

Cheshire West and Chester Council

High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Environment Statement (AP2 ES) and Supplementary Environmental Statement (SES2) Consultation

Consultation closing date: 31st August 2023

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Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or group?

Yes

If yes, please include the name of your organisation:

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Please note: if you are providing a response on behalf of an organisation or group, the name and details of the organisation or group may be subject to publication or appear in the final report, unless you have requested confidentiality.

What category of organisation or group are you representing?

Local government

Please tell us whom the organisation or group represents and, where applicable, how you assembled the views of members.

Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council (CW&C, the 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.

CW&C highly values the importance of engagement with all stakeholders including residents, businesses, parish and town councils, 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 to receive views on a vast magnitude of relating themes, issues and opportunities.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This consultation response from CW&C focuses upon the area MA02 – Wimboldsley to Lostock Gralam.
- 1.2 CW&C submitted a petition against the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill (“the Bill”) and first additional provision (AP1) in August 2022, regarding impacts of the Proposed Scheme on the Council’s administrative area, as described in the Environmental Statement, Equality Impact Assessment Report and associated documents. Themes of those petitions comprised highways and active travel; public transport; public rights of way; climate change; equality and diversity; landscape and visual; ecology and biodiversity; schools; ground conditions; Crewe North Rolling Stock Depot; engagement; waste and minerals.
- 1.3 On 15th August 2023, CW&C submitted a petition against the second additional provision (AP2) of the Bill focusing upon highway and mineral impacts. There are therefore, some repetition of comments made in this consultation submission from that of the AP2 petition.
- 1.4 This consultation submission is structured based upon themes of the proposed changes of AP2 affecting area MA02.
- 1.5 CW&C takes this opportunity to repeat its fundamental view that the design, construction and operation of HS2 through our borough, needs to be driven “inward” from the primary context of ensuring that design will provide effective and sensitive management of the scheme’s lasting impacts on communities, businesses as well as of the natural and built environment, as opposed to being driven “outward” from the primary context of the whole line of route requirements of the scheme.

2.0 SUMMARY OF HS2 THROUGH THE BOROUGH OF CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER

- 2.1 The route of HS2 to the north of Crewe, traverses northwards 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 continues 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.
- 2.2 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.

- 2.3 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 and testing. It is assumed that the scheme will be operational from 2038.
- 2.4 The duration, intensity, and scale of works along the route will vary over this period but will overall be substantial, disproportionate, have permanent changes to lifestyle, impose significant change to the character of the area, impact on economic prosperity and affect the natural and built environment.

Consultation comments

3.0 Context

- 3.1 The construction and operation of the Proposed Scheme is already having significant, disproportionate, and long-lasting detrimental impacts on the wellbeing of residents, communities and businesses which will progressively escalate.
- 3.2 As the HS2 infrastructure will permanently sever and change the character of communities, mitigation must be focused on all those who will be affected with measures to minimise disruption to the day to day connectivity of people from places and their facilities. Cumulative assessment of impacts and the provision of appropriate solutions is essential and the generation of adverse impacts on isolation by the Proposed Scheme would be totally unacceptable to the Council.
- 3.3 Areas throughout the borough affected by the construction and operation of the Proposed Scheme present the Promoter with challenging conditions including unstable ground, complex geology, salt and brine caverns and underground gas storage infrastructure in addition to utilities infrastructure. It is essential that any issues arising from these conditions and upon such infrastructure is addressed fully and at the Promoter's cost.
- 3.4 Although this consultation is on AP2 to the Bill, the Council takes this opportunity to repeat this important overarching context of the circumstances of the borough and requests that the Promoter demonstrates its understanding of this and ensures that respect, responsiveness and accountability are consistently applied.

