Case No: CA-2022-001952

IN THE COURT OF APPEAL (CIVIL DIVISION)
ON APPEAL FROM
THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE (KBD)
BIRMINGHAM DISTRICT REGISTRY

Mr Justice Julian Knowles
[2022] EWHC 2360 (KB)

B E T W E E N

MR JAMES KNAGGS

Appellant/Sixth Defendant

-and-

(1) THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT
(2) HIGH SPEED TWO (HS2) LIMITED

Respondents/Claimants

RULING ON APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO APPEAL

Background

1. The is an application for permission to appeal against a decision of Mr Justice Julian Knowles (**"the Judge"**) dated 20 September 2022. In short, the Judge made an Order providing the Respondents with injunctive relief restraining persons unknown and 59 named defendants from acts of protest in relation to the HS2 railway development (**"the Injunction"**).
2. The land subject to the Injunction covers the full length of the HS2 railway under construction from London to Cheshire. Two types of land are covered by the Injunction: (i) **Pink Land**, which is land to which the Respondents have either freehold or leasehold title and (ii) **Green Land**, which is land to which the Respondents do not have freehold/leasehold title but do have statutory powers of temporary possession for the purposes of the HS2 project. It is the Green Land that matters for this application.

Grounds of Appeal

3. The Appellant seeks to advance five grounds of appeal:
    a. First, the judge erred in concluding the Respondents had sufficient interest in the entirety of the land subject to the order capable of supporting injunctive relief founded on claims in trespass and private nuisance.
    b. Second, the judge erred in concluding that the Respondents may rely on the rights under Article 1 Protocol 1 ("**A1P1"**) ECHR in support of the application for injunctive relief.
    c. Third, the judge erred in law by defining the prohibited conduct by reference to:
        i. legal terms and a legal cause of action,
        ii. by reference to vague terms (such as 'slow walking') and,
        iii. in a disproportionate manner.
    d. Fourth, the judge erred in law by finding that the service provisions for the order are sufficient to bring proceedings to the attention of all those affected.
    e. Fifth, there is some other compelling reason to grant permission to appeal, because of the wider public importance of both the HS2 project and the issues arising out of the terms of the injunction.
4. For the reasons set out below, I refuse permission to appeal. On a proper analysis, none of the five grounds have a real prospect of success.

Ground 1: HS2 Has Insufficient Interest In The Green Land

The Issue

5. The Judge accepted the Respondents' submission that HS2 had the right to immediate possession over the Green Land because the relevant statutory notices had been served. It did not matter that "*the diggers have not yet moved in"* **J[78].** The Judge found that the right to possession was sufficient to maintain an action for trespass.
6. The Respondents' right to possession of the Green Land is contained in Schedule 15 of the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Act 2021 (**"the Phase 2a Act"**). Schedule 15 paragraph 1(1) sets out the conditions required for the Respondents to take possession of the Green Land:

"Schedule 15

Right to enter on and take possession of land

1(1) The nominated undertaker may enter on and take possession of the land specified in the table in Schedule 16—

(a) for the purpose specified in relation to the land in column (3) of that table in connection with the authorised works specified in column (4) of the table,

(b) for the purpose of constructing such works as are mentioned in column (5) of that table in relation to the land, or

(c) otherwise for Phase 2a purposes.

(2) The nominated undertaker may (subject to paragraph 2(1)) enter on and take possession of any other land within the Act limits for Phase 2a purposes.

(3) The reference in sub-paragraph (1)(a) to the authorised works specified in column (4) of the table in Schedule 16 includes a reference to any works which are necessary or expedient for the purposes of or in connection with those works."

7. "Phase 2a purposes" is defined at section 61 of the Phase 2a Act:

> "References in this Act to anything being done or required for "Phase 2a purposes" are to the thing being done or required—
>
> (a) for the purposes of or in connection with the works authorised by this Act,
>
> (b) for the purposes of or in connection with trains all or part of whose journey is on Phase 2a of High Speed 2, or
>
> (c) otherwise for the purposes of or in connection with Phase 2a of High Speed 2 or any high speed railway transport system of which Phase 2a of High Speed 2 forms or is to form part."

