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HS2 INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR

HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS - CREWE) BILL: SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED BY COMMENTS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

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SUMMARY REPORT

**HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS - CREWE) BILL:
SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED BY COMMENTS ON THE
ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT.**

Report prepared by the Independent Assessor appointed under Standing Order 224A(6)(a)(ii)

Submitted to the House of Commons by the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills, pursuant to Standing Order 224A(6)(a)(v)

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be published 20 November 2017*

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Executive Summary

The Public consultation for Phase 2A of the High Speed Rail (West Midlands to Crewe) ran from 17 July 2017 to 30 September 2017. This is the Report of the Independent Assessor summarising the issues raised by the responses as part of that consultation.

16,768 Responses were received for consideration.

The Key issue expressed in the consultation (by volume of responses – directly referenced in 95% of all responses) is concern over the impact of the proposed line on the loss of Ancient Woodland on the route. The expected total loss for Phase 2A for Ancient Woodland is 10.5 ha with the majority occurring in Whitmore Wood (in CA 4) which will lose 33% of its current woodland.

The highlighting of this issue is due to specific campaigns, organised and encouraged by the Woodland Trust which has mobilised support from the general public.

As part of these campaigns (and indeed also included in other independent submissions) a key request is for HS2 Ltd to further consider the design option D9-11.3, for a tunnel under Whitmore Wood.

Submissions from organisations and public authorities highlight particular areas of detail and concern across specific geographic locations on the route. These range from ecological concerns to proposed design issues and traffic proposals. These specific issues should be considered by HS2 Ltd for the next stages of more detailed design.

A key section of the Consultation is the 1,493 submissions from the farming and rural business community who are concerned that the Project will have an adverse impact on their businesses, even possibly leading to a threat to future viability.

A further 'hotspot' of concern is the proposals for the railhead near Stone to support route construction and possibly becoming a permanent feature. This has raised local concerns and many respondents support the proposals of the Stone HS2 Action Group for the railhead to be developed at Aldersley Rough. Conversely, the respondents from Aldersley Rough strongly object to the recommendations of the Stone Action Group and want the railhead to remain as planned at Stone. A number of respondents also mentioned the village of Woore, voicing their concern that it had not been specifically included in traffic analysis nor consultation efforts.



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document forms the Report of the Independent Assessor (Environmental Impact) on the issues raised by comments on the Environmental Statement (ES) published by the Department of Transport relating to the High-Speed Rail Phase 2A (West Midlands - Crewe) Bill. This follows Phase 1 of the Project which concerned the development of the High Speed Line between London and the West Midlands. The public consultation for Phase 2A ran from *17 July 2017* to *30 September 2017*. The ES and supporting materials were produced by HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport, published by the Department for Transport. The Secretary of State for Transport set the consultation period, under the terms of the House of Commons Standing Orders. The ES was made available to the public online on 17 July 2017 and also made available in hard copy from online, library and direct sources on request.

In 2013, for Phase 1, the two Houses of Parliament passed Standing Orders to appoint an Independent Assessor to prepare a summary of issues raised in comments on the consultation, to be submitted to Parliament in advance of the Second Reading of the HS2 Bill. Following completion of the Phase 1 Reports, Phase 2A has been underway in the second half of 2017 and a new exercise for appointing an Independent Assessor for this Phase was implemented. The Standing Orders use the term ‘comment’; in this report the terms ‘response’ and ‘submission’ are also used. The Standing Order required a group of impartial Parliamentary officials, the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills, to appoint the Independent Assessor. The Examiners, after undertaking an advertised public procurement procedure, appointed Golder Associates (UK) Ltd as the Independent Assessor for Phase 2A on 25 July 2017. The Examiners were required under the Standing Orders to set a deadline for the Assessor to compile the summary report and submit it to the Examiners. This period had to be a minimum of 28 days from the date all comments were sent to the Assessor following the end of the consultation period. The Examiners set a period of 30 days, meaning that the report had to be submitted by 20 November 2017.

This Report sets out the results of the work of the Independent Assessor in respect of the HS2 Phase 2A ES. The Report is intended to enable the reader to understand the patterns and key issues arising from the public consultation, along with the presentation of a synthesis of the consultation responses. The public consultation produced 16,768 comments during the consultation period.

Results are presented in terms of key issues raised for the Project as a whole and by Community Area (CA) for the length of the proposed line (the 5 CFAs are discrete geographical areas defined in the ES.) The Assessor was required by Parliament only to “summarise” the issues raised by comments on the Environmental Statement” (see House of Commons Standing Order 224A(6)(a)(i)). Therefore, in this report the Independent Assessor does not provide a judgement on the validity or otherwise of comments received against the technical design work, documentation, development process and proposed mitigation measures for the proposed High Speed Line, particularly in regard to individual submissions and geographic features. However, the Report does comment on issues of significance as expressed in the responses and highlights areas where the public has expressed particular concern.

The Report has been organised into two principal sections:

- i) An Introductory section setting out the Terms of Reference, work programme, approach, and methodology applied by the Independent Assessor;
- ii) Results, presented as
 - 1) Key Issues; and
 - 2) CA results.



The Report was submitted to the Examiners on 20 November 2017, in line with the Standing Order requirement, for submission by the Examiners to Parliament. We believe the report faithfully and objectively represents the views and issues as received by the Independent Assessor. The Department of Transport will publish all responses received. The responses will be made available online during December 2017 via the ES Consultation page on the gov.uk website. The Independent Assessor has no role in the publication of responses.

1.1 The Assessment Parameters

This section of the Report sets out the intent of the assessment process as well as the methods used to achieve the results. This will clarify the approach used by the Assessor and enable the reader to understand the results in the appropriate context. Throughout, the approach has been to maintain complete independence and to construct a process in which all responses are given due consideration.

Terms of Reference

This Report is focussed on the outcomes of the public consultation in response to the ES relating to the High-Speed Rail Phase 2A (West Midlands - Crewe) Bill. The Bill proposes a high speed railway line running from the Phase 1 route in the West Midlands to the main rail junction of Crewe in Cheshire. The Assessor was not required to provide judgement on the quality of the ES itself, such as the value of any community relations along the proposed route, the structure and delivery of the EIA process or the appropriateness of proposed designs, mitigation and route location decisions, although the report summarises comments made by respondents on all these issues.

The aim has been to provide Parliament and the wider public with a summary of key issues and concerns expressed as outcomes from the above process in a timely fashion following closure of the consultation process. The Assessor has been instructed to perform the role in an independent fashion and has therefore kept a proper distance from all interested parties, except where this was required for administrative reasons, principally as part of the process of receiving responses from the Department of Transport's contractor (described below) and to request any materials that were needed to support the Assessor's work programme.

The Independent Assessor

The Examiners required the Independent Assessor to demonstrate that its staff had the knowledge and skills to assess the subject matter of the responses and produce a summary to assist both Houses of Parliament in their consideration of the hybrid bill. The Examiners also required that the firm itself and the staff working on this project had no vested interest in the HS2 project and that neither the firm nor the individuals in question could reasonably be assumed to be biased in relation to the HS2 project. Golder Associates is a UK based company with a UK based team of environmental consultants demonstrating a long track record of working on environmental assessments throughout the UK. The firm is one of the leading providers of Environmental Assessments worldwide and has its own teams of environmental specialists from ecologists to air, noise and water specialists and planning and policy experts covering the complete range of disciplines required for environmental assessment. Golder Associates has no current commercial interest in any particular outcome from the decision-making process relating to the HS2 project.

The firm is also an international leader in environmental Information Technology, both to support environmental assessment and for specialised applications for complex analysis of environmental issues. The firm applied its own environmental consultation management software application – GoldStake – for the management and logging of responses.

Timeline of Assessment

As noted above, the ES was published on 17 July and the Secretary of State for Transport set a deadline for the receipt of comments by 30 September 2017.

The timetable for preparing the final Report was set by the Examiners following discussion with the Independent Assessor and, in setting the timetable the Examiner took account of the final volume of responses, the size and complexity of responses and the time that would be required to ensure each response received full consideration and analysis.



Process

Public responses to the ES were submitted directly to the Department for Transport, under the requirements of the Standing Order, with no involvement from the Independent Assessor. The consultation and the process for submitting comments were designed by HS2 Ltd, working with the Department of Transport. Every response was passed on directly from electronic or physical post boxes to the Department's selected processing contractor without any third party opening or reviewing any response.

The Department's contractor was responsible for logging, opening and (in the case of hard copy responses) electronically scanning all received responses, as the responsible party of receipt. The comments were electronically available to the Independent Assessor in real time on the Contractor's data management system, with each response having its own individual reference number.

In order to provide the required response analysis, the Independent Assessor transferred all responses into their own data management system. The response number assigned by the Contractor is directly linked to the logging reference number within GoldStake to provide an audit trail from the point of receipt.

The Independent Assessor developed a bespoke approach for the handling of the responses based on the proprietary GoldStake response management system and created a series of management screens and dashboards to reflect the expected key issues, types of responses, as well as detailed management and monitoring of team performance and outcomes.

The Independent Assessor decided not to use either external sub-contractors to assist in the process or to apply key word based algorithms for data input. This was undertaken to maximise accuracy at point of input using team members who are environmental professionals and therefore familiar with the issues, requirements and subtleties of environmental assessment. All members of the inputting team received specific project focussed training on both the project issues and the bespoke programme requirements to ensure consistency. Any issue that could not be allocated by an inputter, or was less than clear in its import, was allocated to an Assistance Required log which was analysed daily by senior technical team members.

The database management structure also included reference and logic checks to avoid record duplications. The Independent Assessor also had access to senior specialist experts in all technical areas of environmental assessment throughout the course of the assessment to provide an additional level of expert input as necessary.

GoldStake System

In order to register, sort, manage and assess the responses, the Independent Assessor used its own proprietary consultation response management software GoldStake. This system also includes a useful project management capability allowing the users to monitor progress, set parameters to minimise human errors and access all responses with appropriate audit trails.

Large scale projects which generate extensive public interest require robust, dynamic and effective systems to collate, sort, define and respond to public interaction. From the Independent Assessor's experience of the environmental assessment of large scale developments, the Assessor recognised that a robust integrated system would be required. Following an evaluation of database and system providers, Golder established a partnership with software development house Isometrix and has worked to develop GoldStake – a stakeholder management tool to assist its stakeholder engagement programmes. The application's general features are:

- It is a central web-based database - allowing access for controlled viewing or editing capabilities assigned by the database administrator;
- Linked to spatial software (GIS);
- Has customisable interactive dashboards which allow users to drill into data through interactive charts and maps;
- Has customisable reporting systems which can export the data to Word, Excel, Pdf; and



- Is customisable to client and country (legal) requirements for stakeholder management and the use of personal information.

1.2 Reponses

Volume of Responses

The total volume of responses received by Monday 2 October 2017 was 16,768. This was made up of a variety of types of responses (see Figure 1-1). The consultation response cut-off time was set as 23:45 on Saturday 30 September with postal submissions being accepted into the following week, provided the posting time could be demonstrated as being prior to the deadline. Electronic submissions were closed at 23:45 on 30 September.

With a considerable number of responses arriving from electronic addresses or in the form of campaign responses, the Independent Assessor did not relate each response in terms of its geographical provenance, which in many cases could not be determined. Instead, the focus was to relate each response to the relevant Community Area (CA) (or multiple CAs as required) or to other appropriate categories. The consultation was open to national responses and was not restricted to the public in the immediate project hinterland or CA. Three responses were received from international locations - New Zealand, Kenya and Canada - and these have been included in the analysis.

Responses which referred to other responses (e.g. local authority submissions) were categorised where possible, according to the contents of the referenced submission (or specific referenced issue) as requested by the correspondent, but were only logged according to their own typology.

Types of Responses by Volume

Figure 1-1 presents the typology of responses for the complete consultation responses.

