Rail Development

Statutory Blight

Guide to serving a Blight Notice and selling your blighted property

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Introduction

Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection

Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) is the government's plan to provide more reliable and frequent services between key economic centres in the North of England. NPR forms the transport backbone of the Northern Growth Strategy and will deliver a "turn-up-and-go" railway linking Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds/Bradford, Sheffield and York, with regular onward services to Newcastle, Hull and Chester for North Wales connections.

NPR will be delivered in three phases:

(1) early upgrades and electrification east of the Pennines (Leeds–Bradford, Sheffield-Leeds, Leeds–York);

(2) a new Liverpool–Manchester route via new stations at Warrington Bank Quay (Low Level) and Manchester Airport; and

(3) further cross Pennine enhancements beyond the Transpennine Route Upgrade, including Manchester-Leeds, Manchester-Bradford and Manchester-Sheffield.

The first phase of NPR prioritises the upgrades to existing lines east of the Pennines. The adapted High Speed Rail (Crewe- Manchester) Bill, (hereafter 'the Bill') has been taken forward as part of the second phase of NPR to obtain the necessary powers to deliver the NPR route into Manchester via Manchester Airport (the Proposed Scheme). The Bill, formerly designed to deliver the route between Crewe to Manchester, has been adapted to retain only the section of route from the Parish of Millington and Rostherne to Manchester Piccadilly, via a new station at Manchester Airport (also known as NPR's 'Manchester Connection'). For further information about the development of the Bill, please see information paper A1.

The government has also confirmed its intention to ultimately complete a new line between Birmingham and Manchester. This is not included in this Bill and this would be progressed following the delivery of the three stages of NPR, but it informs decisions on NPR scope and future-proofing.

The work to produce the Bill includes an Equalities Impact Assessment and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the results of which are reported in an Environmental Statement (ES) submitted alongside the Bill. The Secretary of State for Transport has also published draft Environmental Minimum Requirements (EMRs), which set out the environmental and sustainability commitments that will be observed in the construction of the Proposed Scheme. For more information on the EMRs please see Information Paper E1: Control of environmental impacts.

The Secretary of State for Transport is the Promoter of the Bill through Parliament. The Promoter will also appoint a body responsible for delivering the Proposed Scheme under the powers granted by the Bill. Following Royal Assent this body will be the 'nominated undertaker'. There may be more than one nominated undertaker. However, any and all nominated undertakers will be bound by the obligations contained in the Bill, and the policies and commitments established in the EMRs, including any commitments provided in the information papers.

The development and promotion of these proposals for the purposes of the Bill is being undertaken by Rail Development Directorate. This is a ring-fenced business unit of HS2 Ltd, which in turn is a non-departmental public body working under a Development Agreement entered into with the Secretary of State for Transport. This arrangement reflects the expertise available for developing hybrid bills in advance of decisions about future delivery responsibilities.

Guide to serving a Blight Notice and selling your blighted property

This guidance provides information about Statutory Blight and how it applies to owners of properties within what is known as the safeguarded area for the adapted High Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill. You can find maps on which you can check whether your property is within safeguarding at **www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk**.

The Secretary of State has issued a Safeguarding Direction for the railway. As well as helping to protect the land needed for our proposals, issuing a Safeguarding Direction means the Statutory Blight regime is triggered under section 149 and Schedule 13 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Where property is blighted then eligible owner-occupiers may be able to serve a Blight Notice on the acquiring authority asking it to purchase their property before it is needed for the scheme. If the Blight Notice is accepted then a Blight Claim can be submitted for the property to be acquired on statutory compensation terms, which is set out in more detail in Section 5 of this document.

In this guide we provide a summary of the steps involved in serving a Blight Notice, including who may be eligible to serve a Blight Notice. It also takes you through selling your property after you have made a successful application and the types of compensation that can be claimed. For more details on the Statutory Blight process, please see the guidance produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities): **https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/compulsory-purchase-system-guidance**

We would be happy to speak to you to explain our proposals, how they may affect your property and our process to consider Blight Notices. Section 6 of this guide sets out how you can contact us. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has produced guidance on compulsory purchase legislation here: **https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67eac2220678ace40a7f27b8/CPO_Guidance_Update_January_2025.pdf**

Disclaimer

The information in this booklet is for guidance only and is not a substitute for taking professional advice. Using this information is voluntary and we do not accept any liability arising from any inaccuracy or misstatement, whether because a contract has been broken, tort or misrepresentation, or in any other way.

1 Glossary of terms

Blight Notice: This is the statutory notice that, if you are eligible, you can serve on the Secretary of State for Transport (SoS), through us, asking the Government to buy your property.

Building survey: This is the same type of survey that is done for private properties. The survey will identify any issues with the condition of the property that we should know about before contracts are exchanged and which may affect the value of your property.

Compensation Code: A collective term for the principles derived from Acts of Parliament and case law relating to compensation for compulsory acquisition. The overriding principle of compulsory purchase compensation is equivalence. This is the principle that people whose land is acquired compulsorily should be left neither better nor worse financially as a result of their land being acquired and are entitled to compensation which is neither more nor less than the value of their loss.

Completion day: The date when the sale of the property is completed (when you leave and no longer own the property).

Contract: The legally binding agreement that sets out the details of the purchase of your property. The contract commits you and us to the sale and purchase. When we are both ready to commit, the two contracts are exchanged by the legal Advisors.

Conveyancing: The legal process that transfers ownership of the property from you to the Government. It is also known as the 'transfer'.

Express Purchase: A discretionary scheme introduced by the SoS, which relaxes two conditions that apply to statutory blight (see Statutory Blight and Express Purchase applications - Guidance and frequently asked questions for full details).

Home loss payment: This payment is available to owners (freeholders or leaseholders with at least three years left on their lease) who have lived in their property as their main home for at least a year. The payment is equal to 10% of the property's unblighted market value, and within minimum and maximum values set by law. The current maximum is set out in The Home Loss Payments (Prescribed Amounts) (England) Regulations.

