



DEPUTATION TO FULL COUNCIL

Good afternoon Lory Mayor and Councillors. My name is James Lynch and with me are Martin Law, Ann Brown and Sarah Wilson. We are all members of SOWHAT.

THE CURRENT POSITION OF THE COUNCIL

Six and a half years ago we stood here to ask the Council to stand up for residents in our local community. We asked for a working party to be established to liaise with all stakeholders, open channels of communication and allow us to have a voice and an ear when important decisions are being made about HS2. Since then nothing meaningful has happened.

At a recent Executive Board meeting, we were grateful to hear Cllr Golton arguing that it was time for the Council to start acting on behalf of the residents of south-east Leeds and to accept that strong words are simply not enough when dealing with HS2. In response he was told he required a “briefing” about what the Council had done and the changes it had helped to effect. It is our belief that Cllr Golton is one of only three Councillors who actually understand the full implications of the project. His knowledge is not limited to the marketing and spin churned out by HS2 Ltd or by stakeholders involved in the regeneration of the south bank in Leeds.

We recently found out that the Council has spent £156,000 from their HS2 South Bank Reserve, on discussions with consultants and engineers about the HS2 station and how to safeguard the interests of business and the city centre. How much money has the Council either earmarked or spent on mitigating the effects of the project on our residents? If the Council believes sending responses to consultations is enough, they are mistaken.

RECENT CHANGES

In June this year, HS2 Ltd announced a further consultation around the proposed route into Leeds. We believe the design amendment would see further negative impact on the residents of our areas, bringing the tunnel entrance significantly closer to houses, reducing the overall depth of the tunnel, and creating another colossal viaduct, which would tower over the top of the existing A1/M1 link road.

We say “we believe” these things will happen because so far, HS2 Ltd have been unwilling to provide any maps or renderings of the tunnel entrance north of Woodlesford. These changes led to our MP withdrawing his support for the project in its current format.

The Council said it would be unable to provide a meaningful response to the consultation without additional images of the proposed viaduct as it runs into the city centre. Can we ask why the Council suddenly needed to see additional images, yet it has never needed them

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SWILLINGTON OULTON WOODLESFORD **HS2** ACTION TOGETHER

when responding to consultations about the viaduct which will run through our community? Is the Council only really interested in the impact of HS2 when it starts to get close to the city centre? With support from our Councillors, we have been asking HS2 unsuccessfully for visuals of our area for six and a half years. What therefore are the Council going to do? We want action and not words.

STOURTON TOUCH POINT

Because the Council lobbied hard for the HS2 station to be built on the South Bank, trains coming into Leeds will arrive at a T junction, meaning the tracks for HS2 cannot be aligned with the existing railway corridor, making a complete mockery of the word “connectivity”. HS2 trains cannot continue on to any HS3/Northern Powerhouse Rail network and rail users will never be able to travel north on HS2 out of Leeds because of the way it has been designed.

To right this glaring and obvious wrong, we know the council have been involved in discussions about constructing an additional link line between Stourton and Garforth so travel in a northerly direction is possible. It doesn't take a genius to look at a map and work where this new line is likely to be going.

If HS2 and the Council were to now fully review the approach into Leeds and look at the cost of reverting back to the alternative route it investigated along the existing railway corridor, it would integrate with HS3/NPR and would be the right transport solution for Leeds, West Yorkshire and the north of England. The additional spur would be unnecessary. Better still – the Council could withdraw support altogether for HS2 and ask that billions of pounds it will waste, be spent on a proper integrated transport system for the north of England instead.

IN CONCLUSION

What are we asking for?

1. That the Council stops pretending that responding to consultations is enough.
2. It should actively look at changing the approach of HS2 into Leeds so that it is aligned with future NPR/HS3 rail.
3. To tell us what it believes “mitigation” means in relation to a 30m high 2.2 km long viaduct and 10 years of heavy construction and disruption. We want to know exactly what will satisfy the Council.
4. If it is established that what HS2 Ltd are proposing does not meet the Council's threshold of mitigation, we want to know what commitment the Council will make financially or materially to deal with the shortfall.
5. We demand that details of Stourton and Garforth touchpoints are released to the public.
6. The Council must provide a clear definition of how it will provide full transparency and represent and protect the interests of our residents, to whom it is accountable.