category, they state that 'in a limited number' of other special cases, HS2 Ltd. should offer an element of extra compensation – although not to the same level as properties being compulsory purchased. (111)
- **'Humane discretion' needed for Need to Sell:** The Need to Sell scheme should extend to people who have a justifiable reason to move, to include circumstances such as the "age and stage" of people's lives – for example, homeowners wanting to free up capital to help family members. The requirements to provide evidence should be less onerous and strict – in their words 'some humane discretion is called for'. (116)
- **Apply for Need to Sell now:** The Select Committee think 10–15% of the cases they have heard could be addressed through a properly working compensation scheme. The Committee urges petitioners to apply for the Need to Sell scheme before coming to Select Committee, so they can fully judge this scheme's fairness. The Select Committee have asked HS2 Ltd. to write to everyone whose application was rejected when the scheme was known as the Exceptional Hardship Scheme to invite them to consider applying again under the Need to Sell scheme. (118, 131)

- **Cash option instead of sale:** Successful applicants must be given the choice of whether they wish to sell their property or receive money under options such as the Alternative Cash Payment. (119)
- **Independent panel need to speak up:** They expect the independent panel assessing Need to Sell applications to tell them and the Secretary of State for Transport if they feel the terms of reference which guide them in making the decisions restrict them to the extent that they have to make unfair decisions. (120)
- **A property bond?:** The Committee want to see the Need to Sell scheme working effectively and fairly – which means giving residents the confidence to stay, ensuring continuity and coherence within their communities. They state that they have not ruled out directing implementation of a property bond if substantial improvements to the compensation scheme are not made. (134)
- **Decide on HS2's route north of Birmingham:** The next Government needs to make any early decision as to whether to proceed with HS2 phase 2 (stretch from Birmingham to the North) and to finalise its route to avoid unnecessary blight. This is relevant to Camden as the timescale for the route beyond Birmingham could affect how Euston Station is rebuilt. (130)

Mitigation and communication

- **Improve road safety:** The project should endeavour to leave a legacy of reduced risks and improved road safety in areas that receive no other benefit from HS2. (76)
- **Research health impacts:** The Select Committee are concerned that there is insufficient data on the health consequences of infrastructure construction and operation on this scale. A research project on health impacts would be welcome. (96)
- **Poor communication:** The Select Committee acknowledge HS2 Ltd.'s communication and engagement has been poor. They suggest there may be reasons for this including a mismatch in expectations between petitioner and HS2 Ltd. and information simply not being available when a petitioner requests it. They have also asked for details of how the Residents Commissioner will represent, communicate with and feed information back to residents. (93, 97)
- **HS2 should seek to improve community environment:** They feel that community relations could be improved if the disruption communities experience from the construction of HS2 was offset by 'moderate community and ecological improvements', creating positive local legacies of HS2. (94)
- **Give more detail about funds available:** HS2 Ltd. should fully brief the Select Committee on the scale and scope of the Community and Environment Fund and the Business and Local Economy Fund, following the general election. This would help them understand what real schemes they might cover, the criteria for applying to them, and how they will be distributed, so that they can assess whether they should be extended. (94)