Notice to treat: This is a notice served on an owner, leaseholder or mortgage provider by an authority with compulsory purchase powers. The notice states that the authority is willing to agree a price to buy the property.

Owner-occupier: An owner-occupier is anyone who owns a property (either outright or with a mortgage) as a freehold or on a lease with a certain term (which has at least three years left to run) and uses it as their main home or place of business. The full definition of owner-occupier is in Chapter 2, Part 6 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Pre-completion inspection: This is a survey or assessment of your property, which will be done before the legal conveyancing is completed. The survey is needed to make sure we can put necessary measures in place on the day of completion to continue to manage the property.

Professional advisor: This will be a representative you appoint to give you advice. We would normally expect you to appoint a suitably experienced RICS surveyor, who may also be referred to as 'your agent' or 'your surveyor'. The SRB scheme is designed so that once your Blight Notice has been accepted you do not need anyone to act on your behalf.

Qualifying interest: A legal right or claim in relation to a piece of land. This can include: a freeholder or leaseholder (with at least three years left on your lease) of a property fully or partly within the safeguarded area; a personal representative of someone who has died and who had a qualifying interest or; a mortgage lender with a right to sell the property and who can give immediate Vacant Possession.

Red Book valuation: A formal property valuation carried out according to the 'Red Book' issued by RICS (see below), which sets out the valuation standards RICS members must meet.

Report on title: A report outlining the results of the investigation into your property's title (ownership). It explains the findings of the searches, and highlights any legal issues (for example, if there is anything which may affect how the property is used) which will need to be dealt with before contracts can be exchanged.

RICS: This stands for the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. RICS is a worldwide professional body that promotes and enforces the highest international standards in valuing, managing and developing land, properties, construction and infrastructure.

Safeguarding: This is part of the planning process, designed to help the Government and us to make sure that land needed to build and operate the railway is protected from conflicting development that might otherwise take place. As well as helping to protect land, issuing safeguarding directions also triggers statutory blight. This means that property owners living in the areas safeguarding applies to (safeguarded areas) may be able to serve a Blight Notice asking the SoS to buy their property before we need it for building the railway.

Statutory blight: The term used to describe a situation where a property is blighted in a legal sense, such as if it is in a development plan or land safeguarded for a specific purpose or is included within a compulsory purchase order.

Tenure: The term used to describe how land and buildings and held and occupied, e.g. Freehold or Leasehold.

Title pack: Official documents relating to your property.

Unblighted market value: The value of the property in current market conditions, as if there were no plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection.

Vacant Possession: Unless it has been agreed that you will rent back your property, you must hand over an empty property, including the loft and any outbuildings. This is known as vacant possession. You are responsible for making sure that you have removed all of your possessions, in line with the fittings and contents form. You should also make sure that, if the property is vacant before the Completion Date, no squatters are living there.

2 Initial discussions and appointing an Adviser

If you are considering serving a Blight Notice or would like to find out more information, please contact our Land & Property Team. We can explain more about the process and the information that should be submitted with a Blight Notice. This may help you gather information to consider your next steps. You can contact us via:

Freephone (UK): 08081 434 434

Minicom: 08081 456 472

Email: enquiries@raildevelopment.org.uk

The existing law around statutory compensation and Statutory Blight is complicated and based on written law and more than 100 years of case law (court cases) – this is known collectively as the Compensation Code. We strongly advise you to get professional advice from a chartered surveyor experienced in compulsory purchase (including advising on Statutory Blight) who has appropriate professional indemnity insurance. Please see the sections on The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV), below.

If we accept your Blight Notice you may be able to claim back the professional fees you have paid. You will not usually be able to claim back professional (or other) fees if we reject your Blight Notice. Your Advisor must agree a clear fee arrangement with you in writing before starting work and say how much the fee will be or how they will calculate it. You are responsible for paying the fees but you can include reasonable fees as part of your compensation claim where a Blight Notice is accepted.

You should encourage your Adviser to agree the basis for their fee with us at the start of their work. If they do not, there is an increased risk that we may not agree to include all the fees in the compensation if we do not think they are reasonable.

You will also need to appoint a legal Adviser such as a solicitor, legal executive or licensed conveyancer to represent you in transferring your property once your compensation claim has been agreed.

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) is a worldwide professional body that promotes and enforces the highest international standards in valuing, managing, and developing land, real estate, construction, and infrastructure.

The RICS has produced a Consumer Guide giving a clear, impartial guide to compulsory purchase at **cpo-consumer-guide.pdf** (**ricsfirms.com**)

The RICS operates a service to refer you to a qualified person in your area that specialises in compulsory purchase. You can search the RICS website for a regulated RICS member firm to provide you with a free 30 minute initial consultation at **https://www.ricsfirms.com/residential/legal-issues/compulsory-purchase/**

You can contact the RICS by email via **contactrics@rics.org** or by phone to RICS Helpline on **024 7686 8555**.

The RICS has produced a professional standard to provide its members with mandatory professional behaviour and competence expectations in providing advice on compulsory purchase (including blight). The most recent version of this (2nd edition) was issued on 23 December 2024 - **https://www.rics.org/profession-standards/rics-standards-and-guidance/sector-standards/land-standards/surveyors-advising-in-respect-of-compulsory-purchase-and-statutory-compensation-uk.**

On appointment, a RICS surveyor will confirm that they will comply with the professional standard and offer you a copy. If they do not provide you with things such as the terms of engagement and the basis for their fees, you should request them.

Central Association of Agricultural Valuers

The Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) is a specialist professional body representing, qualifying and briefing members practising in a diverse range of agricultural and rural work throughout England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

CAAV members are agricultural and rural valuers who provide professional advice and valuation expertise on issues affecting the countryside, including compulsory purchase of land and farming business advice. The CAAV has also published the 'Good Practice in Statutory Compensation Claims' for its members to reference when providing advice to clients.

