

High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester)

High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Equality Impact Assessment Report consultation

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Please tell us whom the organisation or group represents and, where applicable, how you assembled the views of members. Please write in the box below, and attach additional pages if you need to.

Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council is a unitary local authority formed in 2009. This consultation response is submitted on behalf of the council by the Director of Transport and Highways.

Cheshire West and Chester Council highly values the importance of engagement with all stakeholders including residents, businesses, other public entities and Cheshire West and Chester Councillors.

Over the many years since it was announced that the proposed route of HS2 would pass through the borough, the Council has worked extensively with these and many other parties on a vast magnitude of relating themes, issues and opportunities.

Building upon this substantial foundation of engagement, the Council specifically engaged with its councillors, town and parish councillors and other representative groups to have opportunities to input to the submissions of Cheshire West and Chester Council to the HS2 Phase 2b Equality Impact Assessment and Environmental Statement consultations.

1. Introduction to Cheshire West and Chester

- 1.1.1. Cheshire West and Chester has a population of approximately 331,000 and covers 350 square miles. The borough includes the historic city of Chester and the industrial and market towns of Ellesmere Port, Frodsham, Helsby, Malpas, Neston, Northwich and Winsford. About a third of the population live in rural areas.
- 1.1.2. Winsford and Northwich are the two towns within the borough located closest to the route of HS2, having populations of approximately 34,000 and 20,000 respectively.
- 1.1.3. Winsford is the major town in the area, providing shops and services for people in the town and surrounding settlements and initially grew because of the salt industry during the 19th Century, which remains important today. Winsford is a key industrial and distribution business location with its railway station served by (electric) trains operating to Liverpool, Crewe and Birmingham.
- 1.1.4. Northwich comprises a town centre with several surrounding neighbourhoods and also has a salt industry heritage. A significant achievement in 2007 was completion of solving the town's subsidence problem by establishing one of the country's first ever land stabilisation programmes. The Baron's Quay development area of the town is a major regeneration scheme offering a significantly improved retail and leisure experience. The railway station is served by trains operating to Chester, Stockport and Manchester. A business case is currently being developed to reinstate a regular service on the existing line linking Northwich with Crewe, which would provide direct connectivity with HS2.

2. Summary of HS2 through Cheshire West and Chester

- 2.1.1. The route of the proposed HS2 scheme through the eastern area of our borough, is described in community area report and map book MA02 – Wimboldsley to Lostock Gralam. This traverses north from Walley's Green on embankment, passing Middlewich to the east, before crossing the Middlewich branch of the Shropshire Union Canal on viaduct. It continues on embankment, passing Winsford to the west and crossing the River Dane on viaduct. The route will continue north towards Lostock Gralam, alternating between embankment and viaduct to cross over Puddinglake Brook, the Trent and Mersey Canal, Gad Brook, Wade Brook, Peover Eye and Smoker Brook before continuing into the Pickmere to Agden and Hulseheath area.
- 2.1.2. In addition to the route of HS2, the Proposed Scheme also includes the Crewe North rolling stock depot, which will be provided on land between the route of the Proposed Scheme and the West Coast Main Line, north-east of Walley's Green. This operational and maintenance hub will feature 27 sidings of 400 metre length to accommodate up to 54 high speed trains. When operational, the works undertaken at this depot will be more extensive than elsewhere on the Western Leg, ranging from light cleaning to heavy duty maintenance. This depot is where most train drivers would be based and would start and end their shifts.
- 2.1.3. Construction and commissioning of the proposed scheme is expected to take place in stages between approximately 2025 and 2035 followed by track laying, systems installation, testing with operation assumed to be from 2038. The duration, intensity, and

scale of works along the route will vary over this period but will overall be substantial, have permanent changes to lifestyle, to the character of the area, economic prosperity and to the natural and built environment.

