

HS2 Liaison Group
Venue: The Forum, Towcester, SNC Offices
Draft notes of the meeting held on 14th December 2018 at 2pm

<p>Representatives from the following organisations were present:</p> <p>SNAG Andrea Leadsom MP (part) Tommy Gilchrist – Andrea Leadsom’s Office (part) Evenley PC Lower Thorpe Brackley Town Council Thorpe Mandeville PC Chipping Warden and Edgcote PC CPRE Friends of Boddington Greatworth PC Cllr Rosie Herring</p>	<p>Aston le Walls PC Moreton Pinkey PC Culworth PC Eydon PC Wappenham PC Farthinghoe PC Whitfield Resident Group Boddington PC Sulgrave PC Cllr Ian Morris – NCC Byfield PC Hinton-in-the-Hedges PM Charwelton PM</p>
<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Cllr Fiona Baker Cllr Mary-Anne Sergison-Brooke Simon Matthews – Eiffage Kier JV Andrew Bowe - SNC Helmdon Parish Council Peter Deeley - SNAG Andy Smith - Radstone</p>	<p>In Attendance:</p> <p>Chris Wragg (CW) - NCC Esme Cushing (EC) – NCC (notes) Denis Winterbottom (DW) – SNC Chris James – Effiage Kier JV Steve Beech – Fusion Nisha Mejer – HS2 Ltd James Lomax – Highways England Ian Doust – Highways England</p>

1. Chairman’s Opening Remarks

IM welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves. The notes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

A meeting has been held between Eiffage Kier and Brackley Town Council.

Friends of Boddington gave an update on discussions since the last meeting on prolonged disturbance during construction. There is a feeling that rural communities have been overlooked in the past. Boddington outlined their concerns regarding noise (they are seeking a microphone) and also dust levels. A number of letters have been sent to HS2 Ltd however there has been no formal response as yet.

Action – Friends of Boddington to give an update on prolonged disturbance at the next meeting

3. A43 Discussion

IM welcomed James Lomax and Ian Doust from the Highways England HS2 Delivery Team. They support the planning and delivery of HS2 in terms of delivery of the project, consents and approval strategy.

Action – Highways England/HS2 Ltd/NCC to provide written responses to the all questions submitted by end of January 2019.

Highways England went through each question applicable to Highways England in turn. The key things discussed were:

Cumulative impact of HS2, Northampton Gateway and Rail Central RFIs, expansion of Brackley and East-West expressway

Highways England outlined that they are still awaiting further information from HS2 regarding volumes of construction traffic using the A43. There is a slight overlap between construction of HS2 and the rail freight interchanges (if they go ahead as planned). Highways England's view is that the cumulative impact will be low, particularly as one of the RFIs will be served from the M1. EK pointed out that the HS2 Environmental Statement (ES) did take into account background traffic growth from the baseline figures collected.

CW observed that looking at the cumulative impact is unique in this case compared to other planning applications as it is the interplay of HS2 construction traffic with the RFIs. In normal circumstances the cumulative traffic impact assessed would be the as-built situation – but in this scenario the traffic impact of HS2 once it's built is minimal. The added complication is that demonstrating the impact of a development on the highway network falls on the developer in line with NPPF. Highways England confirmed that they will continue to work with HS2 Ltd to ease the impact on the Strategic Rail Network.

Contingency plans if A43 or M1 closes

Highways England outlined that they have existing contingency plans in place for the A43 and M1 if they have to close. HS2 Ltd have legally prescribed routes which they have to use. Highways England welcomes further discussions with local authorities on this topic.

Maintenance regime and traffic management during HS2 construction

Highways England roads are inspected very regularly and defects rectified quickly. If there are any defects these should be raised using the following email address: info@highwaysengland.co.uk. However it is preferable, particularly if perceived as an emergency a phone call is made to the contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

It is likely that traffic management proposals will involve a reduction in speed limit, but the exact details will come down to the traffic management proposals that are put forward. Highways England will come back with further information on existing design capacity of junctions along the A43. Until further information is forthcoming from HS2 Ltd on construction traffic numbers, the ES is the best information that is available. Once further information is available further assessment can be carried out. In terms of accident blackspots, Highways England will come back on that point in its written response. They will also give an update on M40 junctions.

The following specific concerns were raised with Highways England:

Evenley PC – outlined that closures on the A43 have already caused serious damage to the village as a result of traffic re-routing through the village and they have concerns regarding the safety record of roundabouts on the A43. The village do not feel that Highways England are taking their concerns seriously. Highways England assured Evenley PC that they do take it very seriously, however this is something that comes under the operations division. Ian Doust gave a commitment to raise the issue at a senior level within Highways England.

Hinton-in-the-Hedges PM also reiterated the issues they had suffered with the A43/ A422 roundabout was being improved. Diversions resulted in rat-running through the village. As a result they met with the Highways England operations director. There is real concern that the lessons have not been learnt and

that the same situation will occur again with HS2 works. Highways England assured attendees that it will only be HS2 Ltd working in the HS2 work area and that any diversion routes will have to be agreed with the local highways authority.

Detailed traffic data is available for both Rail Central and Northampton Gateway so attendees felt it disappointing that these are not being planned for. Highways England confirmed that their modelling only takes account of committed schemes.

Whitfield raised their concerns regarding the design of existing A43 Whitfield slip roads and the increase in HGVs. Raising defects has been very difficult in the past; for example overgrown vegetation reduces visibility. The lack of response from Highways England resulted in someone in the village going out to cut the grass themselves which is not at all satisfactory. Highways England confirmed that HGVs will have to go up to the next junction on the A43 to turnaround.

Eiffage Kier (EK) confirmed that work is developing well on forming plans around traffic volumes. The EK Traffic Manager will be meeting with Highways England in the New Year to discuss this and also traffic management. EK are of the opinion that minimising traffic movements is the best way of reducing rat-running and therefore they will be trying to do this as much as possible. One element of this is using the most appropriate access points – for example their view is that accessing from the A421 to Mixbury is a better point of access.

Brackley TC questioned what the purpose of the liaison between HS2 Ltd and Highways England was if it did not address some of these issues and that was why there was so much frustration within the meeting.

EK confirmed that further detail will be available within the Local Transport Management Plan which will be available in the New Year and which will be shared with local communities. The document will contain traffic data with routes and traffic volumes. This will be a very technical document, but it is hoped that a summary document will also be produced that is more concise.

Action – NCC/HS2 to circulate information on LTMP to group when available

AL outlined that her key concerns currently are around the cumulative impact of all the new projects in the area being taken into account in terms of the highways impact and the issue of moving from ballast to slab and the noise impact of this. Highways England outlined that the traffic impact is still a work in progress and further information will be available in the next few months.

The HS2 noise model is currently being updated with the latest noise information, looking at the component parts and updating the design as a result. The noise levels in the Environmental Statement (ES) cannot be exceeded so if there is additional noise arising from the rolling stock or track design, this will have to be mitigated.

4. Community Engagement, Enabling and Main Works update

Community Engagement Update

HS2 gave a presentation on community engagement activities over the past couple of months and distributed a leaflet on the commonplace website. HS2 Ltd are happy to come out and meet with residents and have been involved with volunteer days, engagement days and working with schools etc.

The commonplace website is available here: <https://hs2innorthants.commonplace.is/>

Enabling Works Update

Fusion gave a brief presentation on Enabling Works progress. Their points being:

- All the Schedule 4 and Schedule 17 for the design are in place for the Chipping Warden Relief Road. A lorry route application is currently with NCC to consider. The compound is already in place and clearing the site has commenced.
- Site clearance has commenced at the junction improvements at Welsh Road. The Main Civils works will commence in the New Year for around 3 months.
- Widening works through Wardington (which come under Oxfordshire County Council) will start in March for improvements on bends. Traffic management will be in place for around 3 months.
- The M40 Junction 11 design will add a further set of traffic lights. There will be no other change to the layout (i.e. no widening of lanes). Works will commence in April.
- Fusion have done a number of archaeological mitigation works. A Roman Settlement has been found at Illet's Farm. There are also plans for investigations at Radstone and Thorpe Mandeville.

Members of the meeting raised concerns around the impact the M40 Junction 11 improvements will have on the highway network around Banbury. There is a lot of development going on in that area. Fusion explained that they will try to minimise the impact as much as possible and there may be some night working.

