

Need to Sell Two – non-statutory property scheme

Qualitative research

December 2022

Ipsos UK



Department
for Transport



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Executive summary

Introduction and methodology

Introduction and research background

The Department for Transport commissioned Ipsos to conduct qualitative research to explore participants' views about a new non-statutory property scheme – 'Need to Sell Two' (NTS2). The scheme's design is largely based on an existing scheme – Need to Sell (NTS) – which provides eligible property owners who have been unable to sell their home due to the proximity of the HS2 line of route with an opportunity to sell the property to the Government for its full, unblighted price. NTS2 added a variation to the original scheme, allowing for properties to be sold on the open market with the Government paying the difference between the sale price and the unblighted price, plus an additional incentive payment. NTS is not the only source of support for impacted homeowners but sits within a wider framework of statutory compensation and discretionary schemes.

The research sought to answer the following questions:

- Based on their understanding of the original scheme and the NTS2 variation, how likely would individuals be to consider using NTS2?
- For those who would consider it, what would motivate them to take that option?
- For those who would not consider it, why not, and what might encourage them to do so?
- What level of financial payment, if any, would be effective in increasing uptake of NTS2?

The primary focus of the research was to understand participants' views towards the changes in design proposed for the new NTS2 scheme. Participants were presented with information about both schemes, then given an opportunity to discuss each scheme in more detail. Detailed information about each scheme (stimuli used in discussions is provided in Annex B) ensured that participants were able to provide more considered views about the new NTS2 scheme after providing their initial reaction.

Participants were also asked for views of HS2 more widely to help understand what impact, if any, these views might have on their views of the NTS2 scheme. This report is therefore structured in two main parts:

1. Contextual research, including views about HS2 and the existing NTS scheme (Chapter 2)
2. Views about the proposed NTS2 scheme (Chapter 3)

Methodology

Ipsos UK conducted 25 in-depth interviews online with property owners living along the line of the HS2 route (or previously living along the route for previous NTS applicants). The interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes each and were conducted during August 2022.

To explore a range of views about the new scheme, a decision was made to divide the sample into two sub-samples – four participants who had previously applied for the NTS scheme and were successful or withdrew their application, and 21 interviews with participants who had never applied for the NTS scheme, but who could become potential NTS2 applicants in future. Participants were selected from across the three HS2 construction Phases (1, 2a and 2b), recruiting from postcodes that had previously generated successful applications, and aiming for a mix of gender and property ownership type. As the

research involved speaking to property owners who have owned their property since before the announcement of the HS2 route in their area, participants tended to be middle-age or older adults.

Key findings from the research

Awareness and views about HS2

Awareness levels about HS2 varied across participants. Those who described themselves as being involved in the local community were more familiar with HS2 through community meetings, conversations with councillors and local MPs, conversations with neighbours and other information sources such as postal leaflets and the media. Those less aware of HS2 described having more top-level knowledge, as opposed to having a more detailed understanding about the project. Knowledge gained through interacting with HS2 Ltd staff and contractors was particularly influential on **participants' views about the project**.

Awareness and views about NTS property scheme

While most participants were aware of HS2 property schemes being available to people living along the line of route, **only some were aware about the NTS non-statutory property scheme**. Those who had explored options for moving away from the construction area and had previously considered applying for the scheme, were more informed. Others had little or no awareness about the scheme.

Participants were presented with information about the NTS scheme (see Annex B). **Reactions were focused around two key areas:**

- A perceived lack of clarity around the qualifying criteria
- Uncertainty around the application process.

Participants who previously applied for the NTS scheme raised similar points. They described a complicated, bureaucratic, and 'overwhelming' application process. The reapplication process for those not initially successful was also seen as cumbersome and time-consuming.

The two audiences raised concerns around the valuation process, although it is clear there was some misconceptions around how the process is undertaken. Previous NTS applicants voiced concerns about how equitable the valuation process was, and by extension, the scheme as a whole. Those who had not applied for NTS believed that the process of providing two valuations could achieve an equitable sale, but raised concerns about how the process would work in practice.

Reactions to the NTS2 scheme

Reactions to the NTS2 scheme were mixed. Some felt the new scheme would allow property owners to have more control over the sale process. Others were sceptical, seeing this as a money saving exercise benefitting HS2 Ltd and the Government. They also felt the new scheme would involve a sale process with two separate entities – the potential buyer and the Government – placing an additional burden on the property owner and adding uncertainty to the selling process.

Potential deterrents from using the NTS2 scheme:

- A lack of clarity and confusing information about the application process from the onset; this is both linked to existing attitudes of those who have experience of NTS and perceptions of those who have not used the scheme.
- As with the NTS scheme, participants raised concerns about the need to have a compelling reason to be able to qualify for the scheme, and previous NTS applicants, in particular, criticised the lack of change in the qualifying criteria.
- Participants also raised concerns about the length of time it could take to sell a property on the open market under the new NTS2 scheme and believed the initial NTS scheme would ensure a quicker sale to the Government.
- Any delay in payments from the Government, in particular the impact this could have on using the sum for an onward purchase.

Potential factors that might encourage participants to use the NTS2 scheme:

- A clear and transparent process, accompanied by an efficient timetable, could instil more confidence in the scheme and encourage participants to apply, particularly highlighted by those who have had previous experience of NTS.
- More clarity around the valuation process and the reassurance of a fair valuation could encourage participants to make use of the NTS2 scheme, particularly those who had not been through the NTS application process.
- A commitment from HS2 Ltd to ensure timely top-up payments, made to an agreed timetable; this could allow sellers to use the payment sum as part of the settlement for an onward purchase.

Reactions to the introduction of a financial payment as part of the NTS2 scheme

The introduction of a potential one-off financial payment to the new scheme had a polarising effect on participants' views:

- In some cases, participants argued whether there was a need for a one-off financial payment and questioned HS2 Ltd's reasons for introducing one, while others felt this could be a fair compensation for what was described by one participant as an 'inconvenience and upset' in their lives.
- Fairness was an important factor when deciding on what the financial payment should be. However, participants' views were divided on what would constitute a fair payment – whether it should be a fixed payment for all, or a proportion of the value of the property – and no consensus was reached.

- When asked for an opinion on what the financial payment should amount to, participants reflected on the price of properties in different locations around the country. While most expectations ranged between financial payments of £10,000 to £20,000, there were also mentions of lower payments (£250 - £4,000), and some higher payments (up to £50,000 – for example, in more affluent areas). Some participants felt the payment would only need to cover costs of moving such as estate agent fees, solicitor fees and removal fees. Others felt the payment should be a compensation for the inconvenience of having to move home.
- The timing of the payments was also an important factor that might encourage participants to use the proposed scheme – participants expressed a preference for lump sums, ideally paid at the beginning of the process and a guarantee from HS2 Ltd for a timely payment.
- Previous NTS applicants were less positive about the introduction of a financial payment, arguing that it would have little impact on people’s decision to move, if they truly wanted to move home. They also believed accessing the one-off payment could create more bureaucracy and add to an already complicated application process.

When exploring the **appeal of the two schemes**, there was no clear pattern of preference. There was a sense that a decision to choose one of the schemes would depend on a person’s/household’s circumstances. For example, if there was a need for a quicker sale, participants believed NTS would be more relevant for them, perceiving this as a simpler and faster process; others would choose the NTS2 scheme for the benefit of the one-off financial payment serving as support for moving costs or as compensation for the inconvenience of having to move house as a result of HS2.

What next for DfT and HS2?

This research was commissioned to provide insight and evidence for the likely reception of a potential new non-statutory property scheme – Need to Sell Two (NTS2) – and to inform the design and communications strategy of NTS2, were it to be introduced.

While there was no clear pattern of whether participants would be receptive to, or make use of, the new NTS2 scheme in future, there are several considerations for DfT and HS2 Ltd when considering trialling the new scheme:

- Participants reflected at length on the qualifying criteria for the scheme and, in particular, **the need to have a compelling reason to sell** the property. They argued everyone living along the HS2 line of route should be provided with the opportunity to move if they wanted to but could not qualify for one of the compelling reasons mentioned in the scheme criteria. When exploring views about NTS2, participants expressed frustration and disappointment with the lack of change to this element of the scheme’s design. This led many to believe they would not qualify, or the scheme would not be appropriate for them, unless their personal circumstances changed in future.
- Participants who reported having a negative experience applying for the NTS scheme expressed **a desire for a more simplified, less time-consuming application process** for the new scheme. They reflected on the emotional stress moving house has on people in general and believed the application process was cumbersome and stress-inducing. This was in line with the assumptions of those who had never applied for NTS but might consider making use of one of the schemes in future. There was a sense that more clarity and transparency was needed around the application process. Similarly, more open communication with HS2 Ltd and associated organisations could improve the process.

- There was a sense from previous applicants to the NTS scheme that **the valuation process** was unfair, and participants reported feeling like they made a loss when using NTS, while non-applicants raised concerns about the need to ensure a fair valuation and avoid selling the house at a lower price. More clarity around the valuation process could help address some of the concerns participants raised.
- Reactions to the changes proposed for the new NTS2 scheme were mixed. Whilst some were more positive about the opportunity to **sell the house on the open market**, others raised concerns about this placing more burden on the seller and adding more length to what was already perceived as a time-consuming process. Participants reflected on having to work with two separate entities for the sale and believed selling the house on the open market could take longer than selling to the Government. Clear information and more support about these particular elements of the process could help build more confidence with potential future NTS2 users.
- The **introduction of a one-off payment** was confusing for some and raised suspicion among those who held more negative views about HS2. Others welcomed the idea of a one-off financial payment, seeing it as something that could help cover sale fees or as compensation for having to move home. In some cases, participants felt the one-off payment would have no influence on their decision to move. Participants reflected on what the money could be used for and most mentioned either paying for estate agent fees, solicitor fees, removal fees, or felt it was necessary as a means of compensating them for the upset caused by the construction of the railway. Framing the one-off payment in a more positive way – for example, as a contribution towards these fees or as compensation – could make the scheme more appealing for future NTS2 users.
- Participants also raised concerns about the **timing of the one-off financial payment**. They expressed a preference for a lump sum, ideally paid as early as possible to ensure this money was available to use in any onward purchase. This was an important factor for encouraging participants to make use of the scheme. Similarly, participants reflected on whether accessing the payment would add an additional bureaucratic step in the application process. There was a sense that transparency and a commitment from HS2 Ltd to ensure timely payments would encourage participants to make use of the NTS2 scheme.

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Introduction

Introduction and methodology

1. Introduction

The Department for Transport (DfT) required research to understand the likely reception of a potential new non-statutory property scheme, Need to Sell Two, and to inform the scheme's design and communications strategy. The non-statutory property scheme is intended as a variation of the original Need to Sell scheme, currently available to property owners impacted by HS2.

1.1. Introduction to the two non-statutory property schemes

The **Need to Sell (NTS)** scheme is designed to support property owners who live in close proximity to the HS2 line of route and who have a compelling reason¹ to sell their property, however, as a direct result of HS2 could only expect to achieve a blighted price when attempting to sell on the open market. If an application under the NTS scheme was successful, the Government would agree to buy a property for its full, unblighted, open-market value. This value is determined by Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) qualified surveyors using 'Red Book'²³ valuations.

The proposed **Need to Sell Two (NTS2)** scheme would run alongside the current Need to Sell scheme and would offer the property owner the opportunity to sell their property on the open market. The Government would then pay the seller the difference between the blighted and unblighted price. A one-off payment would also be paid to the property owner should they decide to make use of this scheme and sell their property on the open market rather than to the Government.

NTS sits within a wider framework of statutory compensation and discretionary schemes available to property owners within set distances of the HS2 line of route. Property owners within the area safeguarded for HS2 have a legal right to ask the Government to buy their property. Additionally, there are several discretionary support schemes. These include schemes that offer eligible homeowners within a certain distance of the line of route the opportunity to sell their home to the Government, and schemes offering payments to affected homeowners. The NTS is the only scheme that does not explicitly exclude properties beyond a set distance from the route (although a successful applicant to the scheme must demonstrate that the location of their property is such that it is affected by HS2).

The Department for Transport commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct a qualitative research study aimed at exploring participants' views and reactions to the changes in design proposed for the NTS2 scheme, as well as to explore what might be the motivations or deterrents from using the scheme. The research sought to answer the following questions:

- Based on an understanding of the original scheme and the NTS2 variation, how likely would individuals be to consider the latter?
- If people were to consider it, what would be likely to motivate them to take that option?
- If people would not consider it, why wouldn't they (and what might change their minds)?
- What level of incentive would be effective in increasing uptake of NTS2?

¹ See Annex A for a comprehensive list of what qualifies as a compelling reason under this scheme.

² RCIS Valuation – Global Standards 30 Nov 2021 (<https://www.rics.org/uk/upholding-professional-standards/sector-standards/valuation/red-book/red-book-global/>).

³ RCIS Valuation – Global Standards 2017 – UN National Supplement 14 Aug 2019 (<https://www.rics.org/uk/upholding-professional-standards/sector-standards/valuation/red-book/red-book-global/>).

Ipsos UK conducted 25 in-depth interviews with property owners living along the HS2 route (or previously living along the route for previous NTS applicants). Fieldwork was conducted during August 2022.

1.2. Recruitment and sampling

Our recruitment approach was designed to enable the recruitment of property owners who may be eligible for the Need to Sell schemes in future. The sample frame was all residential addresses in postcodes that had generated previous successful applications to NTS. This ensured that the properties were likely to be in eligible areas, as there is no formal definition of the geography qualifying for NTS. People resident at these addresses were screened on a number of criterion including that they had owned the property before the section of HS2 was announced in their area⁴. The sample also included a smaller sub-sample of previous applicants to the NTS scheme, all unsuccessful applicants were excluded as these people may not have been eligible for future schemes.

