

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

23 February 2018

Dear Mr Carne,

RE: Proposed Sleeper Factory at Bescot Rail Yard

I am contacting you in response to Martin Frobisher's reply to my letter dated 23 January 2018 regarding the above mentioned matter.

Bescot Rail Yard may indeed be ideally located for Network Rail but it is certainly not the correct site in the view of my constituents for the reasons set out in my previous letter to you. More than 4,000 residents have now signed petitions opposing your proposal and this number is continuing to increase. I would have thought Network Rail may have taken time to reflect on their plans in light of the objections received but instead your company seems determined to push ahead, regardless of what local people think.

In addition, Martin Frobisher's reply says the facility will 'secure up to 100 manufacturing jobs in the West Midlands'. However, I understand the jobs to which he refers are likely to be for those employees who are to be redeployed from your factory in Washwood Heath, which is earmarked for closure, meaning few, if indeed any, of my constituents will benefit. It is, therefore, misleading to continue to infer the local community may benefit from this.

I welcome the second 'information' event you are now proposing, whereby I expect hundreds of people may attend. As I pointed out in my previous letter, however, your previous event was inadequate. Very limited information was provided by Rail One to those who attended, no attendance book was kept and residents' views were not recorded. To have only invited around 300 properties, and emailed out a press release, shows Network Rail's disregard for the wider community. I implore you to ensure the whole of Friar Park



ward, and nearby residential areas in West Bromwich and Walsall are invited. The wrongs from the first event need to be put right.

You also refer to a 1km access road, which will connect the facility to the A4031 dual carriageway, sending traffic to and from junction 9 of the M6. It is unclear, though, how you plan to restrict vehicles travelling in the opposite direction through Stone Cross, which is already over saturated with traffic, or how vehicles travelling from the Walsall direction will turn across a busy dual carriageway to join the new access road. You also fail to mention what will happen with the current access road off Sandy Lane.

In addition, I note again with concern the new facility will operate 24 hours a day, with outside operations between 7am and 11pm. For many residents, these hours are regarded as unreasonable and people will have to suffer the daily noise, nuisance and disruption that your factory will cause.

Moreover, I can assure you that local councillors are not supportive of your proposal and have not been kept informed. Councillor Hackett contacted you back in April 2017, at my request, asking Network Rail to arrange a meeting with local residents. I understand Paul Street, Jill Stephenson and Pat Fitzgerald were aware of this request, and subsequent pleas for a meeting, but Network Rail declined at every opportunity. Had you met with residents when requested, you would have understood the scale of opposition to your proposal.

Once again, I would urge you to reconsider your plans and consider an alternative site for the proposed sleeper factory.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Watson".

Tom Watson MP

Member of Parliament for West Bromwich East

cc Martin Frobisher, Managing Director for London North Western Network Rail