8. The Schedule 16 table includes specific purposes for which access to each piece of land is required (e.g. for diversion of utilities, access to utilities, for environmental mitigation works etc). Paragraph 4(1) requires that the Respondent must give 28 days notice of their intention to take possession of the land to the owners and occupiers of the land. Paragraph 4(4) entitles the landowners and occupiers of the land to compensation for any loss they may suffer by the Respondent's exercise of the possession power.
9. The Appellant submits that on the construction of the Phase 2a Act, the Respondents only have a legal right to possession of the land where the Schedule 15 paragraph 1(1)

conditions are met. Therefore, the natural conclusion is that at any point in time where the conditions are not met, the Respondents will have no right to possession of the land and cannot found a claim in trespass. The Appellant goes on to submit that "*where works are not scheduled to take place on land imminently then the Respondents are not only not in actual possession but have no right to such possession either immediately or imminently"* **ASA[29].**

10. It was the Respondents' case that all statutory notices under Schedule 15 paragraph 4(4) for the possession of the Green Land had been given (confirmed in the first witness statement of Julie Dilcock **RSA[2]**). Simply put, the Respondents have therefore exercised this statutory power and are entitled to immediate possession of all the Green Land. Moreover, this is land which is needed, and there is no statutory requirement for the land to be used 'imminently' **RSA[6]**. Further, they say that the definition of Phase 2a 'purposes' is very broad, for example it can include landscaping, advance planting and activities beyond the immediate construction of the railway **RSA[3].** Finally, the Respondents said that the Appellant had conceded at an earlier stage of the proceedings that Schedule 15 and 16 were sufficient to found a potential trespass claim **RSA[4]**.

Analysis

11. I agree with the judge (at **J[78], SJ[18]**): the Respondents plainly have sufficient interest in the Green Land to found an action in trespass and therefore to be granted injunctive relief. I consider that this was conceded by the Appellant in his written submissions of 5 April 2022. In any event, the Appellant's proposition that Green Land can only be taken possession of where it is required 'imminently' is not arguable; it is simply not supported by a plain construction of the Phase 2a Act 2021.
12. Parliament has granted the Respondents the right to immediate possession of the Green Land through the Phase 2a Act. The Act has built-in procedural requirements (e.g. giving 28 days notice before taking possession) and safeguards (e.g. compensation provision and a long-stop of possession for no more than one year after the works are complete). This balances the competing interests of ensuring the land can be used for the railway construction on the one hand, and on the other, respecting the proprietary interest of the underlying leaseholder/freeholder.
13. There is no statutory wording to the effect that the exercise of the paragraph 1(1) immediate possession power (following a 28 day notice period) must be contingent on immediate action. There must be an identified purpose for possession of the Green Land

(and there is), but that purpose is not given a temporal dimension anywhere in the statute. In contrast, the Appellant's submissions seem to assume that "*for the purpose of*" necessarily implies an imminence to the fulfilment of that purpose. But that is just not what the statute says.

14. This unjustified leap of reasoning is revealed at paragraph 29 of the Appellant's skeleton argument:

> "29. […] At any point in time where this statutory condition is not met the Respondents have no right to possession of the land whatsoever. Where works are not scheduled to take place on land imminently then the Respondents are not only not in actual possession but have no right to such possession either immediately or imminently. It is therefore wrong to conclude in relation to such land that the Respondents "are entitled to immediate possession"." (emphasis added).

15. The suggestion that the statute requires any works to be scheduled to take place 'imminently' is unjustified (and indeed there is no real attempt to justify it). There is no textual support for it; nor does it make practical sense. Moreover, there are all sorts of practical difficulties with it. First, there is nothing to say what could be defined as 'imminently': 2 weeks? 2 months? Or, for a project scheduled to take 10 years, might 2 years be considered 'imminent'? Second, it must be for the contractor or relevant sub-contractor to decide when to take possession of any given site, not to have his logistical planning taken over for him by the courts. Third, the qualification of 'imminence' would be impossible to patrol. Even if notice was given before works were about to 'imminently' start, if there was an unexpected delay to construction would this remove the Respondent's right to possess the land? The only requirement is for the Respondent to identify the purpose for which the land is needed, provide 28 days notice, and then they are entitled to immediate possession of that land. That is the power Parliament granted.

16. I am further confirmed in that conclusion by reading Schedules 15, 16 and section 61 together. It is clear that Parliament intended the 'purpose' condition to be interpreted broadly. That explains the inclusion of paragraph 1(1)(c) in addition to 1(1)(a) and (b) in Schedule 15 to work as a fall-back provision to catch any broader purposes that may not align with the originally stated aims of each parcel of land detailed in Schedule 16.

17. Finally, the plain meaning of the word "purposes" is not restricted to actual construction works. As is clear from Schedule 16, the purpose for which temporary possession of the land is required includes for the "*provision of access"* for construction, utility works or creation of new rights of way (see Schedule 16, Column 3). These purposes may not have a defined starting point in the same way that actual construction activities might do. This also reinforces my conclusion that the Act envisages that the land will be temporarily possessed even if there is no immediate construction activities on the land.

18. Accordingly, I consider that Ground 1 has no real prospect of success, and permission to appeal is refused.

Ground 2: The Respondents' Rights under A1P1

The Issue

19. The Judge found that the Respondents could pray in aid A1P1 **J[125].** He considered that he was bound by the case of *Secretary of State for Transport v Cuicurean* [2022] EWCA 661 where Lewison LJ held:

> "There was some debate about whether these were themselves convention rights (given that the Secretary of State for Transport is himself a public authority and cannot therefore be a "victim" for the purposes of the Convention, and HS2 Ltd may not be regarded as a "non-governmental" organisation for that purpose). But whether or not they are convention rights, they are clearly legal rights (either proprietary or possessory) recognised by national law" (at [28], emphasis added)

20. The Appellant complains that the Judge erred in concluding that the Respondents, as a public body, may rely on A1P1 ECHR protection. The Appellant submits that the case law is clear that a 'core public authority', or a party exercising functions of a public nature, cannot rely on its own Convention Rights as a cause of action or as part of a EHCR proportionality assessment: see *Aston Cantlow v Wallbank* [2003] UKHL 37; *YL v Birmingham City Council and others* [2007] EWCA Civ 26. It cannot in law be 'a victim'. This is derived from ECtHR case law which extends to 'non-governmental organisations'.

21. The Respondents' simple response is that it is not and has never been part of their case that HS2 is a 'victim' under the ECHR. They also criticise the Appellant for developing this point in written submissions after the hearing.

Analysis

22. I do not consider that the Appellant's submissions have a real prospect of success. They are not aimed at a substantial or relevant target. A1P1 was only even potentially relevant as a counterbalancing factor to the protestors' rights under articles 10 and 11. The authorities make clear that, regardless of A1P1, ordinary proprietary or possessory rights provide an equivalent counter balance.
23. As noted above, the judge relied on paragraph 28 of *Cuciurean*. The final underlined sentence of the extract quoted at paragraph 19 above makes clear that Lewison LJ did not expressly decide whether HS2 could pray in aid A1P1 because he did not need to. That was because, however they arose, whether through A1P1 or the common law, the proprietary or possessory rights in question were on any view "*clearly legal rights"*.
24. The same point has been made more recently by the Lord Chief Justice in *DPP v Cuciurean* [2022] EWHC 736 (Admin) at [84] when he said:

> "84. The judge was not given the assistance she might have been with the result that a few important factors were overlooked. She did not address A1P1 and its significance. Articles 10 and 11 were not the only Convention rights involved. A1P1 pulled in the opposite direction to articles 10 and 11. At the heart of A1P1 and section 68 is protection of the owner and occupier of the Land against interference with the right to possession and to make use of that land for lawful activities without disruption or obstruction. Those lawful activities in this case had been authorised by Parliament through the 2017 Act after lengthy consideration of both the merits of the project and objections to it. The legislature has accepted that the HS2 project is in the national interest. One object of section 68 is to discourage disruption of the kind committed by the respondent, which, according to the will of Parliament, is against the public interest. The respondent (and others who hold similar views) have other methods available to them for protesting against the HS2 project which do not involve committing any offence under section 68, or indeed any offence. The Strasbourg Court has often observed that the Convention is concerned with the fair balance of competing rights. The rights enshrined in articles 10 and 11, long recognised by the Common Law, protect the expression of opinions, the right to persuade and protest and to convey strongly held views. They do not sanction a right to use guerrilla tactics endlessly to delay and increase the cost of an infrastructure project which has been subjected to the most detailed public scrutiny, including in Parliament."

