

Chesham Town Council



Bill Richards
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24th February 2014

Dear Sirs

Chesham Town Council's Response to the HS2 Environmental Statement

I have been asked to submit Chesham Town Council's response to the HS2 Environmental Statement. The Council will in due course be petitioning the HS2 Hybrid Bill.

This response is without prejudice to our contention that the consultation and the process of which it is part are deeply flawed. Significant impacts of the scheme have been ignored or inadequately assessed and unsupported assumptions have been made. Our submission is made without prejudice to any addenda that we reserve the right to make after the closing date of the 27th February 2014 if, after further and reasonable examination of the documents, significant facts or information come to light.

INTRODUCTION

Chesham is the third largest town in Buckinghamshire with a population of approximately 21,000. In July 2011 we responded to the initial HS2 document and in March 2013, following the judicial review of HS2, we responded to the Draft Environmental Consultation Document. However, despite these previous representations, we have effectively been ignored. The word "Chesham" appears just 5 times in the Environmental Statement, three in respect of archaeological remains "outside the area of study". We are not, for example, mentioned in section 10 – Socio Economics – of the CFA Central Chilterns/ No 9 Report. Yet the town's boundary on the B485 Chesham Road to Great Missenden is less than two miles from where the proposed HS2 route would cut across this road. Chesham is also close to Amersham and



Chesham Town Council, Town Hall, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1DS
Twinned with Friedrichsdorf Germany; Houilles France; Archena Spain



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there can be no doubt that a great deal of disruption to traffic flows through and around our town would occur during the period of construction.

After protests by our MP Cheryl Gillan that vital information (877 pages) had been left off the memory sticks, the online copies and the hard copies of the consultation documents, the House of Commons Standing Orders Committee was convened (for the first time in 6 years) and ruled that the consultation period should be extended by 17 days until the 10th February. Subsequently, at the insistence of the House of Lords, the Government moved the deadline to the 27th February. Nevertheless my Council wishes to register its protest against the still very short period – about 11 weeks including the Christmas and New Year holidays – allowed for response to what is an extremely long and complex document. (In comparison the consultation period for Crossrail was almost 16 weeks). We would reasonably have expected to have been given a lot more time in which to research in greater depth the likely impact of HS2 on our community. Nevertheless, in the very limited time allowed, we have produced our comments and observations on the Environmental Statement. Before giving these, however, as responsible citizens and taxpayers we would like to comment on the bigger picture because we know that, at the petitioning stage, we shall not be permitted to oppose the building of HS2 but only to seek mitigation.

For some time the Council has had serious doubts about HS2. This is not because of insular self-interest, although we believe that it will have a seriously negative impact on Chesham. Rather it reflects our belief that at a time when huge cuts in public sector spending are being forced on the Government, in order to reduce the enormous budget deficit, there seems to be no commercial case for spending £50 billion on a project, which would slow down the journeys of more people than it speeded up and which is neither “low carbon” nor “green”.

In 1985, when it was first proposed by British Rail, HS1 was costed at £1 billion. It eventually cost £11 billion. The cost of HS2 is currently estimated by the Government to be £42.6 billion. However Treasury officials have told the Financial Times that the total cost, allowing for VAT and inflation, could be in excess of £70 billion. Neither figure includes the cost of the trains, which are currently set at £7.5 billion in 2011 prices, despite the fact that it would be around a decade before any trains are needed.

Danny Alexander has said that the next spending review will set out how much money would be paid out under Barnett Consequentials due to the building of HS2 after 2015- 2016. Barnett Consequentials relate to money paid to Wales, Northern and Scotland when the UK Government spends money on projects which only affect England. This means that yet more billions will be added to the cost of HS2. The proponents of HS2 would have us believe that the project would stimulate the economy and bring about a renaissance of the North. The National Audit Office, on the other hand, has stated that “There is no evidence that HS2 would promote growth and bridge the North/ South divide”. There are political leaders in the North who agree with this view.