The group also observed that the Chipping Warden Relief Road and Wardington works will be on site at the same time. Fusion explained that the traffic management for Chipping Warden is fairly minimal – however it may be considered more efficient to do works one after another.

Greatworth mentioned that they had received an advance notice of works on Sulgrave Road which was circulated to the village but the works then did not happen on that date. It would have been helpful to know this in advance so that a further update could have been given. It was suggested that sometimes updates on commonplace are not as prompt as they could be.

Main Works Update

Eiffage Kier (EK) gave a recap of the key issues that had been raised with them village by village. These mainly concerned traffic, noise, dust, workforce (where they will be based/living), bridleways, footpaths/connectivity and landscaping.

Friends of Boddington expressed their thanks to EK and HS2 Ltd for the engagement so far and urged others to engage with EK and HS2 Ltd.

EK gave an update on the last thinking regarding the A43 and HGV movements. The A43 was proposed in the ES as an offline construction, further investigation has found that it is likely to be an online construction (i.e. the existing road alignment will be retained). As a result the route past Radstone will have to be lowered slightly. EK will come out to Brackley and Whitfield to discuss in the New Year. A mailshot for the 20 properties in Radstone should be undertaken so that all were aware as dissemination of information in the parish has been patchy.

EK are currently looking into using an internal road network which will be built alongside the mass haul route which will be for larger dump trucks. The mass haul road will be crushed/ compacted stone whereas the internal road network will be tarmac. The two will be entirely separate. EK will be able to remove a large amount of traffic from the local road network and use the strategic road network instead. Access to this route will be from the A43 north along the trace. EK clarified that the internal road network will be temporary (however it may be retained for the railways systems contractor which will follow behind EK before the railway opens to the public). Routes for maintenance are already identified

within the design in the ES. In some cases there will be a plant crossing point where the internal road network crosses the public highway. Where this is the case there will be traffic lights to control this interaction. The intention is that the internal road network will ultimately extend the whole length of the railway trace.

Lower Thorpe viaduct is known as a key design element. Engagement events are planned in February/ March and venues are being confirmed. Edgcote viaduct is also a key design and ideas for that area will be shared at an event in the New Year.

There has been real progress in terms of reducing traffic levels related to the Chipping Warden Construction Compound. The original ES indicated that traffic flows on the A361 would be between 900-1800 on a daily basis, through the Additional Petition and an assurance to Wardington this was reduced to 500. EK have looked carefully at the figures and come to the conclusion that 250 a day for the two year peak construction period can be achieved. EK are working closely with Wardington and Byfield to feed into their approach to the A361. EK also confirmed that following concerns raised by Boddington and having looked at the improvements necessary to accommodate HGVs they will not be using the route through Boddington as a lorry route.

EK have brought in specialists to talk to parishes where appropriate – for example a landscape architect came to talk to Boddington to explain the process of considering the landscape impact. On this occasion bringing together the landowners along this section also made the meeting very constructive.

At Wormleighton the Heave trial work is still continuing (accessed from Stoneton Lane). Earthworks start early in April. Just over the border EK are also working with the Banbury Ornithological Society at Glen Davis reserve where HS2 will be impacting on ancient woodland.

5. HS2 Road Safety Fund

NCC has now received the PO for the feasibility work so has already invoiced for this funding. The PO covers the full £1.65 million, but further applications will have to be submitted to HS2 to draw down the remaining funding. Work on feasibility design will start in the New Year with a view to completing it by April. There is still the opportunity to submit schemes, however it is likely that the value of the schemes submitted is higher than the available funding. Views will be sought from the group if this is the case on which schemes should be prioritised.

Action – NCC to consult with the group further on the HS2 Road Safety Fund priorities at the next meeting or arrange a separate meeting if more appropriate

6. AOB

The group expressed their disappointment that Highways England were unable to answer their questions in more detail, despite having the questions in advance.

Action: NCC to raise issue with DfT through their regional engagement contact

Byfield PC noted that discussions had concentrated on the A43 and asked for the A361 to be an agenda item at the next meeting.

Action: NCC to put A361 discussion on next agenda

Date of next meeting – Friday 1st March 2019 at 1.30pm at The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester