

COMMENTS ON CENTRAL CHILTERNNS (9) REPORT

Construction is expected to result in significant increases in traffic flows (i.e more than 30% for HGV or all vehicles) on the following roads as a result of construction traffic and/or temporary closures/diversions, the A413, only parts of which are dual carriageway, the Hyde Heath Road, the B485 Chesham Road and Frith Hill. This we are told will lead to an increase in journey times, including presumably those for ambulances travelling from Chesham to Stoke Mandeville Hospital, coaches and cars ferrying children to school and people travelling to work.

We think it unlikely that that HS2 would provide significant employment opportunities for our people. Rather we believe that it would prove a blight on the local economy. The Chilterns attract some 55 million leisure visits a year. But will walkers and cyclists still wish to come in such numbers while HS2 is being built, or indeed afterwards? We very much doubt it and fear that HS2 will destroy existing jobs in the visitor economy, which accounts for over 9% of all employment in Buckinghamshire, and undermine plans to generate 2000 new jobs in the sector.

COMMENTS ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT (Non Technical Summary)

Point 2.5 on page 7 states that “High Speed Rail is considered to offer the appropriate balance between addressing climate change and economic benefits.”

This statement is totally misleading. Trains travelling at 250 mph use nearly twice as much electricity as those moving at 125mph. HS2 would therefore result in a massive increase in electricity consumption and carbon emissions.

The Chilterns chalk aquifer is a vitally important water resource for Buckinghamshire and London. We have serious concerns about the impact that HS2 would have on the water table, water quality, changes to ground water flows and the potential for increased risk of flooding.

As for the business case, the National Audit Office states that there is no evidence that HS2 would promote growth and bridge the North/ South divide. The published benefit cost ratio has declined from a 2010 estimated 2.7 return for every pound invested to 1.7 in 2012. Allowing for the latest economic forecasts and a more realistic value for the time saved by passengers, some estimates put the figure as low as 90p for every pound invested.

COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT CODE OF CONSTRUCTION PRACTICE

We have been told that there is no intention to send heavy lorry traffic through Chesham but can we be sure of this? The process for enforcement of the Code of Construction Practice appears weak with the responsibility for compliance falling mainly on the contractors and their sub contractors.

HS2 promises to “take reasonable steps to engage with the community” but presumably only HS2 will be the arbiter of what is reasonable.

The Local Environment Plan Site Controls will only become available for scrutiny after the Bill Submission has been made in support of the Hybrid Bill. This will make it difficult and probably expensive for Local Authorities, with their limited regulatory and enforcement resources, to make observations in a restricted time frame.