

HS2 in Hints – update December 2020

A number of Hints residents, with the support of Staffordshire County Council ('SCC') made a formal complaint to HS2 at the end of October this year. There were 3 specific complaints:

1. breach of the Code of Construction Practice ('CoCP') in relation to work/construction vehicles accessing the LM-JV compound in Hints before 07.00 and after 19.00;
2. failure of HS2/LM-JV to abide by the Environmental Statement to divert construction traffic away from the centre of Hints by using School Lane and Rookery Lane rather than the publicly advertised Watling Street access; and
3. the complete lack of liaison with Hints residents by HS2/LM-JV about the use of village lanes contrary to all information provided to residents in community forums and publicly available documents.

HS2 responded to the complaint on 5 November 2020 by dismissing each of the above complaints.

Having discussed this with SCC and the Parish Council, our complaints were referred to the Independent Construction Commissioner ('ICC') on 12 November 2020. The following day the ICC confirmed that Hints residents had a 'valid complaint' for him to investigate.

The initial process was a mediation between SCC (on behalf of Hints residents) and HS2, mediated by the ICC. The outcome of this was:

1. on complaint 1 above, no common ground was found between SCC and HS2;
2. on complaint 2 and 3 above, HS2 acknowledged the complaints and committed to the ICC that it would find resolutions to these complaints.

This means that the ICC will now decide the complaint regarding the breaches of the CoCP only and we should expect a decision on that in January 2021. However, it is positive that HS2 has now formally acknowledged our complaints and is required to find resolutions.

The next contractors on site are Cadent to re-site the high-pressure gas main. SCC has confirmed that Cadent intend to access its worksite in Hints via Watling Street. Cadent will need to create a wide access and put a bailey bridge over Black Brook.

BBV are the main contractor due on site to start the construction of the rail line. To address complaint 2, HS2 confirmed to SCC that it has required BBV to investigate using the Watling Street access and we understand that BBV is now liaising directly with Cadent regarding access off Watling Street. We are attempting to extract more detail from BBV on timings and access.

To address complaint 3, BBV are also looking to set up community meetings with the Parish Council and residents as soon as January 2021 and tell us it is committed to working more transparently with the Parish Council and residents.

If residents wish to complain about HS2 or its contractors in Hints about:

1. construction/work traffic accessing sites before 07.00 or after 19.00, because this remains within the ICC process, please send your complaints to the Clerk of the Parish Council who will collate these complaints and pass them to SCC as evidence in the ICC process. Please use this email for your complaints hs2@hintswithcanwellpc.co.uk; or
2. general disturbances caused by HS2/contractors using School Lane and Rookery Lane or generally about failure to liaise with residents, please send your complaints to HS2Complaints@hs2.org.uk and copy in Sir Mark Worthington, the ICC directly at complaints@hs2-cc.org.uk. It is important that you copy in Sir Mark because he wants to monitor that HS2 is abiding by its commitment to resolve our complaints and if he continues to receive complaints from Hints residents, he will hold HS2 to account.

The Parish Council is looking to organise another public Zoom HS2 specific meeting on January 19th 2021 – please check the website for the agenda and login details.