3. Overarching comments of this response

3.1. Opportunities

- 3.1.1. Cheshire West and Chester Council welcomes this opportunity to comment on the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Environmental Statement and Equality Impact Assessment. Separate submissions are made for each of these.
- 3.1.2. HS2 is a new high speed rail network that will provide the first major increase in inter-city rail capacity for over a century and release substantial capacity for rail travel on the existing network. High speed trains will serve London, Birmingham, Manchester using a combination of HS2 lines and the existing conventional rail network, operating at speeds of up to 360 kilometres per hour (225 miles per hour). It is essential that HS2 construction and subsequent operation is taken forward based upon an approach that fully complements the economic growth and connectivity development programmes of our region, the north of England and the United Kingdom.
- 3.1.3. Cheshire West and Chester Council is leading on a major project based expanding the capacity of Chester railway station to enable the station to be served by additional services including potential extension of HS2 on the existing direct line from Crewe. This is a central component of a wider regeneration programme for Chester, building upon an already established and ambitious transformational programme of this popular historic city. Increasing two-way connectivity with HS2 services is of high mutual importance.
- 3.1.4. Chester is one of the busiest stations in the North West region by passenger usage and is a substantial business and tourism destination in its own right as well as being a major hub for rail service interchange. Cheshire West and Chester Council is close to completing an initial assessment of the benefits of extending HS2 to Chester and serving the vast tourism and commercial opportunities of North Wales and the Mersey-Dee cross border areas.
- 3.1.5. Electrification of the Chester and North Wales main line to coincide with introduction of HS2 services at Crewe would enable direct, electric, high-speed services substantially building upon an established passenger demand market. This would offer a major opportunity to incentivise a transfer of travel to a highly attractive sustainable mode of travel with significant environmental benefits. These links with HS2 could be further enhanced by electrification of the existing line between Chester and Warrington, providing direct connectivity with HS2 (and Northern Powerhouse Rail) at Warrington for Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport stations. The multitude of Wales cross-border benefits closely align to themes and opportunities highlighted in the Union Connectivity Review of Sir Peter Hendy.
- 3.1.6. Road based public transport including fixed route scheduled bus services and non-fixed route flexible bus services provide important opportunities for sustainable travel for the construction and operation of HS2 (the latter for staff as well as passengers). As the phases of HS2 construction will have substantial adverse impacts on traffic congestion, the HS2

scheme must provide funding to work in collaboration with the Council and operators to provide targeted services that will make meaningful reductions of car journeys. Clearly, this will have an impact on managing the carbon footprint of HS2 during construction as well as once the service is operational.

- 3.1.7. In addition to public transport measures, by working with the Council to enhance provision for walking and cycling, these will combine to offer attractive options for the complete end to end journeys that will be made.

3.2. Information and future review

3.2.1. Although these consultations are based upon a baseline position on when the information was compiled, as the future phased impacts of HS2 construction and operation cannot currently be fully anticipated, it is essential that commitments are given by HS2 Ltd. to ensure that all affected, will be given transparent, accessible and timely opportunities to inform and influence the scheme as it progresses using understandable and supportive formats. This includes having a clearer understanding of the order and updated timescales of when information will be provided and answers to questions given.

3.2.2. There continues to be inadequate detailed information and evidence on several critical issues of major importance. Addressing this is a fundamental requirement for Cheshire West and Chester Council to be able to assess whether the HS2 scheme has holistically considered all the impacts and mitigation options, along with committing to deliverable and proportionate measures for the borough. There are a significant number of areas of concern set out within these consultation responses.

3.2.3. On a relating theme, Cheshire West and Chester Council reiterates and repeats its demand that HS2 provides models built to scale, showing the visual and severance impacts of HS2 infrastructure on communities, including associated works such as to highways and public rights of way.

3.3. Crewe North rolling stock depot

3.3.1. Construction and subsequent operation of the Crewe North Rolling Stock Depot and associated rail infrastructure is itself, a major scheme, featuring a vast multitude of complex impacts on communities and the environment. It must also serve as a significant employment and training opportunity, and it is important to ensure that local people and businesses have access to these opportunities.

3.3.2. To maximise full and inclusive assessment of the rolling stock depot, Cheshire West and Chester Council proposes that a dedicated working group is established, with the terms of reference jointly prepared by HS2 Ltd, the Department for Transport and Cheshire West and Chester Council.

3.4. Engagement

3.4.1. Cheshire West and Chester Council urges government to urgently step-up work on multi-agency technical engagement by HS2 Ltd. with the Council, neighbouring Councils and other entities. The same commitment is also urgently needed to address the significant adverse wellbeing impacts on communities in our borough which are already experiencing

these impacts. Cheshire West and Chester Council reiterates its readiness to build work on these themes with government and HS2 Ltd.

- 3.4.2. Although HS2 Ltd. includes use of many specialist teams, meaningful capturing & use of the knowledge and views of residents and communities urgently needs to be better embraced and for them to know what (and how) they can influence the HS2 scheme in their area. For example, HS2 will traverse areas of significant ground instability with residents having direct knowledge and awareness of the actual history of this, which may not be so readily identifiable from more formal analysis. Additionally, only residents can have a realistic and full interpretation of how HS2 construction and operation will directly affect community life as well as the associated psychological effects on people.
- 3.4.3. Measures need to be committed by the HS2 scheme that are more inherently driven from the perspective of receptors such as communities as opposed to just from the perspective of managing a project to build this rail line. Funding to take forward opportunities to have one or more people embedded in our area to be contactable and approachable for our residents, communities and businesses urgently needs to be established, as passage of the Phase 2b Bill through its parliamentary process represents a significant stage of this major scheme. – There is already an outstanding need for HS2 Ltd. To “become a good neighbour” and overall accountability for this must remain directly with government and HS2 Ltd and be responsibly demonstrated by contractors.
- 3.4.4. There is an important and outstanding need for the cumulative assessment of impacts on residents, communities, businesses, the natural and built environments to be developed, appraised and responded to. The combined impacts on each of these are greater than that of the individual components. The distinct lack of this approach by HS2 Ltd, results in receptors of adverse impacts not being identified or fully understood.