You can search the CAAV website to find a CAAV member in your local area at **www.caav.org.uk/find-a-caav-member** or contact the CAAV by phone via 01452 831815, by email to **enquire@caav.org.uk** or by post at Harts Barn Farmhouse, Monmouth Road, Longhope, Gloucestershire GL17 0QD.

2.1 Need to Sell property scheme

The Need to Sell (NTS) property scheme provides support for property owners who have a compelling need to sell their property but are unable to do so, other than at a substantially reduced value, because of the scheme.

Owner-occupiers who are not eligible to serve a Blight Notice may be able to apply under the NTS property scheme. Your property does not need to be within the safeguarded area for you to be eligible to apply under the scheme. You can find more information on the scheme at: **www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk**.

If you have an active or refused application under the Need to Sell Scheme and your property is now within the safeguarded area (either all or part), you may be eligible to serve a Blight Notice.

The HS2 Ltd Land & Property Team will contact you to discuss this if you:

- Have applied for the Need to Sell Scheme but your application was refused;
- Have an ongoing application under the Need to Sell Scheme;
- Have contacted us to discuss the Need to Sell Scheme but have not yet applied; or
- Been accepted on the Need to Sell Scheme but have not yet sold your property to us.

3 The Statutory Blight process

This section sets out the steps involved in submitting a Blight Notice to ask us to buy your property. Section 3.1 sets out a summary of the process of submitting a Blight Notice and further detail can be found in Section 4.

3.1 Summary of key steps and time scales

Initial discussions and appointing an Adviser

Eligibility and completing a Blight Notice

Service of the Blight Notice

Review of the Blight Notice and offer of a meeting

Decision

We will confirm our decision within two calendar months of service of your Blight Notice.

3.2 Express Purchase

If your property is in safeguarding the Government offer an Express Purchase scheme which, if you qualify, relaxes some of the rules that normally apply to statutory blight, making it easier for you to sell your property to the government.

This scheme applies to properties in the surface safeguarding area and Extended Homeowner Protection Zone only.

Express Purchase simplifies the Blight Notice scheme in two ways. When an owner-occupier who qualifies for statutory blight and owns a property within the safeguarded area serves a Blight Notice on the Secretary of State, the Government may choose to accept the notice:

• regardless of whether we would need the property to build or operate the railway, as long as the property is fully within the safeguarded area; and

• without asking you to show that you have made reasonable efforts to sell the property.

The Government may choose not to accept the notice if, for example, we would only need the airspace above the property to temporarily swing the arm of a crane or for other overhead construction access.

Express purchase will be available to eligible owner-occupiers whose property falls entirely within the safeguarded area.

For eligible property owners whose properties are only partly within the safeguarded area, we will consider each Blight Notice on a case-by-case basis. If we need any part of your property for the railway, we will assess whether any part of it (generally the home) is within the safeguarded area. If it is, express purchase will apply. If no part of the home is within the safeguarded area, but more than 25% of the property (that is, the whole of the property, including the house, garden and land) is within the safeguarded area, express purchase will still apply. If 25% or less of the property is within the safeguarded area, we will assess your application using the principles of statutory blight. Under these principles, we will assess whether we need any part of your property to build or operate the railway.

We will look at whether we can take the part we need without 'seriously affecting the amenity or convenience' of the property. Tests for whether it is appropriate to take part of a property are different for commercial and agricultural properties.

If you do not agree with the decision to serve a counter-notice, you can refer the matter to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber), who will make a decision on the issue. You must do this within one month of receiving the counter notice. Express purchase will only apply in areas of surface safeguarding. This means it will not apply to properties that are above for example bored tunnels, unless the Government has announced specific measures for properties above tunnels.

3.3 Streamlined Residential Blight (SRB) scheme

The SRB scheme does not replace the existing Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme, but runs alongside it. The SRB scheme is for owner-occupiers living in residential homes in the area of Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection whose Blight Notice has been accepted by the Government.

The SRB scheme aims to provide a quicker route to sell your home as the process does not require negotiation on the property value and disturbance items.

The SRB scheme provides for the unblighted market value of your home to be established by two independent RICS Red Book valuations (a third valuation will be needed if the two valuations are more than 10% apart). A fixed sum disturbance payment of £7,000, in addition to stamp duty, professional fees, legal fees and a home loss payment is also paid.

It will still be possible for claimants to withdraw from the SRB scheme and revert to the normal process of selling. However, there is a £1,000 fee for doing this.

For further information on the SRB scheme please see the SRB scheme guide at
www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk

4 Eligibility

4.1 Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria for Blight is set out in legislation. When serving a Blight Notice, you should provide evidence that you can satisfy all the criteria. It is in your interest to provide as much evidence as possible to support your Blight Notice.

4.2 Does your property fall within one of the descriptions of blighted land?

You can only serve a Blight Notice if your property is 'blighted land' as defined in the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

Land and buildings can be blighted where they are safeguarded for the railway or authorised to be compulsorily acquired by a special enactment or authorised to be compulsorily acquired by a Transport and Works Act order or by an order granting development consent (or where the order has been applied for).

Please speak to our Land & Property Team if you need any support to understand our proposals and the safeguarding area.

4.3 Do you have a qualifying interest in the property that you want us to buy?

To be eligible for Statutory Blight, you need to provide evidence that you have a qualifying interest in a hereditament (or part of a hereditament) or an agricultural unit (or part of a unit).

A hereditament is a property that is rated, e.g. a house with a single council tax entry or commercial property with a rateable value. It is also explained as being any property or piece of land that can be inherited. What constitues a hereditament can be a complicated matter and your Advisor should be able to provide advice on this.

An agricultural unit is land which is occupied as a unit for agricultural purposes, including any home or other building occupied by the same person for the purpose of farming the land. Agricultural purposes are horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing, dairy farming, breeding and keeping livestock, using land as grazing land, meadow land, willow beds, market gardens or nursery grounds, and using land for woodland in a way that supports farming of land for other agricultural purposes.

The types of qualifying interests are listed in the table below.

Do I have an interest in the property which qualifies me to apply?
YES – I am a freeholder or a leaseholder (with at least three years left on my lease) of a property which is fully or partly within the safeguarded area, and one of the following applies:
I am an owner-occupier of a private residential property that is my main home.
I am an owner-occupier of business premises that have an annual rateable value of no more than £44,200 in Greater London or £36,000 for the rest of England.
I am an owner- occupier of an Agricultural Unit. (Note, a Blight Notice can be served by a farming partnership even where partners own separate parts of the agricultural unit).

Do I have an interest in the property which qualifies me to apply?
I am a personal representative of someone who has died and who had a qualifying interest (as set out in the three columns to the left) at the time of their death.
I am a mortgage lender (for example, a bank) with a right to sell the property and who can give immediate Vacant Possession.

4.4 Do you meet the occupancy requirements?

You will also need to show that you meet the occupancy or other requirements as set out in the table below:

Occupancy requirements	
Residential Properties	You must be living in the property on the date you serve the Blight Notice and must have owned it and lived in it as your main home for at least six months before that date. **Or** If the property is empty: you must have lived there as your main home for at least six months before it became empty; it must not have been empty for more than 12 months; and it must not have been occupied by anyone else since.
Business Premises	You must have a qualifying interest in the premises on the date you serve a Blight Notice and must have owned or leased it for at least six months before that date and have run a business from there throughout this time. **Or** If the property is empty, you must have run a business from there for at least six months before it became empty, if it has not been empty for more than 12 months.
Non-residents	If you are a mortgagee, you must have the right to sell the property and be able to give immediate Vacant Possession. If you are the representative of someone who has died, the HM Land Registry title for the property does not need to be updated with the names of beneficiaries under the will. You can prove you have the right to sell the property by submitting relevant documents such as a death certificate, will, grant of probate, or letters of administration

Occupancy requirements	
Agricultural Unit	You must have a qualifying interest in the Agricultural Unit and have occupied it for at least six months before serving the Blight Notice. **Or** If the Agricultural Unit is not occupied you must have a qualifying interest in it and must have occupied it for at least six months before it became empty, if it has not been empty for more than 12 months. For an agricultural unit we need the following evidence to show that you occupy the land: • Printouts of the individual field parcels from your Rural Payments Agency (RPA) online account. These will show maps with RPA land parcel numbers, the total area, and the area that qualifies for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). • A copy of the relevant year's BPS application form. This will show details of the parcels relating to your BPS claim, which can be cross-referenced against the printouts from the RPA online account. • A claim statement showing that you have been paid. This will confirm that you made an eligible claim under the BPS and that from the RPA's point of view you were entitled to run a farming business from the land.

4.5 Have you made reasonable efforts to sell your property?

You will need to provide evidence that you have made reasonable efforts to sell your property and have been unable to do so. You will need to demonstrate what those efforts were. Those efforts should include marketing the property with a local estate agent. If marketing the property is not possible, you should still provide evidence to demonstrate the efforts you made to sell the property.

For example:

- You might have asked a local estate agent to market the property. You may have done this in person or by phone, email or post. You should provide details of the estate agent's response. If you didn't get a response, you may wish to still give us details of your original approach to them as this will help us to understand the efforts you made.

- If an estate agent explains, for example, that they would market your property only for a special upfront fee to reflect the fact that the property is in the safeguarded area and is unlikely to sell, please tell us about that too and provide evidence of this.

5 The Blight Notice

5.1 Completing a Blight Notice

A Blight Notice is a legal document, the form of which is set out in The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992. You can download a copy of a standard Blight Notice form from **www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk**.

When you serve a Blight Notice you will need to provide evidence setting out how you meet the relevant eligibility criteria. This section of the guide explains the eligilbility criteria that you will need to meet to be eligible for Blight.

You should serve your Blight Notice over the whole of a single property interest (a Hereditament), such as a house or an agricultural unit. We recommend that you take advice from your Adviser regarding this.

The information you provide will need to be supported by clear evidence to demonstrate that you are eligible. You can find more details of the evidence we require in our Blight Notice Information Questionnaire. The questionnaire needs to be expanded to provide this.

You will find all the relevant documents at: **www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk**

We will respond to your Blight Notice within two months of you serving your Blight Notice. If your Blight Notice is accepted, you will have three years and two months from the date of you serving the Notice to submit a Blight Claim and sell your property to us or to refer your case to Tribunal. We would usually expect the process to be completed in this time.

5.2 Serving a Blight Notice

To serve a Blight Notice you will need to complete and submit a Blight Notice, and provide the following:

- Blight Notice
- Supporting evidence. We prefer to see original or certified copies of evidence so we can ensure the information is correct. We will check your original documents and return them to you securely.
- Blight Notice Information Questionnaire (**www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk**) – this will help us in providing background information to your application.

You can:

- Post the documents using Royal Mail Special Delivery (or equivalent postage) to:
  The Secretary of State for Transport,
  c/o High Speed Two (HS2) Limited Land & Property Team,
  Two Snow Hill Queensway,
  Birmingham B4 6GA

- Email the documents to **blightnotice@raildevelopment.org.uk**

- You can email your Blight Notice and supporting information, but we prefer to see the any original or certified copies of evidence within 10 days of service of your Blight Notice. If you choose to email your Blight Notice, we recommend that you also attach a copy of the email when you send us the original or certified copies of your supporting evidence. We will check your original/certified documents and return them to you as soon as possible after receiving your Blight Notice.

We will take copies of all documents and return the originals/certified copies to you. If it is not possible to produce a clear copy of the document (due to its age or condition), we may need to keep the original/certified copy until a decision on your Blight Notice has been made. Your Case Manager will tell you if we need to do this.

5.3 Providing evidence for your Blight Notice

The different sections of the Blight Notice form are called 'schedules'. In schedule 1 of the Blight Notice, you should explain your qualifying interest and provide a list of any other people with an interest in the property that you know about (for example mortgage providers or tenants), and their names and addresses.

We prefer that the evidence you provide is either original documents or certified copies, and should include:

- proof of ownership (if the property contains more than one title, provide all titles), which might be the epitome of title document, the conveyance to the current owner, a copy of the Land Registry entry, or a copy of the lease; and
- proof that the property has been occupied for the required length of time (see Section 4.4).

All applicants

We need two documents, which must be from different organisations. You can provide one document from List A and one document from List B, or two documents from List A. (See both lists below.)

All documents must include your name and the address of the property. If you are not submitting your application through a suitably experienced and qualified chartered surveyor, we prefer that these documents are originals or certified copies of paper statements (that is, not printed from the internet or from an electronic copy). This may mean you need to ask organisations for paper copies.

- **If you are the owner-occupier of the property when you apply**, you need to provide one piece of evidence from List A and one from either List A or List B. One piece of evidence from List A must be dated as close as possible to the date of the Blight Notice and within the three months immediately before the date you serve the Blight Notice. The second piece of evidence should then be dated at least six months before the date of the first piece of evidence and within the last 18 months. (If you have moved into the property within this six-month period, we would need further evidence to show you have lived there for six months.)
- **If a property is empty, you may still be eligible to apply.** You will need to provide evidence that the property has been empty for no longer than 12 months from the date you serve the Blight Notice and that you occupied it for at least six months before it became empty. We would expect to see evidence of the date you left the property, together with two pieces of evidence showing the property was occupied for six months before it became empty.

List A	List B
A recent bank or building society statement that shows the date it was issued (or one showing transactions from within the last three months)	Utility bill (for example, gas, electricity, water or landline phone)
A mortgage statement	Local authority tax bill (for example, a council tax or business rates bill)
A recent credit card statement that shows the date it was issued (or one showing transactions from within the last three months)	Home contents insurance certificate for the address for the relevant period. If you want to submit this, you will also need to provide the buildings insurance certificate for the property for the same period (if they are separate), to show you have both buildings and contents insurance.
Loan statements or a student loan statement	
Documents and correspondence about the State Pension, tax credits, Universal Credit or other benefits	
Private pension statements (if you currently receive a pension)	

(You can blank out any financial figures and account numbers as we need these documents for evidence of occupation only.)

Further evidence

We also ask that:

- **Owner-occupiers** of business premises provide a business rates bill.
- **Mortgage providers** provide details of any mortgage roll or reference number and full contact details for the mortgage provider; and confirmation of vacant possession.
- **Personal representatives of someone who has died**: As well as evidence from List A and List B, we will need:
  - a death certificate
  - power of attorney
  - grant of probate
  - last will and testament; and
  - letters of administration

We may ask for further proof to confirm statements and we will check the electoral roll or other sources to confirm statements you have made.

Examples of evidence that we cannot accept:

- Provisional or full driving licence
- National Insurance card
- Mobile phone bill
- Letter from a GP, dentist or similar
- TV licence and other related documents

Certified copies

If certified copies can be provided, they should be certified by a UK solicitor, accountant, a doctor listed on the General Medical Council website, or a bank manager only. They should write 'I certify this document is a true copy of the original', sign it, and write their name, profession, the date, and the name and address of their employer on each page of the copied document (and not over the top of other text). Keep a note of this person's name and address so that we can contact them if necessary. We also accept copies of documents which have been certified using the official Post Office Identity Document Checking Service. If you use this service we will need the original filled-in checking service form and the original till receipt from the post office. Please can you ensure that we receive your application no later than two months from the date on the till receipt.

If you cannot provide originals or certified copies, when you make your application you should explain why the originals are unavailable.

For Schedule 2 of your Blight Notice you will need to provide a plan with the boundaries of the property clearly marked.

5.4 How we review and decide on your Blight Notice

We will acknowledge receipt of your Blight Notice and we will check it to see whether or not you have provided enough evidence to meet the eligibility criteria for Statutory Blight. You can find more details of the evidence we need in our Blight Notice Information Questionnaire available at **www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk**.

If we do not have enough evidence, we will tell you what additional evidence we consider is necessary. We ask you to supply any missing information within 10 working days. If you do not provide a satisfactory response within 10 working days, we may reject your application by serving a counter notice, as set out in Section 5.5.

If we have enough evidence, we will decide whether to accept your Blight Notice (see Section 5.4) or reject your Blight Notice (see Section 5.5). We have two months from the date of service of your Blight Notice to respond to accept or reject it. If you do not receive a response within this time, the Blight Notice will have automatically been accepted.

5.5 If we accept your Blight Notice

If we accept your Blight Notice, this means that a 'Notice to Treat' ('NTT') has been served on the date 2 months from the date the Blight Notice was served. A 'Notice to Treat' creates an obligation to sell (and for us to buy) the property.

A NTT will expire after three years unless:

- compensation has been agreed, awarded or paid into court
- a General Vesting Declaration ('GVD') has been executed to acquire the property
- entry onto and possession of the property has been taken
- a reference is made to the Tribunal to determine the level of compensation payable

If any of these steps have been taken, then the NTT remains live. None of these actions require the property to have been sold (i.e. a completed transfer) within the 3-year period.

We will confirm in the letter accepting a Blight Notice that you will now be able to submit a Blight Claim. We will also offer you and your Advisor a meeting to discuss the process for selling your property. This will give you the opportunity to meet your case officer and our property Advisor and discuss what is set out in Section 6.

If you are eligible, you can at this stage chose to proceed with the streamlined process (see Section 3.3 and the SRB scheme guide for further details).

5.6 If we do not accept your Blight Notice

If we decide not to accept your Blight Notice, we will send you a counter notice which will set out the reasons for our decision. The counter notice will reference one or more of the Seven Grounds (A-G) set out in section 151(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. If the Blight Notice relates to an agricultural unit, any counter-notice may also reference section 159.