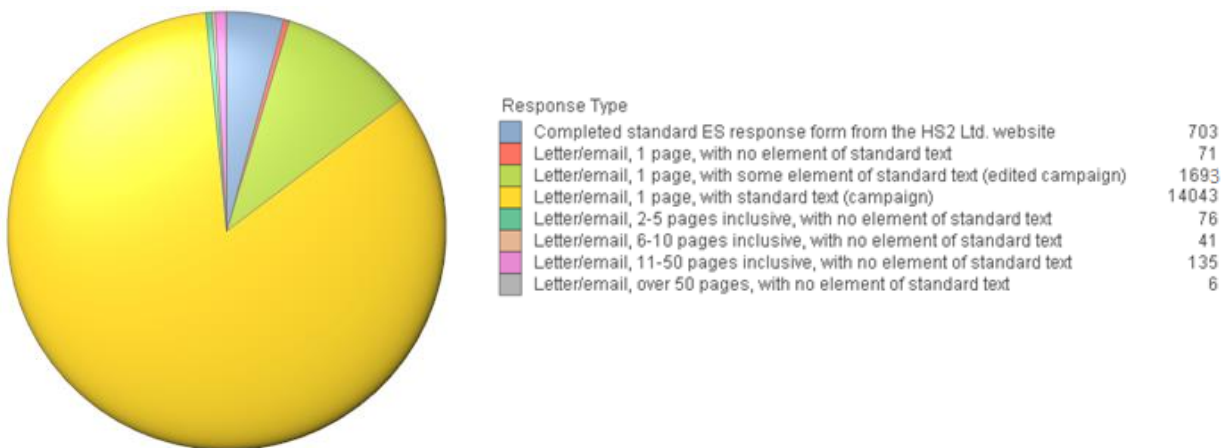


Figure 1-1: Typology of Responses

The majority, of the responses, 15,736 (94%) were campaign responses resulting from three distinct campaigns:

Campaign	Submission type	Responses
Woodland Trust	Online	14,044
Whitmore2Madeley HS2 Action Group	Postcard	1,273
Woodland Trust SoS	Email	419

The Woodland Trust campaign specifically referenced Whitmore Wood in CA 4 and was addressed to HS2 Ltd and the Woodland Trust SoS campaign was addressed to the Secretary of State.



Letter submissions (either postal or electronic) were categorised depending on size of submission. The Consultation organisers had also made available an electronic form for the public to submit its comments and concerns.

The Independent Assessor did not have access to any submissions made to the Department of Transport during public consultation presentations and events, unless the respondent followed up with a submission made directly to the consultation process as described above.

The responses included a number of documents presenting formal submissions from a range of organisations, including public authorities, special interest groups and others of a national and local level. Whilst forming a smaller number in terms of submissions, the content and extent of the response could be considerable ranging up to 800 pages for some individual submissions. Whilst counting as an individual submission in the response statistics, all issues covered in each submission were assessed and considered and so, where appropriate, they contribute to the overall results and commentary that follows in more depth.

Responses will be published by the Department for Transport and made available through their website, although, where requested by the respondent, confidential submissions will not be published.

Issues Analysis

It is not the place of this Report to comment on every single individual instance and expression of concern along the whole route. These can be accessed once all the responses are published and will duly be considered in full by HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport. Where issues were referenced by a number of separate correspondents to a level which was noticeable in the analysis, these are highlighted in Section 2.0 of this Report as appropriate.

Responses are counted by individual submissions as received from the Consultation period. However, the Members of the two Houses should consider the extent to which submissions from MPs, Councils and Organisations with national memberships can be taken to represent the views of their wider constituencies.

It was felt by the Independent Assessor that we should make no assumptions about the homogeneity of such responses or count each such response as marking a 'response' for each claimed constituent in our response count. The response of the Stone Town Council for example, which is against the proposed Stone railhead location, claims to be speaking for 17,000 individuals, would have the potential to 'skew' key issues without a fully referenced link to an individual or individual response.

However, we have indicated these key organisations and constituencies and their concerns in the relevant CA Section 2.2 to assist Parliamentarians in their understanding.

Calibration with Environmental Statement Categories

The Independent Assessor has used the categorisation of issues as defined by the ES where possible as the foundation of its analysis. This enables the presentation and discussion of the results in Section Two of this Report to be easily related to the material and locations presented in the ES material. These have been supplemented by additional categories considered by the Independent Assessor as worthwhile to include, as well as a smaller number of issues that arose from multiple submissions in the response results. There were no issues arising in the submission material received which could not be allocated to the appropriate area for logging or discussion.

The Assessor has also used the designation of the CAs as the foundation of the results presentation in Section 2.0. These will enable interested parties to quickly gain an understanding of and relate local issues (where expressed in this manner) to the relevant section of the proposed route. These are illustrated in Figure 1-2 below.

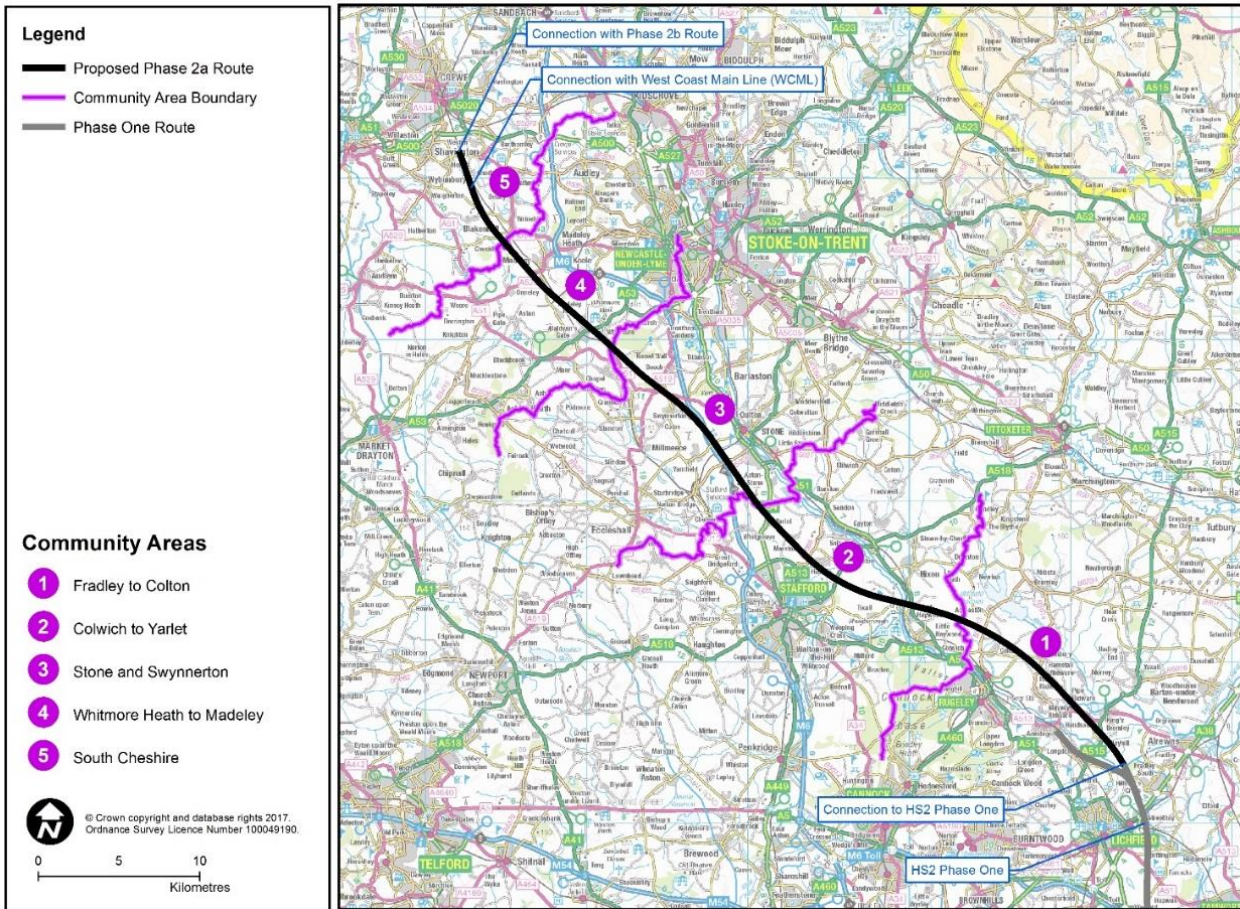


Figure 1-2: Map of route and CA boundaries

As shown in Figure 1-2 the Phase 2A scheme comprises the western section of Phase 2 between the West Midlands and Crewe. It includes approximately 58 km of HS2 main line and two spurs (approximately 6 km) south of Crewe. The spurs will allow trains to transfer between the HS2 main line and the West Coast Main Line.

Categories of Issues

The Independent Assessor used the following list of principal categories to present key issues relevant for expressed concerns. These categories included all those established in the ES along with some limited additional categories created by the Assessor. Where responses covered a number of concerns and issues, these concerns and issues were logged as separate instances. In the following listing the issue headings are followed by examples of elements and concerns that are included under that heading.

ES environmental topics are as follows:

- **Agriculture and Rural Business:** farming and other rural enterprises, farm buildings and related land use;
- **Woodlands and Forestry:** woodland planting and ancient woodlands;
- **Air Quality:** dust and emissions/pollutants related to construction and operational traffic, including as, a result of, road traffic increase around stations and depots;
- **Community:** general effects on residential property, community facilities and communities as a whole: e.g. effects on public footpaths, bridleways, parks and gardens and temporary presence of construction workers;



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- **Cultural Heritage:** ancient burials, old buildings, designated assets (e.g., Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas) buried archaeology, historic landscapes. The 'setting' (local landscape situation) of these heritage assets is covered here. Palaeoenvironmental resources (ancient environments) are also considered;
- **Ecology:** protected species, biodiversity, wildlife, habitat disturbance, loss and restoration. Nb. 'ecological value' is covered here but the community and social/economic value of ecological resources is considered within other categories;
- **Land Quality:** contaminated land and newly occurring ground contamination. Groundwater concerns where related to contamination. Leaks/spillages etc. geological issues are also in this category, as are mineral resources;
- **Landscape and Visual Assessment:** change to landscape character and views. Concern re: visible components related to the development – e.g. overhead lines and changes in lighting;
- **Socio-economics:** trade, employment, business and the economy/markets (local and national). E.g. isolation effects on businesses or opportunities for jobs during construction/operation. Labour supply. Changes in demographics also included here;
- **Sound, Noise and Vibration:** as an issue for people and where they live, and as related to shared community open areas, schools, hospitals, etc. or the route in general;
- **Traffic and Transport:** covers all modes of transport, to include walking and cycling, road and rail, waterways and air. Includes diversions and change in the volume of traffic/congestion/emptiness. Also includes accident/health and safety risks;
- **Waste and Material Resources:** off-site disposal to landfill of solid waste from construction and demolition activities (and related earthworks design). Includes waste generated (not material inputs e.g. aggregates required for construction). Disposal of contaminated soil; and
- **Water Resources and Flood Risk Assessment:** Surface water features, both natural and artificial and ground water concerns (where not related to contamination – a land quality issue). Flood risk and drainage networks (and sewers). Disposal of liquid waste.

In addition to the above further categories were included to cover comments that did not fall into any of the above categories. These are:

- **Sustainability:** strategic environmental impacts including carbon issues, economics, energy requirements, long term environmental consumables and climate change;
- **Tunnel:** this was used for comments expressing the desire for a particular section to be tunnelled;
- **Not specified:** used when no comments have been made at all;
- **Property Value:** used when the comment specifically relates to property value;
- **Compensation:** used when the comment specifically relates to compensation;
- **Expense:** general issues relating to the project cost;
- **Public Consultation Issues/time:** used for issues related to the public consultation process in general, e.g. too many pages, not enough time to respond, methods, difficulty with electronic forms;
- **Government:** used for general issues purely with regards to the Government or government policy e.g. 'I will not vote for this government again';
- **Environment:** for comments regarding the environment that are general statements that do not specify any of the other categories e.g. 'the project will damage the environment'. If more specific issues are mentioned then the appropriate issue category was used e.g. if it says 'the project will damage the environment and all the wildlife' then the response was categorised under 'Ecology';



- **Infrastructure:** This is for comments that relate to suggestions to upgrade/improve the existing infrastructure (railway lines) rather than build a new one;
- **Mental Health/Anxiety Concerns:** This is for perceived mental health issues, for example if somebody writes “the stress will kill me”. Only used for perceived health issues that do not fit any other category. Any specific health issue related to a specific environmental impact is categorised in the appropriate issue, for example ‘Air Quality’;
- **Other:** used for ‘other’ issues such as requests for information (RFI) or additional topics not covered elsewhere. All use of this category included a comment preceded by the word ‘other’, for example “Other: RFI”. The ‘other’ comments were closely monitored and if any trends were observed then an additional category issue was added: and
- **Positive for the Environmental Statement Process:** used when positive comments were made, with regard to approving specific aspects of the scheme or the process in general.