3.5. Cross-border impacts

- 3.5.1. Cheshire West and Chester Council works extensively with other Councils, greatly valuing the benefits and efficiencies this brings to all parties. HS2 construction and subsequent operation will clearly have significant impacts that cross border with neighbouring areas and the Council needs commitments from HS2 Ltd. for its dedication to collective collaboration and information sharing as part of future working.
- 3.5.2. Schools at Wimboldsley and Byley are referred to elsewhere in this submission and are examples of schools that are directly affected and have children from the boroughs of Cheshire West and Chester as well as from Cheshire East. The site of the latter straddles the border, as does the proposed nearby borrow pit.
- 3.5.3. Cheshire West and Chester Council strongly supports the need for securing the appropriate investment in the Crewe hub station and surroundings to enable it to meet future passenger demand and act as a hub and spoke for the whole region. This will include suitable car park provision enhancements but also importance of accessible infrastructure and service enhancements of connecting rail and bus services ensuring that these services will continue to operate reliably and be inclusive to all users.

3.5.4. The highways network is essential for the cross border movement of people and goods with avoidance of congestion (or vehicles using unsuitable alternative routes) being essential to avoid generating major adverse environmental and air quality impacts as well as enabling equal access to services and facilities. This also relies upon commitments from HS2 Ltd to address the future additional maintenance liability generated by its haulage routes and routes used for construction of HS2 including the rolling stock depot.

3.5.5. It is essential that these issues and opportunities are taken forward on a cross border and multi-agency basis by HS2 Ltd. Similarly, both Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council are jointly concerned about the impacts of HS2 construction on the continuity and service provision of cross boundary bus services. We note that Arriva's bus depot is located at Winsford but operates services throughout Cheshire.

3.5.6. Cheshire West and Chester Council along with Cheshire East Council are jointly concerned about the extent of adverse impacts at the following key locations:

- A530 Nantwich Road / Chapel Lane
- A556 Chester Road / A530 King Street
- A54 Middlewich Road / Road One / Clive Lane
- A556 Shurlach Road / Birches Lane
- A54 Holmes Chapel Road / A533 Leadsmithy Street, Middlewich

Cheshire West and Chester Council also shares Cheshire East Council's concern that HS2's approach to highway modelling includes the assumption that major schemes (such as Middlewich Eastern Bypass) will be delivered in advance of construction despite them yet having Final Business case approval. There needs to be an understanding of what the impacts on the road network will be if this scheme is not delivered for any reason, and any additional mitigations measures included in the bill as a backstop.

3.5.7. The final Bill must facilitate any required additional land take that may be required to ensure that any improvement schemes for public rights of way, highways or sustainable travel infrastructure can be delivered without constraints

Please let us know your views on the EQIA Report by responding to these questions:

4. Question 1

Please let us know your comments on the route-wide impact assessment, set out in section 5 of the EQIA report

4.1.1. The route-wide impact assessment appears to be comprehensive. The Council welcomes the general measures and notes the positive approach taken around communications (5.2.6) and advocacy/support (5.2.8). 5.2.16 around maintaining public rights of way including accessibility considerations is crucial and must be delivered.

- 4.1.2. The reference at 5.2.18 to avoid HGV movements operating adjacent to schools during drop off and pick up periods is a laudable approach, although the caveat of 'where reasonably practicable' does introduce some doubt as to how effective this will be.
- 4.1.3. The positive action commitments set out in 5.2.20 - 24 are valued in terms of the employment of under-represented groups, although we would wish to see a pledge around employing local people from under-represented groups rather than the more general aims.
- 4.1.4. Paragraph 5.2.26 refers to maintaining footways of adequate width to facilitate pedestrian flows - this should include an accessibility consideration so that disabled people including those who use wheelchairs are included, not just pedestrians. Specific issues that are covered in the route-wide assessment such as noise and air quality will be picked up in the relevant section below.
- 4.1.5. The acknowledgement in section 5.3.11 that four of our care homes will be impacted by traffic increases and two of our care homes by visual impacts at 5.3.6 is accepted as is the impact of construction noise on one of our schools at 5.3.19 and the traffic impacts on a number of schools at 5.3.21 - although the impact on two closer schools, Wimboldsley and Byley, is covered below and is the subject of separate reports. These reports will be finalised and submitted to HS2 Ltd. after the closing date of this consultation.
- 4.1.6. The impacts on play areas for three of our facilities is covered at 5.3.49, and the permanent loss of Lostock Green Picnic area including an accessible toilet is deeply regretted (5.3.50). Similar comments apply to effects during operation (5.4.1 - 21)

