

TOM WATSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Tel: 0207 219 8123

Mr Mark Carne  
Chief Executive  
Network Rail  
1 Eversholt Street  
London NW1 2DN

January 2018

Dear Mr Carne,

**Proposed Sleeper Factory at Bescot Rail Yard**

I have recently been contacted by a significant number of constituents who are vociferously opposed to Network Rail's proposal to build a concrete sleeper factory at Bescot Rail Yard in my constituency.

I understand that you held a public consultation event, organised through Rail One, on Wednesday 10 January at the Friar Park Millennium Centre, with a view to submitting a future planning application to Sandwell Council for this development.

However, many residents inform me that this meeting was very poorly advertised, with thousands of residents being unaware the consultation event was even taking place. While many people missed out, hundreds of residents did attend at short notice due to the mobilisation of the local community, particularly through social media, by key residents and their local councillors.

Feedback from residents about your consultation event was overwhelmingly negative, though. Indeed, it appears Rail One, who I understand would build the proposed sleeper factory, were completely unprepared for the volume of people who did attend, had no attendance book for residents to sign and failed to make any notes regarding people's concerns.



The consultation appears to have been poorly planned and the event itself somewhat shambolic to say the least. I query how you can possibly have captured the views of the local community ahead of submitting a planning application to Sandwell Council. In addition, I understand that local residents were given an email address to raise comments and objections; the deadline for which has now passed. I would urge you to extend this deadline to allow the many residents who were unaware of this development to have their say on your plans.

A company the size of Network Rail should be able to run a fair, open and transparent consultation – this has not happened and urgent steps should be taken to put this right. Moreover, as you may already be aware, nearly 2,000 of my constituents have signed an online petition opposing your company's proposal. Paper petitions are also being circulated in shops and door to door, with the total number of objections now being in excess of 3,000.

As the local MP, residents and councillors have raised the following concerns with me:

- The impact this proposed development will have on the health and wellbeing of children and families, with particular reference to concerns around pollution, dust and the use of chemicals;
- The development is too close to residential homes and local schools;
- The development is likely to result in overshadowing/loss of outlook to the detriment of a number of residential properties;
- Noise or disturbance resulting from use, including proposed hours of operation of the sleeper factory;
- Highway issues: traffic generation, vehicular access and highway safety;
- Increased levels of noise;
- Devaluing of property prices; and
- Increased light pollution.

The list above is by no means an exhaustive list of residents' concerns. I would particularly like to draw your attention to the concerns of those residents who live in Tiffany Green, who already report severe problems with noise, pollution and traffic following other recent developments in their area.

I am very concerned at how close the proposed sleeper factory will be to their properties and how it may impact upon their quality of life.

Furthermore, staff at the consultation event informed residents that the facility is proposed to operate 24 hours a day, with an additional 5,000 plus Heavy Goods Vehicles using the area per year.





This is likely to lead to thousands of extra trips to and from the site, both through Friar Park and Stone Cross, in what is already a congested area.

As well as the existing road network, I also query whether your current access road is suitable to accommodate this additional volume of traffic.

Since being elected as an MP in 2001, I have never seen the local community so united in opposition to a development and I would urge you to reflect on this, both as the chief executive and at a board level.

A facility of this nature should be built in a non-residential location - not near people's homes and local schools. I am certain there are other rail yard sites in the UK, which would be more suitable for a development of this nature, and, therefore, ask you to urgently review your plans for the proposed sleeper factory at Bescot Rail Yard.

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Please contact my constituency office at Terry Duffy House, Thomas Street, West Bromwich B70 6NT, or email [tom.watson.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:tom.watson.mp@parliament.uk), with your reply.

Yours sincerely

**Tom Watson MP**

Member of Parliament for West Bromwich East

Cc The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport Mr Jan Britton, Chief Executive, Sandwell Council