

# PHOTOGRAPHIC TOUR OF SOUTHERN PARISH OF HAREFIELD AND PART OF THE COLNE VALLEY ON JULY 17<sup>TH</sup> 2019 TO CONSIDER THE FURTHER IMPACT OF HS2 ON HAREFIELD'S ENVIRONMENT.

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The tour started along Breakspear Road South, which in recent months had seen a lot of new construction work. We then moved to Harvil Road to look for continuity in previous observations and for new work. Finally we went to the west side of the Colne Valley to look at the work around Chalfont Lane which had extended from earlier work by Tilehouse Lane, which is highly visible from Harefield at The Old Orchard and Colney Farm, All work is preparatory for HS2 as the actual construction of the line has yet to be formally approved.

A feature of all sites visited is the intense security applied by HS2 Limited, involving considerable fencing of various materials, passed through by gates which are locked, or have a heavy presence of security guards, who were generally friendly (at worst disinterested) and occasionally provided some useful information.

HS2 Limited have also supported their on-site security measures by recourse to the law. The details of the High Court injunction of 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019 are described in figures 1(a) and (b). HS2 Limited took out the injunction in response to protestors



Figure 1(a)

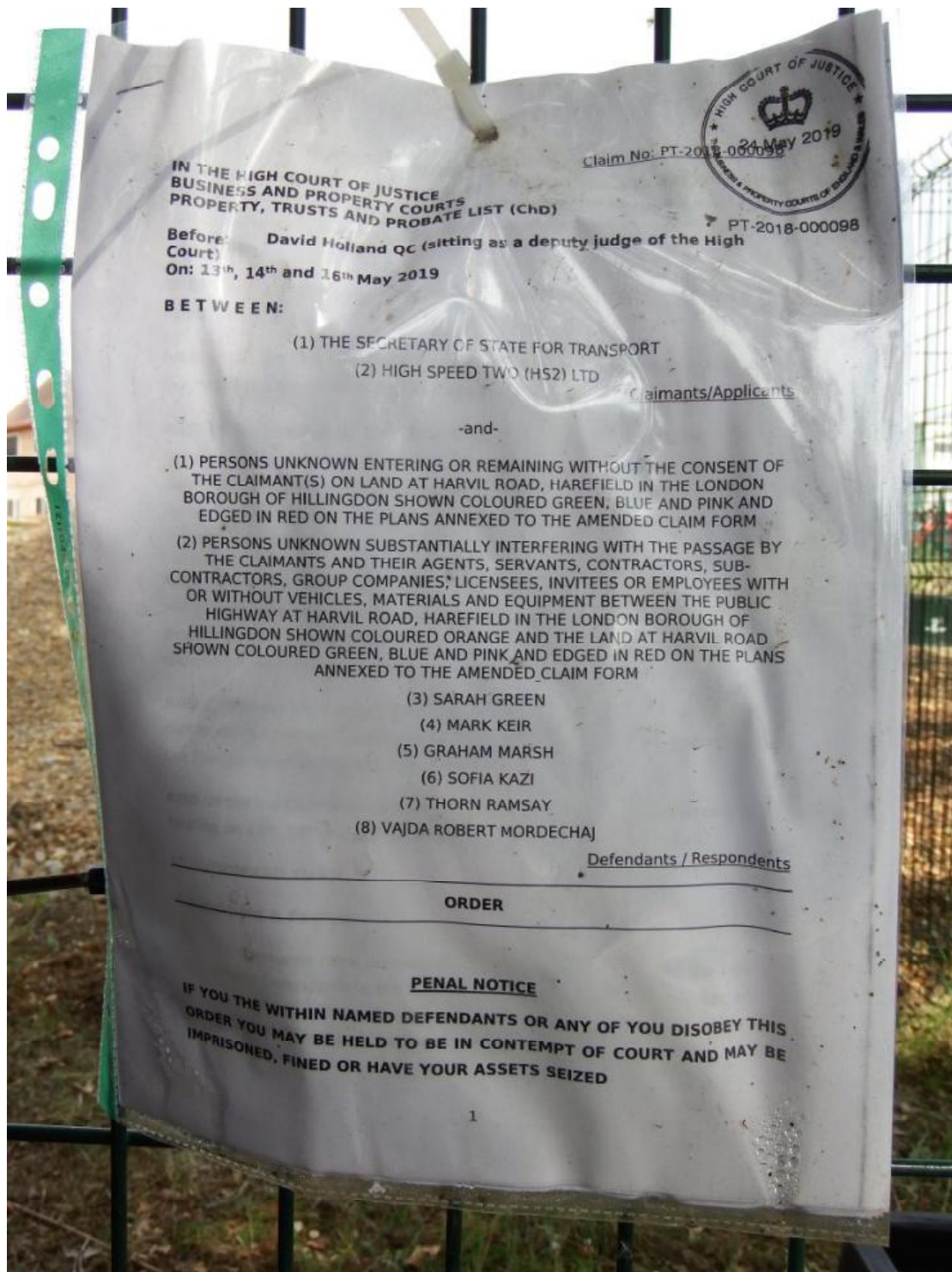


Figure 1(b)

who had got into their sites and tried to obstruct the work by such tactics as blocking or sitting on machines. The injunction also applies to parts of the public roads serving the sites.

