



Rail Development

Selling your home using the Streamlined Residential Blight scheme

Contents

Introduction	4
1 Glossary of terms	6
2 Streamlined Residential Blight (SRB) scheme	8
2.1 What is the Streamlined Residential Blight (SRB) scheme?	8
2.2 How is selling my home under the SRB scheme different to selling my home under the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme?	8
3 The step-by-step process once your blight notice has been accepted	9
3.1 Valuation and building survey	9
3.2 Appointing agents	9
3.3 Process to sell your home	9
3.4 Pre-completion report	11
3.5 Conveyancing process	11
4 What you will receive under the scheme	12
4.1 Market value	12
4.2 Fixed disturbance payments	13
4.3 Professional advisor fees	13
4.4 Legal fees	13
4.5 Stamp duty	13
4.6 Home loss payment	14
5 Help available to you	15
5.1 Land and Property Case Officer	15
5.2 Helpdesk	15
5.3 The Residents and Construction Commissioner	15
6 Frequently asked questions	16

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.

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.

HS2 Ltd is a non-departmental public body and their Rail Development Directorate is responsible for developing and promoting these proposals for the purposes of the Bill. The company works under the terms of a Development Agreement entered into with the Secretary of State for Transport.

Selling your home using the Streamlined Residential Blight scheme

This guidance is for property owners affected by Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection. It gives information about selling your home using the Streamlined Residential Blight (SRB scheme) and the compensation you can claim. We expect the SRB scheme to reduce timescales and minimise disruption for you when compared with the existing Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme.

The SRB scheme does not replace the existing Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme, but runs alongside it. Once the Government has accepted your blight notice, you can choose to sell your home using either the SRB scheme or the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme.

The guidance for selling your home using the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme is available at: **www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk**

The link above adds to our general guidance on safeguarding and serving a blight notice. This guidance is also available at: **www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk**

Disclaimer

The information in this booklet is for guidance only and does not replace professional advice. Using this information is voluntary, and we do not accept any liability for any false, incorrect or missing information.

1 Glossary of terms

Agricultural unit: 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, keeping and breeding 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 the farming of land or for other agricultural purposes.

Acquisition agent: The acquisition agent manages the purchase of your property on our behalf. They will be the person who has the most contact with you, our solicitor, the building surveyors and the managing agent. The acquisition agent will also arrange to hand over your property to the managing agent on the completion date, unless you are entering into a 'rent back' arrangement (see 'Can I ask to rent my property from the Government?' on page 18).

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.

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

Compulsory purchase compensation: Compensation will be made up of the unblighted market value of your home, and a fixed disturbance payment of £7,000 for costs and losses you have as a result of being disturbed from living in your property. There are also certain other payments you may be able to claim (see Section 2.1).

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

Exchange of contracts: When you and we are ready to legally commit to the sale, the two contracts are signed and exchanged, meaning we are both legally bound to the sale and purchase.

Express purchase: A discretionary scheme introduced by the SoS, which relaxes two conditions that apply to statutory blight (see Guide to serving a blight notice and selling your blighted property).

Fixed disturbance compensation: This is usually only available if you live in the property. It is compensation for reasonable further costs and losses you have as a result of having to move, such as removal expenses. (See Section 4 'What you will receive under the scheme' on page 12.)

Form of claim: Another term for the claim form you submit to us for compensation for selling your property to the Government under the existing statutory blight process.

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.

Managing agent: The managing agent is responsible for providing us with a pre-completion report, which will set out what we need to do on completion day. They will also be present on completion day to

receive the keys and to inspect your property to make sure that there have been no changes to it since the initial valuation inspections. If the property is in the same condition as it was and is vacant (if this applies), our solicitor will release the funds to allow completion to take place.

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.

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.

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.

Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme: A scheme you can use to sell your home once the Government has accepted your blight notice. It can be more complicated than selling your home privately. This is because a price has to be negotiated, and compensation covers more than just the market value of your property. The principles of compensation are complicated as they are made up of Acts of Parliament, previous court cases (‘case law’) and government guidance.

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.

2 Streamlined Residential Blight (SRB) scheme

2.1 What is the Streamlined Residential Blight (SRB) scheme?

The SRB scheme is for owner-occupiers living in homes in the area of Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection whose blight notice has been accepted by the Government.

The SRB scheme requires two independent Red Book valuations (a third valuation will be needed if the two valuations are more than 10% apart), to find the unblighted market value of your home. It also offers a fixed disturbance payment of £7,000.