Participants were recruited from the general public working to a recruitment matrix that ensured a good geographical distribution across the three HS2 phases, and a good spread of gender and age. Due to the requirement to speak to homeowners who have owned their property since before the HS2 announcements, the age profile of participants was focused towards middle-age and older adults, who are also more likely to have owned their home⁵. For the purpose of this study, the sample targeted adults living in post code areas that had at least one previous successful application to NTS. Participants also needed to own the property prior to the announcement of the construction. The sample included a larger number of participants from Phase 1 to ensure a range of views and circumstances in this group, as this accounts for the longest section of the line of route (Table 1). It should be noted that the purpose of sampling in qualitative research is not to establish a random or representative sample drawn from a UK representative population but rather to identify specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied.

The sample of participants was split into two sub-samples, summarised in detail in Table 1:

- 1. A small sample of previous NTS applicants (5 interviews, 4 achieved)**, who had applied to the NTS scheme, and either sold their property or withdrew the application. Participants were sent an invitation letter from HS2 Ltd inviting them to take part in the research and seeking consent for Ipsos to contact them directly to organise an interview. The target number of interviews for this sample was five; four interviews were achieved.
- 2. A larger sample of non-NTS applicants (20 interviews, 21 achieved)**, who had never applied to the NTS scheme and who might be eligible to apply for either scheme in future; 21 interviews were achieved to ensure a total number of 25 interviews. We worked with the Ipsos Contact Centre who followed a clear screener questionnaire to identify suitable participants and arrange each interview.

⁴ Relevant dates: Phase One – 11 March 2010; Phase 2a – 28 January 2013; Phase 2b – 28 January 2013 or 7 July 2016 (proposal of M18 route through South Yorkshire only).

⁵ English Housing Survey, Home ownership Report 2019-20, annex table 1.2 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2019-to-2020-home-ownership>)

Table 1. Summary table showing the sample structure and achieved sample comparatively.

Demographic	Target sample	Sample achieved
Age		
	A good mix	49-77
Gender		
Male	A good mix	14
Female	A good mix	11
Property owners		
Owns outright + sole owner	A good mix	4
Owns outright + joint owner	A good mix	16
Owns with mortgage/loan + joint owner	A good mix	5
HS2 phase		
Phase 1	9	13
Phase 2a	8	6
Phase 2b	8	6

At the end of the interview, participants were offered a £60 payment as a thank you for their contributions to the research.

1.3. Methodology

Interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes each, exploring participants' views in depth and providing an individualised setting for participants to share their views and experiences. Interviews were recorded with the participants' permission to allow for a comprehensive analysis of views.

The design and structure of the depth interviews was informed by the key research objectives. Two discussion guides were developed, ensuring discussions were tailored and relevant for the two sub-samples. Figure 1 below, shows a summary outline of the two discussion guides.

Figure 1. Structure of the two interview guides, shown comparatively.

Interview content



Topic guide for Non-NTS applicants sample:

- Awareness and views about HS2
- Awareness and views about NTS
- Introducing NTS2 and spontaneous reactions
- Stimulus informed reactions to NTS2, including views on the two main changes in the design:
 - the option to sell on the open market and receive a 'top-up' from the Government
 - thoughts on introducing a one-off financial payment
- Comparison between the two schemes – NTS and NTS2
- Final reflections and interview wrap-up



Topic guide for previous NTS applicants sample :

- Awareness and views about HS2
- Understanding the experience of those who previously applied for the NTS scheme
- Exploring views on the potential design of a new scheme – NTS2:
 - Improvements to NTS design
 - Proposed changes for the NTS2 scheme
- Reflections on the two schemes
- Design your own scheme
- Final reflections and wrap-up

Source: Ipsos

The purpose of speaking with previous NTS applicants was to understand in more detail their experience of applying for the NTS scheme and their views on the changes proposed in the NTS2 scheme. Discussions with participants who had not previously applied for the NTS scheme were focused on understanding their views (spontaneous and more informed) on the two schemes, as well as exploring what might motivate or deter them from using the newly proposed NTS2 scheme.

Interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams to allow for the sharing of stimulus with participants. This helped participants gain a better understanding of the schemes and the key differences between the two schemes (see Annex B).

1.4. Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data

Qualitative research is illustrative, detailed, and exploratory. It offers insight into the perceptions, feelings, and behaviours of people rather than quantifiable conclusions from a statistically representative sample. Owing to the small sample size and the purposive nature with which it was drawn, findings from this research cannot be considered to be representative of the views of all people living along the line of the HS2 route. Furthermore, when considering these research findings, it is important to bear in mind that individual views can be somewhat contradictory.

Qualitative research cannot – and does not set out to be – representative of the wider population. We sampled participants purposively in order to highlight a diverse range of views and circumstances. When analysing the data, we were not seeking to understand prevalence but rather the values and experiences which underpin people's attitudes and opinions. As such, the sampling criteria was designed to ensure that the sample reflected the diverse range of circumstances of people living along the HS2 line of route. Quota sampling was used to ensure the sample captured a diversity of experiences. It should be noted that the quotas were not intended to facilitate detailed sub-group analysis or report specific sub-group differences – this is because, given the scale of the study, the sub-group numbers do not allow for robust

analysis. Furthermore, the findings cannot be considered quantifiable as they are not drawn from a statistically representative sample. As such, the findings should not be treated as generalisable to the wider population.

Throughout this report we have referred to “participants” as the individuals that have taken part in our research. Where more specific context was required to frame our findings, we referred to those participants who had never applied for the NTS scheme as ‘non-NTS applicants’ and those who had already been through the process of applying and selling their house through the scheme as ‘NTS applicants’. Thematic analysis was used to interpret and analyse the data. Interviews were transcribed and data was added into an analysis grid structured to mirror the discussion guide flow. This allowed identification of key themes across the interviews. Upon completion of fieldwork, the full team of researchers met to enable collaborative analysis and interpretation of the themes. The transcripts, allowed for verbatim quotes to be used throughout this report to illustrate particular viewpoints.

Anonymised verbatim quotes have been used to help illustrate key findings, but these quotes do not necessarily summarise the views of all participants that we spoke to.

Findings and insights from this report are presented in more detail in the following chapters.



2. Contextual research

2.1. Awareness and views of HS2

Awareness of the HS2 project varied across participants. Those who were more aware and had more knowledge of HS2 cited having an active role in the community, attending community meetings and being involved in submitting HS2-related petitions at the House of Commons. Those who were less aware described themselves as knowing the thinking behind HS2 and being aware of the 'outline rather than having in-depth' knowledge. Predominant information outlets were inclusive of postal leaflets, conversations with councillors and local MPs, community meetings, the media, and informal anecdotal conversations with neighbours. In some cases, participants felt information was not easily accessible and lacked clarity, leading to feelings of frustration.

Those engaging in community meetings had a range of experiences; for some, it was a key place which allowed for communication between HS2 Ltd, associated agencies and the local population. For others, it led to less positive opinions of HS2 more generally, whereby a lack of information and unanswered questions instilled distrust in HS2.

Views about HS2's potential benefits for local communities were also mixed. In some cases, participants believed HS2 would not benefit those who lived near the route due to having to travel further from smaller, local stations to make use of the line. In these instances, participants supported investment in existing local train infrastructure. Conversely, some participants reflected on the local employment opportunities created by the construction of HS2 and the improvements to road infrastructure aimed at facilitating the increase in lorries on the roads in the area.

2.2. Awareness and views of the NTS scheme

Overall, most participants who hadn't been through an application had some level of awareness of the Need to Sell (NTS) scheme. Participants knew there were schemes available to those living near the HS2 line of route but were less familiar with the Need to Sell scheme itself. They relied upon anecdotal evidence from neighbours' experiences to build their knowledge and shape their views. These experiences were both negative and positive.

I'm aware that it has been in place already for a while because one of my neighbours used it. She was struggling through a marriage breakdown, and she knew somebody who knew somebody, and she actually sold her house to HS2. She got market value, she was very happy with it.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2b

Yes, I think one of my neighbours might have done this actually, and I don't think she got a very good price for her house.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2b

When shown information about the NTS scheme, participants felt the qualifying criteria were difficult to navigate - particularly in relation to having a compelling reason to sell. Participants felt that wanting to move away from the route should account for a good enough reason to be considered for this scheme. Learnings from other applicants' experiences, the lack of clarity around the qualifying criteria and the idea of needing a compelling reason to sell, led to feelings of injustice and distrust in HS2.

I'm surprised that it says that the criteria include demonstrating that they could only sell their property at a significant loss. I thought you could do it if you were impacted and you didn't want to live on the HS2 line.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2b

In order to meet the criteria, you have to live 2 centimetres away from the train line. Yes, I just think the criteria will probably be so narrow that very few people will be able to take advantage of the scheme.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

Financial implications were also raised. Participants felt the scheme did not have enough nuance and this created uncertainty around the application process, as they believed there was a possibility they could end up making a loss on their property. While participants understood there was a need for some eligibility criteria to be in place for the scheme, they raised concerns about one criteria in particular – selling the property if an offer within 15% of the open market value was made. Participants felt this could lead to someone potentially losing a large sum of the total value of the house. They also believed there should be more emphasis on compensating those moving house due to HS2 for the upset and inconvenience of having to move home.

The criteria that if you had an offer within 15% of the open market value then obviously you have to accept that offer. If you don't accept it and then apply to the scheme you would not be achieved on the scheme but when you look at the numbers on that, that's a lot of money for someone to have to pay.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

I don't think there is an understanding of the stress of moving at all, I am retired and settled here, it feels as though there is no actual personal consideration for us at all. Surely, if we were to move, we would need some sort of financial compensation for that trouble.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2a

Participants emphasised that NTS could be beneficial to sellers, if there was a need for a quick sale. They felt that the sale would be more equitable, if the process involved two valuations on the property. By contrast, mistrust in HS2 compounded with the perceived difficulties of selling near the HS2 line, led participants to question how the process would work in practice.

It makes you feel quite good that there is a way out of it. I think you must have two valuations. I would not like to think that you were going to get the true value and I would hate to be in a position because of HS2 trying to lower the value of what the property was really worth. That would be my only concern.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

2.3. Experience of applying for the NTS scheme

Previous NTS applicants were asked to reflect on their experiences when applying for the NTS scheme with the aim to understand the positives and negatives throughout the process, and what could have been improved.

NTS applicants had very good knowledge and understanding of HS2, having done research into the planned route and how this would potentially impact them, and their property. NTS applicants also cited attending local meetings and consultations as well as having conversations with local leaders, including MPs. It is through these experiences that NTS applicants came to find out about the NTS scheme.

Not all NTS applicants stated that the main reason they moved was due to HS2. There was a split between those who already had intentions of moving, and those who had no intention to move, but felt compelled to due to HS2.

NTS applicants described the process of applying for the NTS scheme as ‘complicated’ and the paperwork required to complete the application as ‘daunting’ and ‘overwhelming’. They expressed difficulty in sourcing some documents, thus leading to what participants perceived to be a very protracted process. In the case of one NTS applicant, a specialist agent was hired to help mediate the process as they did not have the knowledge, nor resources to complete the application.

There are a huge number of hoops to jump through. Even when you are signing up an estate agent, there are things that you are supposed to have done at those points. This is signing up an estate agent before I've even not been able to sell my house. You know, there are lots and lots of traps that you can fall into, so I was really careful to research it all.

Participant, NTS Applicant, Phase 2b

The process of having to reapply was seen as a huge burden placed on NTS applicants. They described feeling ‘trapped’, being unable to sell their property on the open market while also not meeting the criteria for the scheme. When reapplying, NTS applicants described the process of having to source further evidence as ‘exhausting’ and ‘time consuming’. The speed of response from HS2 was also criticised.

It felt endless. There was also a sense that they didn't respond quickly. You know, you are given X number of weeks, months, to put in your application and then to reapply, and likewise, they are permitted to take however long to make their judgement and give you the answer, and they went to the wire every single time, you know. It was literally at the eleventh hour their answer came in. So, they definitely kept you hanging around as long as was humanly possible.

Participant, NTS Applicant, Phase 1

When asked to think about the elements of the application in more detail, NTS applicants cited a number of issues. For example, providing the evidence that there had been an unsuccessful attempt to sell the property on the open market. In one case, an NTS applicant cited that they had their property for sale on and off for approximately two years, with three viewings over that period. When supplying this as supporting evidence for the application, the seller felt HS2 Ltd's default position was to discount any evidence in the first instance, followed by a request for further evidence with limited information about where to source the additional evidence from. This perceived approach created a high degree of cynicism and led to a breakdown of communication, making the process even further drawn out.

Another issue raised by NTS applicants was the valuation that was set against the property. In most cases, the unblighted valuation was disputed by NTS applicants with the view that the property was under-priced in the interest of the Government getting a better deal. This level of cynicism is reflective of how NTS applicants felt they were treated throughout their experience – whilst the process of valuing the property is intended to be impartial, in most cases NTS applicants felt they were not getting a fair deal.

They get two valuers, one that they appoint and one that you choose. But you can only choose from the panel that they offer you, and providing those valuations are within 10% of each other, they choose the median and that's what they offer you. Which resulted in us losing £60,000 on the value of the property, the unblighted value of the property. Which was a significant sum of money.

Participant, NTS Applicant, Phase 1

Across the interviews with NTS applicants, there was a sense that the application process was not a positive experience due to the period of time from the start of the application until the selling of the house and the paperwork required for submitting the application. In some cases, NTS applicants highlighted the benefit of having such a scheme available to homeowners.

When asked how the process could be improved, NTS applicants referred to:

- A simplified application process that is accessible to the public and easy to navigate
- Improved communication from HS2 Ltd and more timely responses to queries and outcome of application
- A 'fair' valuation that is independently set (whilst this is part of the design of the current scheme, NTS applicants did not share this view)

It should be noted that at the stage of exploring experiences of the NTS scheme, the Need to Sell Two (NTS2) scheme had not been presented to NTS applicants.