4.0 Archaeology

- 4.1 CW&C receives its archaeological advice from the Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (APAS), which is a shared service based in CW&C but also providing archaeological advice to Cheshire East Council. APAS also maintains the Historic Environment Record for both authorities. It continues to be heavily involved in discussions and liaison with the heritage teams for both HS2 Phase 2a and Phase 2b. The authority's response to this latest public consultation is based on advice received from APAS.
- 4.2 This response from APAS is predominantly focussed on Volume 5 (Technical appendices) and the supporting reports of which the latter, whilst not a formal part of the Environmental Statement (ES), have been prepared in support of material contained in Volume 5. Volume 2 (Community Area Summary Reports and Map Books) does reference archaeological issues in the various Community Area reports but these references are brief and merely summarise the information contained in the relevant section of Volume 5 (Technical Appendices). Volume 3 is concerned with route-wide effects and Volume 4 is concerned with off-route effects; archaeology does not appear to have generated a specific requirement for comment or discussion in either of these volumes with reference to the latest amendments.
- 4.3 Turning to Volume 5, archaeology is considered in the Technical Appendix entitled 'Historic Environment', which also considers the effect of the amendments on the historic built environment. The report comprises a summary gazetteer (Sections 3-5) containing details of affected features and an impact assessment (Section 6) containing an appraisal of the effect of the amendments on individual features. The effect of the amendments on the historic landscape character are assessed in Section 7 and Section 8 assesses the impact of the amendments on features affected by two or more changes to the scheme. A map book illustrates the changes outlined in the report.
- 4.4 The Volume 5 Historic Environment report is supported by two further reports which, although providing further data, do not form a formal part of the ES. These documents comprise, firstly, a report on three further geophysical surveys of areas identified as having archaeological potential and situated within land affected by these latest amendments to the scheme. In addition, there is a second report that consists of baseline data. These data relate to land affected by amendments to the scheme which was not included in the original ES.
- 4.5 In terms of the actual impact of the amendments on any archaeological features, the Historic Environment report concludes that these will be minimal as, in most cases, the effects have already been identified in earlier studies and the amendments do not introduce any new major impacts within CW&C's area (APAS has noted some minor impacts in Cheshire East and these have been noted in its parallel response to that authority).
- 4.6 Although no major concerns have been identified within this consultation, any that do arise can be raised within the archaeological mitigation strategy that is currently being developed by HS2 Ltd. in consultation with Historic England and the local authority archaeological advisors.

5.0 Waste

- 5.1 The figures for waste generated and the likely amount to go to landfill have changed in AP2. The amount of inert waste forecast to be generated has increased compared to the original scheme.
- 5.2 Although the overall reduction in landfill capacity in the North West is now proposed to be 62% (which is less than that in the original proposal, but more than for AP1), the Council requests details of the supporting evidence to allow it to understand the robustness of that information and of the Promoter's mitigation measures.
- 5.3 The Council notes that as there is not any inert landfill capacity in Dumfries and Galloway, the inert waste generated by the Annadale depot works will be managed in the North West region. As the Council collaborates with waste planning authorities across this region, clarification is sought on whether inert waste from these works were included within previous waste figures.
- 5.4 Clarification is sought on whether the Promoter (or Nominated Undertaker) has any powers to use land within the construction areas of HS2 (in the borough) for landfill. The Council would like a commitment from the Promoter for engagement on this important theme, including to determine whether this may provide some opportunities for displaced inert material to reduce impacts on prevailing landfill sites, reduce transportation of this material and whether there are potential positive impacts on biodiversity.
- 5.5 Although the Council seeks reassurance that AP2 will not cause impacts that could lead to a need for the Council to source additional landfill capacity or sites, it is recognized that the Promoter will seek sustainable placement of material within the project area to reduce the need for off-site disposal to landfill and reduce transport requirements.

6.0 Minerals

- 6.1 The Council would like further information from the Promoter about anticipated impacts of AP2 on mineral resources of the borough as well as on salt and brine extraction. Of special interest is information about the amount of aggregate sand and gravel required or the impacts on salt and brine extraction.

7.0 Noise and air quality

- 7.1 CW&C recognizes that changes made within AP2 relating to noise and air quality are likely to be followed by subsequent revisions as evolution of scheme design and data refinement continues (as for other aspects of the scheme).
- 7.2 The Council seeks appropriate and proactive engagement to demonstrate that changes adversely affecting noise and air quality are accompanied by commitments for appropriate mitigation measures in readiness of those impacts. These measures should be provided based up having a proportionate

interpretation of the impacts on receptors as opposed to simply relying on legislative standards as a trigger for intervention.

- 7.3 Although it is regretful that further receptors of adverse noise and air quality continue to be identified, the Council acknowledges that by doing this, it should ensure that appropriate controls and mitigation can be identified, assessed and implemented prior to the receptor being impacted. Confirmation of this is requested along with a commitment for continued engagement with the Council to ensure that changes to receptors are identified and accompanied by appropriate commitments throughout the lifetime of the scheme, in accordance with measures contained within the Environmental Statement and Code of Construction Practice.

