



HS2 will close Camden Town and cost borough £1 billion, council tells court



Protest. Camden council is one of 15 boroughs along the HS2 route challenging the project in the High Court. (Picture: P...

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Mira Bar-Hillel

04 December 2012

The controversial High Speed 2 rail link between London and Birmingham will cost Camden £1 billion in damage, the council warned the High Court yesterday.

The legal case challenge is being made by Camden and 14 other boroughs along the HS2 route.

The potential closure of Camden Town and demolition of hundreds of the 447 Camden homes affected will cause most of the damage.

Camden council Leader Sarah Hayward claims the Government decided to go ahead with HS2 without understanding its impact.

She said: "The work required to accommodate HS2 and its impact is still not fully known and yet a decision to proceed has been taken by the Secretary of State without this vital information.

"The Government and HS2 Limited have made absolutely no assessment of the disruption to Camden Town, or the impact for hundreds of families in Euston.

Moreover, the decision to proceed without a full Equalities Impact Assessment fails to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and I cannot see how the Secretary is able to legally proceed with this scheme."

"The overwhelming devastation that will be caused by HS2 proceeding is too extensive for the council not to take action", Hayward added. "We need to do all we can to protect ourselves from the destructive legacy HS2 will create for decades.

"We will fight for every home, school and business, brick by brick."

Opponents of the Government's HS2 high-speed rail scheme asked the High Court yesterday to declare the £34 billion project legally flawed and send it back for reconsideration.

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The first phase of HS2 would see a new, high-speed railway line running through Tory heartlands from London to Birmingham.

The legal challenge at London's High Court, which is expected to last seven days, could potentially delay the scheme for years if successful.

The case is being fought in several parts. Yesterday, a QC for 51m, an alliance of local authorities opposing HS2, accused the Government of being guilty of fundamental failures, including failing to undertake a strategic environmental assessment, or to arrange a consultation process "that allows informed responses on the true merits and demerits of the proposals".

Nathalie Lieven QC, appearing for 51m, said there had been no proper environmental assessment of the impact of the "entire project", or the full cumulative impacts of the first phase.

She told Mr Justice Ouseley: "It is a decision involving the purchase and demolition of hundreds of homes. In Camden alone between 200 and 500 dwellings are affected. They have no idea what the figure will be north of Birmingham."

Ms Liven said the scheme must also be blocked because of a failure to comply with the EU's Environmental Impact Assessment Directive.

The second application for judicial review is by campaign group HS2 Action Alliance (HS2AA) and concerns the legality of compensation arrangements for homeowners living near the proposed HS2 line.

Lawyers for HS2AA say homeowners are in danger of not being properly compensated following a "fundamentally flawed" consultation process.

The High Court is also hearing challenges from the Heathrow Hub group and from Aylesbury Golf Club in Buckinghamshire.

HS2AA director Hilary Wharf said: "The Government is trying to force through HS2 without following proper process. We have two strong cases coming to court that expose how the Government has been unlawfully taking shortcuts in its decision-making processes. Our cases concern environmental issues and the consultation on compensation.

The Transport Secretary decided in January this year to proceed with the construction of HS2. The proposals are for a high-speed rail link between London, Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester - the "Y" network - with trains running initially at speeds of up to 225mph, and later potentially reaching 250mph.

The network will also provide links to Heathrow Airport and the Channel Tunnel via the existing High Speed 1 (HS1) line.

The proposals are for the Y network to be built in two phases. The first phase will run between London and the West Midlands.

The second phase is planned to extend HS2 beyond the West Midlands to Manchester and Leeds and include direct high-speed services to a new Heathrow Airport station.

The court was told it will also add in further stations in Manchester, the East Midlands and South Yorkshire, Leeds and Heathrow.

But neither the route for the second phase, nor the location of second phase stations, have been identified in Government documents, the judge was told.

Phase one, expected to cost £16 billion, would alone have very significant impact on the environment and homeowners, with a large number of properties facing demolition, with at least 216 in Camden to accommodate the expansion of Euston Station, Ms Lieven told the judge.

Even though it was decided in January to proceed with the entire project, it was impossible to assess the impact on the environment of the second phase, even in broad terms, because no route had been published.

This was in breach of environmental impact regulations requiring assessments to be carried out, argued Ms Lieven.

With regard to phase one, route alterations had been made that had not been subject to consultation, even though in a number of instances "these alterations create greater impacts on individual properties and the environment than was previously the case".

Ms Lieven listed other legal flaws which, she argued, meant the whole project must be reconsidered.

A DfT spokesman said: "HS2 will bring cities closer together, drive regeneration, tackle overcrowding and stimulate economic growth.

"While it would not be appropriate to comment on the specific claims, the Government is confident that the decisions on HS2 have been taken lawfully and fairly and it is vigorously defending these legal challenges."

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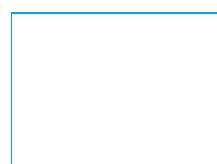
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Anonymous 21 hours ago

Interestingly the French, when building their TGV line, decided not to build any new lines in Paris itself, but bring all trains in on existing lines. Then, as traffic grew, and as people saw the value of having the fast link, new lines in Paris were built and stations expanded. Politically much easier.

Reply 0

Toomev 2 days ago

If damage costing £1bn occurred in Camden, how would anyone notice?

Reply -2

Anonymous 2 days ago

What is the point of a railway line that gets people from the centre of London to the centre of Birmingham or a few other towns faster, if the transport infrastructure that most of them will use on arrival is knackered?

A far better use of the money would be to re-model bridges and tunnels on most of the UK's main rail lines so that double-decker trains can be introduced. It wouldn't make journeys much faster, but it would almost double capacity. Journeys would be more comfortable, and since twice as many passengers could be carried for the same staffing levels, fares could fall instead of rising. A virtuous circle, not a vicious one.

Reply +5

Anonymous 2 days ago

Seems nobody wants this ego-farce. Who on earth would want to get to Birmingham quicker than they can already? Are they masochists?

Reply +3

Anonymous 2 days ago

Who needs HS2 trains to terminate at Euston?

Run 'em all through London on to HS1, with stops at both Stratford International and Old Oak Common.

Reply +3

Mice470 2 days ago

The line WILL be built. It will make not a jot of difference what all these protestors do or say. They will just be pouring money into the pockets of the lawyers who will be encouraging them to carry on taking more and more court action. It would save everyone a lot of money, the Government included, if those property owners already identified as being subject to compulsory purchase were paid twice the value of their property TODAY without any further discussion permitted.

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ASHLEY BOGLE FRIMPONG 2 days ago

The damage to Camden was done 40 odd years ago.

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Wispywonder 2 days ago

We'll gain more than we lose. Once the line is in place, Camden will bounce back to its grotty self. Typical NIMBY'ism.

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-2

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