- A Red Book valuation is a formal report that meets RICS' professional standards (these standards are also known as the Red Book). You will choose the first valuer, either from our pool of valuers or a valuer of your choosing (who must be registered with RICS) and we will choose the second from our pool of valuers.
- Under the SRB scheme we will award you a fixed disturbance payment of £7,000 to cover disturbance costs (the costs of being 'disturbed' from living in your property). We will not pay any further disturbance costs.

You are entitled to other costs and payments as well as the disturbance payment. We explain these in detail in section 4 – 'What you will receive under the scheme'. They include:

- a statutory home loss payment;
- stamp duty for your new property;
- legal fees (including VAT); and
- professional advisor fees (including VAT).

2.2 How is selling my home under the SRB scheme different to selling my home under the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme?

If you were to sell your home under the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme, both you and we would need to get initial valuations. Following the valuations, we would enter into negotiations with your professional advisor to agree on the unblighted market value of your home. Your disturbance costs would also be agreed through negotiation.

As no negotiations are needed when selling your home under the SRB scheme (because the disturbance payment is fixed and we use an average of two valuations (or three if more than 10% apart) to determine the value of your property), we expect the SRB process to be shorter and any disruption to you to be kept to a minimum.

3 The step-by-step process once your blight notice has been accepted

3.1 Valuation and building survey

We will arrange for the valuations to take place once:

- your blight notice has been accepted;
- you have told us you would like to use the SRB scheme; and
- you have confirmed your choice of valuer.

At the same time, we will arrange a building survey. We need the information from this survey to help set the unblighted market value for your property, as it will take into account anything that may affect its value, such as its general condition. This would take place for a normal house sale.

3.2 Appointing agents

Once you have accepted our offer, your case officer will appoint an acquisition agent to manage the purchase on our behalf. The acquisition agent will be the person who has most contact with you, our solicitor, the building surveyors and the property management agent. The acquisition agent will also discuss your preferred exchange date with you.

3.3 Process to sell your home

By accepting your blight notice, the SoS is considered to be authorised to compulsorily purchase your property and to serve a 'notice to treat' (which says they are willing to agree a price to buy it). The notice to treat is valid for three years and two months from the date that you served the blight notice.

The diagram opposite gives a brief overview of the steps in selling your property, using the SRB scheme, once your blight notice has been accepted.

These are rough timescales only and will depend on how fast and how accurately your solicitor responds to queries. If there are legal complications, queries may take longer to deal with. If this happens, the acquisition agent will discuss it with you and agree a new target date for completion.

Valuations

Once we have received your signed terms and conditions and choice of valuer, we will instruct both your valuer and ours. At the same time, we will also instruct a building survey.

As long as the valuation reports are within 10% of each other and a third valuation is not required, we will aim to give you your offer within six weeks of receiving your signed terms and conditions and choice of valuer.

If a third valuation is needed, we will contact you to discuss timescales.

The flowchart below shows the key steps in the SRB scheme following your acceptance of our offer and when approximately they will take place.

Week 1

The purchase process begins when we receive your written acceptance of our offer and you have instructed your solicitor. We will instruct the acquisition agent to manage the purchase on our behalf, and our solicitors to start the conveyancing. The acquisition agent will introduce themselves to you and agree a target date for completion. They will also arrange any specialist surveys, if necessary.



Weeks 2 to 4

Once our solicitors have received the title pack (official documents relating to the property) and the search results, they will raise any necessary enquiries with your solicitor. You will need to answer these enquiries as far as you can.



Weeks 5 to 6

The pre-completion report is arranged and completed. This report will set out what we need to do on completion day, including making your property safe and assessing whether we need to do any maintenance or repair work.



Week 8

If there are no complications, the 'Report on Title' is finalised and sent to the acquisition agent.



Week 9

The acquisition agent provides the final documents for approval.



Weeks 10-11

Our solicitors will send the Contract and Transfer documents to the Department for Transport to be signed.

The Department for Transport needs at least 10 working days from receiving the Contract and Transfer documents to returning the signed documents. The funds will also be transferred to our solicitors within this timeframe.



Week 12

A date for completion is agreed, giving the managing agent at least 10 working days' notice to make the necessary arrangements. Contracts can be exchanged.

3.4 Pre-completion report

This is a survey or assessment of your property before the conveyancing is completed. Our managing agent is responsible for providing us with this report. The report will set out what we need to do on completion day, including making your property safe and assessing whether we need to do any immediate maintenance or repair work.

The managing agent will also use the pre-completion report to see whether we need to carry out any health and safety tests and if the property needs certain certificates (for example, a gas safety certificate) before we can let it, if this applies.

3.5 Conveyancing process

Choose your solicitor carefully. Their performance will really affect your experience of selling your property. As with normal house sales, a solicitor will need to act on your behalf, so it is important you find an experienced and good-quality solicitor who has time to focus on your case.

Completing the sale is normally the 'full and final settlement', which means that your claim under the SRB scheme is settled.

This final stage in the process usually takes at least three months, as we need to:

- investigate a property title (to check what rights, if any, apply to the property);
- issue and receive property information forms (a set of enquiries or questions about the property);
- carry out property searches, reach agreement on the legal documents and transfer funds to the solicitor;
- complete the necessary assurance and approval process (along with the Department for Transport); and
- exchange contracts and complete the sale.

You can also have some control over the timescales, such as asking for completion to be delayed until you have found a property to buy.

4 What you will receive under the scheme

The aim of compulsory purchase compensation is to put you in the same financial position as you were in before the Government bought your home, as far as can reasonably be done.

Compensation will be made up of the unblighted market value of your home, and a fixed disturbance payment of £7,000 for costs and losses you have as a result of being disturbed from living in your property. There are also certain other payments you may be able to claim (see section 2.1).

The following represents what you will receive if your blight notice is accepted and you choose to sell your property under the SRB scheme.

4.1 Market value

The valuations of your property will be based on its unblighted open-market value (that is, its value in current market conditions as if there were no plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection). The valuations will be independent assessments of what the sale price (value) should be, and will be carried out by qualified chartered surveyors.

We establish the market value by having two valuations carried out by two independent valuers registered with RICS. One of the valuers will be chosen by us from a pool of chartered surveyors approved by us who are familiar with your area and have appropriate experience.

- You can choose another surveyor from our pool, or any valuer registered with RICS, who agrees to do the valuation (including agreeing conditions on the format of the valuation report and a maximum fee). The valuer must not have any conflicts of interest relating to you or your household (or anyone else connected to your application). For example, the valuer cannot represent you in your claim or be employed by or associated with the firm or the person who is representing you.
- We will arrange and pay for both valuations.
- If the valuations are within 10% of each other (we calculate this by taking the difference between the two values as a percentage of the higher value), your offer will be the average of the two.

If the valuations differ by more than 10%, we will arrange and pay for another valuation. This will be carried out by a valuer from our pool, chosen by you. We will give this third valuer the two previous valuation reports, with the valuation figures removed. Your offer will be the average of the two closest valuations. If three valuations have been done and there are no two closest figures (that is, the highest and lowest figures are of equal distance from the middle figure), we will use the middle valuation figure as the offer price.

The payment we offer you will be valid for 12 months from the date of the offer letter. However, your blight notice is valid for three years and two months from the date that we received it. If our offer expires but your blight notice is still valid, you will not need to submit a new blight notice to continue selling your property to the SoS. However, if you want to continue with either the statutory blight or express purchase process or the Streamlined Residential Blight Scheme, you need to submit a form of claim (for statutory blight or express purchase) or new terms and conditions (for SRB). You will also have to pay £1,000 to cover the cost of new valuations. We will take this amount from the disturbance costs.

4.2 Fixed disturbance payments

You will have costs as a result of being disturbed from your property. Under the SRB scheme you will be awarded a fixed amount of £7,000 to cover these costs. These costs usually include, but are not limited to:

- removal expenses;
- special adaptations at your new property;
- removing fixtures and fittings;
- disconnecting and reconnecting services;
- forwarding post;
- related losses (such as fees for paying a mortgage off early and arrangement fees);
- personal time and mileage;
- other professional fees (such as a property finder, valuation fees or mortgage broker fees);
- a building survey for new property;
- other fees, for example cattery or kennel fees, overnight hotel accommodation and so on;
- skip hire;
- removing fish from ponds; and
- removing hot tubs.

4.3 Professional advisor fees

Because it is important to receive the right professional advice, you can also claim for professional advisor fees as well as the fixed disturbance payment of £7,000.

We have designed the SRB scheme so that once your blight notice has been accepted you do not need anyone to act on your behalf. If you would like a professional advisor to continue acting on your behalf after your blight notice has been accepted, you are welcome to do so. Your professional advisor will be able to claim reasonable fees. Fees for work completed after your blight notice has been accepted will be capped at £250. We consider this amount to be reasonable for professional advice when you are deciding whether the SRB scheme would be appropriate for you. The fees should not be affected by the value of the property.

4.4 Legal fees

As well as the fixed payment of £7,000, you will usually be able to claim reasonable solicitors' costs you have for selling your property and buying a new property. The fees and disbursements will need to be reasonable in relation to how complicated your claim is. Disbursements are the fees paid by your solicitor, on your behalf, to third parties while dealing with conveyancing.

4.5 Stamp duty

You can usually claim stamp duty you pay on your new home, though there will be an upper limit on this, based on the price the SoS pay for your current home, even if your new home has a higher value than your existing home. If your new home has a lower value than your existing home, the stamp duty you can claim will be the amount paid on your new home.

4.6 Home loss payment

If you are selling your home using the SRB scheme, you may be entitled to a home loss payment.

This payment, set by law, is equivalent to 10% of the value of your existing home, up to a maximum limit set out in The Home Loss Payments (Prescribed Amounts) (England) Regulations latest iteration.

You would need to show that you had been living in the property for at least a year before we bought it.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is responsible for setting the maximum home loss payment, and this increases each year in line with inflation.

5 Help available to you

If you need help and want to get in touch with us, you can do this in various ways, as set out below.

5.1 Land and Property Case Officer

You will have a named case officer who works in our Land and Property team and will be overseeing your case. We will give you the details of your case officer once you have confirmed to us in writing that you would like to sell your home using the SRB scheme.

5.2 Helpdesk

You can contact the Helpdesk on **08081 434 434** or by emailing **enquiries@raildevelopment.org.uk** at any time. The textphone number, for people who have hearing or speech difficulties, is **08081 456 472**. The Helpdesk will be able to answer any questions you have, or will put you in touch with a member of staff with the relevant expertise or a member of our stakeholder engagement team who can help with general enquiries.

5.3 The Residents' and Construction Commissioner

See details at the end of this document.

6 Frequently asked questions

I own a small business. Can I apply for the SRB scheme?

No. The SRB scheme is only open to owners of residential properties because the disturbance costs for businesses and agricultural units are usually higher and would need to be negotiated.

Can I choose to accept the fixed disturbance payment of £7,000 and opt out of the Red Book valuation?

No. You must commit to both the Red Book valuation and the fixed payment.

I have chosen the SRB scheme but my disturbance costs are going to be higher than £7,000. Can I withdraw from the scheme?

Yes. You can withdraw from the SRB scheme and return to selling your property through the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme (where disturbance compensation is negotiated).

If the Red Book valuations have been completed, the Government's formal offer for your home would remain fixed and could not be negotiated. However, we would negotiate with your professional advisor to reach an agreement on the value of your disturbance compensation.

If you do withdraw from the SRB scheme you will have to pay costs of £1,000. This is considered a reasonable amount for the time and expense involved in setting the unblighted market value through the SRB scheme.

I am unhappy with the offer for my property. Can I return to the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme and negotiate the offer?

If you are unhappy with your offer under the SRB scheme, you are under no pressure to accept it. The offer will be valid for 12 months, after which time we will need new valuations if you want to continue with selling your property to the SoS. You will need to contribute £1,000 towards the cost of the new valuations (this will apply if you choose to continue with the SRB scheme or return to the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme). If you decide to return to the Statutory and Express purchase scheme the you will be able to obtain an initial valuation and negotiate the value in line with the process under that scheme. Do note that you cannot do this until the SRBS offer has expired 12 months after issue.

How did you appoint your pool of valuers?

We carried out competitive tendering (asking people to offer costs and conditions for contracts) to find valuers who have the resources to provide valuations across the full route. Our valuers are independent chartered surveyors who are registered with RICS and who have the competence and professional knowledge to carry out valuations in line with the Red Book manual of valuation standards.

Are the valuers and valuations independent?

Yes. We instruct the valuers to provide an open-market valuation of your home in line with RICS guidance. The full definition of open-market value is: 'the estimated amount for which an asset or liability should exchange on the valuation date between a willing buyer and a willing seller in an arm's-

length transaction after proper marketing, and where parties had each acted knowledgeably, prudently and without compulsion’.

Do the valuers have local knowledge?

We have appointed our valuers because they are able to cover relevant sections of the route.

Who can I pick as my choice of valuer?

You can use any valuer who is registered with RICS, as long as that valuer does not have any conflict of interest relating to your home or your household (or anyone else connected to your application). For example, the valuer cannot be employed or associated with the firm or person who is representing you and must not be involved in any way in marketing your property (if marketing was undertaken).

RICS is the professional body for the valuers that you must use. You can contact RICS to confirm if a valuer or firm is registered and has the appropriate qualifications (www.rics.org).