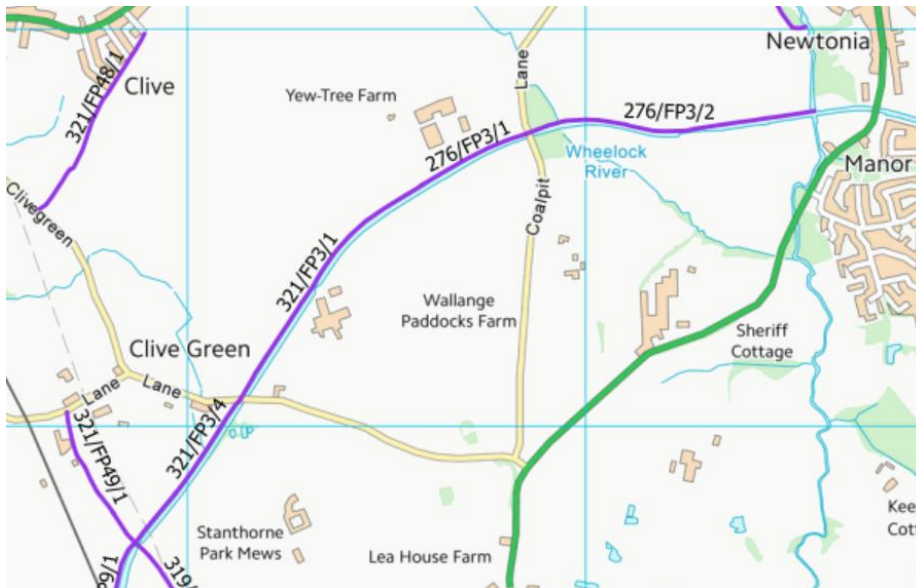
8.0 Highways and active travel

- 8.1 The Council seeks further engagement with the Promoter to receive and review information that has led to showing impacts along road links and at junctions (during construction and operational scenarios) for those which are identified as moderate/major adverse impacts as well as for impacts that may generate additional maintenance costs on highway infrastructure (such as bridges on the A530 Croxton Lane). The Council requests that appropriate mitigation measures are developed and implemented by the Promoter.
- 8.2 The Council seeks further engagement with the Promoter to understand the apparent increase in traffic flows through both Northwich and Winsford compared to AP1 and of the consequential impacts on communities. Where moderate or adverse negative impacts are identified, the Council requests that appropriate mitigation measures are developed and implemented by the Promoter.
- 8.3 Further details are also sought on diversion routes (highways or rights of way) and the Council requests sharing such information with parish / town councils, to ensure that the needs of residents are understood and met. This extends to negative impacts of the SES2 and AP2 ES for changes in daily movements of all vehicles (i.e., incorporating construction vehicles and worker commuting vehicles), traffic levels that result in changes in the traffic-related severances for non-motorised road users, particularly pedestrians using or seeking to cross the roads. The Council requests that appropriate mitigation measures are developed and implemented by the Promoter.

9.0 Public rights of way (PROW)

- 9.1 The Plan replacement 1-34 = Plot 70b added to Lach Dennis, crosses a FP3 Lostock Gralam (a couple of times) and FP2 Lostock Green. The Council would like reassurance the footpath is not to be closed during HS2 construction. Plot 70b connects to Birches Lane close to the line of footpath at the junction. The Council requests that the Promoter will engage and consult with the Council on impacts on these footpaths (and other footpaths) to ensure that impacts will be satisfactory to the Council and the local communities.

- 9.2 AP2 proposes the construction of an alternative path that would connect the termination of FP5 Wimboldsley on the “old” Nantwich Road/A530 to the proposed line of the new road. This is a significant improvement for accessibility and convenience for the potential future use of the footpath and is fully supported.
- 9.3 AP2 has a commitment to close the towpath footpath at Wimboldsley (FP3) for a short period. The Council seeks commitment from the Promoter to agree upon maximum periods of duration of these closures.



- 9.4 The Council also seeks commitment from the Promoter to ensure that all temporary footpath diversions are at least equally amenable for users and that any temporary closures should be for as minimal time as possible.

13.0 Conclusion

- 13.1 The Council’s overarching key themes are orientated around adverse impacts on communities including severance, stock piles, active travel and highways (during construction and operation of HS2) and upon the natural environment.
- 13.2 The HS2 scheme, including features set out within CW&C’s petition against AP1 will adversely affect many communities including Rudheath, Lostock Gralam, Byley, Lach Dennis, Lostock Green, Wimboldsley and Davenham.
- 13.3 CW&C 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 determine this chosen route and infrastructure, CW&C requests that there continues to be meaningful scope for sharing of additional information and for changes to be made, which may require future Additional Provisions to the Bill. This will become more apparent as technical work develops and confirms that

further mitigation measures and amendments will be required to continue to minimise adverse legacy impacts on communities, businesses and the environment.

- 13.4 HS2 Phase 2b is already having a major adverse impact on communities, businesses, the natural and built environment and construction will magnify the scale of these environmental impacts. Government and HS2 Ltd. need to keep a firm focus on the project from this perspective, ensuring that the decisions now being made, which will have lifelong impacts, will be fair. As mentioned within the Council's response to the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) HS2 Phase 2b Environmental Statement Consultation (31st March 2022), Government is urged to establish a regional ombudsman function to help ensure reasonable and proportionate measures are taken by the scheme.
- 13.5 The Government is also urged by CW&C, to ensure that there are periodic and ongoing meaningful public review opportunities of the emerging environmental and equality impacts of HS2 Phase 2b. These should be structured so that all people, including under-represented groups, understand impacts and what decisions they can influence.
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