

Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2)

27/1/22

Stephen Mendel

[REDACTED]

Dear Mr Stone & Mr Wallis.

I represent our family farm known as [REDACTED]. I have been actively working with National Highways and their appointed representatives since 2018 and have been particularly proactive in supporting their environmental & archaeological studies on our land as we have a rich ecology with most of the farm land included in an Environmental Stewardship Natural England programme since 2013.

No land owners and farmers impacted by this proposed road scheme wish to see the destruction of countryside in this beautiful area of the Cotswolds and much of the land impacted has been farmed since the Roman times.

However as local users of the A417 we also recognise the difficulties and human impact this problem road has presented for many decades.

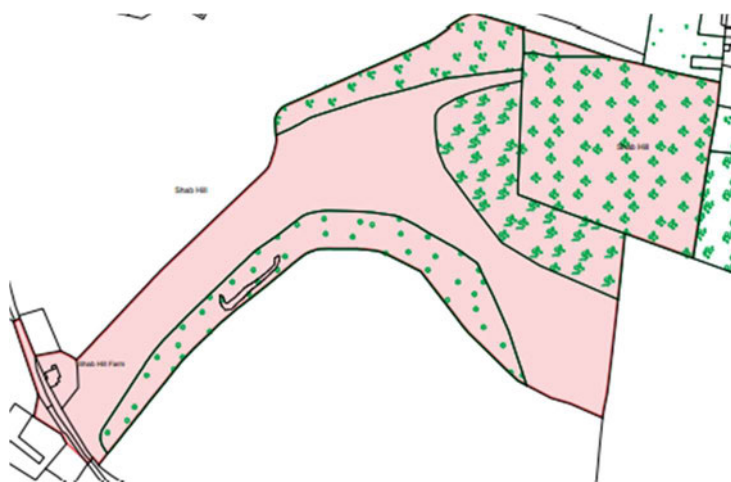
For this specific hearing I wish to firstly draw the attention of the Planning Inspectorate to one area of land which will be decimated by the proposed route and for which I don't believe the applicant's documentation, as submitted, clearly documents the impact on species & trees for this important area.

This portion of land at [REDACTED] is known as [REDACTED]". It is a natural Cotswold valley of approximately 14 acres lined with more than 100 historic mature Beech trees and is a diverse ecological environment with Deer, Badgers, Birds of Prey, bats and many other species. The valley has been left as a natural habitat for many decades with only light grazing for cattle over the years and it has been left untouched for the past 8 years. It has no public access so remains a natural wilderness and is a beautiful part of the countryside.

As well as the significant impact on the ecology I would like to draw specific attention to the mature beech trees which have been growing for a number of centuries, the felling of the majority of these trees for the proposed route would be necessary and I don't believe the applicant has clearly highlighted the

importance of this valley and trees in their application and they have not highlighted the loss of this historical woodland. Very few mature Beech tree valleys exist in Gloucestershire with many being felled to provide wood during the 2nd World War.