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Barry Sheerman, the Labour M.P for Huddersfield, has stated that that “Rather than bringing life into the region it would suck life out the region into London and the South East”. He has suggested that “If there were a poll in all the big cities in this country today, wouldn’t people rather spend £50 billion on the regeneration of our cities and towns than on HS2”. He has also blogged that “ the Government’s regional policy- or lack thereof- shows its London-centric bias . Rather than supporting the North’s economic strengths and potential, the development of HS2 reflects the Government’s view that regional development depends solely on connectivity with London. A Government strategy that was truly aimed at regional development would invest directly in the regions and its people through better education, training and job opportunities and local transport networks. Instead it is wasting £50 billion on a high speed rail line that will intensify the unhealthy dominance of London and the South East”.

There are others who agree with him. The leaders of Bradford and Wakefield Councils also oppose the project. Andrew Burnham, the M.P for Leigh in Greater Manchester, has warned that the project “would deliver maximum disruption and minimal benefit to an area which has amongst the poorest access to rail transport of any in the country” and that “it cannot be allowed to be at the expense of local communities, whose greatest resource is the green space in which they reside”.

Even in Birmingham a survey has revealed that two thirds of small businesses are against HS2. Tellingly, HS2 themselves admit that 73% of what they call “regeneration jobs” would be in London. If and when HS2 were introduced, Doncaster and other main stations in the Midlands and the North of England , which are not on but near the proposed route for HS2, would end up with slower services than those presently in operation. In the case of Doncaster, there would no longer be any trains with one-stop services to London. They would all stop at Retford, Newark, Grantham, Peterborough and Stevenage in a journey lasting 120 minutes. Currently the 156 mile trip takes between 95 and 100 minutes.

The business case for HS2 appears very weak because it is based upon dubious assumptions. It fails to recognise that time spent on trains can be economically productive. But travellers use laptop computers as well as “smart” phones during journeys and Skype is becoming a very attractive alternative to physical meetings. Predictions of huge increases in passenger numbers are also questionable. Telecommuting (working from home) and the availability of software for 3G teleconferencing suggest that technology will reduce the growth in demand for expensive physical travel.

The coalition should learn from the example of HS1, where passenger numbers are substantially below forecasts and occupancy is about 55% of capacity at peak travel times. Services and train lengths have been cut, partly because of resistance to premium fare rates.

It should also take note of the recent decision by the French to slash a Euro 245 billion TGV expansion programme by almost 90%. Apparently it is not just the massive construction costs that alarm them but also the huge ongoing subsidies that are required. Forecast occupancy rates have proved far too optimistic. Usage is declining due to increasing competition from low cost air lines and the fact that



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tickets are just too expensive. SNCF plans to cut 1,410 jobs in 2014 due to the rapidly reducing profitability of their flagship service. The operating margin of the service has declined from 20% in 2008 to an estimated 10% for 2013. The company estimates that 1 in 2 TGV lines will be in deficit. The situation will become significantly worse in 2019 with the loss of TGV monopoly over the main network.

In the interim, evidence has emerged showing that the tracks used by TGV are wearing out more rapidly than previously thought and that increasingly high maintenance costs are being incurred. The TGV's maximum service speed is 300 km/h or 187 mph as against the 360 km/h or 225 mph forecast for HS2. Inevitably the latter's tracks would be subject to greater stresses and would therefore wear out more quickly.

The proposed Lyon to Turin HSR project has been severely criticised by the French Court of Auditors because alternative, less expensive proposals had not been thoroughly explored. Forecasts of traffic growth had been hugely overestimated and the Court observed that the existing line was running well below its capacity. The Court also noted the contradictions between the claimed net benefits of the scheme and the socio-economic studies carried out. "The net present value is negative in all scenarios". The Court stressed the absolute necessity for independent experts to certify the costs of the project, so as to avoid any conflicts of interest "past, present or future".

Many people in France believe that TGV will cut back the network (as has happened in Spain and the Benelux) keeping only the most profitable routes. As there has been so little investment in rest of the network during the period of TGV's expansion, this would have the effect of increasing regional inequalities. Monsieur M. Pepy, the head of SNCF, has admitted that France made a mistake with TGV and should have concentrated more on regional and commuter services.

Mr Cameron has said that we need HS2 in order "to catch up with Europe". But we would be catching up with an overblown system that is in retreat. The HSR service between Amsterdam and Brussels has been abandoned, largely because of ticket pricing problems. Prices having trebled over 3 years, load factors were varying between 7% and 15% because travellers chose to use much cheaper available alternative rail services linking these two cities.

In Germany the S21 HSR project is experiencing huge cost overruns and "Der Spiegel" has said that "it looks like it may be on the path to becoming the country's second outsized White Elephant" (the first being Berlin's shelved new airport project).

In Portugal the Government decided in 2013 to cancel all work on the HSR link between Lisbon and Madrid. The cost was too great and the benefits too small.

Supporters of the project have argued that HS2 must be built in order to defuse the "capacity time bomb", which they say is threatening us. However this flies in the face of some rather inconvenient facts. Data from Network Rail's Utilisation Survey show that the West Coast Main Line service into Euston is the least crowded of all lines into London after HS1. The Government's own figures released in



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the High Court in December 2012 showed that in the evening peak the Virgin WCML trains were on average only 52% full. It seems implausible that WCML will run out of capacity in the foreseeable future.

Fewer than 2% of rail journeys nationally are made on the WCML. The claim by Patrick McLoughlin, the Transport Secretary, that HS2 would be “one of the most potentially beneficial infrastructure projects on the planet” and that Britain can be transformed by a scheme, which does nothing for the journeys that most people make, is risible. The project can quite justifiably be described as “an extraordinarily expensive solution in search of a problem.”

However in the meantime there is overcrowding on other routes such as the main lines into Paddington, Waterloo, Victoria and Liverpool Street and key commuter routes into cities such as Manchester, Leeds, Milton Keynes and Northampton and yet, in many cases, the Government has no plans to provide extra capacity. HS2 has not been shown to be in the national interest compared to investment in regional transport needs as set out in the 51M alternative. It does not form part of a national transport strategy, nor even a national rail strategy.

The forecasts for the use of the HS2 service appear extremely optimistic. Figures for passenger miles growth for Virgin West Coast show a sharply declining trend with growth of less than 1% in 2012/13. (Source Stagecoach Annual reports). Yet HS2's target is to fill 18 large trains per hour, in each direction, which looks unrealistic both technically and economically. The assumption is that a large proportion of the passengers would be former users of the WCML service. However currently there are not enough of these to achieve the desired occupancy rate and so the forecasts assume a surge in travel on this route, for reasons which are quite beyond us. It is conceded by HS2 that its calculations could be upset by fares policies and the competitive response of existing mainline operators. Excess capacity could force HS2 down the route of heavy fares discounting, further undermining the economics of the project.

We do not need HS2, which would represent a rich man's means of transport. It would leave many areas with slower train travel and the reconstruction of Euston would cause chaos for 8 years. A big cut in intercity services running on the “classic” mainlines is built into the Department of Transport's business case for HS2, including £7.7 billion of savings in subsidies to existing services. In the business case, these savings offset part of HS2's operating costs.

The Transport Select Committee's report published in December claimed that no alternative proposals would meet capacity and connectivity demands. However in the words of the Member of Parliament for Chesham and Amersham, Cheryl Gillan, “it is questionable how they can stand by these claims, when, apparently, they took no oral evidence from opponents of HS2 or promoters of alternative schemes. This report is little more than an extension of the propaganda already emanating from the Department of Transport and HS2 Ltd.”

The 51m Group of 19 Local Authorities opposed to HS2 has proposed a much simpler and vastly more economic solution should extra capacity on the West Coast Line be needed. This would involve changing



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one first class carriage to standard (still leaving three first class coaches per train) and lengthening trains from the present 9 or 11 carriages to 12. This would provide 693 seats on most trains – more than three times the current average evening peak demand. The elimination of three minor “pinchpoints” (between Euston and Crewe) would allow an extra 15 InterCity trains in each direction daily and increase freight capacity by separating InterCity and freight trains along the line.