A value of the signs describing the injunction (figure 1a), which are displayed heavily around the fencing at various gates, is that the map shows clearly in blue, green and pink the parts of Harefield which have been taken over by HS2 Limited for the preparatory construction works. These have been contracted out to relevant engineering firms by HS2 Limited or the utility companies responsible for given infrastructure. The works form a swathe across the south of the historical parish and the land is being changed considerably. Much of the construction work is underground so it may be that some artificial and even some natural restoration may be successful, but a lot of vegetation has been cleared.

On July 17<sup>th</sup> there were three major construction projects along Breakspear Road South, two under way and the other waiting to start. The first was located at the Gatemead Compound, a joint project by the engineering firms Costain and Skanska. The purpose of this work is to construct a bridleway diversion and to make a new road which will give access to the Merck, Sharpe and Dohme complex (MSD) of the world's seventh largest pharmaceutical company, which in Harefield is centred on veterinary medicine. The bridleway is the old lane from New Years Green to Breakspear Road South, which continues eastwards across the River Pinn into Ickenham. Figure 2(a) shows the entrance with the sign showing the preserved right of way and a variety of fencing.



Figure 2(a)

Most of the road to MSD has been constructed past a fairly modern boarded-up house to pass through security gates and a barrier (figure 2b). Considerable

parking facilities and container-style huts have also been provided as shown in figure 2(c)



Figure 2(b)