25. The Judge had these issues well in mind in his judgment at [125] where he said:

> "125. I am satisfied that the First Claimant can pray in aid A1P1, and the common law values they reflect, and that the approach set out in DPP v Cuciurean and other cases is binding upon me. The point raised by D6 was specifically dealt with by the Court of Appeal in *Secretary of State for Transport v Cuciurean* [2022] EWCA Civ 661, [28]…" (My emphasis)

The judge then cited the passage set out at para 19 above.

26. For completeness, I do not consider that *Attorney General's Reference Number 1 of 2022* (cited by the Appellant in their skeleton argument for permission to appeal) is authority that public authorities could not rely on A1P1 rights. The relevant passage states:

> "102. That is unsurprising because in addition to the usual questions about the applicability of a Convention right and then proportionality the A1P1 rights of the non-state owner are in play. We find it difficult to imagine that the Convention could ever be used to avoid conviction for damaging private property, even if very rarely it might be when considering damage to public property which is not significant. For domestic purposes, in our view, that is the position."

27. On this basis, Ground 2 tilts at a windmill. The Judge did not rely solely on A1P1 but recognised these rights were reflected in ordinary property rights at common law. The Judge's findings as to trespass and nuisance were findings of proprietary or possessory rights which were enough to found the claim for the injunction, with or without A1P1.

Ground 3: The Terms Of The Injunction

The Issues

28. The Appellant submits that the Judge erred in law by defining the terms of the injunction (i) by reference to legal terms and a legal cause of action, (ii) by reference to vague terms (such as 'slow walking'), and (iii) in a way which is disproportionate because they do not correspond with the definition of persons unknown.

i) Legal terms/Analysis

29. The Appellant takes issue with the reference to 'legal terms' such as "*public right of way", "lawful rights over any public highway"* and *"a lawful freehold or leasehold interest".* Moreover, the Appellant submits that the Injunction contains an internal

inconsistency: it prohibits conduct hindering the Respondents but allows for lawful rights over the public highway which may include deliberately and intentionally obstructive conduct on that highway. The Appellant concludes this leads to uncertainty about what conduct is covered by the Injunction.

30. I disagree with the Appellant that the Injunction contains 'legal terms' that make it hard or unclear to understand. Whilst the terms 'freehold' and 'leasehold' are legal vocabulary, they are also commonly used and widely understood by those without legal training or advice. Similarly, I consider reference to "lawful rights" over public highway is sufficiently clear. Moreover, even though the Appellant's heading for this ground refer to *"references to a ... cause of action*", the Appellant does not identify any cause of action used in the language of the Injunction. There is no inconsistency.

ii) 'Slow Walking'/Analysis

31. The Appellant submits that 'slow walking' (at paragraph 5 of the Injunction) is too vague, and he relies on the comments by the Court of Appeal in *Ineos v Persons Unknown* [2019] EWCA Civ 515 (at [40]) to the effect that it is not clear what is sufficiently 'slow' to engage such conduct. The Judge, clearly alive to this fact, qualified this part of the Injunction with the word 'deliberately' (at paragraph 5(f) of the Injunction) but the Appellant contends this does not address the vagueness of this provision.
32. I do not accept that this argument is open to the Appellant, or that it has a real prospect of success.
33. It is not open to him because, before the Judge, the Appellant's argument was that 'slow walking' was a recognised form of protest and should therefore not be prohibited by the Injunction. There was no question that it was too vague; on the contrary, its clarity meant that the Appellant wanted it excluded from the injunction altogether. The Appellant cannot credibly argue now that this recognised form of protest was unclear.
34. Furthermore, I do not consider that it was unclear. The word 'deliberately' qualifies the activity in a relevant way. Moreover, the comment in *Ineos*, which was decided before the latest raft of HS2 cases and did not include the word 'deliberately', could be said to be a summary of counsel's criticisms of the injunction in that case, rather than a series of findings by the court.

35. In the later case of *National Highways,* cited below, although the express words "slow walking" were not used in the injunction, neither Lavender J (nor counsel for the protestors) raised any concerns with the wording: "*deliberately ... slowing down ... the flow of traffic".* In my view, that also demonstrates both that this is now a well-recognised phenomenon and its inclusion is an important part of any effective injunction. I do not consider there is any material difference in the wording accepted in *National Highways* and the present injunction to found a realistic ground of appeal.

iii) Alleged Discrepancy: Analysis

36. The Appellant argues there is a discrepancy between the definition of persons unknown (which contains an 'effect clause') and the prohibited conduct (which does not require any such effect). The 'effect clause' captures individuals whose conduct has the effect of "*damaging and/or delaying and or hindering"* the HS2 works. The Appellant submits that the definition of persons unknown is narrower than the prohibited conduct because it requires it to have the effect of damaging/delaying the works. He contends that this discrepancy means an individual who 'unintentionally' delays the HS2 works will be caught by the Injunction, even where there is no work ongoing or disruption caused. This is said to be disproportionate.
37. I consider that the Appellant's construction of the Injunction is untenable. In my view, the Injunction must be read as a whole. There is no inconsistency. A person reading the Injunction would have no difficulty in concluding that it prohibits them from entering the HS2 Land even where they do not cause any delay or disruption to the works. That is clearly contained in the definition of 'persons unknown' and cannot be ignored simply because the same detail is not repeated in the prohibited conduct section of the Injunction.
38. I therefore reject all three arguments about the terms of the Injunction. They are excessively legalistic and do not arise on a common sense view of the words used. They have no real prospect of success.

Ground 4: Service

The Issue

39. The Judge was satisfied that service of the Injunction complied with the guidance in *Canada Goose UK Retails Ltd v Persons Unknown* [2020] 1 WLR 2802 and that the terms were sufficiently clear to allow persons potentially affected to know what they must not do. The Judge repeated this finding at paragraph [26] of the Supplemental Judgment.
40. The Appellant asserts that the Judge erred in finding that the service provisions (at paragraphs 7-11 of the Injunction) were sufficient to bring the Injunction to the attention of all those affected. The Appellant points to the case of *National Highways v Person Unknown and others* [2021] EWHC 3081 (QB) where it was held to be impracticable to place notices on stakes in the ground. Instead, the broad scope of the injunction was tempered by requiring personal service on persons unknown. The Appellant suggests that the Injunction in the present case allows for the possibility that persons may fall within the definition of persons unknown and breach the terms of the Injunction without being aware of the Injunction itself (particularly as the Injunction is not restricted to protestors, but land users and land owners covered by the Injunction). The Appellant suggests that notice should be provided by post.
41. The Respondent states that the final service provisions at paragraph 2 of the Injunction were a product of the earlier debate about the service of the proceedings themselves which resulted in the order of 28 April 2022. They say that the proceedings were highly effective at bringing proceedings to the attention of those who wished to participate. The Respondent characterises this ground as an attempt to re-run earlier arguments that were never appealed. In any event, the Injunction does make a provision for personal service where this is practicable: see paragraph 11 of the Injunction.

Analysis

42. I consider that this complaint is not open to the Appellant. The service provisions in the Injunction mirrored those ordered in respect of the original proceedings in April 2022. The appellant said he was going to appeal those provisions but did not do so. Time to bring such an appeal expired in May 2022. It is too late to challenge those same service provisions now. It would be an abuse of the court process.
43. In any event, I consider that the service provisions in the Injunction were more than sufficient to comply with the guidance in *Canada Goose* and, made adequate provision for personal service. Any contrary argument has no real prospect of success.

44. Given the scope of the Injunction, it is clearly impractical for service to be effected along every piece of injuncted land. The Appellant takes issue with the failure to provide notice by 'post', but does not explain why this is necessary in addition to the current methods of service already proposed. Crucially, in my view, at paragraph 11 the Injunction does provide for personal service where this is reasonably practicable – for example when a person unknown becomes identified or a named defendant or where the Respondents become aware of a trespasser.

Ground 5: Some Other Compelling Reason?

45. For the reasons set out above, I do not accept that any of these grounds of appeal have a real prospect of success.

46. In those circumstances, it would be pointless to allow permission to appeal simply because this is a major project and there may be issues which may become relevant to other injunctions. There has been recent Court of Appeal guidance on service (*Canada Goose*, *Barking and Dagenham*) and recent Divisional Court and Court of Appeal guidance on the balancing of possessory and protestors' rights (*DPP v Cuciurean* and *SoS for Transport v Cuciurean*). Both these last two arose out of HS2. It might be thought that that is sufficient guidance, at least for the moment, in this area, and that to grant permission in this case on this ground would, in the words of the Lord Chief Justice in *DPP v Cuciurean* (at [84]), be simply to sanction yet further delay and further increase the cost of a project which has been subjected to the most detailed public and Parliamentary scrutiny.

47. For all these reasons, I refuse permission to appeal.