

DEPUTATION ONE – SWILLINGTON, OULTON, WOODLESFORD HS2 ACTION
TOGETHER

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MR J LYNCH: My Lord Mayor and Fellow Councillors, my name is James Lynch and I am the Chair of SOWHAT, which is an HS2 action group representing over 300 households in Swillington, Woodlesford and Oulton. On my left we have got Ed Cartwright, who is a business owner in Swillington. His business is currently threatened by closure due to HS2. We have Martin Law, a resident of Cluntcliffe, Peter Holly, a resident of Woodlesford, and Gordon Daker, another local resident of Woodlesford.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I understand you have got two speakers?

MR J LYNCH: Ed would like to speak for a minute, yes. Thank you.

We are here today to ask the Council to support our efforts to re-route HS2 utilising tunnels and existing transport corridors so that less residents are catastrophically blighted. We also want the full support of the Council in our efforts to secure full and fair compensation for all residents suffering personal financial losses as a result of the proposals.

At the end of January this year the lives of hundreds of people in Leeds were catastrophically changed by the announcement of the preferred route of the High Speed railway line. We were given absolutely no warning, received no communication from the government or HS2 Ltd, discovering our fate by watching the news or hearing from neighbours.

There are approximately 400 residential properties located within 300m of the proposed route in our areas. A June 2010 pilot study into property blight on Phase 1 of the route suggested that blight corridors would extend between one and two miles from the centre of the proposed route. It also estimated that blight impact would be between 15-30% of the market value of the properties affected.

The average house price across our areas is £160,808. If we presume the average loss in value due to blight is only 22.5%, then we calculate the estimated loss to the property market to be just under £14.5 million, which needs to be recouped before HS2 brings any financial benefit to our city.

When France built the TGV, properties within 1.5 miles of the route qualified for compensation. Our Government proposes that only properties which fall within 60m of HS2 will qualify for compensation. We believe this means that there will be only six qualifying properties in our area. Everyone else will receive nothing, leaving residents stuck in limbo, unable to sell, unable to move, unable to plan for their futures. People are also experiencing difficulties securing lending at reasonable rates of interest.

We were delighted to receive a letter from Councillor Golton last week in which he informed local residents that he now opposes HS2. His perspective has changed following lengthy attempts to speak with HS2 Ltd on our behalf. In his letter Councillor Golton stated that HS2 is and I quote “ruling out fair compensation or alleviation to those affected on the route.” He goes on to confirm that he “will not stand by and see the interests of my neighbours and constituents sacrificed to protect HS2’s bottom line”.

I now pass on to Ed who is going to speak about his business and the environment.

MR E CARTWRIGHT: Thanks, James. Our two successful and growing family run businesses, Swillington Organic Farm and Swillington Park Fishing, are based in the Aire valley in East Leeds. Not only do we provide employment and a valuable resource for the local community through our initiatives with local school children, groundwork, post-16 learners and elderly residents, my parents and grandparents have invested decades of work in turning what was a wasteland left by the Coal Board into a thriving environmental oasis. Our land includes a site of scientific interest and we farm the green belt organically to protect local wildlife. The Aire Valley was meant to be a green corridor into Leeds for the enjoyment of Leeds residents. If the proposed route for HS2 goes ahead it will be a concrete corridor, with trees felled, landscape and wildlife destroyed and our businesses closed to build the 60 foot high viaduct, that will come through Swillington and blight the whole area.

HS2 is meant to be bringing investment and jobs to the city, but as a business owner it means I cannot invest, grow or create jobs and our employees will lose their jobs if the route is not changed.

The alternative route is a better route for Leeds. It follows the existing railway and will spare the impact on our businesses, the environment and the devastating personal impact it will have to see a lifetime’s work bulldozed away.

MR J LYNCH: Concluding our deputation today, we make the following requests of Leeds City Council:

- We want you to fully support the alternative route for HS2, proposed by Alec Shelbrooke MP, which would broadly follow the existing motorway corridor to Stourton where it would rejoin the current proposed route, and express this support in the Council’s written response to the current proposed route consultation.
- We request that the Council properly examine the possible benefits and disbenefits associated with bringing high speed rail to Leeds. This examination must include the negative impact the project has already had on the value of housing stock in our areas.
- We want you to establish a working party which will liaise with all stakeholders, including our group, opening channels of communication and working actively to minimise the impact of implementing high speed rail on the residents of Leeds.

- We seek a commitment from the Council to oppose HS2 if the Government fails to implement an appropriate and fair compensation scheme, or
- If you are not willing to oppose HS2, to commit to implementing a local compensation scheme, as by supporting the project you are supporting the unfair treatment of affected residents in Leeds. If the anticipated economic benefits to Leeds are realised a proportion of this financial gain should be used to offset the personal financial loss of affected residents.

Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, James; thank you, Ed. Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that this matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we vote on that, Council? (*A vote was taken*)
Thank you very much, that is CARRIED.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the considerations which your comments will receive. Good afternoon.
Thank you. (*Applause*)