Among the documents published by the Government in January 2012 were reports commissioned by DfT from Network Rail and W S Atkins. While the Network rail report was intended to undermine the 51m alternative, it acknowledged that the capacity calculations set out in the alternative were credible and deliverable. The report from Atkins stated that the alternative had a cost benefit ratio of 5.1, compared with 1.4 for HS2. The capital cost of the 51m alternative is £3 billion, a figure not disputed by Network Rail, and a tiny fraction of the cost of HS2.

The terms of reference for HS2 contained an imperative that Heathrow should be integral to the route. However this does not form part of the current proposal. The proposed route does not connect directly to Birmingham and there are potentially serious connection problems at Euston, where the Northern Line suffers from bad overcrowding.

The proposed route for HS2 would be environmentally devastating to the Chilterns, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which supposedly enjoys statutory protection. The Chilterns chalk aquifer is a vitally important water resource for Buckinghamshire and London and 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. We also believe that this project would prove a blight on the local economy.

The coalition prides itself on being “green” and HS2 informs us that “High Speed Rail is considered to offer the appropriate balance between addressing climate change and economic benefits”. This breath-taking statement is totally misleading. What they do not tell us is that trains travelling at 225 mph use nearly twice as much electricity as those moving at 125mph. Moreover, presumably in attempt to keep costs down, HS2 Ltd. have used power consumption figures for 200 metre trains, whereas the plan is to use 400 metre trains, which would require a great deal more power. HS2 would therefore result in massive increases in electricity consumption, currently 40% generated by burning coal, and carbon emissions.

Having made a forecast for electricity prices, HS2 chose to ignore it and to use the baseline 2011 industrial price without any allowance for beyond inflation increases. These costings were made in 2013, when HS2 already knew that electricity prices had risen by 20% above the 2011 level they had decided to use.

As for the idea that HS2’s carbon footprint would be reduced by a move to renewable and nuclear power generation, we would observe that of the UK’s remaining 16 reactors, 15 are due to close by



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2023, having reached the end of their design lives. They take many years to build and at the moment only 4 new ones are in prospect.

HS2 also claim that carbon emission savings will be made as travellers switch from air and road transport. However their own forecast is that the number of car journeys taken off the roads would be just 923,000 a year– out of a total of 540 million long distance car journeys. That is just 0.17% of long distance car trips.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT NON- TECHNICAL SUMMARY (NTS)

Here we would like to acknowledge the generous support and valued advice that we have received from local HS2 action groups, notably the Chesham Society, the Chalfonts and Amersham Community Forum, the Chiltern Ridges Action Group and Buckinghamshire County Council. Their views, observations and recommendations we heartily endorse.

On page 3 of the Non-Technical summary it is stated that this section of the Environmental Statement was “prepared by a group of independent environmental consultants”, namely ARUP and URS. In fact neither of the two companies’ websites lays claim to such credentials. ARUP’s website describes the company as “designers, planners, engineers and technical specialists”. URS describe themselves as a design, engineering and construction company. ARUP was associated with the Eden Project and has supported lectures on environmental subjects by Jonathan Porritt. However like URS it is essentially focussed on engineering and so the two groups’ assessments and conclusions are based on engineering rather than environmental principles.

One must also question their “independent” status, since both would be substantial financial beneficiaries if the HS2 project were to go ahead. There are well-established principles in central and local government that prevent MP’s and Councillors from voting on projects from which they stand to gain personally. These same principles should prevent firms from carrying out an environmental review of HS2 and producing such reports as the Environmental Statement.

A Strategic Environmental Statement should have been carried out prior to planning and determining the proposed route but it was not. So effectively “the cart was put before the horse”. We believe that the conclusions of the Environmental Statement are suspect and intended to justify (sic) a decision that had already been. The ES for the most part evidences a failure to appreciate the impact of HS2 on Ecology, the Communities and Heritage Assets. The NTS either dismisses the impact of HS2 or even where it recognises impact, seeks to downplay it. The description of the project is essentially engineering based and reducing its environmental impact appears to have been sacrificed in the interest of cost saving.

In paragraph 3 on page 156 of the NTS it is stated that that the special characteristics of the Chilterns AONB would not be affected by, among other things, the permanent severance of land, viaducts, road



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bridges, overhead line equipment, loss of vegetation, opening up the landscape, and lastly up to 36 trains per hour travelling through the countryside at 225 mph. This breathtaking statement, which invites incredulity and ridicule, could never have been made by anyone possessing even the remotest interest in or care for the environment. It reads like a government propaganda prospectus for HS2 and reinforces our conclusion that the ES is totally unfit for purpose. The Government should admit this and commission a new and genuinely independent Environmental Impact Study.

Section 10 of Volume 2 (CFA9) concludes that “No residual significant socio-economic effects are likely to arise during the construction of the Proposed Scheme.” We find this assertion absolutely astonishing and totally incomprehensible.

In the case of South Heath, a village lying just off the B485 Chesham to Missenden road, some sense of the disruption emerges in section 8.9 but even this section completely understates the dislocation that would be caused by the construction and construction traffic. Lorry movements would effectively paralyse the village, severely affecting those trying to get to work and to school. The impact on emergency services, deliveries and business has been ignored.

A recent survey, conducted under the aegis of the Chilterns Conservation Board in the environs of South Heath, revealed that of 286 respondents, 87.8% reported adverse effects on their health and wellbeing because of worries about HS2. Some 16.4% of respondents had sought medical help.

What the summary fails to acknowledge, although it is blindingly obvious, is that the impact of HS2 would be felt well beyond the designated route. Chesham does not feature in the ES but there can be no doubt that our town would be badly affected during the period of construction and potentially afterwards. Many of our residents commute by car to work in neighbouring towns and there are employees of Chesham firms who live outside of our town and commute in the opposite direction. There is also a substantial volume of “through” traffic.

Then there are our schools. Chesham Grammar School has 1200 students and eighty teachers. The school’s catchment area is very large and approximately 800 of the pupils live outside of Chesham. Of this number the majority travel by coach and car, the remainder by train. Around 50% of the teachers commute by car. While HS2 was being built, journey times to and from school for many would almost undoubtedly lengthen, thereby putting pressure on time tables.

The pupils at Chiltern Hills Academy are mostly from Chesham. However a substantial number of the staff live miles away and drive to work.

As for the emergency services, ambulance and fire brigade, no mention is made of the likely impact on these during the construction period. There is no hospital in Chesham and full A and E services are no longer provided by High Wycombe and Watford hospitals, which served our town in the past. In the



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main, Accident and Emergency cases from Chesham are now conveyed to Stoke Mandeville Hospital, a journey of 13 miles, which, according to the AA Route Planner, should take 25 minutes. However the normal route is via the B485 and the A413, both of which roads would experience heavy increases in traffic during the period of HS2's construction. Thus one would expect journey times to increase, which could well put lives at risk.

The usual alternative, Wexham Park Hospital at Slough, is 14.3 miles from Chesham with an AA estimated journey time of 30 minutes. However this route also involves using the very busy A416 and crossing the A413. So here again one must anticipate longer journey times with consequent risk to patients.

Our residents also use Amersham Hospital, which has around 50,000 outpatient visits per annum, a great many from Chesham, the third largest town in Buckinghamshire. The hospital is situated just off the A413 and would be impacted by heavier traffic on that route.

The South Central Ambulance Service, which serves our town, works well at present. However they themselves admit that "delivering emergency services across Buckinghamshire is a challenge with increasing demand, significant rurality and the changing configuration of hospital services." They understand that their task would undoubtedly be made more difficult by disruption to traffic flows.

Given the likelihood of longer response times for ambulances travelling to emergency and accident sites, we would ask HS2 to provide an air ambulance for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for the duration of the construction period. This could be of particular value for the construction workers as well as members of the public.

In the case of the Fire Service, Chesham has its own Fire Station with a "Rescue Pump" crewed by an establishment of seven (Retained Duty System) staff who respond to incidents by hurrying from their "normal" jobs in the local community. However in the case of serious conflagrations, they require assistance. The nearest "wholetime" crewed station is at Amersham, about three miles away but Amersham only has one fire engine. The nearest "large" fire station is at High Wycombe. The response times of both Amersham and High Wycombe could be adversely affected by heavier traffic resulting from the construction of HS2.

Currently the road system around Chesham just, but only just, about copes with peak traffic flows, except when there are interruptions due to road and infrastructure works and accidents. Then there can be lengthy and frustrating delays for car, coach and lorry drivers. An already at close to capacity road network would come under severe additional strain during a construction period lasting for 5 years, commencing in 2017.

The process of construction is expected to result in significant increases in traffic flows (more than 30%) on the Hyde Heath Road, the vitally important A413, which is not a motorway and only parts of which



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are dual carriageway, and the B485 Chesham Road, which latter would be diverted during the creation of a “cut and cover” tunnel at Frith Hill. The A413 and the B485 are two very important routes for residents of and travellers to and from Chesham. There seems little doubt that dense traffic on the A413 would tempt some frustrated drivers to seek routes taking them through Chesham via “rat runs” such as Rockey Lane .

The excavation of the Amersham Vent shaft alone would result in up to 400 single vehicle journeys per day (Vol.2 CFA8 page 144). Up to 200 of these will be made by HGV’s with LGV’s and cars accounting for the balance. This equates to 40 additional movements per working hour. The delays identified in the report resulting from the extra traffic associated with the Amersham Vent shaft could well put lives at risk. Delays would also adversely affect the 11 bus routes which cross the A413 and impact the working of the Chilterns Crematorium, the site of 3114 funerals in 2013. This facility is much used by the families of deceased people from Chesham (the third largest town in Buckinghamshire) and congestion at this point would have serious and distressing effects on those managing and attending funeral services at the Crematorium.

We have been told by HS2 that there is no intention to send heavy lorry traffic through Chesham but can we be sure of this? Lorry drivers, so reliant upon their sat-navs are notorious for taking unsuitable routes. The process for enforcement of the code of construction appears weak with the responsibility for compliance falling mainly upon the contractors and their sub-contractors.

Turning to business and employment, paragraph 10.4.3 in the section on Socio-Economics states that “no non-agricultural businesses have been identified, which are expected to suffer significant amenity effects from the proposed scheme.” This statement we find incredible and totally at odds with the findings of local researchers. Thus the Chilterns Countryside Group survey of retail businesses in Great Missenden, our neighbouring town, revealed that large numbers of retail businesses did not expect to survive the HS2 construction period. Some 46% of respondents estimated that they would suffer a mean reduction of 29% in their annual turnover.

Chesham is a much larger town with a population of 21,000. But no community is totally self sufficient and our retailers, supermarkets and smaller businesses, currently enjoy support from neighbouring towns and villages lying on or close to the proposed HS2 route, such as Great Missenden, Prestwood, Amersham, Hyde Heath, South Heath and the Lee. Our town car parks register about 1000 short/medium stay cars parked per working day. This number excludes the Waitrose and Sainsbury car parks and that of Chesham’s London Underground Station, also used by shoppers. Were journeys to Chesham to become more difficult for visitors, they could shop elsewhere. One local Chesham printing firm, with a substantially out of town clientele, fears that it could lose up to 50% of its turnover during the construction period. Once lost, they remind us, clients are very difficult to get back.



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The Elgiva is a 300 seat capacity theatre and digital cinema owned and managed by Chesham Town Council. Its wide-ranging programme of professional and amateur productions, musicals, ballet/dance and pantomimes plus an eclectic range of feature films means that it attracts audiences from a large area. According to the management, in 2012 only 27% of attendees were from Chesham, the remainder coming from large towns as far afield as Watford, Hemel Hempstead, High Wycombe, Slough, Uxbridge and Aylesbury plus neighbouring smaller towns such as Berkhamsted, Amersham, Great Missenden, Wendover, the Chalfonts. Some of these are on or close to the HS2 route, and more difficult access to the Elgiva during HS2's construction period would be very likely to deter visitors and reduce box office takings.