03

Views about the NTS2 scheme

3. Views about the Need to Sell Two scheme (NTS2)

Section summary

- Reactions to the scheme varied. Reflecting on their experience, previous **NTS** applicants were more critical **about NTS2**, with non-applicants taking a more balanced view
- Similar to views about the NTS scheme, participants had concerns relating to the qualifying criteria and the need for a ‘compelling reason’ to sell
- Non-applicants would be encouraged to use the scheme if valuations were fairly set
- Concerns were raised over the length of time it may take to sell the property on the open market
- Top up payments were expected to be timely and in line with property completion dates
- Previous applicants reflected on their negative experiences of NTS and felt that ‘pain points’ needed to be addressed as part of the new scheme, including sourcing documentation and filling the application form, communication, and valuations

3.1. Reactions to the NTS2 scheme

Participants’ initial reactions varied. While some felt the new scheme would be more empowering, allowing property owners to have more control over the sale process, others believed this was a way for the Government to save money and place more burden on the seller. Previous applicants to the NTS scheme were particularly critical of NTS2.

Participants speculated the scheme was being proposed as a money saving exercise and to help HS2 Ltd and the Government reduce the effort it would take to buy properties and having to sell them again.

I think my initial views are that obviously it's going to be saving them an awful lot of money because they don't have to buy people's properties outright and then have to sell them on again, which will obviously be great cost to them. It's probably been done for that reason.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

You've still got to qualify, and you've still got to have the valuers round. The only difference is you hand the keys over to a different person, and I can see that, for the Government then, they don't have to have a portfolio of properties that they've got to manage and rent. Probably at great expense.

Participant, NTS applicant, Phase 1

Those who believed it would create additional burden for the seller, reflected on having two entities to manage for the selling of the property – a potential buyer and the Government. They expected this would create additional paperwork for the seller and queried the logistics involved in the process – for example, one participant raised concerns about the practicalities of proving what the difference would be or whether solicitors would know how to manage a situation like this. Participants also raised concerns about the management of financial payments and queried how that would work in practice.

I think also you're kind of selling your house to two different people. That sounds like paperwork nightmare because you've got the conveyancing for the person that's actually buying your house and then you've got whatever you need to do for the Government who are paying for the extra bit of the house.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

Participants were introduced to the NTS2 scheme, a variation on the NTS scheme. They were informed that the key qualifying criteria would remain the same as with the NTS scheme, and that the NTS2 scheme would allow sellers to attempt to sell the house on the open market with the Government paying the difference to reach an unblighted sum. Later in the interviews, participants were introduced to another potential new feature of the NTS2 scheme – an additional one-time payment to encourage uptake and support those going through the scheme.

Similar with feedback on the NTS scheme, participants, particularly non-applicants, reflected on the qualifying criteria and raised further concerns over what constitutes a 'compelling reason'. In cases where examples were provided to participants, there was a sense that having the value of the property impacted by HS2 was a sufficient reason to qualify for the scheme. Whilst participants were encouraged to consider the two key changes proposed for the scheme, this was an area of contention and something participants wanted to explore further should they consider using either scheme in future.

If I'm picking holes in this statement, I guess it's a compelling reason, again, which is the problem, because as it stands, it doesn't seem unreasonable to make that as a statement or a promise. For someone selling the property, I guess, if it all goes smoothly, then the outcome is the same.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

When presented with the NTS2 scheme, previous NTS applicants were more critical. Their views were influenced by the negative experiences of their previous NTS application. When contemplating the key differences of the NTS2 scheme, NTS applicants reflected on the issues they had throughout the process of applying, with many citing difficulty with sourcing relevant documentation, the communication with the NTS team and how valuations were set and agreed.

Previous applicants believed that if these issues weren't addressed, the scheme would present the same obstacles for future applicants and the proposed variation on the scheme would offer little tangible benefit.

If you still have to do the whole process of the Need to Sell, I can't really see [the difference]. Some people might be taken in by 'I'm going to get a one-off payment' perhaps. I can't see any benefits to it because it's going to be as difficult, I think.

Participant, NTS applicant, Phase 2a

3.2. What might encourage participants to use the scheme?

Simplicity and transparency were some of the key features participants mentioned when discussing what might encourage them personally to use the scheme. They explained that a clear and streamlined process with the right actors involved at key moments and an efficient timetable, would instil confidence, and appease some of the anxiety around selling one's house and making use of the scheme.

If it was straightforward and solicitors were confident about how it worked and the timescales were going to match each other. It's already incredibly stressful when you move house, so you do not need more stress by Government bureaucracy.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

If you know that's going to work efficiently and quickly, you will be more likely to use it than get bogged down in time consuming negotiations. I think having the terms clearly laid down and telling you what the process is and doing it promptly, and efficiently. As I say, that sounds fine but if it all gets bogged down in negotiations that go backwards and forwards and it starts taking forever, then it becomes very difficult.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

A fair valuation of property was an important issue raised by participants. Those who had no experience of the scheme felt the property would need to be valued fairly in order to make the scheme appealing. Some questioned whether it was possible to get a true unblighted valuation with the route so close to the property. Participants believed that independent valuations would bolster the housing market and allow buyers to get a good deal on the property, whilst the seller receives the full value of the property.

Yes, I would [use the scheme]. If I could demonstrate that we're going to get a significant loss because of HS2, that would be my problem, but if I could find a way of demonstrating that and enter the scheme, then I think it would be a good scheme, again, as long as the valuations can be reflected.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

Participants reflected on the importance of having timely 'top-up' payments as one of the guarantees of the NTS2 scheme. They believed **a commitment was needed from HS2 to ensure the payment would be made according to an agreed timeline** and in good time to allow for it to be used by the seller as part of the monies for the onward purchase. Participants suggested the payment should be received in line with completion dates to allow for the settlement of the onward purchase. Whilst it was noted that not all participants would require the funds on completion, it was recognised that this was a desired guarantee, which would contribute towards the success of the scheme.

It needs to be paid on completion of the sale of the house to whoever has bought it. The need is it's got to be close together so that the full package is available for the people to purchase a second property.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2a

3.3. What might deter participants from using the scheme?

A lack of clarity and confusing information around the application process could constitute one of the main barriers for using the scheme. Participants expressed scepticism in relation to using a scheme associated with HS2. They reflected on having two entities that would be involved in the buying process – the buyer and the Government – and felt clear and timely information, as well as efficient communications with HS2 Ltd would be necessary to facilitate a better application experience.

Similarly, some participants questioned whether HS2 Ltd would top-up large amounts – for example, a 'top-up' of up to £300,000 for a house that was worth £500,000 and only sold for £200,000.

Without knowing the detail of it, it's difficult. I would need to see the detail. I would try and cut out as many weasel words as possible. You know, the 'want' and 'need', what's a compelling reason, what's a significant loss. It's things like that. It needs definition.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

The length of time it could take to sell a property, even at a blighted price was a concern for participants. They felt that if one of the qualifying criteria was to demonstrate that the property had unsuccessfully attempted to be sold on the open market then only a significant drop in price would result in a sale. In such cases, participants reflected on how the variation of the scheme would be more time consuming than the original scheme as it would involve going back on the market after submitting a successful NTS application. This may not pose an issue for those who are not in a rush to sell, but it could be a barrier for those who are looking to sell rapidly, particularly if they have an onward purchase, or chain, that requires completion within a certain timeframe.