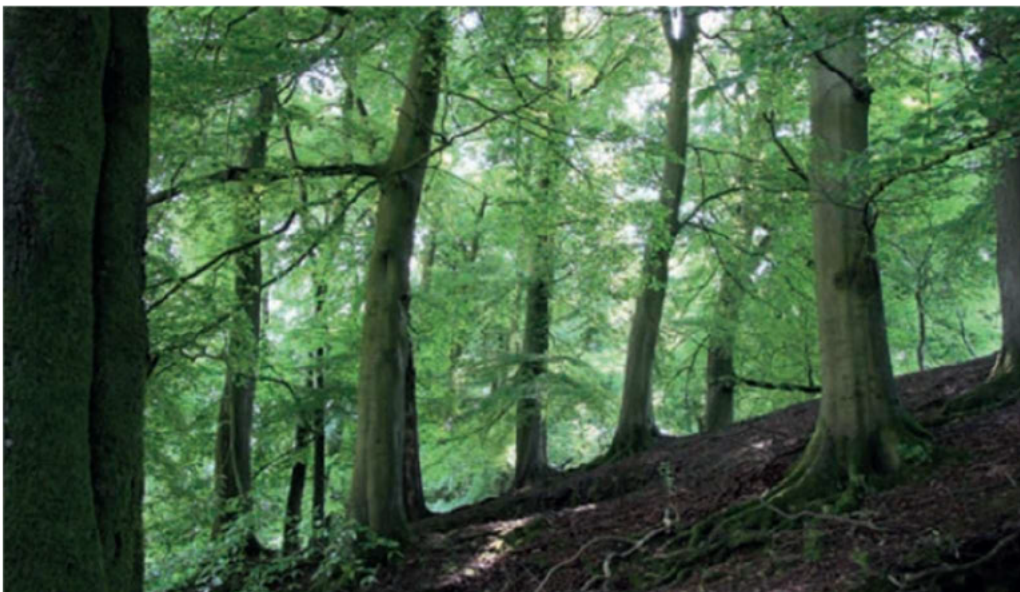
Could the applicant please confirm how many mature beech trees would need to be felled and how the impact on this significantly biodiverse environment will be mitigated &/or offset including the planting of replacement beech trees to be maintained indefinitely? Some of this information may be included within the overall environmental impact assessment documents submitted but this are difficult to follow for the layperson.



A large proportion of the "valley" will be destroyed as the proposed "Shab Hill Junction" cuts through it.



Our beautiful
[REDACTED]
with 100+
mature beech
trees.



Secondly, I would like to again draw attention for the Planning Inspectorate to the proposed amended BOAT (Byways open to all traffic) which runs across Shab Hill and Stockwell Farms. Whilst we support expanding rambling, dog walking, horse riding and cycling across the Cotswolds we do not support the encouragement of motorised vehicles such as 4X4s, quad bikes & trail bikes which churn up the tracks, frighten horses, livestock and ramblers and which cause noise & pollution and which have an overall negative impact on the environment.

The proposed amended BOAT for which landowners were NOT consulted (despite numerous requests to be consulted on the plans for the existing track), will have a negative environmental impact and decrease the experience for dog walkers, ramblers and horse riders as it will become a fenced in track with additional gates rather than the open countryside that is available today, kettling walkers, riders and the occasional 4x4/cross bike into a new fenced off track will be a worse experience and could be dangerous for horse riders when motorbikes pass at speed on a narrow track with barbed wire fencing on both sides.

Note, a BOAT is not required to maintain the existing access to ramblers, horse riders etc only to maintain access for motorised transport. Was this explained during the consultation with these “interest” groups and was it explained that the BOAT would be fenced off and no longer included as part of open countryside?

We would strongly challenge the need and cost to the public purse in acquiring this additional land and we do not see the logic in NH needing to acquire the land in order to maintain access for ramblers and horse riders etc (this can be maintained without NH ownership).

In terms of motorised vehicles there has been no assessment of how the existing Category 5 highway “track” & BOAT is used today and we maintain that the infrequent use by motorbikes & 4X4 vehicles, largely at the weekend during nice weather, does not justify the environmental impact of creating this new BOAT, the expense and impact of acquiring more land to do so and the negative impact this will have on ramblers, dog walkers and horse riders etc. I also challenge the safety of this BOAT opening up onto a main road.

The amended BOAT (to be fenced off) also goes through land included on the Historic Environment Farm Environment Record (HEFER) and no mention of HEFER has been included in the applicant's documentation.

If the need and environmental impact of maintaining access for motorised vehicles is proven we would still challenge the applicant's insistence that they need to acquire land to provide this and the amount of land they are acquiring, forcing [REDACTED] to lose yet more land.

Can the applicant please explain why no assessment of need/usage has been carried out for maintaining motorised vehicle access, why the landowners were not advised/consulted during the various consultation stages and why a BOAT is being forced through rather than an amendment of the existing rights-of-way which would then not require the acquisition of additional land. Were the interested parties also told all the facts regarding motorised access?



Acquiring part of this BOAT and fencing it off will further scar the countryside.

Thank you for listening and for your time today.