If you like, you can choose a valuer from any of the firms in our pool of valuers. We would then pick a second firm from this list.

Why can't you give me a firmer timeline for how long it will take to sell my home?

It is difficult to predict exactly how long it will take as every purchase is different. While most purchases run fairly smoothly, some may take much longer if there are any complications (such as an issue with the title deeds, local searches or whether a septic tank meets regulations). The responsiveness of your chosen solicitor will also have an impact on the time it takes to complete your purchase so please ensure you take care when appointing a solicitor to act for you.

When would be an appropriate time for me to make an offer on a new home?

We would strongly suggest you delay committing to buying your new home until you have accepted our offer. This will give you a firm budget to work with and make sure that you are in the best possible position when making future offers. The process leading to completion can still take around three months and it may take longer if there are issues. The price you agree for a new home must remain ‘subject to contract’ (that is, not fixed until you exchange contracts) as the checks made during conveyancing occasionally result in the need to review or reduce the price.

I need adaptations to my new property. Can I claim for these as well as the fixed disturbance payment?

No. If you believe the cost of the adaptations and other disturbance costs are likely to be more than £7,000 you may want to consider selling your property using the Statutory Blight and Express Purchase scheme, where you can negotiate disturbance costs.

Will you rehouse me?

We have no duty to rehouse you, but we can offer a ‘rent back’ arrangement in certain situations. For more information please see the Rent Back scheme guide at www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk

Will you help me find a new property?

As buying a property is a very personal matter it is better for you to work with your local estate agents to search for a suitable new property. If your needs are unique, you may need to employ a property finder or property search agent. We are unable to provide any support with this.

Can I apply for my moving costs in advance?

No. It is normal practice for the Government to pay the costs of moving with the agreed value of the property once conveyancing is complete (that is, when the property transfers to the SoS and you hand over the keys).

Should I continue to make necessary repairs or improvements to my property, even when I have had my blight notice accepted?

You should carry out repairs to your property if it is necessary for it to remain suitable to live in. You are also free to improve your property, but we may not necessarily meet the costs of any improvements as they may not be equal to a similar increase in the market value of the property.

I have a Help to Buy arrangement on my existing home. Do I need a separate Help to Buy valuation?

No. If you are selling your home to the SoS, you do not need a Help to Buy valuation. Homes England will accept the final agreed valuation given for your property as part of the statutory blight process. You will need to comply with any other restrictions in your Help to Buy agreement.

Can I ask to rent my property from the Government?

Yes. Once you have accepted the Government's offer to buy your property, you will be able to ask your case officer if you can rent your property back once it has been sold. You should ask your case officer about this in good time, ideally by the time you exchange solicitors' details. The process could take up to three months, as we need to assess the property to see if it could be made suitable for letting, in line with legal requirements and sound commercial principles, and prepare letting documents. For more information please see the Rent Back scheme guide at www.npr-bill-documents.org.uk.

If I do choose to rent my property back from the Government, will I still receive the fixed disturbance payment and will I still be able to claim stamp duty?

Yes. You will still receive the £7,000 fixed disturbance payment once the SoS's purchase of your property has been completed.

If you buy a new home after the rental period has ended, you will generally be able to claim stamp duty at this point. There will be an upper limit on this, based on the price the SoS pay for your current home, even if your new home has a higher value than your existing home. If your new home has a lower value than your existing home, the stamp duty you can claim will be the amount paid on your new home. However, you will not be able to claim any further disturbance costs.

What is the difference between blight and statutory blight?

The term 'blight' describes something that spoils, harms or damages something. Property close to the route may be considered blighted, and that means you cannot sell it on the open market other than at a greatly reduced price. The term 'statutory blight' means the same in this context but is protected by law. If your property is directly affected, that is, it is within a development plan or a safeguarded area for a specific purpose (for example Northern Powerhouse Rail: Manchester Connection or is included within a compulsory purchase order, you may be able to serve a blight notice on the SoS to buy your property and pay you other costs as a result of being disturbed from your home.

What will happen to my property after you have bought it?

We can buy property that we may not need for the railway or which we will not need for some time. To make sure that we manage this property appropriately we will try to rent it out wherever possible.

In some circumstances, we may offer surplus land back (land that is no longer required) to former owners, anyone who has taken over their land or to sitting tenants.

How should I complain if I am unhappy with the service I receive?

If you are not happy with how we deal with your application, please follow our complaints procedure at www.hs2.org.uk/how-to-complain.

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.