2.0 RESULTS

2.1 Key Issues

This section of the Report presents a summary of the key issues and concerns received from all respondents to the ES public consultation. The results reflect the volume of responses from a wide range of respondents, ranging from individuals to public authorities, commercial organisations (business and agriculture), Interest Groups and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) concerned with natural and cultural heritage, community issues and campaigns.

This section is designed to provide the reader with a quick and accurate picture of the feedback received from the entire public consultation, the key issues by volume and ranking of issues to show respective importance as provided by the responses. ***It does not evaluate responses on a technical level against assumptions presented in the ES.*** This is in line with the role of the Independent Assessor to only to summarise comments, rather than give an evaluation of them. Responses referencing individual CAs are detailed in Section 2.2.

This section also provides the reader with a snapshot of the issues expressed within each category to give a better understanding of key concerns than can be given simply by headline statistics. These snapshots have been designed to represent a picture of the situation relating to each issue and CA, not to provide comment on or précis every single received response. However, where particular geographical features or themes are a recurring element of the relevant responses, this Report highlights these issues. Key issues are presented in Figure 2-1 and ranked by order of comments received.

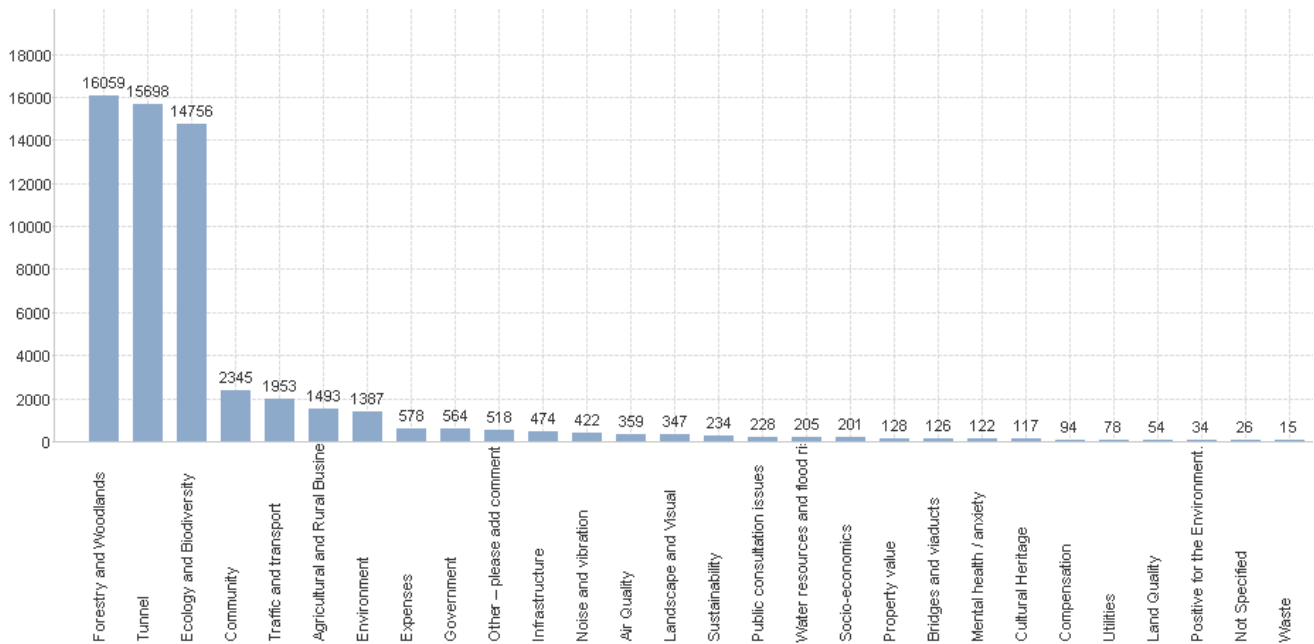


Figure 2-1: Final Issue by Numerical Importance

Issue 1: Forestry and Woodland – 16,059 Comments

This issue was, by far, the largest issue of concern in the Phase 2A consultation. The following two ranked issues (Tunnel and Ecology and Biodiversity) are connected directly to the campaigns over the Ancient Woodland impacts, although Ecology and Biodiversity (see below) also included some detailed responses on additional issues.

The volume of concern is the direct result of a main public response campaign facilitated by the Woodlands Trust to raise the issue of loss of Ancient Woodland along the Phase 2A route. Altogether 10.5 ha of Ancient Woodland is expected to be lost, with the largest area (6 ha) from a single wood, Whitmore Wood, in CA 4, which is expected to lose 33% of its current area.

There were three distinct campaigns received on this issue (see Appendix A). The most significant campaign was an online response message facilitated by the Woodlands Trust registering opposition to the proposed loss and damage of ancient woods and trees as part of the HS2A proposals.

The Whitmore to Madeley campaign and Woodlands Trust campaign specifically referenced the tunnel option for Whitmore Wood and the SOS campaign referenced the need to protect Ancient Woodlands within a national context, the Phase 2A Bill being only one element of a general letter.

Campaign	Submission type	Responses
Woodland Trust	Online	14,044
Whitmore2Madeley HS2 Action Group	Postcard	1,273
Woodland Trust SoS	Email	419

In all of these campaigns respondents had the opportunity to add their own comments to the general text and where this occurred, this has been considered and included in the analysis where appropriate.

The main campaign also referenced the 27 Veteran and Ancient trees which are expected to be lost.

Whilst the main focus was on the Ancient Woodland, it was noted by other respondents that 65.9 ha of other woodland would also be lost or damaged. There was concern that the level of woodland survey undertaken



for the ES was lacking and that promises of more detailed surveys in the future was insufficient (suggestions of 30% having been surveyed for the ES) and should have been undertaken for the formal ES.

Respondents are also awaiting publication of the forthcoming Ancient Woodland Strategy (AWS) document by HS2 Ltd which was expected in August 2017. This document is anticipated to set out expected impacts in more detail and to present proposed detailed mitigation and management measures, although some currently presented mitigation principles such as translocation of ancient woodland soil have been welcomed by respondents.

Respondents are concerned that proposed mitigation for ancient woodland will be inadequate, with some suggesting that 'the value of compensatory habitats is exaggerated [in the ES Reports]'. Overall this is an issue on which respondents are expecting further information and response from HS2 Ltd.

Issue 2: Tunnel – 15,698 comments

The high volume of responses highlighting this issue is due to its being included in the main campaign submissions and is directly related to the concern over the expected impact on Whitmore Wood and loss of Ancient Woodland.

Respondents support the implementation of a tunnel under the entirety of Whitmore Wood to eliminate impacts on the ancient woodland. This has been considered in the route designs as option D9 11.3. This is referenced in the ES (Volume V). *Option D9-11.3: the route would pass beneath Whitmore Heath, Whitmore Wood, the West Coast Main Line, the River Lea and Bar Hill in a twin bore tunnel, approximately 6.4 km in length and a depth of up to approximately 75 m.*

The tunnel option is also perceived as having an additional benefit of minimising disruption to the West Coast Main Line during the construction period. Respondents in the Whitmore to Madeley campaign also referenced the support of their local MP Sir William Cash for this option.

Some respondents, including the local MP for Stafford, Jeremy Lefroy, support a case for a tunnel between the villages of Ingestre and Yarlet.



Issue 3: Ecology and Biodiversity – 14,756 Comments

The majority of comments in this category are connected with the impacts of the proposed route on the Ancient Woodlands and specific species and habitats within. However, in addition to the campaign concerns, other respondents highlight a number of specific ecological issues along the whole route.

There is concern that the level of ecological surveys has not been adequate for the ES. Respondents are not convinced that Local Wildlife Sites (LWS's) have been fully understood in the ES context and that more detailed understanding is required for decision making. This concern extends to hedgerows and the understanding of potential impacts on species including bats, barn owls, badgers, and pond dwellers. This has led some specialist commentators to conclude that 'the value, and designation status of a great many sites is unknown and therefore the ES cannot accurately assess impacts to these' (Staffordshire Wildlife Trusts).

Information on mitigation plans are still expected and the habitat compensation and long term habitat management requirements are still seen as requiring further information. The 'green' and 'grey' bridges and habitat connectivity proposals are considered to require further studies. Some elements of the proposals are seen favourably however, with many respondents approving of the strategy to use and then rehabilitate borrow pits to create new habitats as a positive measure (Borrow Pits Restoration strategy CT-009-000).

Conversely, a number of individual respondents also question the level of proposed ecological compensation as too high, which will adversely cause the disproportionate loss of high quality agricultural land. In relation to this a number of responses voiced concerns that ecological issues had been prioritised at the expense of landowners, communities and local business. One respondent, for example, noted that teams of bat observers had been in his vicinity for the project but that no one had spent any detailed time with him or his community.

Issue 4: Community – 2,345 comments

The high level of responses in this category is due to the issue being referenced in the Whitmore to Madeley campaign (1,273 responses) under a statement of concern about 'General devastation on the Community'.

The remainder of the responses are concerned about negative impacts on general community life resulting from impacts during the construction period, potential community severance and concern regarding the 24 hour operation of railheads and construction compounds resulting in 'unbearable' nuisance and lowering the quality of life. A commonly held view is that respondent's communities will be 'widely impacted by the construction and operation of HS2' with very little perceived community benefit for the Midlands itself, with London and 'the South' reaping the rewards.

Community issues also included general references to the legacy impact of the project and specifically the long term effects it might have on future generations, particularly due to perceived negative environmental effects (the loss of woodlands for example).

Issue 5: Traffic and Transport – 1,953 comments

The key concern in this category is for the potential impact of HGV and construction traffic on the existing road network causing a potential increase in traffic hazard, disruption, noise, pollution impacts and an overload of capacity at road junctions. Many noted that proposed construction traffic routes were potentially unsuitable due to local flooding, weight restrictions and roads width.

Submissions were received from a range of businesses and organisations from hair salons to schools, who were concerned about potential traffic impacts on customers and child safety. A large number of responses also raised specific concerns regarding access for emergency vehicles during the proposed road closures and diversions.

Traffic density and potential cutting of current access routes was also a key concern for businesses, including agricultural businesses, requiring constant access to various parts of their land, property and operations.

Some respondents were more relaxed and are assuming that detailed design measures and discussions with HS2 will ensure that outcomes will be appropriately managed and will ultimately be of low significance.



The four year timeframe for construction activity is a major concern for respondents and potential traffic flows around the proposed construction compounds, including vehicles getting lost in the rural lanes are seen as potential long term nuisance.

Issue 6: Agriculture and Rural Businesses – 1,493 Comments

This category presented the concerns of the farming and rural business community on the potential impacts of HS2A on their business revenue, operations and viability. Most responses in this category consisted of detailed and specific concerns about project designs and construction impacts related to their own land and /or business and cannot be discussed individually in this summary Report.

There are a range of businesses along the proposed route that will potentially be substantially impacted by the project. These range from dairy farming to country pursuits such as shoots. Many businesses have diversified including 'visitor experiences' and accommodation. Whether tenanted or fully owned, there is concern about the continuing viability of businesses, herd sizes and quality of agricultural land.

Land take and land access for the project and for the construction infrastructure (including road closures and diversions) is a key concern. Respondents are concerned that the Project is proposing to take too much land for ecological compensation and balancing ponds. There is also a widespread feeling that the ES has downplayed the significance of impacts on business, both for the construction period and for long term operation (e.g. noise impacts on herds and construction dust on the quality of grazing grass). Some respondents are concerned that the influx of construction workers could lead to a rise in poaching and the spread of disease to farm stock from the poachers' use of unsterile equipment.

Respondents are extremely concerned that a strict Construction Environmental Management Plan, appropriate for each area, should be developed and applied by the Project to minimise, if not avoid all potential adverse impacts on their business and require re-assurance from HS2 Ltd that this will be a priority.

Respondents all require further discussions with HS2Ltd to discuss proposals and ways in which the potential impacts can be further mitigated and, where necessary, compensated.

Issue 7: Environment – 1,387 comments

The majority of responses in this category are due to the general statement including 'Environment' in the Whitmore to Madeley campaign postcard requiring the development of the Whitmore Tunnel option D9 -11.3. These are supplemented by respondents who reference the Environment in general terms in their submissions in a wider context than Ancient Woodlands or Ecology.

In these submissions, there is a concern expressed that various environmental impacts are 'not adequately catered for within the proposals' and that there is still uncertainty over the extent of land potentially set aside for construction and mitigation purposes as well as the duration of the use. Respondents also wish for further clarity on the return of land and to what condition the land will be returned, for those sites allocated for construction purposes – work sites and spoil heaps etc.

A further general comment which arises is concern expressed regarding the changes that were made between the draft EIA and the final July 2017 ES, where respondents feel that the changes between the versions have generally increased adverse environmental impacts.

Issue 8: Expense – 578 Comments

This category captures additional comments added by Respondents to the campaign messages, as well as comments with individual submissions relating to the costs and expense of the HS2A Project.

All of the comments received reference the opinion of the writer that the Project is a large expense and the money would be better spent elsewhere. This is expressed in a variety of levels of passion and personal statement. The favoured alternative for the spending is the NHS, followed by education. Many respondents are also convinced that the eventual cost of travel on HS2 will be too expensive for the 'ordinary' person'.



Issue 9: Government – 564 Comments

This category also captures additional comments added by Respondents to the campaign messages as well as comments in individual submissions relating to perceived motives of Government Policy in supporting the HS2A Project.

Respondents in this category add some personal comments of a generally negative nature about National Policy and support for HS2 and question the competence of Government implementation. There are a number of party political comments.

Issue 10: Other – 518 Comments

This category includes comments made, with regard to specific, often personal, issues that do not fit within the broad issue categories elsewhere. Many included requests for information from HS2 Ltd. or project engineers regarding predicted impacts and proposed mitigation on particular properties or landholdings. Respondents also suggested alternative options and highlighted errors and inconsistencies within the ES, with regard to local maps for example.

'Other' comments also incorporate concerns with regard to the overall justification for the High Speed Rail initiative, stating that increases in homeworking and conference calling will effectively make it obsolete. In relation to this, a number of people requested investment in local broadband connections while inferring that the project expenses would be better invested in newer technologies.

Generalised comments, not specific to a particular area or property with regard to land take, were also included in this issue category, with a number of people stating that land take was generally excessive. A small number of individuals also noted effects from potential electromagnetic interference.

Issue 11: Infrastructure – 474 Comments

The majority of comments in this category state a preference for investment to upgrade and improve existing rail infrastructure in the country rather than building HS2. Some respondents mention specific electrification schemes such as the Midlands main line but most comments are generic statements that 'the money would be better spent improving rail infrastructure'. 2 respondents mention rail infrastructure in more detail expressing concern that the rail infrastructure for Crewe needs more thought and that rail capacity issues are not fully worked out.

185 comments reference a concern over increased housing infrastructure which could likely be developed in the wake of HS2 development and the adverse impacts on local services, provision and environmental amenity that this may create. The 'Hot Spot' issue is the debate over the proposed railhead location at Stone and the counter arguments between the two sets of respondents for Stone and Aldersley Rough over the location with the least impact.

Issue 12: Noise and Vibration – 422 Comments

This issue is overwhelmingly concerned with the potential impact of increased traffic and HGV operations on existing communities and personal wellbeing over the construction period. Around a quarter of the comments (115 comments) reference the operational noise effects on people and animals of the trains following completion (particularly where embankments and viaducts are proposed). Concerns over the operation of the maintenance depots, particularly for night time noise impacts, were also noted.

Concern is expressed about potential structural damage from vibration on nearby historic structures and community buildings (e.g. the Church Buildings Council who would like to see a similar study for Ingestre Church as that which was performed for Phase 1 for St Mary's church in Wendover – social assessment, attenuation and mitigation measures). The proposed railhead facility near Stone is singled out for concern over blight from noise and 24 hour operation impacts.

Respondents question the effectiveness of proposed noise mitigation measures (e.g. the extent of barriers on main viaducts) and a minority question the methodology and application of noise studies. The ES is supported by a specific document 'Volume 5: Social Noise and Vibration Methodology, Assumptions and Assessment



(E61)' but some respondents are unclear how this relates to specific assessments of immediate interest to themselves.

Issue 13: Air Quality – 359 Comments

As with Issue 12, concerns surrounding air quality relate to the potential impacts of dust from construction traffic and the long term health impacts for both humans and animals. This is particularly related to residents and community services (e.g. schools) who are concerned that detrimental air quality impacts will arise during the construction period. The methodology applied in the ES is questioned in detail, in particular, the ES is considered to downplay the potential risks from this issue. Respondents are concerned that adequate mitigation and robust construction and environmental management procedures will be implemented and adhered to.

Issue 14: Landscape and Visual – 347 Comments

Respondents mentioning this issue are concerned that the historic landscapes along the route will be considered and measures applied to minimise visual disruption and impact. This is focused on large scale infrastructure sections such as the Great Heywood Viaduct and the potential impacts on the landscape of Shugborough Designed Parkland area and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) of Cannock Chase in the southern part of the Phase 2A route where respondents feel that the impact is going to be higher than that stated in the ES.

There is also concern expressed over the height of the track bed which will be constructed across the Cheshire Plain in the northern end of Phase 2A and the landscape impact that this will create.

Respondents also feel that line support infrastructure such as noise fences and overhead line equipment (e.g. Gantries) have not been fully included in the visual assessments supplied in the ES.

Respondents are also concerned that the proposed mitigation measures such as additional planting and balancing ponds will be absorbed into the landscape and will not be 'excessive' in scale.

In line with Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) methodology, comments concerned with lighting are included within this issue. Respondents are particularly worried about the impacts and adverse effects of bright and continuous lighting for the proposed railhead near Stone and all construction compounds supporting 24 hour operation periods. This is perceived as a major blight issue.

Issue 15: Sustainability – 234 Comments

For these respondents, a sustainable case for HS2 has not been made, with 57 respondents believing that the carbon efficiency calculations do not fully account for the likely complete carbon balance of the project. The most commonly expressed issue is that the calculations do not fully take into account increased journeys to stations to catch the HS2 train by potential commuters'.

Issue 16: Public Consultation – 228 Comments

This category covers those comments where respondents express their dissatisfaction with the public consultation process itself, either in terms of access to the documentation, the time available to read and comment on the ES before consultation closure and the perceived perfunctory approach to consultation from HS2. It was, however, noteworthy that despite these comments the majority of respondents would welcome further and constructive dialogue with HS2 on their particular concerns and around a quarter of comments (54) recognised communication efforts by HS2 Ltd. throughout the Phase2A design process to date. There was considerable disappointment that the final ES included new impact elements from the initial plans which respondents felt had not been adequately disclosed in the consultation process and which were perceived as an attempt to 'spring adverse elements' into the ES.

A high proportion of respondents felt the village of Woore had not been adequately considered and consulted with.



Issue 17: Water Resources and Flooding – 205 Comments

Respondents who referenced this issue had specific concerns over particular instances of direct relevance to their own land or business and were worried about the potential for adverse impacts on the existing water regime from the proposed HS2 route infrastructure. Potential disruption to field drainage and the potential risk of flooding from proposed balancing ponds including their size and land take, was a key issue. Some respondents were also concerned at the potential disruption to the groundwater balance (for example a vulnerable fish farm). Respondents were concerned that proposed mitigation and proposed drainage measures to minimise additional flood risk were either not sufficient or not sufficiently demonstrated in the ES. The Environment Agency however, stated their general satisfaction with the overall approach to flood risk while making a number of recommendations.

Some respondents also required further explanation of resilience measures to meet projected climate change impacts and potential long term precipitation changes. Respondents expected that more data enabling design proposals would be forthcoming in future Project design stages.

Issue 18: Socio-economics – 201 Comments

Respondents referencing this issue were concerned about the potential impact of the HS2A route on existing employment levels for the local communities and the potential for undermining the viability of current business models. This was also expressed as ‘anxiety that the local economy will benefit from the construction of HS2’ and that local suppliers of labour and construction support services would have access to the procurement chain so that local economies would receive some benefit in income and skills development.

Respondents want HS2 Ltd to ensure that the construction period causes only minimal disruption to economic activities, jobs and access for existing businesses though a number of respondents with their own small and specialised businesses are extremely worried that the consultation process is being rather blasé about their predicaments and that their previous work and investment in establishing and developing their business will be placed in jeopardy. One business was concerned that written agreements established for Phase 1 had been ignored for Phase 2A and was seeking clarification of intent.

Issue 19: Property Value – 128 Comments

These comments were focused on the issue of potential and perceived blight on the respondents’ property and dissatisfaction with the compensation formula levels being proposed. Respondents’ felt that the ES was downplaying the impact of blight and that their previous investment in property was now at risk. The proposed railhead near Stone was the most commonly referenced issue in this category.

Issue 20: Bridges and Viaducts – 126 Comments

Where mentioned, respondents were concerned over the final design and scale of the large viaducts, in particular, referencing the Great Haywood viaduct and River Lea crossing. The key issues expressed were the harmonisation of the design with the receiving landscape and that the noise from the raised structures would be appropriately mitigated for residential areas.

Issue 21: Mental Health /Anxiety – 122 Comments

Respondents in this category were either concerned for their own or a close relatives or neighbours mental health and wellbeing. Many referenced the loss of woodlands as detrimental in this regard. Some respondents have experienced stress from the uncertainty of the impact of HS2 on their business and livelihoods and others were concerned about increased stress levels experienced as a whole by their community area.

Issue 22: Cultural Heritage – 117 Comments

Most comments in this category referenced elements of the built environment, well known to the local communities. In particular, village churches, the heritage structures near Ingestre (Ingestre Pavilion and Tixall Gatehouse and the landscapes of Shugborough Hall). The joint submission of Staffordshire, Stafford, Lichfield and Newcastle under Lyme Councils referenced more detailed historic heritage areas stretching back to the era of early human habitation which require consideration. Respondents are concerned that the operational



impacts will detract from the current settings with possible long term adverse effects for potential visitors and long term structural damage from vibration issues.

Issue 23: Compensation – 94 Comments

This issue is related to issue 19 Property values where respondents raised particular compensation issues related either to their own property or business. Many of the concerns and details are specific to the individual response and not for presentation in a public forum.

Issue 24: Utilities – 78 Comments

The impacts on power lines and water supply infrastructure were the main issues of concern for Respondents. Any potential impacts on provision or disruption of supply were seen as not acceptable. These were mainly expected on a temporary basis during the construction period and respondents required HS2 Ltd and Project designers to make all provision to minimise disruption and ensure continuation of utility provision. Some respondents were concerned that the provision of electrical supply for the line itself would result in impacts from substation facilities and additional power line requirements.

Issue 25: Land Quality: - 54 Comments

Respondents were concerned that land quality would suffer from the construction impacts and any long term changes resulting from the route infrastructure. The potential impact of balancing ponds was particularly mentioned. Another key concern was the potential impact of ecological mitigation and new planting adversely affecting high grade agricultural land and respondents were concerned that the ecological issue was being prioritised over rural activities.

It was also suggested by a large number of respondents that further geological work was necessary to support the tunnelling options put forward in relation to CA 4.

Issue 26: Positive comments on the Environmental Statement Process – 34 Comments

Public Consultation exercises by their nature receive comments on concerns and issues that are felt by Respondents to be adverse in impact. A few respondents mentioned positive aspects of the HS2A phase such as increased line speeds and the presentation of the ES. However, even in these respective submissions the positive was outweighed by concerns on the adverse impacts of the proposed line and the overall submission should be taken as an objection to the Project on principle.

Issue 27: Not Specified – 26 Comments

Submissions in this category include a number of blank ES Response Forms received. Some refer to a particular Community Area but make no mention of a specific environmental concern or comment, others refer to additional submissions, separately emailed letters for example (which have been logged and categorised accordingly).

Issue 28: Waste – 15 Comments

A small number of respondents expressed concern at the proposed level of waste transportation that was likely along the roads in their area, contributing to traffic and transportation issues. More innovative and sensitive solutions to waste disposal were also requested.

2.2 Community Areas (CAs)

This section of the Report presents the results from the Public Consultation related to the geographical/spatial groupings along the proposed route. Not all submissions referred specifically to a relevant CA designation, although the project team were able to relate many submissions to the appropriate CA through references to local settlements mentioned in the text. The CAs are taken from the ES and the Independent Assessor has decided to apply the same categorisation for ease of reference with HS2 project material.



This section presents results by CA as well as further categories to reflect wider geographical areas where submission responses were directed. General comments concerning the entire route or project philosophy are also discussed in this section. Each CA section presents results by volume, issue and response type. The results are presented in the following pages in numerical order rather than ‘hot spot’ order.

2.2.1 CA 1 – Fradley to Colton

ES NTS Reference: Section 8.2, Page 60

There were 199 comments relating to this CA

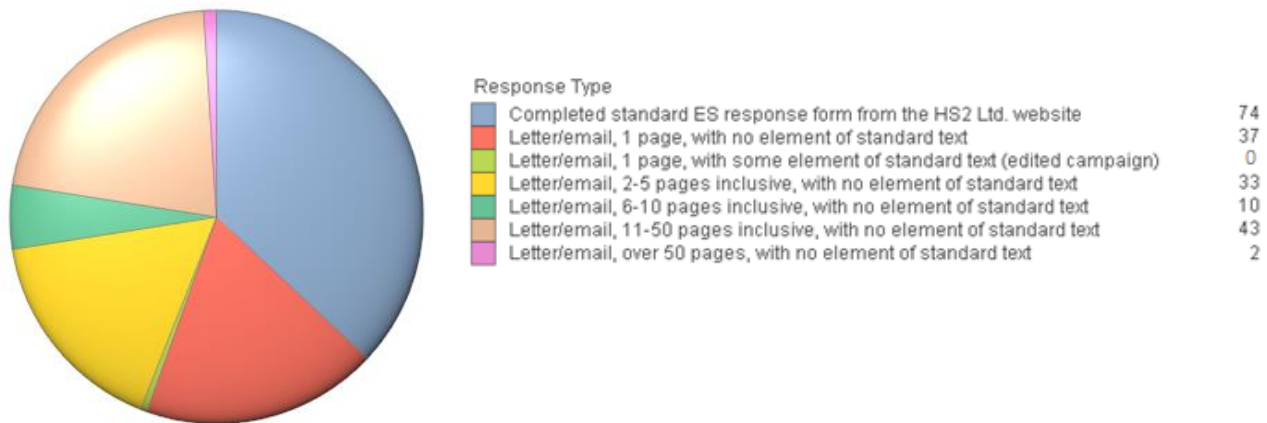


Figure 2-2: CA 1 – Response Type

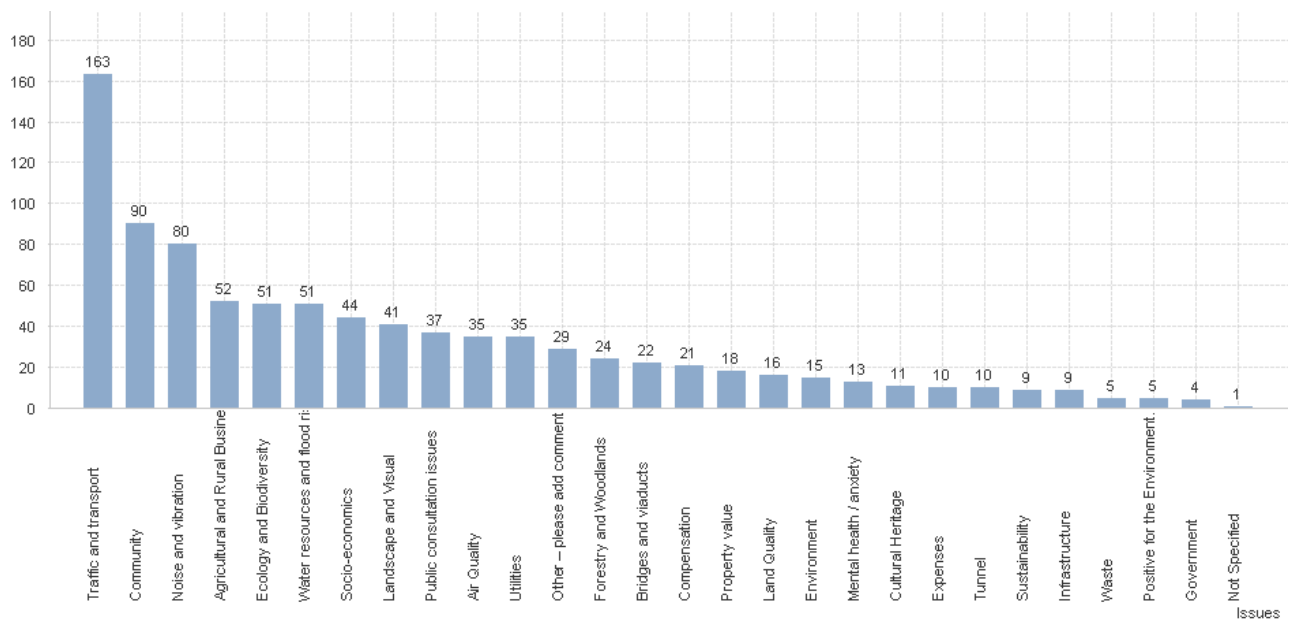


Figure 2-3: Environmental Issues

Community Area 1 is predominantly rural and agricultural in character and issues arising from construction and maintenance-related traffic ranked the highest concern. These comments focused on themes of reduced access to business, particularly agricultural holdings, and the overall ability of these businesses to function during the construction phase. The suitability of local roads for HGVs was also questioned, especially in peak time / during the harvest when the local roads will be under strain from multiple users. The potential for local roads to flood during heavy rainfall was also raised as a key concern. Respondents specified particular anxieties surrounding roads at Pipe Ridware, Hill Ridware and Blithbury.



SUMMARY REPORT

Concerns surrounding traffic and transport also linked to common themes of community health and safety, the impacts of increased traffic on children and the elderly and the overall wellbeing and livelihood of residents through lack of access to services and workplaces through predicted increases in journey times. Disruption to recreational activities through footpath diversion was also a common concern.

Noise and vibration is the third ranked issue for the CA. This is also in response to proposed project-related traffic, particularly during construction, and concern about a lack of adequate mitigation to address noise induced health impacts on residents and, to a lesser extent, livestock.

Other comments raised included a concern regarding lack of access to local land and that local impacts had generally been poorly understood, with both inadequate mitigation and a perceived lack of local consultation highlighted as common themes. Alternatives for haul roads were also suggested.

Points of detail are listed in a number of organisation responses (for example Staffordshire, Stafford, Lichfield and Newcastle under Lyme Joint submission, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust). Respondents are also concerned over the potential impact of the route infrastructure on the nearby Cannock AONB and although there are no ancient woodlands directly impacted in this section of the route, there are two ancient woodlands (Carwarden Springs and Westfield Covert) which are adjacent to the construction boundary which respondents consider could be indirectly affected.

Four borrow pits are proposed to be included in this CA and respondents are concerned that appropriate restoration measures are to be applied.



2.2.2 CA 2 – Colwich to Yarlet

ES NTS Reference 8.3, page 68

There were 86 comments relating to this CA

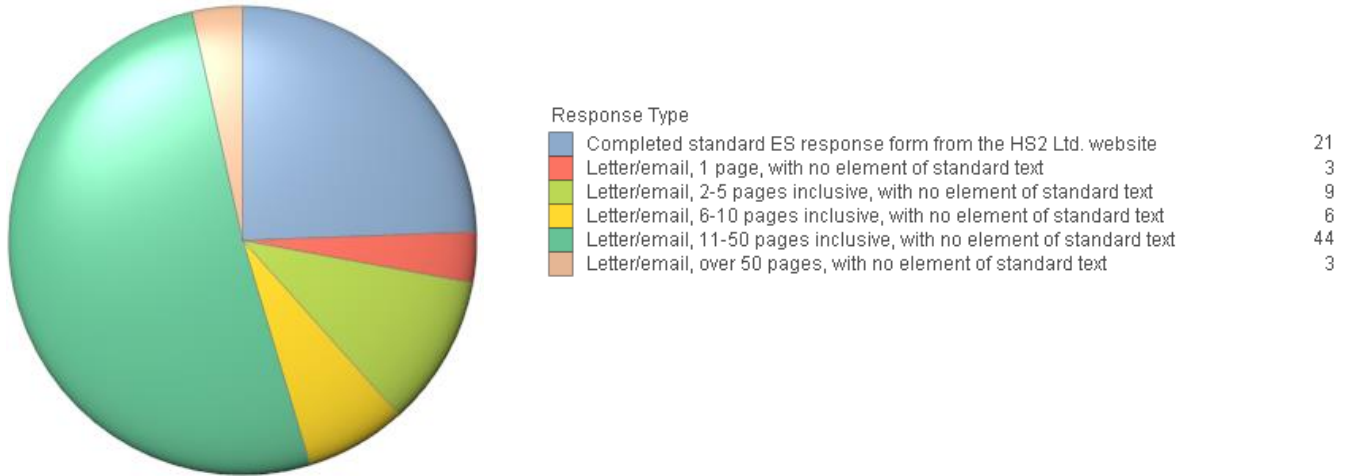


Figure 2-4: CA 2 – Response Type

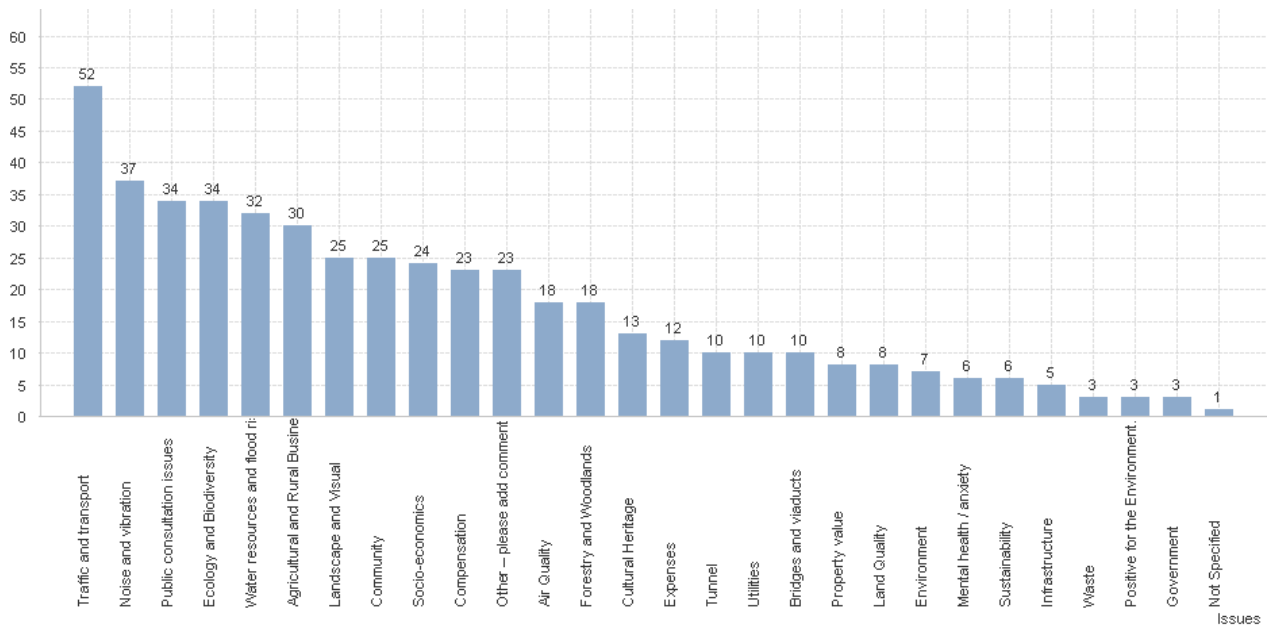


Figure 2-5: CA 2 – Issue Categories

CA 2 comprises scattered settlements in a predominantly rural landscape. Traffic and transport issues are the respondents' greatest concern. These issues focus on the Project's proposals for construction traffic associated with the engineering and satellite compounds planned in the vicinity. Respondents highlighted a number of roads believed to be unsuitable for the haulage traffic proposed and noted there are already issues with congestion, flooding and accidents on narrow, local networks. Potential issues relating closure of the M6 were also mentioned, as traffic commonly builds up on local roads when accidents or roadworks occur. It is widely believed that the plans for traffic movement will make local travel within and between communities, challenging.



SUMMARY REPORT

Noise and vibration issues were mentioned in relation to the present tranquil nature of the CA. Concerns centred on the proposals for both haulage traffic and compounds and the related noise effects on residents, livestock, businesses and communities in general and vibration effects on property. The mitigation (and lack of compensation) proposed is considered insufficient. The noise impacts of the operating line, particularly near Hopton were also noted (and tunnelling suggested).

A number of respondents have stated their disappointment with the public consultation undertaken to date, citing particular properties and stakeholders that have been previously omitted. There is a general perception that residents have largely been ignored.

Respondents also raised a number of concerns relating to ecological issues, particularly the amount of land take proposed for habitat creation (and the resultant loss of agricultural land) and the 3 ancient woodlands directly impacted. In more general terms the point was raised by a number of people that they felt the effects on wildlife and habitats had been considered inconsistently (in regard to Local Wildlife Sites for example). Others considered that ecological issues had been dealt with in more detail than those on the local community and residents.

Concern is expressed about land drainage throughout all project phases, from pre-construction onwards. Proposed borrow pits and balancing ponds were highlighted as potentially negatively affecting the existing drainage system. It was also noted by the Environment Agency that local flood risk was effectively considered and mitigated.

Particular landscapes of concern include the Shugborough Hall and Historic Park area and the areas of Ingestre and Tixall. Some respondents, including the local MP, Jeremy Lefroy, support a tunnel to minimise route impacts in the Ingestre and Hopton areas.



2.2.3 CA 3 – Stone and Swynnerton

ES NTS Reference 8.4, page 77

There were 166 comments relating to this CA

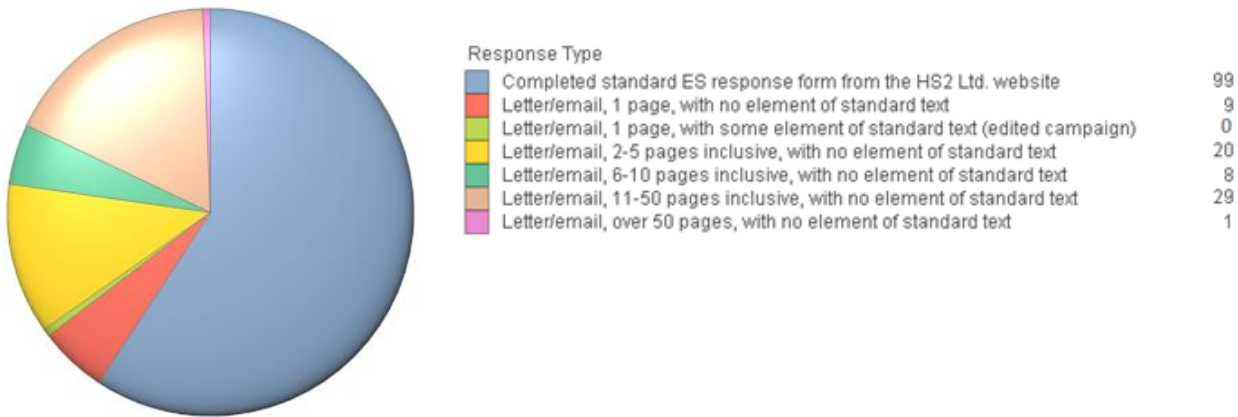


Figure 2-6: CA 3 – Response Type

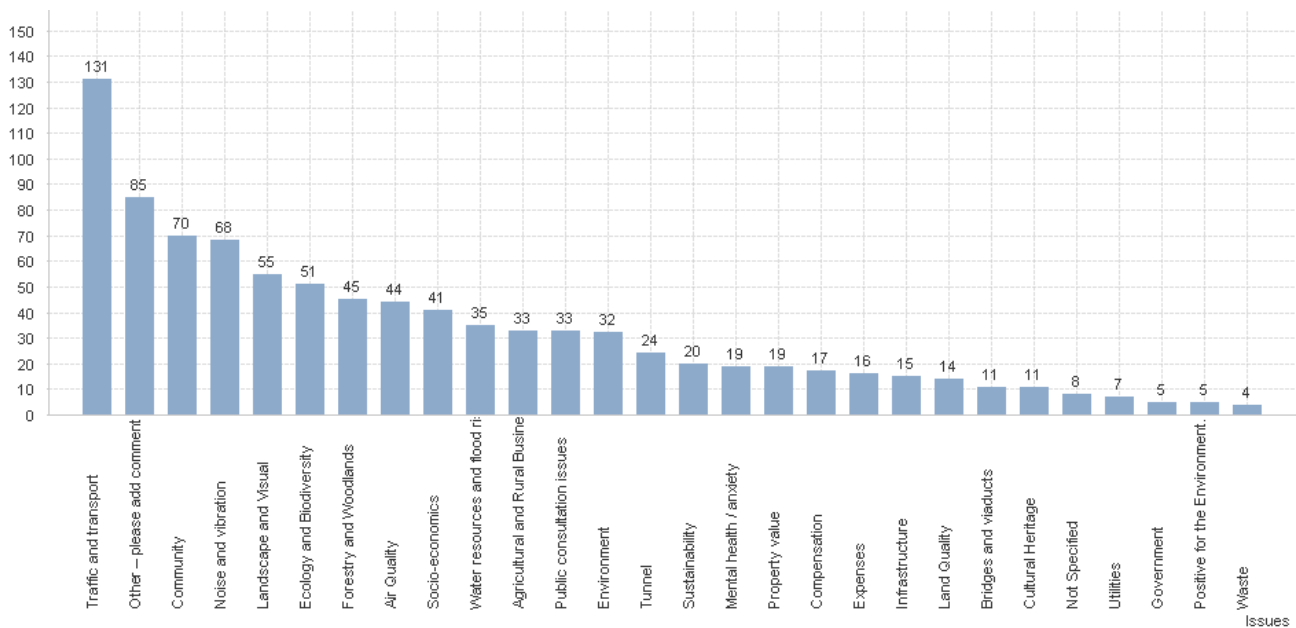


Figure 2-7: CA 3 – Issue Categories

CA 3 is predominantly rural and agricultural in character. There are a mixture of scattered settlements, isolated properties and farms. Traffic and transport proved to be the greatest concerns of responses specific to this CA. These issues are primarily associated with the construction of a permanent infrastructure maintenance compound at Stone (IMB-R), which will be developed on the site of Stone Railhead construction depot.

Specifically, concerns were raised regarding the practicality of using the Stone site without the local infrastructure to support it. Anticipated local congestion was a particular issue and the winding, narrow nature of local roads highlighted. Respondents also mentioned that the slip roads, bridges and cuttings proposed to support the layout, coupled with the increase in HGV (and other) traffic, may increase the risk of accidents.

The high proportion of ‘other’ issues for this CA relate to respondents stating their preference for the location of the proposed railhead compound and citing various other project alternatives. The majority asserted Aldersley Rough (in CA 4) as their preferred site, others, mainly in the CA4 Aldersley Rough area supported the Stone proposal. A specific Group opposing the Stone Railhead has been created and submitted a



response (Stone Railhead Crisis Group –SRCC). This Group is clear that it is not an Action Group to oppose HS2 per se, but to make a case for the Aldersley Rough site in preference to that of Stone. This is also supported by Stone Town Council who state they represent the views of 17,000 residents.

‘Community’ concerns include general disruption of village life as a result of the local proposals at Yarnfield, Stone, Eccleshall and other smaller communities. The alternative railhead option at Aldersley Rough was mentioned as a less intrusive preference, with a lower overall impact on residential areas. A number of respondents mentioned that they felt they bore the brunt of the negative impacts of the Project and would receive no benefit. A response submitted jointly by the Staffordshire Authorities suggested that the proposals for the permanent IMB-R may affect future growth plans for the region.

Noise concerns related to the overall impact of the line in close proximity to residential properties and to the Stone railhead compound. Respondents voiced their worries that rail movements will take place during unsocial hours. The visual effects of the Stone railhead compound were also of concern, including the impact of the lighting on local residential properties.



2.2.4 CA 4 – Whitmore Heath to Madeley

ES NTS Reference 8.5, page 83

There were 15863 comments relating to this CA

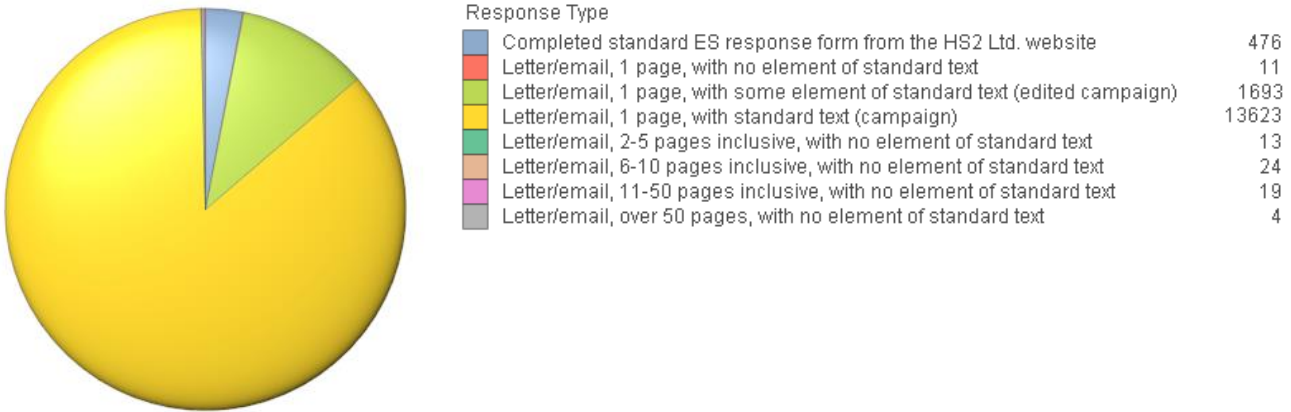


Figure 2-8: CA 4 – Response Type

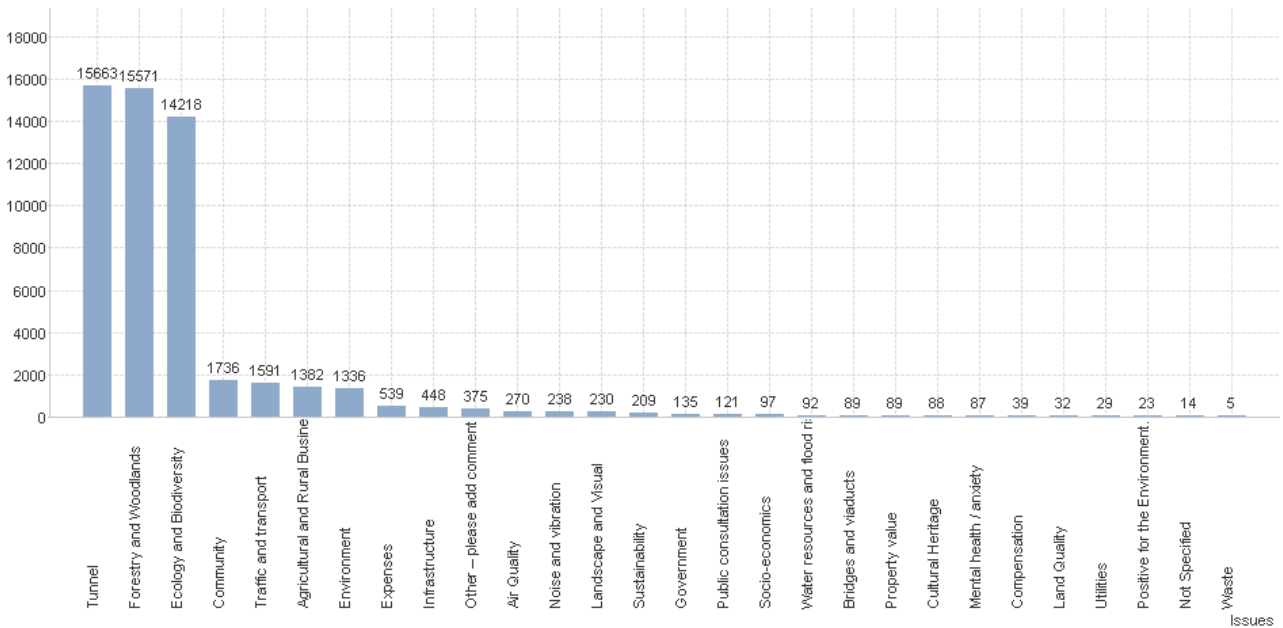


Figure 2-9: CA 4 – Issue Categories

CA 4 is dominated by farmland, with small settlements, farmsteads and woodland, including ancient woodland, scattered throughout. This CA received the majority of responses, over 15,000 of which were in the form of a Campaign.

The most popular Campaign was initiated by the Woodland Trust, raising concerns about the proposals for Whitmore Wood, specifically, the loss of ancient woodland and the habitats within it while suggesting a tunnel to protect it. This alternative option for a 'longer, deeper tunnel' (than that currently proposed) was also raised by other responders. This is also supported by the area's MP, Sir William Cash, in his submission. A separate Campaign specified that this tunnel should be from the south of the A53 at Whitmore to the north of Bar Hill. Others referenced Option D9.11.3 (Vol. 5 of the Environmental Statement). These comments suggested that this option would effectively eliminate the negative impacts of the Project on Whitmore and Madeley parishes with many noting the intensive nature of cumulative engineering works proposed in the area.



It was also suggested by a large number of respondents that further geological work was necessary to support the tunnelling options. Many stated that sand and gravels lie at shallow depths locally, suggesting that boring a (shallow) tunnel through the area would be more difficult and costly than currently estimated by project engineers. The case for the longer, deeper, tunnel was therefore seen as a potential preferred option from a geological and cost perspective.

Issues surrounding forestry and woodland placed value on the woods for physical wellbeing and stated that the predicted loss is not justifiable when compared to both the costs of the project and the perceived gains made. Individuals stated that the predicted reduction in journey times (as a result of high speed travel) were insufficient to warrant the destruction of the woodland resource, for example. Some also mentioned that woodlands should be afforded more protection, treated as a feature of historic and communal importance.

Ecology and biodiversity concerns centred on the habitats and species within the ancient woodlands locally. Many stated that the compensation woodland proposed was unsatisfactory, noting that they would not experience any benefit from this in their lifetime. Some also raised concerns that the 'white deer' seen locally at Whitmore Wood were not mentioned in the Environmental Statement.

The large majority of community related concerns mentioned the legacy impact of the Project on future generations, specifically how the loss of ancient woodland locally would impact future generations, with individuals expressing disappointment with the predicted long term effects on their children and grandchildren. Some also raised concerns that the project as a whole would only benefit London and 'the South', with only detrimental impacts experienced by local communities.

Traffic issues were mentioned in relation to the construction/HGV impacts on the local road network, many cited the diversions and closures proposed. Many stated this would impact negatively on local businesses, farming activities and the community in general. A number of responses also raised concerns that the village of Woore had not been analysed for traffic impacts, particularly in relation to road safety, congestion and related noise, air and any structural damage caused by heavy loads



2.2.5 CA 5 – South Cheshire

ES NTS Reference 8.6, Page 89

There were 78 comments relating to this CA

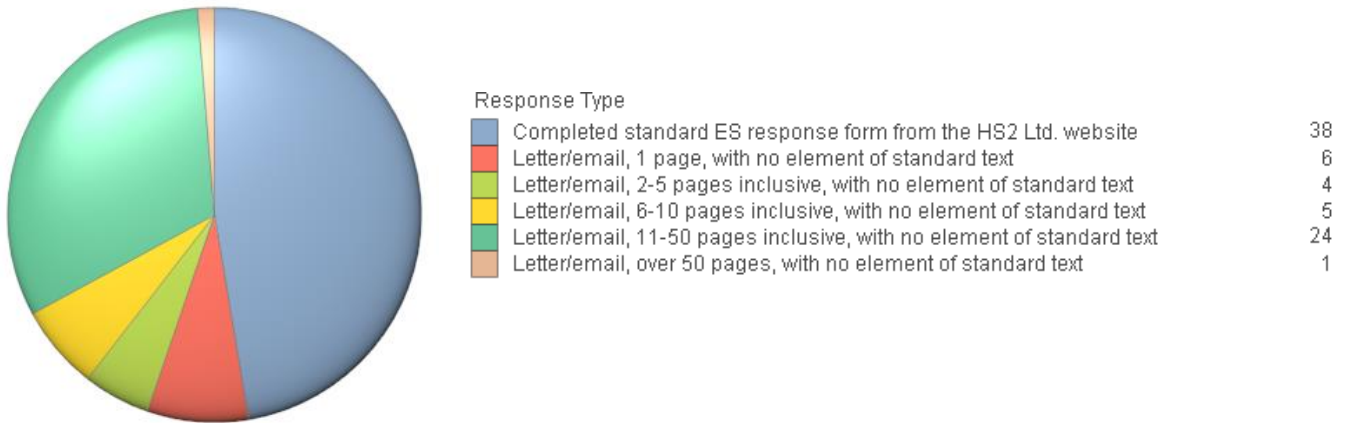


Figure 2-10: CA 5 – Response Type

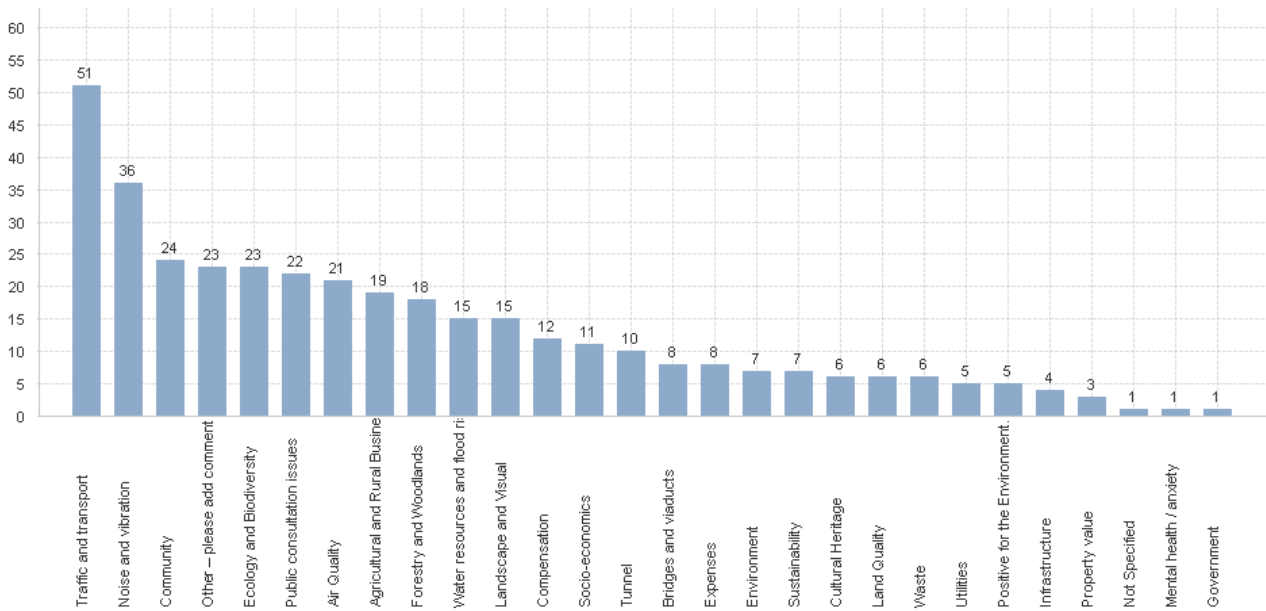


Figure 2-11: CA 5 Issue Categories

The rural South Cheshire CA includes small villages and farms, becoming increasingly urban towards Crewe. Traffic and transport issues were the majority concerns, primarily the use of local roads for construction and maintenance traffic. The suitability of roads (for HGVs) was questioned with safety concerns and local road weight restrictions highlighted.

The related impact on the local quality of life and health, particularly in relation to sound and vibration impacts from trains travelling on embankments and viaducts through the CA were mentioned, with many noting a perceived lack of mitigation. In general terms, the cumulative effects of the proposed developments in South Cheshire (both HS2 and unrelated housing projects for example) were met with concern, particularly in relation to local road congestion.



Both Stone and Aldersley Rough were mentioned for the infrastructure maintenance facility by respondents stating their response was in relation to CA 5, the majority stated their preference for the Stone option (within CA 3). Concerns which also fall into the 'other' category include issues over proposed land take and land access restrictions. Errors and inconsistencies in the ES were also highlighted with a number of people requesting further survey or information.

A lack of local community consultation was mentioned by many, with the predicted impact on specific local areas and properties questioned. Other responders made it clear they felt they would only experience damaging impacts locally and little benefit overall.

Ecology related concerns noted that the ES may have underestimated the significance of the Project's impact on local wildlife sites, reserves and local woodland habitat. People also stated their general dissatisfaction with the habitat compensation proposed, with some stating that any agricultural land take was unjustified, whilst the Cheshire Wildlife Trust noted a shortfall in compensation habitats overall.



2.2.6 HS2 Spurs, Crewe Hub and West Coast Mainline

There were 28 comments relating to these areas

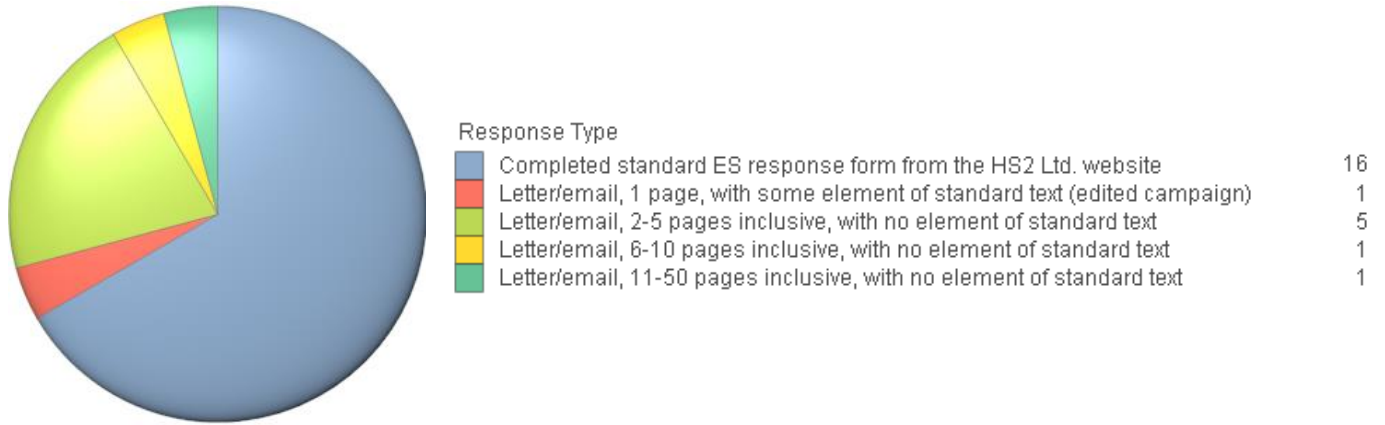


Figure 2-12: HS2 Spurs, Crewe Hub and West Coast Mainline – Response Type

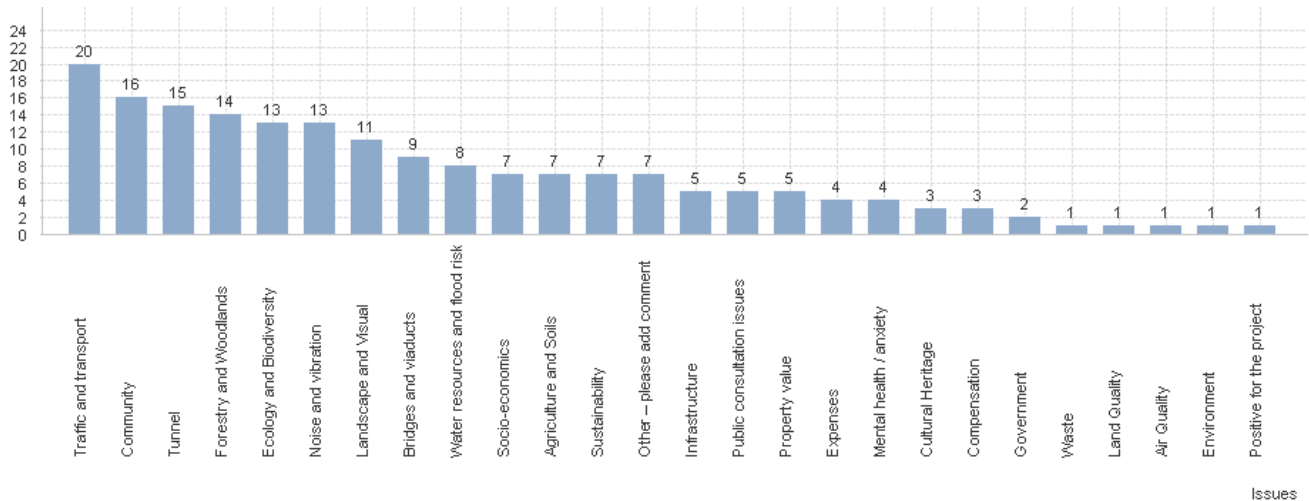


Figure 2-13: HS2 Spurs, Crewe Hub and West Coast Mainline – Issue Categories

Two spurs are proposed south of Crewe to transfer between the HS2 mainline, north to the West Coast Mainline (WCML) and south, to London. To facilitate the connection of the spurs to the West Coast Main Line, modifications will be required to the existing West Coast Main Line infrastructure in the South Cheshire area (CA 5).

The cumulative proposals were met with concern by a number respondents who suggested the wide-ranging construction would be disruptive, particularly from a traffic and transport perspective through road closures primarily. The potential problems for residents travelling between communities and commuting were highlighted. Concerns were also voiced regarding the operating height of the spur link (and resultant noise and visual impacts).

Comments specifically mentioning the WCML discussed the potential for HS2 to release capacity on the line and the opportunity for the project to support freight growth. The routing of the line through Crewe was mentioned as key in this regard. Support was given by freight operatives for the railhead at Stone (to replace the IMD at Crewe) but with a note of caution to secure additional capacity of the WCML to enable effective growth.



Concerns were raised by freight operatives who suggested opportunities to create an integrated hub Crewe station to support a higher performing network were missed.

2.2.7 Not Specified

There were 467 comments that did not specify a particular Community Area

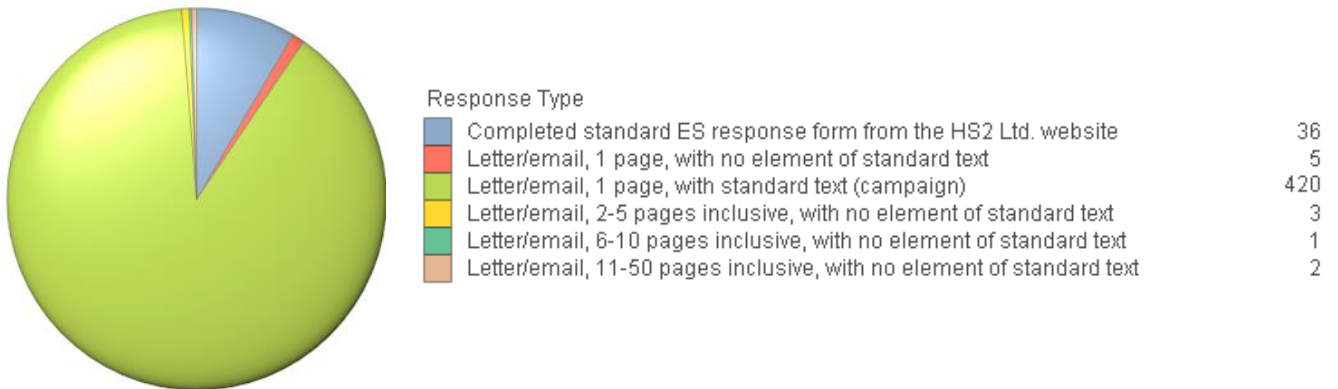


Figure 2-14: Not Specified – Response Type

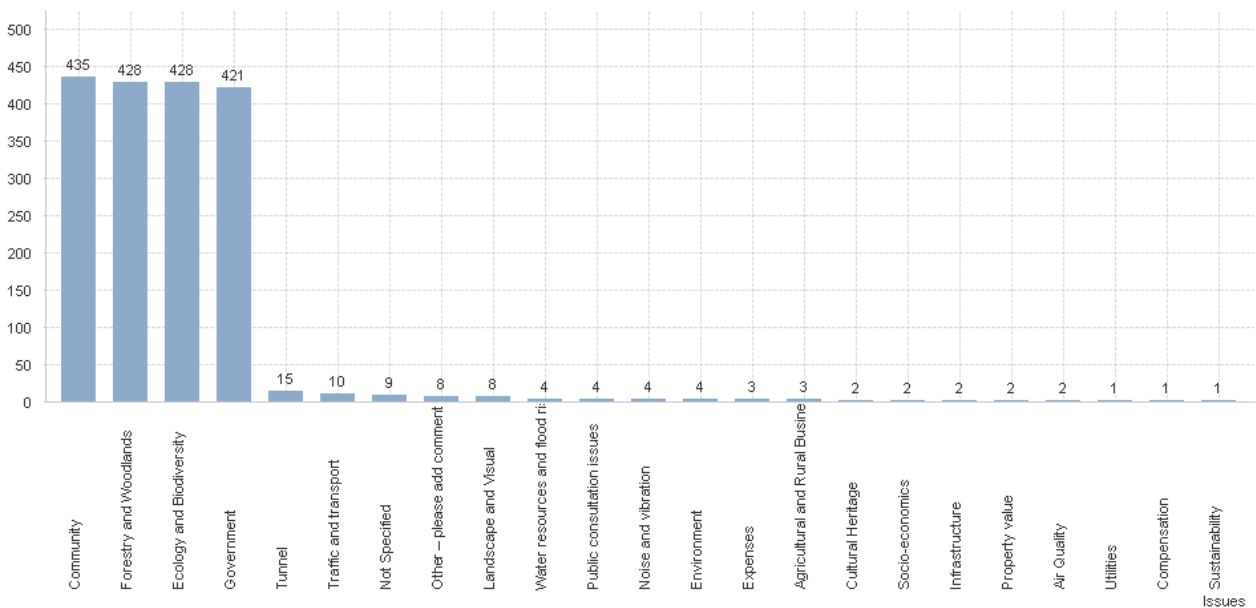


Figure 2-15: Not Specified – Issue Categories

The majority of responses which did not specify a Community Area were received in relation to a Campaign. These responses mentioned three main issues.

Community-related concerns reference the long term impact that the loss of ancient woodland will have on future generations who will not be able to enjoy them. Ecological issues were also a majority concern with respondents stating the importance of woodland habitats specifically and the implications of the proposed loss (as a result of the Project) on net biodiversity.

The significance of woodlands and trees as a legacy feature was another theme throughout the Campaign responses, with signatories voicing their concerns over how little protection woodlands were apparently afforded. Furthermore, respondents sought to place blame on national planning policy, citing that cumulative government-led infrastructure projects were failing to protect woodlands and the natural environment.



Report Signature Page

GOLDER ASSOCIATES (UK) LTD

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20 November 2017

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APPENDIX A

Campaign Responses

Subject:

FW: 5011015866 Response to HS2 Phase 2a Environmental Statement consultation

Dear HS2 Ltd,

I would like to register my opposition to the loss and damage of ancient woods and trees as part of the HS2 Phase 2a project.

The environmental statement indicates that 17 ancient woods will be damaged or lost and 27 ancient or veteran trees destroyed.

Ancient woods and trees are some of the UK's most diverse and valuable habitats. I find their loss and damage unacceptable.

Please ensure alternative options to destroying ancient woodland are found. A start would be to develop a tunnel under Whitmore Wood in Staffordshire to protect this precious habitat.

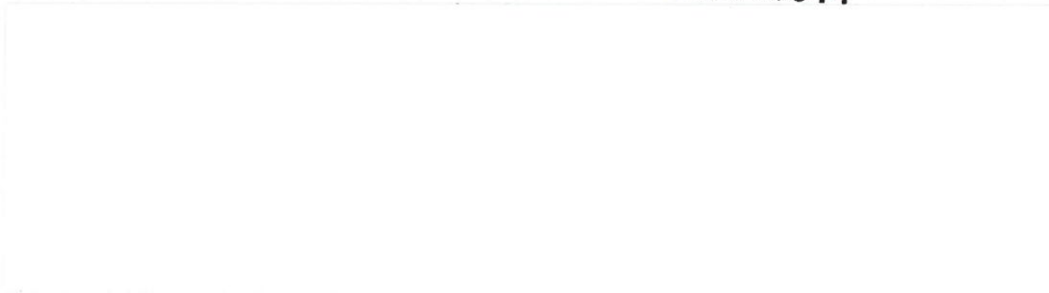
Thank you,

CA4 - HS2 Whitmore to Madeley (Closing date 30th September 2017)
This is my formal Consultation Response to Question 3

We need a longer, deeper HS2 tunnel from the south of the A53 at Whitmore to the north of the currently proposed tunnel at Bar Hill, Madeley, to avoid the total devastation the current project design would wreak on the environment, farmland, ancient woodlands, the community and the road network, due to the massive infrastructure implants and extensive road system revisions involved.

I believe that a longer, deeper tunnel is feasible and a realistic alternative. It is actively supported by the local MP Sir Bill Cash, and favoured by HS2 Engineers as a better, simpler solution. I ask that its full evaluation by HS2 Ltd, which has already been ordered by the Secretary of State, now be made public and the longer, deeper tunnel adopted.

5020015014



Subject:

FW: Ancient woods and trees: facing the chop

Sent: 01 October 2017 17:28

To: Chris Grayling <Chris.Grayling@dft.gsi.gov.uk>

Subject: Ancient woods and trees: facing the chop

Dear Secretary of State,

Ancient woods and trees are precious. To be classed as ancient woodland, an area has to have had continual woodland cover for at least 400 years. That's before the English Civil War was fought, and makes them older than historic buildings such as St Paul's Cathedral.

Sadly, unlike historic buildings, protection for our green heritage in the UK is in short supply. Housing schemes, quarries, golf courses and holiday lodges all continue to chip away at the little ancient woodland that remains. Government-backed infrastructure projects are also taking their toll.

Just 2% of the UK is now covered in ancient woodland. Over the coming months, the government will make important decisions on policies which will have major implications for our woods and trees: the updating of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the HS2 Phase 2a Bill and the 25 Year Plan for the Environment. As your department develops and influences these crucial policy areas, I urge you to ensure that ancient woods and trees get the protection they deserve.

Now is the moment to protect this irreplaceable habitat. Now is the time to make their loss "wholly exceptional". Infrastructure projects such as government-led road and rail schemes should be exemplars of good environmental practice, not destructive proposals where people are asked to choose which precious ancient woodland should be destroyed.

Your government has pledged to be the first to leave the environment in a better state than you inherited it. Further loss of irreplaceable ancient woodland is a "Net Loss for Biodiversity", and so your laudable aim will fail unless you take action on this. Please take this simple step so that our and future generations can enjoy the many benefits that ancient woodland provides.

Yours,

As a global, employee-owned organisation with over 50 years of experience, Golder Associates is driven by our purpose to engineer earth's development while preserving earth's integrity. We deliver solutions that help our clients achieve their sustainable development goals by providing a wide range of independent consulting, design and construction services in our specialist areas of earth, environment and energy.

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