If we serve a counter notice and you accept our decision, then that Blight Notice is concluded and no longer has any legal effect. At this point, you may still submit a further Blight Notice, but you cannot have two Blight Notices at the same time for related to the same interest in property. Any further Blight Notice should contain new information or details of how your circumstances have changed, as it is very unlikely that resubmitting a Blight Notice with the same information would result in a different outcome.

If you do not agree with our decision, you may wish to consult with your Adviser and consider whether to make a reference to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber). The Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) must receive this reference within one month from the date of service of the counter notice.

If your Blight Notice is not accepted, then you may be able to make an application to the Need to Sell scheme.

6 Selling your property

This section sets out how you sell your property through Statutory Blight. We will also offer you and your Adviser a meeting to discuss the process for selling your property. This will give you the opportunity to meet your case officer and our property Adviser and discuss what is set out in Section 6 below.

6.1 Submission of your Blight Claim

You can use the Model Claim Form available at the following link: **www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk**. A suitably qualified Adviser will be able to support you to complete your claim form, identify the statutory compensation you may be eligible for and negotiate your claim. See Section 6.2 for details of the compensation you may be entitled to claim.

We will appoint an Adviser to negotiate and agree the Blight Claim with you or your Adviser.

Our Adviser will arrange to visit your property, ideally within two weeks of receiving your claim, to inspect it for valuation purposes and to carry out a building survey (typically a RICS Level 3 Home Survey – see House surveys: The costs, types and benefits of one | RICS). We must do this to help assess the property's market value and consider anything that may affect it, such as the property's general state of repair (but not the effects of the railway).

6.2 What would you be entitled to if the acquiring authority agrees to buy your property?

The aim of compulsory purchase compensation is to put you in the same financial position as you were before the acquiring authority bought your property, as far as is reasonable. The categories of compensation (or heads of claim) paid to property owners are detailed in the Compensation Code which sets out the principles used for assessing compensation. These categories are summarised below:

Market value: this is the value of the land if it had been sold on the open market ('open market value') by a willing seller at the valuation date.

The assessment of compensation will ignore any increase or decrease in value caused by the scheme underlying the compulsory purchase (e.g. regeneration project, housing, new road, railway line etc) or the prospect of that scheme. This is known as the 'no scheme principle.

The value is generally negotiated by our agents and recommended to us to accept. We do not accept offer prices, RICS Red Book Valuations, or the views of local estate agents as suitable evidence as they do not represent evidence of actual sales.

When assessing the open market value of land compulsorily purchased, account may be taken of values attributable to the prospect of planning permission being granted on the land in the future. This is often referred to as "hope value". A landowner has 2 different ways of claiming hope value either reflecting:

- the prospect of a planning permission being granted on the land for an alternative use or development; or
- appropriate alternative development being established on the land for which planning permission may be assumed

If you claim development value or hope value, it may restrict your ability to claim certain elements of disturbance compensation.

Severance and Injurious Affection: if we buy only part of your property (following a counter-notice under section 151(4)(c)), you may be entitled to compensation not only for the land we take but also for any reduction in the value of the land you keep. ‘Severance’ is the term used to describe the reduction in value of retained land where only part of a property is taken. ‘Injurious Affection’ refers to the reduction in value of the kept land as a result of constructing and using the railway and will not usually be relevant to a Blight acquisition.

In these circumstances, we usually assess compensation using a ‘before and after’ valuation, to consider the combined effect on value. We will also need to consider any increase in value, or ‘betterment’, of the land you keep.

Please ask your Advisor for more details on this if you think it would apply to your property. This is a complicated area of compensation law and this may or may not apply to your circumstances.

Disturbance compensation: this covers reasonable additional costs and losses you have because of your move (for example, removal expenses and Stamp Duty Land Tax for a replacement property, capped at the value of your current property). A list of items you may be able to claim for is found in Appendix 1 at the end of this guide.

When claiming compensation, you have a duty to keep such losses to a minimum. We will not accept a claim for losses that could reasonably have been avoided. Your professional Adviser (legal Adviser or a surveyor) will be able to help with this claim.

Statutory loss payments: Statutory loss payments compensate you for the inconvenience and disruption of selling your property under Statutory Blight or Compulsory Purchase. There are different loss payments depending on whether the property is residential or non-residential. This will include home loss payments, basic loss payments or occupier loss payments, as applicable to the interest acquired.

Fees: compensation for reasonable professional fees that you have to pay due to us buying your property. They will need to be reasonable in relation to the scale and complexity of the claim.

6.3 Reaching agreement

Following the property visit, our Adviser will give us their initial views on your compensation claim. They will then begin negotiations with your Adviser to reach a provisional agreement on the Unblighted Market Value of your property and any other disturbance compensation. This provisional agreement will be ‘subject to contract’ and subject to our approval. The length of this stage depends on how easily we can agree the claim. In straightforward cases, we would expect to agree compensation relatively quickly. However, it can take a number of months to reach agreement.

Once your and our Advisers have reached a figure that they (and you) are happy with, our Adviser will give us their report and a recommendation for compensation. An agreement with our Adviser at this stage is ‘subject to contract’.

Our case officer will then ask for formal approval as part of our internal governance process. They need this approval to be able to make a firm offer and move on to the conveyancing (selling your current property).

At this stage the price must remain subject to contract, as the checks made during the conveyancing stage can sometimes mean the price has to be reviewed or even reduced.

If there has been a significant period between the inspection and providing the final report, we may need to inspect the property again.

This is also the time when you may want to commission surveys for the property you want to move to. You will need to make sure your property Adviser is aware of this and includes the surveys in your claim before we reach agreement (depending on our approval) if you are looking to claim these costs.