The Chesham Moor Gym and Swim, another facility owned and managed by the Town Council, has an open air heated swimming pool, tennis courts and fully equipped gymnasium. The majority of the users, some 75%, come from Chesham but the remainder are from places close to the HS2 route and here again we would expect an adverse impact on turnover and profitability.

Tourism is not mentioned in Volume 2 of the report on the Central Chilterns (Area 9). Yet tourists make 55 million visits annually to the AONB which is the Chilterns and generate revenue in excess of £470 million. (Source – Chilterns Conservation Board). Tourism is important to Chesham's shops, public houses and restaurants. Visitors come from all over but many are Londoners, who travel to Great Missenden by train and then walk to Chesham, before refreshing themselves and returning home. Others arrive in Chesham, a "Walkers are Welcome" town, via the Metropolitan line and then head in the direction of Missenden. Chesham is also a favourite destination for cyclists, who purchase comestibles from our shops. But would walkers and cyclists still wish to come in large numbers while HS2 was being built, or indeed afterwards? We think it most improbable because much of our suddenly very much less accessible beautiful countryside would resemble the Western Front. Indeed we fear that HS2 would prove a blight on the visitor economy, which accounts for over 9% of all employment in Buckinghamshire.

Walkers, cyclists and horse riders are hardly mentioned in the ES. Some concern is expressed about diverting footpaths but none for the safety and convenience of those using them. In view of the substantial numbers of people involved, we would ask that HS2 undertake a risk assessment for any rights of way passing close to construction sites.

As for new jobs in Chesham, it seems unlikely that HS2 would provide significant employment for our people, most of whom probably don't have the requisite skill sets.

In conclusion, HS2 would bring no benefits to Chesham, whose residents would have to travel to London in order to access the service. (It would be quicker and cheaper to drive to Birmingham.) It would damage our local economy and cause huge inconvenience to traffic through and around our town. The Non-Technical Summary makes frequent use of the word "temporary". However road closures and



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traffic diversion onto minor roads during the periods of construction and fitting out could, in some instances, last for 6 years, a period slightly longer than that of the Second World War!

HS2 makes no business sense at all judged by any criteria that we understand. It is almost impossible to think of anything less “green” than this ill-conceived, energy guzzling, massively Co2 emitting, environment devastating juggernaut. The nation cannot afford to waste £50 billion on a vanity project that would only benefit rich businessmen. A future historian might say of HS2 that “Never in the field of human economic activity was so much sacrificed and so much owed by so many for the benefit of so few.”

We believe that building HS2 would be a terrible mistake and that the 51m Group’s proposition, which could be achieved at a fraction of the cost of HS2, makes infinitely more sense. However the latter has not been used as a comparator.

If the proposed route is forced upon us, then we believe that the Chiltern bored tunnel should be extended to north of Wendover, which even the Environmental Statement recognises would substantially reduce the damage to the environment, heritage sites and the Chilterns AOB. It would also reduce the toll of human misery caused by this project and represent the best way of reducing HS2’s impact on Chesham.

Should the CRAG (Chiltern Ridges Action Group) tunnel be rejected, then we would plead for the adoption of REPA (Residents’ Environmental Protection Association) proposition of a shorter extension of the Chilterns Tunnel to beyond Leather lane. This would prevent extensive disruption to traffic flows by obviating the need for the construction of the South Heath Cut and Cover tunnel.

As suggested by the Chesham Society, we would also ask HS2 to construct new routes to access the line directly from the A413, rather than using existing lanes which are totally unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles.

In addition, so as to mitigate transport problems, we would suggest that HS2 adopt and enforce a park and ride scheme for staff. They should also think about removing spoil by rail (a possibility which is not considered in the ES), running special overnight trains on the Chiltern Line. The idea would be to build sidings, where spoil could be transferred to goods wagons during the day ; these could be situated east of Deep Mill bridge and near Small Dean, where the proposed HS2 route crosses the Chiltern Line.

Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information from Chesham Town Council on this matter, which raises great concern for us both on a national and local level.

Chesham Town Council

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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Richards", is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Bill Richards
Chesham Town Clerk