

## Introduction by Professor Sadie Morgan

The HS2 Independent Design Panel annual meeting on 21 November 2017 provided an opportunity for panel members and HS2 Ltd staff to reflect on some of the key issues emerging from meetings during the course of the previous year. The panel has been invited to comment on a wide range of topics, including civil engineering, stations, customer experience and sustainability. This chair's report sets out the 'Top 7 Lessons Learned' from the perspective of the panel - based on discussion at our annual meeting.

### #1 Urban integration

The panel has highlighted the need for HS2 Ltd to work collaboratively with local planning authorities and other key stakeholders to integrate stations and civil engineering structures into their contexts. The panel sees this as essential for HS2 to deliver on its promised regeneration benefits, and the ambition to be a 'catalyst for growth'. In this context the panel is delighted that HS2 Ltd have created a new post, for a Head of Urban Design and Integration. This appointment will strengthen HS2 Ltd's design team, helping ensure integration of stations with the public realm and developments in the surrounding area.

### #2 Community engagement

The panel has been supportive of HS2 Ltd's strategic approach to engagement - and has welcomed several opportunities to comment on this. With detailed design work on the Phase One civil engineering now well underway, the panel is keen to see evidence of the way the engagement strategy is being put into practice. For example, the panel has highlighted the potential to discuss landscape design along the route with local communities, to make the most of opportunities for this to be of long term benefit. It will also be essential for the panel to be made aware of the priorities and concerns of local residents when it is asked to comment on sections of the HS2 route or station designs.



Professor Sadie Morgan, chair of the Design Panel

### #3 Communication

The panel has encouraged HS2 Ltd to make more of its work to develop design guidance and requirements public. The recent publication by HS2 Ltd of the Colne Valley Viaduct specimen design, by Knight Architects is therefore very welcome. This sets a benchmark for the quality of this significant structure, and Phase One civil engineering more generally.

### #4 Procurement

The panel continues to see procurement as a crucial stage in the process of achieving high quality design for HS2. It has commented on a number of procurement processes for: Phase One civil engineering; station design; and the Euston Master Development Partner. The panel would encourage refinements to the approach, learning lessons from Phase One. For example, careful thought is needed where there is a mix of 'hard' design requirements and 'soft' guidance - to avoid ambiguity in the standards required to meet the aspirations of the HS2 Design Vision.

## #5 View from the train

The call to celebrate HS2 as a world class engineering project that the nation can be proud of has been a consistent theme of panel discussions. The Phase One parliamentary process has put significant emphasis on 'mitigation' in response to petitioning. As a result, embankments will be constructed along most open sections of the route – limiting open landscape views from the train. The panel has called for a different approach for Phase Two, allowing more extensive views from the train to improve customer experience, whilst responding to the needs of communities along the route.

## #6 A great place to work

An HS2 Independent Design Panel meeting to discuss the Washwood Heath Depot and Control Centre in Birmingham gave an insight into the working life of those who will operate HS2. Given the demanding nature of the jobs likely to be carried out on this site, the panel highlighted the need to consider the role the space around buildings can play in improving the quality of the working environment and helping alleviate stress. For example, high quality landscape along routes around the site, perhaps with wildflower planting, could help contribute to the welfare of the workforce. Similar issues will apply to stations, the design of rolling stock, and maintenance facilities elsewhere along the route.

## #7 Design champion

The panel has called for a design champion to be appointed to the HS2 Ltd board. Sir Nicholas Serota fulfilled this role at the Olympic Delivery Authority, and appointing a board member of similar standing would be invaluable to ensure design quality remains a priority. With enabling contracts already under way, and civil engineering contractors developing designs for construction, cost and programme challenges are inevitable. A board level design champion would help ensure that HS2 Ltd does not lose its focus on design quality, alongside programme and cost.

## Design priorities for 2018

The panel will continue to comment on a wide range of design issues during 2018, but three priority areas are: station design; civil engineering; and customer experience.

### Station design

The announcement of the Phase One Station Design Services Contracts for HS2 in February 2018 marks the start of an intensive period of design work on Euston, Old Oak Common Stations in London, Interchange Station in Solihull, and Curzon Street Station in Birmingham. For each of these stations the High Speed Rail (London to Birmingham) Act 2017, sets out a requirement for special Station Design Panels - jointly selected by HS2 Ltd and the local planning authority.

### Civil engineering

Detailed design work will also continue on Phase One civil engineering. The HS2 Independent Design Panel has now met with all four of the contractors responsible for this work. These meetings have covered a wide range of structures including: vent shafts; tunnel portals; bridges; viaducts; as well as the landscape design and ecological initiatives that form part of these projects.

### Customer experience

In addition to commenting on the built environment aspects of HS2, the Design Panel has also been invited to comment on the work of the Railway Operations team. This has included a recent session to discuss the Rolling Stock Concept Blueprint - which sets out aspirations for the design of trains which will run on the HS2 route. The panel have also encouraged the Department for Transport to embed this valuable work as part of the procurement process for the West Coast Partnership - the train operator which will be responsible for HS2 services.