6.4 What happens if we are unable to reach agreement on compensation

We will work with you to reach an agreement on your Blight Claim. However, there may be circumstances where we are unable to reach an agreement. The following options should be considered if this is the case:

Meeting with all parties

If, after negotiations, we still disagree on your claim (or parts of the claim), we will usually ask for an 'agents and principals' meeting between you, your case manager and both our agents. The aim of this meeting is to try to settle the points being disputed and help both parties to fully understand each other's positions. The meeting will look at why negotiations have broken down and see if they can be restarted.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

If it becomes clear that we are unable to reach an agreement, we will explore the reasons for this with you or your Adviser and consider different means of ADR as a way of progressing negotiations. This is a quicker and cheaper way of reaching a solution than referring the case to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber). ADR uses an independent third party to try to settle differences. Some examples of ADR include mediation, independent expert witness determination and early neutral evaluation. The most appropriate form of ADR may depend on the specific circumstances and can be discussed if an agreement is unable to be reached.

Upper Tribunal

If we can't reach agreement then either party may refer the case to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) for determination of the compensation payable. Either party can refer the claim to the Upper Tribunal once your Blight Notice has been accepted. There is a 6-year limitation period from the date of the NTT to make a reference to the Upper Tribunal, after which any claim will be statute barred. However, the NTT must still be live to allow a reference to the Upper Tribunal to be made (see Section 4.8, above).

Reference to the Upper Tribunal is a formal process. The role of the Upper Tribunal is to determine the level of compensation payable, which might relate to a point of law that will affect the level of compensation payable.

The costs of referring a case to the Upper Tribunal can be high and you should always get professional advice before you do this. However, the Upper Tribunal is usually the last step if an agents and principals meeting or ADR is unsuccessful. Once a case is referred to the Upper Tribunal, the Upper Tribunal will issue directions that set out a proposed plan to manage your case, and may hold a hearing to assess how much compensation you must be paid. This can be a lengthy process.

Before any reference to the Upper Tribunal is made, the parties should consider and follow the guidance set out in the Compulsory Purchase Association's Land Compensation Claims Protocol 2024: **https://compulsorypurchaseassociation.org/land-compensation-claims-protocol-1.html**. The Upper Tribunal expects the Protocol to be followed.

6.5 Conveyancing

The process to sell your property, known as conveyancing, can only begin after the acquiring authority has agreed the price to buy your property.

Conveyancing usually takes around three months, although this can vary from case to case. You can also have some control over the timescales, such as asking for completion to be delayed until you can move into your new property. This is the same as for a normal sale.

The table below shows the key steps in the process.

Summary of the Conveyancing Process
We instruct a legal Adviser to start the conveyancing once agreement has been reached and governance approval obtained.
↓
Once we've instructed our solicitors to start the conveyancing process, they'll contact your legal adviser to request a title pack. The title pack contains several documents we call protocol forms. Our solicitors will carry out detailed checks to see if there are any issues that could affect the sale, such as a planning application. We complete searches to find out about the property and make sure we're paying the right price. Our solicitors review the documents they receive, such as the protocol forms and searches. This review identifies any issues that need to be addressed. Your legal adviser may ask you to take out indemnity insurance, at your cost, to cover such issues
↓
Once all queries have been resolved, we'll send a draft contract and transfer to your legal adviser. These documents confirm the sale of your property and transfer ownership.
↓
Our legal Adviser will produce a report on title when the draft Contract is agreed with you and your legal Adviser.
↓
Our agent will review the report on title and confirm if it affects their view on value.
↓
A Pre-Completion Inspection is arranged and completed. The survey is needed to ensure we can put necessary measures in place on the day of completion for ongoing management of the property.
↓
We will arrange for funds to be transferred to our legal Adviser. They receive the funds within 10 working days of our request and send the Contract and Transfer documents to the acquiring authority to be signed.
↓
The acquiring authority needs five working days from receiving the Contract and Transfer to return the signed documents.
↓

Summary of the Conveyancing Process
Once the contract and transfer documents are agreed, signed by you, and returned to us, the Department for Transport will sign and seal them on behalf of the Secretary of State. Our solicitors will then agree a completion date with you. This is the final exchange of legal documents confirming the completion date. We pay a 10% deposit to your legal adviser. On completion day, you hand over the keys to our agents who will carry out a final inspection and release the remaining 90% of the purchase price to your legal adviser. We reserve the right to postpone completion if there are any issues on the day.

7 Contact details and further information

7.1 How you can contact us

To contact the HS2 Ltd Land & Property Team:

- Call us on **08081 434 434**
- Email us on **enquiries@raildevelopment.org.uk**
- Minicom: **08081 456 472**
- Write to us at **High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd , Two Snow Hill, Queensway, Birmingham B4 6GA**

To submit your Blight Notice or Blight Claim:

Please send in your Blight Notice, along with our Information Questionnaire and supporting evidence, using Royal Mail Special Delivery (or equivalent postage) to

High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd, Two Snow Hill, Queensway, Birmingham B4 6GA

You can also email documents to **blightnotice@raildevelopment.org.uk**

We will need to see the original copies of evidence within 10 days of you emailing your Blight Notice for review. If you choose to email your Blight Notice, we recommend that you also attach a copy of the email when you send us the original copies of your supporting evidence.

Once you have submitted your Blight Notice, you will be provided with a named Case Manager who will be your main point of contact if you have any questions.

If you have any issues, concerns or wish to make a complaint:

If you have issues, concerns or wish to make a complaint, please do not hesitate to get in touch so we can investigate and quickly find a good resolution. You can do this by:

- raising the issue with your named Case Manager; or
- contacting our Land & Property Team in any of the ways set out above.

7.2 Managing personal information

We may share information with organisations and individuals that have a legitimate interest in buying and selling your land and property under statutory blight. We have a duty to protect public funds, and we may also share information with other Government departments and agencies for that reason or to prevent and detect crime or fraud. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the railway.

We may reject your application if you give false or inaccurate information in it. We will carry out security and anti-fraud checks on the information and supporting evidence you provide.

