

On behalf of:
Camden Cutting Group
Euston Action Group
Camden Civic Society
And all participants at ECRG

Simon Kirby
HS2 Ltd
1 Canada Square
London
E14 5AB

29th April 2016

Re: Rejection of Euston Community Engagement Plan

Dear Mr Kirby,

This letter is on behalf of all the participants at the Euston Community Representatives Group ('ECRG') which met with HS2 staff on 27th April. Your staff presented a '*Euston Community Engagement Plan – 3 year forward look v1*' at the meeting.

The community representatives and local councillors present passed a unanimous resolution during the meeting rejecting the Engagement Plan. We set out below our reasons and how we would like to take this forward.

We are all familiar with the recent PACAC and Bynoe reports which state unequivocally that HS2 has been deficient in its engagement with impacted local communities. To quote from the Bynoe report:

"We are concerned that HS2 Ltd has failed to identify with what we believe to be the root cause of the forums' failings: namely that the process was treated as a one way 'box-ticking' exercise by HS2 Ltd, with no genuine two way engagement.

In the Euston and Camden area we fully endorse these findings as we have had four years of fruitless 'engagement', that has consisted of one way broadcast of information. We have repeatedly asked what, if anything, has ever been changed as a result of engagement with the local community in Euston or Camden. We cannot identify anything, nor can your staff.

On 27th April, we were presented with a Euston Area Engagement Plan by the Interim Senior Communications Manager for the Euston and Camden area, Cate Sleep.

At the meeting we took a vote and collectively rejected this plan. It effectively consists of a list of meetings with no discussion or analysis to correct the

problems identified to date. It contains no process for follow up or continued discussion. It contains no 'two-way' dialogue events where the community can engage with HS2, other than ECRG meetings once a quarter, and community information sessions which are one off events. Neither of these provide an appropriate forum for sustained, detailed engagement on technical issues with concerned residents, such as air quality, noise insulation, design of key infrastructure, traffic management or alternative options at for development of Euston station.

To take another example, the plan for CoCP and LEMP engagement is entirely through local authorities in the Planning Forum, followed by a one way community information event post Royal Assent.

ECRG meetings to date have been poorly organized, without an independent chair, with no agreement of agenda or sharing of information in advance to make the meetings as useful and productive as possible. The overall culture of your staff and the tone of engagement is defensive, hostile and one-way. To quote one of your senior engagement managers at a recent meeting "we'll meet you when we have something to tell you". In summary, your staff do not 'get it' and we have no confidence in them or in the plan that they proposed.

We also take objection to the continued assumption by HS2 that Camden Council fully represents the community, and that engagement with Camden officers means that community concerns have been addressed. Both community representatives and Camden Council have made it repeatedly clear that neither party believe this to be the case. The community must be treated as an equal partner in its own right, independent of Camden Council. This situation may not be true in all areas, but is certainly true in Euston where the Council is effectively a development partner of HS2 under the Euston Area Plan (EAP).

You are on record as recognizing the need for a change of approach to engagement in the light of PACAC and Bynoe. We would like you to make good on this commitment in the Euston and Camden area.

As a first step, we would like you to meet with a small group of us to discuss and agree how we can 're-set' the engagement process in Euston and Camden.

As you will appreciate, this needs to happen quickly. Valuable time has already been lost due to the slow process in preparing the current proposed deficient draft "community engagement framework". We trust that given your commitment to changing the culture around engagement you will act on this quickly.

We take this opportunity to remind you that the residents of Euston and Camden are going to be severely impacted by decades of work as a result of HS2. To quote from the report of the Select Committee: "*Camden is exceptional, and needs special treatment. Many residents are going to have to put up with disturbance on a scale beyond the experience in most other locations*".

It is vital for residents, and for HS2, that a credible engagement plan is in place. And to quote from the conclusion of the Bynoe report: 'Hope is not a Plan'.

We look forward to hearing from you.

On behalf of all ECRG participants:

Matt Hollier
Co-Chair, Camden Cutting Group

Robert Latham
Chair, HS2 Euston Action Group

Dorothea Hackman
Chair, Camden Civic Society

cc:

David Higgins (Chair, High Speed 2)

Patrick McLoughlin MP (Secretary of State, Dept for Transport)

Sarah Hayward (Leader of Camden Council)

Keir Starmer MP (Member of Parliament for Holborn and St Pancras)

Bernard Jenkin MP (Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee)

House of Lords Private Bill Office (for the attention of the Chair of the Select Committee High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill)