

THE RT HON. ANDREA LEADSOM MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon. Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

21st January 2020

Ref: AL/TG/2001

Dear Grant,

Re: HS2

Following a meeting on Friday 17th January of the South Northants HS2 Liaison Group, which you may be aware is a forum I set up some years ago to bring together representatives from HS2-affected communities in my constituency, I am writing to you to raise two specific areas of concern.

Ancient Woodland

We welcomed your order in September last year that removals of ancient woodlands for HS2 be stopped during the independent review into the project, caveated unless they are shown to be absolutely necessary to avoid major cost and schedule impacts, should the scheme proceed as planned.

At our meeting last week, the group discussed Halse Copse (between Greatworth and Radstone) and Fox Covert (to the west of Upper Boddington) which have been clearly identified as ancient woodland in the HS2 proposal, and a small but significant part of both will be lost to HS2.

Whilst we are not aware of any imminent HS2 works that would affect either of these areas in the next few months, I should be grateful for your reassurance that no vegetation / ancient woodland clearance or other ecological works will be undertaken at these two sites, or indeed elsewhere in South Northants, ahead of the outcome of the Oakervee Review.

Similarly, residents in Brackley have also raised concerns about imminent HS2 works to fell trees and to clear vegetation in Turweston; whilst the village is in Buckinghamshire, I would also be grateful for your comments on this as well so I may report back to my constituents. As Turweston falls within the Aylesbury constituency of our colleague Rob Butler MP, I have copied him for information.

Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

HS2 Ltd's Land & Property Team

You will be aware from previous correspondence on behalf of specific individual constituents that there is a great source of frustration in South Northants about the ability of HS2 Ltd's Land & Property team to discharge its responsibilities effectively.

These were raised again at the meeting on Friday 17th, and it was clear that many of the substantial constituency HS2 casework issues I am trying to resolve are centred around problems within L&P, and how they treat landowners and residents.

There is an almost callous disregard that runs throughout their entire approach to taking possession of people's land and homes, with compensatory payments frequently late and often substantially lower than expected. Colleagues in other areas along the line-of-route have expressed the same frustrations.

As you know, I have continued to call for fairness and transparency from HS2 Ltd in their engagements with people in South Northants and along the line-of-route; I am constantly reassured by our Community Engagement Team that this is improving, yet see no evidence to demonstrate this.

Could I ask what you can do to ensure HS2 Ltd treats everyone with dignity and respect, and ensure that fair and equitable property compensation for those affected is dealt with as a matter of urgency? I can provide you with specific examples in my constituency where this has not been, and remains not, the case, and have previously written to you on these points.

If helpful, I would gladly meet with you to discuss wider problems with the L&P team in detail, perhaps with a small number of similarly affected colleagues if that would add strength to our shared position.

Thank you for considering these two important issues on behalf of the South Northants HS2 Liaison Group, and I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,



The Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom MP
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

Cc: Rob Butler MP
Cllr Ian Morris, Chairman of the South Northants HS2 Liaison Group