For more details on how we use your information, how we keep your information secure, and your rights to access the information we hold about you, please visit **www.hs2.org.uk/about-us/documents/privacy-notice/**.

If you have any questions about your right to access your personal information, you can contact us by any of the ways set out above.

Appendix 1: Typical disturbance claim items

Item	Explanation
Removal expenses	We will pay no more than the removal costs to a similar-sized property, usually up to 50 miles from your current property. You will need to get three quotations, and we will normally pay the lowest quotation. If you are moving to a rented property, we will only pay for this move. If you are moving abroad it is unlikely that we will pay your full removal expenses.
Redirected post	You can claim Royal Mail Redirection costs as well as the cost of redirecting business post (if this applies). This is normally for a period of up to 12 months.
Building or other surveys	We will pay the reasonable costs (including VAT if this applies) of a building survey on your new property. We will also pay for other surveys we consider reasonable, such as electrical or gas surveys.
Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT)	We will pay the SDLT on your new property, capped at the unblighted agreed purchase price of your current property (that is, the value of the property as if there were no plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection). If you pay less than this for the property you are moving to, we will pay the SDLT on the lower amount.
Mortgage costs	If you are not able to transfer your current mortgage, we will consider paying reasonable costs associated with a new mortgage, such as early redemption costs, mortgage arrangement fees, brokers' fees, valuation fees and legal fees. If you can transfer your mortgage we will pay the lender's valuation and legal fees involved in doing so.
Special adaptations to your new property	If you need the same adaptions to your new property that you have at your current property, you may be able to claim for these, but we will need quotations. These adaptions may help with safety or independence, for example, stairlifts, ramps, grab rails or adapting your home for wheelchair use.
Carpets and floor coverings	We will not cover the cost of carpets and floor coverings at your new property. The price we are paying for your current property and the price you pay for your new property will reflect any value of the floor coverings.
Curtains and blinds	We will not normally cover the cost of new curtains or blinds. If the property you are buying does not include curtains or blinds and you have fitted curtains or blinds in your current property, as long as their value is not included in the price we pay for your property, we may refund the cost of them. The cost will need to reflect the age and condition of the curtains or blinds being replaced – we will not provide new for old.

Item	Explanation
Telephone	We will normally cover the cost of a telephone reconnection charge at your new property.
Satellite TV	We will normally cover the cost of reconnecting satellite TV at your new property if it was connected at the property we have bought.
Skip hire	We would not normally cover the cost of skip hire as you should have vacant possession (be able to move straight in), and usually be moving into a similar-sized property.
Solar panels	If we agree that the solar panels on your current property do not increase or reduce its value and can be removed without damaging the roof or the property, we will pay the reasonable costs of removing them and reinstalling them at the new property. If they cannot be removed, the unblighted market value would reflect this.
Greenhouses and sheds	We do not cover the costs of these as they are usually fixed items and included in the sale of a property.
Hot tubs	If these are considered not to be part of the unblighted purchase price (the value of the property as if there were no plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection) and can be moved, we will pay the reasonable costs of taking them to your new property.
Pets	If pets need to be out of the property during a move, we will pay the reasonable costs of this.
Personal/ management time	We will consider compensating you for income you have lost because of time you have spent on your case. The time must have been reasonably and properly incurred and evidence of the loss will be required.
Personal mileage	We will pay personal mileage in line with HM Revenue & Customs mileage rates) for you to carry out a reasonable number of local viewings of properties to buy.
Your surveyor's professional fees	We will agree a fee rate and what the work will cover with your surveyor, who will send us filled-in timesheets. Further guidance is also provided by the RICS in their professional statement: Surveyors advising in respect of compulsory purchase and statutory compensation, previously mentioned.
Legal fees	You will need a legal advisor to deal with conveyancing (selling your current property and buying a replacement property). We will pay their reasonable fees and expenses in line with how complicated the claim is.

Item	Explanation
Business losses	If you use your property for business purposes (fully or partly), we may pay compensation for business you have lost if this could reasonably be considered a result of having to relocate. This would be for specific items, for example, new stationery, removals, a loss in value of stock, or the costs of telling customers your new address. In some circumstances it may not be possible to relocate your business and it will need to close. This might be because relocating would not be economically practical or because you are entitled to statutory compensation, for example if you are aged 60 or over. We suggest that you get professional advice on this.
Burial sites (this does not apply to pets)	We will pay the reasonable costs of moving remains and reburying them at a site nearby (the new property or a local cemetery). We will consider each case individually. We will not pay the costs of moving remains abroad.

Keeping you informed

We are committed to keeping you informed about work on Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection. This includes making sure you know what to expect and when to expect it, as well as how we can help.

Residents' and Construction Commissioner

The independent Residents' and Construction Commissioner oversees and monitors our work, making sure we fulfil our commitments to you.

The commissioner will monitor the way we manage and respond to complaints about construction and advises members of the public how to make complaints.

The commissioner helps settle disputes involving individuals and organisations that we can't resolve.

The commissioner can be contacted on:
hs2commissioner@dft.gov.uk

Property and compensation

You can find out all about Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection including how it affects properties along the route and if you could be entitled to compensation by visiting:
www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk

Holding us to account

If you are unhappy for any reason, you can make a complaint by contacting our Helpdesk team.

For more details on our complaints process, please visit our website:
www.hs2.org.uk/contact-us/how-to-complain/

Contact us

Our Helpdesk team are available all day, every day.

You can contact them by:

Freephone
08081 434 434

Minicom
08081 456 472

Email
enquiries@raildevelopment.org.uk

Write to

FREEPOST
HS2 Community Engagement

Website
www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk

Please contact us if you'd like a free copy of this document in large print, Braille, audio or easy read.

You can also contact us for help and information in a different language.

We are committed to protecting personal information. If you would like to know more about how we use your personal information, please see our privacy notice **www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-speed-two-ltd-privacy-notice**.