



26th July 2010

Exceptional Hardship Scheme

I am writing to outline the Exceptional Hardship Scheme (EHS) that the Government announced today. We will write to you again on August 20th, when the scheme will be formally launched, with more detailed information.

The EHS will give assistance to owner-occupiers of property who are most severely affected by the proposals for a new high speed rail line between London and Birmingham. It will apply to properties that are on, or in the vicinity of, High Speed Two Ltd's recommended route - route 3. Property owners who urgently need to move, and are unable to sell their property on the open market, will be able to apply to the Secretary of State for Transport for him to buy their property from them at its unblighted value.

We received over 4500 responses to the consultation on the EHS, which closed on June 17th. Under the terms of the consultation, the EHS would have only applied to residential property owner-occupiers who urgently needed to sell.

Following the consultation, the Secretary of State has decided to widen the scope of the scheme so that it now also applies to the following groups:

- owner-occupiers of commercial properties with an annual rateable value not exceeding £34,800
- owner-occupiers of agricultural units
- those who have recently inherited a property
- people whose property has been repossessed and urgently need their lender to sell it

In addition, the scope of the scheme has been extended to include property that is located close to the proposed entrances and exits of tunnels.

A panel will consider applications from property owners. The majority of panel members will be independent of Government, and while we are appointing them, there will be an interim panel in place who will consider urgent cases.



There is by no means a definitive list of reasons why people might urgently need to sell, and each application submitted to the EHS will be looked at on a case by case basis. However, examples of why people might need to sell now, that the panel may consider as exceptional hardship are:

- changing employment location
- being under extreme financial pressure
- the need to buy a larger or different property to accommodate an enlarged family
- the need to move into sheltered accommodation, a nursing home, or in with other family members

The EHS will remain in place until the Secretary of State makes a final decision, following a public consultation early next year, on whether to build the line and, if so, what its route should be. At that time we would expect the route to be safeguarded and statutory blight provisions would then apply.

Many respondents said that if the government decides to go ahead with the line, there should also be longer-term support for those who would be most seriously affected by the line but whose properties would not be covered by the statutory blight regime. The Secretary of State has agreed that there should be some additional provision of this kind, and will consider what these arrangements would be. He will announce his proposals for this before the public consultation.

You can read the Ministerial Written Statement at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/press/speechesstatements/statements/hammond20100726>

and FAQs are at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/pi/highspeedrail/exceptionalhardshipscheme/>

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sir Brian Briscoe". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

SIR BRIAN BRISCOE
CHAIRMAN