Similarly, participants considered the process from the perspective of selling to move on to a new property and the potential risks of **not having timely payments from HS2 in this process**. They felt, there would need to be an agreement in place with HS2 Ltd and a guarantee that these payments would happen according to agreed timescales, so they could be put towards the buying of a new home. This would provide participants with the ability to buy a new home and would reduce some of the uncertainty of the process.

I wouldn't do it. Unless I had it in writing prior to selling, I wouldn't do it. If it was guaranteed, yes. If it was agreed before you sell, then yes. That would take a lot of stress out of it actually.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

In some cases, participants expressed a **desire to be compensated for the inconvenience and upset** of having to move house. They felt the schemes were designed to ensure sellers get the 'bare minimum' on their homes, disregarding that people would need to move due to the HS2 presence in the area. Participants emphasised the need to recognise the impact the construction has had and may have on people's lives and believed this could be done through compensation.

Because I think the reasons for selling would be because of significant impact by the train track. If I feel that then whoever wants to buy the property would feel that. So, yes, I can see that the Government is offering to pay the difference, but there's no compensation for the upheaval of me moving or the costs incurring in that process.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2a

Some participants described the NTS2 scheme as a **'safeguard' option**, something they would only consider if they were looking to move home and were unable to sell at a desired price. The scepticism associated with HS2 would prevent participants from considering this as a first option, however, clarity and timely communication around the process and having payment guarantees in place, could potentially encourage participants to make use of the scheme.

Yes, I think I would, if I wanted to sell, yes...when you say encourage to use the scheme, I think the scheme is there more as a safeguard, and I think the scheme is there, and if you've decided to move, for whatever your personal reason is, you're using the scheme out of desperation, I would have thought.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2a

3.4. Reactions to the introduction of a financial payment

There were nuanced views about the idea of introducing a financial payment. While some form of acknowledgement of the inconvenience of the cost of moving was required, there was also a concern around potential unreasonable and excessive claims. This was balanced by those who felt the true value of a home and the emotional ties could not be accurately calculated and reflected in a sum of money.

I think a set amount to pay for the [cost of] removal because if I sold this house, I would have to pay for the removal cost. Anything else above that, it's up to me, it's not HS2's responsibility to put a new swimming pool in the back garden and that sort of thing. HS2 has enabled them to purchase the house and then pay for the removals and that's where it should stop. There should be no advantage to selling your house to HS2 or privately and making excessive claims.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2a

Because to HS2 it's just a house that's in an inconvenient place. But to somebody else, to whoever owns the house, it's their whole life. It's people's memories, people's history. People's network of friends, that sort of thing. And how do you put a value on that?

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2b

Participants also expressed **scepticism**, particularly in relation to where the money would come from, whether it would ultimately be taken off the final agreed price of the property or whether it was a way for the Government to save money. Some also expressed concerns about added layers of bureaucracy.

Introducing a financial payment to the scheme had a **polarising effect on participants' views**. While participants could see the benefit of having an additional payment which could be used to cover fees in the process of selling and moving, others challenged the need to offer a financial incentive to make use of the scheme in circumstances in which an individual would need to move away. Participants who focused on the emotional impact of HS2 construction on people living along the line of route, felt the payment should be the same for everyone, as they believed *'everyone is going through the same trauma, whether they're in a big house or a small house'*.

I don't understand the logic of giving them an incentive to apply, and then giving them a cash refund back. If they're going to do that, they've introduced two layers of bureaucracy. Just remove the first one and just add a bit more onto the second one. Albeit, I have concerns regarding the fraudulent side of it. Maybe you might think if it's £250, it just covers a bit of admin, bit of postage, or anything like that. I'm sure they're probably thinking of something like £5,000. They've just got too much money if they're going to do that.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2b

I say, I don't think the financial payment is necessary, but in this circumstance, I think it would help people with stamp duty etc. so I think the new scheme is probably the better option in my opinion.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2b

Participants were asked to think about what their expectations of a one-off financial payment would be. In this context, **fairness** was an important factor. However, perceptions about what would be fair divided participants' views and **no consensus was reached on what would constitute a fair payment amount.**

Some participants emphasised the importance of ensuring the scheme in its entirety was fair and provided property owners with an honest offer – for example, one participant defined this as needing to be a scheme that allows people to move without incurring a loss. Others reflected on fairness from the perspective of the financial payment. There was no consensus on whether the payment should be **offered as a fixed amount or as a proportion of the value of the property.** Those in favour of a fixed amount argued that all who would consider moving would go through the same process, upset and inconvenience of having to leave a home and move to a new place. One participant opposed the idea of offering a financial payment, believing this could encourage people to sell the house to make a profit. The participant believed that if a financial payment was to be included in the scheme, it would have to offer the same payment for everyone, to stop those with extremely expensive houses benefitting more from the scheme; this was argued as a fairness point in the design of the scheme.

Well, I think if they're going to do it, then I'd just think a one-off payment and give everybody the same. Because otherwise you'll get people who've got a house worth £1,000,000 who, say it was 10% of the house price, then somebody who's got £1,000,000 will have an awful lot more than somebody whose house sells for £200,000.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2b

Conversely, others argued that a fair offer would be to ensure the payment is set as a proportion of the value of the house, reasoning that the associated costs would be higher – for example, one participant reflected on the estate agent fee being charged as a proportion, while another believed the costs of moving from a larger house would be higher, thus the payment should reflect the higher costs.

I suggested something like, they pay the estate agent fees. I was going to add, maybe, the solicitor fees, that was the sort of thing that I thought might be worth doing, which was not too extravagant.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2a

One participant who had previously considered applying for the NTS scheme argued that the one-off payment should be set at 15% of the value of the property, which he believed was the qualifying loss a property owner would have to incur on the open market to qualify for the NTS scheme. This was perceived as a good way to ensure a fair and/or minimal loss to the property sale.

Participants expected the payment to be in the tens of thousands, regardless of whether they believed it should be a fixed amount or a proportion of the value of the property. While some participants speculated using amounts of £250, £500 and £50,000, the expected payments range, for most participants, was between £10,000 and £20,000.

Participants reflected on the **importance of location and the influence it has on the value of a property** when considering what would constitute an appropriate payment amount.

For example, one participant hypothesised that a £2,000 one-off payment could be appealing when moving to an area within the geographical area of Stafford. This would have to increase if the seller intended to move to more expensive areas, such as London.

I think a local one based on the costs of moving to an area within the geographical area of Stafford, £2,000 should do it but you might get people who say, 'Well, I've got to move to London,' and then you're started talking a lot of money then.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2a

Others, who lived in what they described as more affluent areas, believed that £5,000 would be too small of an amount, and a sum of £50,000 would be more appropriate. There was acknowledgement that this would vary for properties selling in other parts of the country, where sums of £3,000 - £4,000 could appeal to sellers.

In most cases, participants settled for a range between £10,000 and £20,000, seeing this as a sum that would allow them to pay for solicitor fees, estate agent fees and support the cost of removal when moving house. This view was also shared by previous NTS applicants.