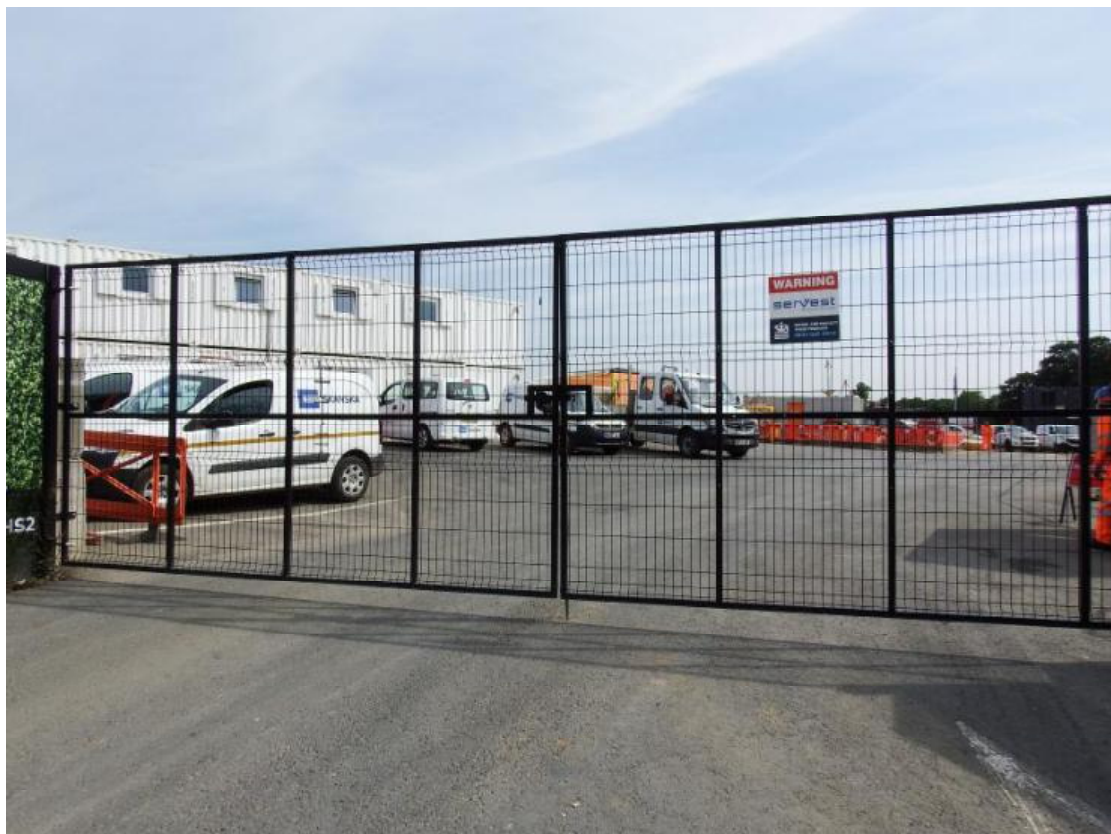


Figure 2(c)

The second construction is divided between two sites on either side of Breakspair Road South and on either side of the Chiltern Railway Line, which crosses the road here. The work is by Barhale on behalf of Affinity Water to lay a new pipeline to divert existing water mains. This involves digging trenches to lay the pipe, backfilling the land and boring a tunnel between two shafts. Work has been commenced on the site south of the railway bridge behind Gate 4 (figures 3(a) and 3(b)), with the site having been cleared, plant and huts brought in and a gravel road placed in the site.



Figure 3(a)

The work on the site north of the railway bridge entered by Gate 2 seems to be slightly more advanced (figure 3(c) and (d)). There is a concrete road with the construction work leading to a possible tunnel under the road. As with all the sites there has been vegetation clearance (the line of trees along the boundary on both the southern and northern sites is a reminder of the previous landscape) and bare earth, fencing, plant and security systems of a hopefully temporary effect dominate the scene.



Figure 3(b)



Figure 3(c)



Figure 3(d)

The third construction works were due to start along Breakspear Road South itself. The road was to be closed for this work, but objections by London Borough of Hillingdon led to a delay until July 20<sup>th</sup>. A previous short closure had exposed the severe congestion created on the route for the diversion through Ickenham and Ruislip, particularly at peak hours, but not desirable through the school examination season. The delay meant the works will take place during the school summer holidays, starting on July 20<sup>th</sup> and carrying on for a planned 59 days until September 14<sup>th</sup>, although the southbound lane will be opened to traffic with control by temporary traffic lights from 16<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August. Road closures (see figure 4) are a major feature of HS2 Limited's preparatory construction work. On July 17<sup>th</sup> New Years Green Lane was closed to through traffic as part of a two week closure, and traffic was being stopped by a security guard at the entrance from Breakspear Road South and having to prove genuine reasons for wanting access.

The work on Breakspear Road South was infrastructural, involving completing the construction of the access road to the MSD complex, a new crossing for the bridleway diversion, laying gas pipes (not for the Cadent project at Harvil Road), installation of new British Telecom services, installation of a high voltage cable and enlarging the existing gas main along the road and connecting it to the gas main in the MSD access road. The section of Breakspear Road affected is shown on figures 5(a) and 5(b): it will undoubtedly look different.



Figure 4



Figure 5(a)





Figure 5(b)

The work for HS2 Limited at Harvil Road remains dominated by the reconstruction by Cadent of the Harefield to Southall gas pipeline. The original works based on the southern site accessed by Gate 1 and northern site by Gate 2 remain in operation and the scar created in the landscape by the destruction of woodland and making of the new pipeline route is still very much in evidence (see figure 6). At the height of summer nature is trying to cover the worst of the scar with some greening of the affected area. The Cadent project has expanded to the west side of Harvil Road with the new site cleared of most of its vegetation, high levels of security, and a new concrete access road (see figures 7(a) and 7(b)). The work involves tunnelling between shafts, the tunnel boring machine progress from the south site is now complete. Trenches are dug, the pipe laid and the land then backfilled. At the western end of the newer Cadent site is a site where the ground is being surveyed to prepare for the driving of piles for the start of the viaduct over the various lakes, starting with HOAC's lake and then over Broadwater and the Water Skiing Lake. Other surveying work is taking place around Dews Lane and Moorhall Road, but with little permanent mark yet left on the landscape. Other surveying here is linked to the need to build new pylons and move the electricity transmission wires.



