

Date: 24th June 2020



**Councillor Danny Beales
Cantelowes Ward
London Borough of Camden
Judd Street
London
WC1H 9JE**

**Mark Thurston
Chief Executive Officer
High Speed 2 Ltd**

www.camden.gov.uk

[By email]

Dear Mark

Restarting construction during the Covid-19 pandemic

I am writing to highlight my concerns, and the concerns of many residents in Camden, regarding HS2 construction works restarting amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Whilst I understand that the government's position through the pandemic has been that construction may continue if it complies with public health guidance, the HS2 project is now proceeding in a vastly different climate to that of a few months ago. It should therefore not be restarting works without adaptations to mitigate the impacts on the local community. This is already a challenging time for local residents and I therefore ask you to engage them in plans for the way forward, to put in place measures that will reduce the impacts of construction on their lives. The issues our residents face (such as not being able to open windows due to construction noise) will be significantly exacerbated with so many spending most of their days at home, either working remotely, home schooling, in self-isolation or recovering from the virus. As such, there is a clear potential for works to cause heightened distress and disruption to a larger number of residents, impacting their health and wellbeing beyond that already impacted by the pandemic.

Residents in the Regent's Park Estate in particular, who have already been living through the disruption caused by HS2, are now unable to get any respite from the noise and disturbances as they follow government instructions to stay at home as much as possible and keep the community safe. They have told me that with less traffic on the road, HS2 construction noise is already more noticeable. Prior to the COVID 19 outbreak, HS2 has had three years to complete its noise insulation scheme before main works commenced, yet it has still only installed the full package of measures in 22% of the 1,300 properties identified. HS2 then paused the installations due to COVID 19 and despite the main works recommencing, the noise insulation programme has not. I urge you to immediately resume the noise insulation works to properly protect residents from the noise and dust from the re-starting of construction. I also ask for greater transparency, including a clear public timeline to complete the noise insulation programme, and increased resources to meet this timeline.

In cases where the noise insulation works are not yet fully complete, I ask that you make available respite space for residents who are being affected by your works.

Dust exceedances, of which there were already a high number, will also be more stark and noticeable in the midst of this pandemic, especially to residents who have had Covid-19 and are susceptible to air quality and dust levels while recovering. I therefore ask HS2 to consider the measures you can take to lower the noise, dust and air quality thresholds you work to during this time, in order to mitigate the impacts of construction works in a way that is clearly sensitive to the situation Camden's residents are living in.

We are all making sacrifices to follow guidance and stay at home more. However, for some living in overcrowded conditions or without access to outside space this is a greater challenge. It would be helpful therefore, for your team to lead some strong engagement with residents in order to understand the impacts they are experiencing at this time, and with a view to mitigating them. In the course of this engagement I ask that you consider the road closures put in place and impact on access to transport, to ensure that residents are safe when travelling to get necessities or to access medical help. I would also expect to see strong communications, above and beyond regular approaches, to outline how HS2 will be putting health and wellbeing at the heart of resuming works in Camden. I understand that Jenny Rowlands has also raised this with you and I would be happy to discuss any mitigation measures further with you if necessary.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danny Beales". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cllr Danny Beales
Cabinet Member for Investing in Communities and an Inclusive Economy
(Includes Planning, Regeneration & Economic Development)