So, £5,000 round here would not be enough, and frankly you would be talking £50,000 as the bung element. But I think in other parts of the country [...] £3,000 or £4,000 might be very tempting for people. So, this is a very artificial area to talk about.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

It should cover the solicitor's fees and the estate agent's fees, so, I think between £10,000 and £20,000 probably would do that.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

What would I have been happy with? If I'd received the unblighted market value, the fact that it cost us £5,000 to pay a professional, plus my time. The amount of time I spent on that was unbelievable. I think I would probably be looking for something between £10,000 and £20,000.

Participant, NTS applicant, Phase 1

The timing of payments was also emphasised as an important factor when considering uptake of the scheme. Participants reflected on how the scheme would work in practice and expressed a preference for a lump sum that would be paid, ideally, at the beginning of the process or that guarantees would be set in place about the commitment of HS2 to ensure the payments are made on time. They felt this would provide reassurance during the application process and could provide support with paying some of the fees associated with selling a property.

I would want a valuation scheme which was so quick, that I knew that any sale or any purchase I was then going to make could go through, because I know what I would have to spend. And that means the product of the sale of your property, any borrowing, and the HS2 top-up, because there would be three elements to your purchase. You would want that in place as quickly as possible. You can't say, [...] I'm going to buy a new house, and then I'm going to wait 18 months for HS2 to top-up. It can't happen. So, first thing is you want prompt arrangements so that payment takes place. And, if necessary, to a guaranteed level. So, you say if we're about to exchange, you could have a mechanism for this, we know what we're going to get from HS2 when we exchange. [...] But we need to know what we've got to spend. I think that would be the security that everyone is looking for.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

Previous NTS applicants questioned the need for introducing a one-off payment to encourage people to make use of the scheme. Reflecting on their experience of applying for the scheme, they felt the payment would not make a difference to the scheme and instead hypothesised it could add a layer of additional paperwork associated with accessing the one-off payment. They believed a simplified application process would bring more value to the NTS2 scheme.

Summary of participants' views – one-off financial payment

- In most cases, participants expected a financial payment of £10,000 to £20,000.
- Participants reflected on how they would use the one-off payment often in relation to paying estate agents, solicitors and moving fees. A more positive framing of the message around the financial payment could encourage uptake of the scheme. For example, it could be framed as a financial payment to help cover selling and moving fees or to provide the seller with compensation for the inconvenience of moving.
- The speed and timing of payments was a concern for participants who felt they needed reassurance and guarantees before embarking on the application process for the NTS2 scheme.
- In some cases, participants questioned the need for an additional payment to encourage uptake for the scheme. They believed that if the need to sell was there and a property owner qualified for the criteria, and if there was not a financial loss for the seller, the two schemes offered the same outcome.

3.5. Impact on scheme appeal

When comparing the two schemes, participants' views varied. Views tended to focus on simplicity and ease of selling as well as the transparency of the processes involved and the potential advantages of a more transparent scheme.

Those who expressed a **preference for NTS** preferred the perceived simplicity of the process when having to deal with one buyer – the Government. Participants also reflected on the challenges of selling a property on the open market – for example, properties could take longer to sell and offers may be lacking as a result of HS2. In these instances, participants highlighted that NTS offered the seller a certainty that their house would sell, provided there was a successful application. The NTS scheme was seen as less bureaucratic and less likely to carry risks of sales falling through.

I cannot believe that there wouldn't be some inspector coming from the Government saying, 'I don't know you have not really put it on the open market, you've not got a proper price'. So I can see endless bureaucracy with that. Whereas selling directly to the Government, they actually have the responsibility of then selling it on or deciding what to do with it. I didn't see the advantage, because the cap of the price is determined by what the Government says the value of the property is. So that's how much in the end you get, whether you sell it on the open market and have all the hassle of that yourself."

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2b

Those who **expressed a preference for NTS2** cited the financial payment as the main driver for preference. As emphasised in the previous section, participants felt this could serve as compensation for those having to move and were more positive about potentially using the payment to cover fees. For some participants the ability to sell on the open market was more attractive because of a perceived more transparent valuation process. Others were positive about the prospect of using a scheme that might help save some money for the Government.

In this way the NTS2 scheme was more attractive to a potential seller, as it offered financial support and an opportunity to receive a fairer price for their home. The idea of saving public money was also an element of appeal for some participants.

And as I say, the financial payment which I don't think is necessary, but in this circumstance, I think it would help people with stamp duty etc. so I think the new scheme is probably the better option in my opinion.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 2b

One participant reflected on the application process of the two schemes and believed that NTS would be more appropriate for people who may need to move out more quickly, while NTS2 would be useful for those with more time on their hands as it would involve finding a buyer on the open market as well as agreeing on that price with the Government.

In some cases, participants emphasised that selling on the open market could have potential benefits for an individual, a family, or the local community, citing this as an appealing feature of the NTS2 scheme.

If I'm honest neither of them really appeals, but I guess probably the second one a bit more. Just feels like it's got a bit more humanity about it because you're selling to an actual person and hopefully, they'll make a good family life here like we have, rather than just selling to the Government.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

Conversely, some participants believed neither of the schemes addressed the needs of people living along the HS2 line of route.

I don't believe either scheme addresses the needs of everybody. I have suspicions about the new scheme, and I don't believe that it genuinely helps people unless they're literally at their wits end or as a last resort. So, I don't think either scheme is a preferred scheme at all.

Participant, NTS non-applicant, Phase 1

3.6. Circumstances in which participants would use either of the schemes

Across discussions, participants identified circumstances in which they might consider using the schemes. These circumstances often applied to both schemes. Below we summarise some of the circumstances in which participants would consider using the two schemes.

A change in lifestyle or a life event were circumstances in which participants believed they would consider the scheme. For example, participants discussed changing job roles and moving for a better paid role – this would trigger a need to sell in which they would consider using the schemes. **Divorcing, losing a partner or children moving out** were also circumstances in which participants felt they would consider moving and potentially making use of the schemes. However, those participants who were more sceptical about HS2 expressed a preference for attempting to sell on the open market first, before considering using the scheme as a last resort or out of desperation.

I think if we did look to move and we were having difficulty selling, then yes, we would definitely look into it.

Participant, non-NTS applicant, Phase 2a

It'd be desperation, really, because if you couldn't sell, you would hopefully make your house presentable, get valuations, go with an agent, and then, if it didn't sell, or you didn't get offers, then you would, out of desperation, come back to HS2, wouldn't you?

Participant, non-NTS applicant, Phase 2b

A change in health whether due to aging or sudden illness was also a common reason participants cited when discussing situations in which they'd consider making use of the scheme to move house. In such circumstances, participants explained they would be looking to move closer to family or relatives and friends for support.

I have never actually contemplated selling this house. But, if my health depended on it, and I had to, I would.

Participant, non-NTS applicant, Phase 1

Participants also reflected on the **inconvenience and distress caused by the construction** as a potential circumstance in which they would consider using the scheme. In particular, participants living in areas of the HS2 route where construction had not started yet believed that if building HS2 was going to severely impact on their home and health, they were likely to make use of the scheme to move house. In some cases, noise was a particular concern for participants, especially for those living near other sources of noise – for example a busy road.

Well, we don't know how the noise aspect's going to affect us, do we, really? It's going to be horrendous. We live on a main road as well, so that's going to really impact all the traffic, we're going to have all the heavy vehicles coming through, all the heavy machinery, so it is going to be horrific really.

Participant, non-NTS applicant, Phase 1

In some cases, **distance from the HS2 route** was also a potential factor which could influence participants when considering whether they would make use of the scheme or not. Some participants believed the construction of HS2 will have limited impact on them and their home due to the location of their home, thus, they did not envisage making use of the scheme to move.

I wouldn't consider it because of HS2 because I don't really think it's going to impact us that much. We're going to have inconvenience while it's being built or if it was to be built but, the running of it I don't see that that's going to impact us at all.

Participant, non-NTS applicant, Phase 2b

Participants also mentioned some factors that in combination with the circumstances mentioned above, would deter them from considering using the schemes.

One of the most commonly mentioned deterrents was **participants believing they would not fit the criteria to qualify for the scheme**. This was associated with a lack of understanding around what would qualify as “a compelling reason to move”.

It's something that I would be ruling myself out of, purely because I don't think I have a compelling reason apart from the fact that I want to move out.

Participant, non-NTS applicant, Phase 2b

Similarly, participants were concerned about the lack of **transparency and clarity around the application process**. They believed more information and a simplified process was needed from the onset and, in some cases, having someone to provide assistance to those considering applying and who might find it difficult navigating the application process.

Well, simplicity, I suppose, transparency, how easy is it to find out the details? How long does it take? In other words, how well is the scheme run I suppose. If you know that's going to work efficiently and quickly, you will be more likely to use it than get bogged down in time consuming negotiations.

Participant, non-NTS applicant, Phase 1

Notably, some participants explained they would not consider moving under any circumstances and felt they'd want to continue to live in the area for as long as possible.

3.7. Impact of proposed changes on the appeal of the NTS2 scheme

Although the idea of a potential one-off payment made NTS2 more appealing for some, this was counteracted by the appeal of simplicity and potential for a faster sale which the NTS scheme offers (more detail on preference can be found in Chapter 3). Thus, there was no clear pattern of preference towards either scheme.

Based on the evidence in this research, there are several factors which have an influence over whether the NTS2 scheme is to have a greater appeal over the original scheme. These factors are very much dependent on the individual circumstances of the applicant and what the perceived merits are for each of the schemes.

Participants raised concerns over the timescales associated with NTS2. As explored in this report, some felt that selling the property on the open market is likely to take longer, particularly if there is a chain, and with the possibility of deals collapsing, NTS2 is seen as higher risk.

Selling it to the Government's easier because you're only dealing with one person then. If you're selling it yourself, you've got to have a buyer and you've got to have all the chain.

Participant, non-NTS applicant, Phase 1

There were also concerns over the speed of the top-up payment. For those that would anticipate moving into a new property and require the top-up funds to complete their onward purchase, it would be vital that payment is made on the day of completion.

I would worry about whether HS2 would go through with that payment or how long it would take to get it. People will probably need that payment to go towards the payment of their new property so they will need it fast.

Participant, non-NTS applicant, Phase 2a

In contrast, there were participants who felt that NTS2 would put the seller more in control of the process and that the variation of the scheme would support the economy and bolster the housing market. In one case a participant described it as a 'win-win', with a potential buyer getting a good deal and the seller getting the full unblighted value of the property.

I think if they were to roll this out, in certain areas with certain types of property, I can see that it would free things up, because people would be buying houses at rock bottom prices, which would be great. You know, there will be people out there who would happily buy a house with a railway a few hundred yards away and then become a landlord and rent it out.

Participant, NTS applicant, Phase 1

Annexes

Annex A – List of qualifying reasons for the Need to Sell scheme

Under the Need to Sell scheme (and the proposed NTS2 variant), a successful applicant would have to demonstrate that they had a compelling reason to sell their property.

These are examples of the sort of circumstances in which applicants would typically be considered to have presented a strong case for having met this criterion. The following is not definitive and other circumstances could qualify a property owner for the compelling reason to sell criterion.

- They want to sell their property because they had lost their job and, as a result, their income had significantly reduced and they could no longer meet previous commitments. They had been unable to find a new job that provided the same income.
- They need to move to take up a new job.
- They are dividing assets as part of a divorce settlement.
- They were recently married and want to sell their property so that they and their spouse could sell their individual homes and use the proceeds to buy one home.
- They are in ill health.
- They want to move to a smaller, single-storey property, as they are becoming less mobile.
- They want to sell their property to meet financial commitments that were due within three years from the date of their application. The sale would relieve an unreasonable financial burden on them.
- They want to move from a large and isolated property to one that was nearer to local amenities and services and which had access and a layout that would better suit them as they become less mobile.
- Due to a reduced retirement income, they want to sell their property so that they could downsize and move. Selling their property would free up money and reduce their outgoings.
- An elderly property owner wants to sell their home so they can move closer to a family member.
- They want to sell because they have a long-established retirement plan to move to a different property in a less rural area, closer to amenities.
- They need to sell their property so that they could relocate to allow their child, who has special educational needs, to go to a school that met their needs.
- They had recently had another child and wanted to move to a larger property as they needed more room (including bedrooms) for their growing family.
- They are selling the property of someone who had died, so that the executor and beneficiaries could wind up the estate.

Some applicants may fall into more than one of these categories (e.g., no longer working due to ill health).

In exceptional cases, prolonged disturbance and noise disruption from the construction or operation of the railway may contribute to a compelling reason to sell. However, in general property owners would

first be expected to look at the arrangements under the Prolonged Disruption Compensation Scheme (PDCS) that has been set up for this purpose.

Annex B – Stimuli used with participants during the in-depth interviews

Introducing the Need To Sell scheme

A

The Government has set up the Need to Sell (NTS) scheme to support the property owners most impacted by HS2 who need to move. If they can meet the criteria then they will buy their property directly at the full open-market value, as if HS2 was not there.

The criteria include demonstrating that they could only sell their property at a significant loss, because of HS2. Owners must demonstrate that they have a compelling reason to sell the property, the circumstances of which are assessed as part of the application.

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Introducing the Need To Sell 2 scheme

B

This scheme would be called Need to Sell 2 and would be set up to support property owners most impacted by HS2 who need to move. The qualifying criteria include demonstrating that property owners could only sell their property at a significant loss, because of HS2. Owners must demonstrate that they have a compelling reason to sell the property, the circumstances of which are assessed as part of the application.

Under the NTS2 scheme the owner would sell it on the open market for a price that reflects that the property is near the HS2 route, then the Government would pay the seller the difference.

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Summary of the schemes

C

Circumstance	NTS	NTS2
Property owner has to demonstrate they can only sell their property at a significant loss because of HS2	✓	✓
Property owner has to demonstrate they have a compelling reason to sell	✓	✓
Property owner gets the full unblighted value of their property	✓	✓
Property owner sells to the Government	✓	X
Property owner sells on the open market	X	✓
Property owner gets a financial payment	X	✓
Property owner gets stamp duty, legal fees, removal expenses	X	X

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This is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911/MRQSA and incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme). It covers the five stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



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