5. Question 2

Please let us know your comments on the Community Area (CA) assessments, set out in the EQIA Report. You are welcome to comment on one or more of the Community Areas listed below. Please tick those that you wish to comment on:

Please write in the box below, and attach additional pages if you need to.

5.1. MA02 - Wimboldsley to Lostock Gralam

- 5.1.1. The permanent loss of the educational facility of Greenhayes Farm is of concern, with no attempt at mitigation. The fact that it is free, and the nearest alternative is not only some distance away but also charges mean there is a distinct adverse impact on young people (7.3). Equally, the permanent loss of Lostock Green Picnic Area and its accessible toilet represents a detriment to children, older and disabled people, and pregnant and nursing mothers. Disappointingly, the language is also poor, with a reference to 'disabled toilet' at 7.4.1.
- 5.1.2. The impact on Darnhall Primary School at 7.5 is acknowledged, although no apparent reference is included of Wimboldsley Community Primary School and Byley Primary and Nursery School which are much more significantly impacted. The former is in close

proximity to two borrow pits, construction of a vast rolling stock depot as well as the HS2 line. The latter is in close proximity to a borrow pit which will rely entirely on road haulage of material which will also be close to the school. Impacts on these schools is extensively described within a comprehensive report specialist report which will be finalised and submitted to HS2 Ltd. after the closing date of this consultation. (reference to these schools is also made later in this response).

- 5.1.3. The impact on Lostock Lodge Care Home at 7.6 does not make reference to the impact of construction on visitors who may visit less frequently as a result, impacting on the health and wellbeing of residents who are older and/or disabled. There is also presumably a typing error at 7.6.7 which refers to Bentley Manor Care Home.
- 5.1.4. All of these specific locations contain a commitment that 'HS2 Ltd will work with (affected organisation) to identify reasonably practicable measures to mitigate the effects'. This needs to take place as early as possible with Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- 5.1.5. The 'area-based effects' section (7.7) outlines some of the impacts on access to amenities but does not recognise difficulties in access to local shops which is likely to be an issue for older and disabled residents, nor such things as access to the nearest hospitals (in Crewe and Northwich).
- 5.1.6. The impacts on Wimboldsley Community Primary School and Byley Primary and Nursery Schools are the subject of the separate reports referred to in paragraph 5.1.2. The key equality impacts identified will include noise, vibration and air quality issues during the construction phase which will impact on pupils, especially those with disabilities, and the lack of access to open spaces as lessons currently held outside need to be indoors. Additionally, road closures and increased traffic will impact on staff and parents, and a recommended mitigation is to have before and after school clubs to ease congestion and travel issues.

6. Question 3

Please let us know your comments on appendices to the EQIA Report (Appendix A

Literature Review and Appendix B Community Profile). Please indicate in your response

which appendix your comments apply to

- 6.1.1. No comments on the appendices, appears accurate and robust. However, as information becomes available from the 2021 census (likely to be from summer 2022 onwards), this should be updated.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1.1. Cheshire West and Chester Council recognizes the magnitude and complexity associated with the government's scheme for the construction and subsequent operation of HS2 Phase 2b. Although extensive work has already been undertaken by HS2 Ltd. to conclude with the proposed route and infrastructure, there needs to continue to be meaningful provision for change, particularly as technical work develops new findings and strengthened mitigation solutions are identified.
- 7.1.2. The Council emphasises that HS2 is already having a major adverse impact on communities, businesses, the natural and built environment. Construction will also increase the extent of overall adverse environmental impacts. Government and HS2 Ltd. need to keep a firm focus on the project from this perspective, ensuring that the decisions being made which will have lifelong impacts will be fair. Cheshire West and Chester Council urges the government to establish a regional ombudsman function to help ensure reasonable and proportionate measures are taken by the scheme.
- 7.1.3. It is impossible to comment on environmental and equality impacts at this stage of the scheme, based on the whole life of this project. This needs to have periodic and ongoing review and be structured so that all people, including under-represented groups, understand impacts and what decisions they can influence.
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