Figure 6.



Figure 7(a)



Figure 7(b)

The protest by the environmentalists survives, with their camp opposite Gate 2 of the Cadent site expanded into the field behind with a number of tents now erected (see Figure 8(a)). Their stronger forms of protest have led to the taking out of the injunction by HS2 Limited (see above). The contrast between the signs (Figure 8(b)) offers the functional and rusty *Works traffic* against the banner for *Extinction Rebellion*, and hints at the unequal resources of the two sides. Extinction rebellion recently came to prominence with protests in a number of cities, particularly London, against what they identify as the failure of government to deal adequately with climate change. Infrastructure projects like HS2 and their association with economic growth are argued to be one factor leading to ecological destruction. The unprepossessing vegetation and its associated life forms takes on a much more urgent aspect in the light of the climate change debate.



Figure 8(a)



Figure 8(b)

The final part of the tour took in the west side of the Colne Valley. Although not administratively in Harefield the area affected by HS2 preparations is highly visible from Park Lane. The view from between Colney Farm and The Old Orchard (Figure 9) shows the area affected by the preparation works and the consequent changes in the landscape.

The gravel pit workings at the south end (see Figure 10) are near completion; it is thought that they may be filled with spoil from the Chiltern tunnel boring before the



Figure 9



Figure 10 (from Keith Piercy photo 21/5/2019)

overburden is restored. The water main work in the Chilterns serviced from the end of Tilehouse Lane is continuing. On July 17<sup>th</sup> Tilehouse Lane was closed to traffic. The recent changes have been mainly associated with the development of the base site for the boring of the HS2 tunnel under the Chilterns. The formerly narrow (often single-track) and twisting Chalfont Lane has been reconstructed so it is a two-lane, generally straight single carriageway, but it is not accessible to the public from the North Orbital beyond the cottages for whom it is the access road (see Figures 11(a) and 11(b)). The previous banks and hedges bordering the lane have also been removed.



Figure 11(a)

A blue boarding fence has been constructed around the new site, but which does not completely hide the existence of vehicles, construction plant and huts suggesting activity is well under way.

Major changes have been completed at the other end of Chalfont Lane. The non-residential part of Roberts Lane has been barred by two gates (TQ015922 and TQ017919) which offer access only to those on foot, horse or bicycle. A completely new road parallel to the M25 called Link Road now joins Chalfont Lane to the road through Horn Hill, replacing Roberts Lane (see Figure 12). Chalfont Lane is now blocked off at Link Road from access to the bridge over the M25 (which can just be made out in the distance on figure 12(b)). The new slip roads constructed to and from the M25 to allow lorries carrying tunnel spoil away from the site are now complete (see figure 12(c)) and in use: a tanker for transporting liquids was seen to leave the base tunnel construction site past the blue boarding and progress via the slip road on to the northbound M25.



Figure 11(b)



Figure 12(a)





Figure 12(b)

As well as work on the tunnel base site there is a project generally wrapped in plastic but showing scaffolding underneath, for which the purpose is unknown (see figure 12(d)). The changes to this small area are substantial.

Assuming the current review of HS2 ordered by the new Prime Minister (pushed for by the Treasury concerned at the £30 billion excess spending, but chaired by a noted HS2 supporter) approves its continuation, then the immediate future of the southern part of Harefield and west side of the Colne Valley will show a continuation of construction work. This will be of a dubious aesthetic impact on the scenery of the landscape and despite alleviation and/or compensation measures will cause harm to the ecology of the area. Road closures adding to added journey times with congestion and extra pollution on the diversion results will be frequent if not permanent. The end result will be major permanent changes to the local environment in order for a contentious national infrastructure project to go ahead.



Figure 12(c)



Figure 12(d)