

Case Study #13

HS2 INDEPENDENT
DESIGN PANEL

Birmingham Curzon Street Station is at the heart of the HS2 network. HS2 Ltd is aiming to deliver a design that sets a new benchmark for 21st century station design. A landmark that local communities will proudly identify with. By taking a place based approach it aims to meet the ambitions of both the HS2 Design Vision and Birmingham City Council's 'Big City Plan' - a 20 year masterplan for the city centre. To achieve this, the scope of HS2 Ltd's design work extends beyond the station building, to provide public spaces around the station, which have been developed in close collaboration with the City Council. To support this process, a bespoke design panel has been set up, with members jointly selected by HS2 Ltd and the local planning authority.

Process: Design Panel meetings to discuss Curzon Street Station began in 2015. Seven design panel meetings were held prior to the appointment of a Station Design Services Contractor (SDSC) in 2018. The SDSC team includes: WSP Global; Grimshaw Architects; Glenn Howells Architects; and Grant Associates Landscape Architects. Since then 15 design panel meetings have been held including six mentoring meetings, supporting design work towards a Schedule 17 planning submission. Two design panel meetings to discuss the Schedule 17 stage design were held in July and August 2019.



Curzon Street Station

This is the thirteenth in a series of case studies about the work of the HS2 Independent Design Panel.

Project headlines

- Curzon Street Station will play an important role in acting as a catalyst for growth.
- Public Realm improvements include a new station square, and extensive tree planting.
- A Design and Build Contractor will be procured to develop detailed designs and construct the station.
- HS2 Ltd is liaising with stakeholders including Birmingham City Council, Transport for West Midlands and Network Rail, on a planned improvements to the adjacent Moor St. Station and Moor St. Queensway.
- The Schedule 17 and Town and Country planning submissions will be made in 2020.

Panel comments

The panel's comments on the Schedule 17 stage designs for Curzon Street Station included the following points.

1. Maintaining Quality

The panel applauds the design of Curzon Street Station, which has achieved an elegant simplicity that belies the complexity of its technical requirements. The huge efforts required by all involved to achieve this solution are recognised by the panel. The panel feels the design for Curzon Street Station follows in the tradition of great railway stations like St Pancras, by celebrating its engineering. Once completed, it will offer an uplifting point of arrival and departure for Birmingham. The relationship with the historic Curzon Street Station has been handled with sensitivity and promises to be successful.

The panel feels the Schedule 17 stage designs meet the aspirations of the HS2 Design Vision - subject to the design quality promised by the current scheme being maintained through to construction. The panel has stressed that this will require a well-considered construction procurement process - and the commitment made to involve the HS2 Independent Design Panel in commenting on this is appreciated. It urges HS2 Ltd to consider aspects such as how this process might secure the use of Small and

Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and also define the 'non-negotiable' elements of the design developed to date.

2. Urban Integration and commercialisation

How HS2 integrates with local places is central to delivering on the ambition for it to be 'more than a railway'. The panel has welcomed the attention HS2 Ltd has given to ensuring the station design responds to its Birmingham context, and the collaborative working with the Council. The scheme incorporates a multimodal transport interchange, improvements to the surrounding public realm, and has been coordinated with work by Network Rail and others on the proposed improvements to Moor Street Station.

The panel warmly welcomes HS2 Ltd's intention to produce an urban design and integration study for the HS2 corridor into Curzon Street Station. This work will be important to ensure that the civil engineering structures along this route are as sensitively integrated into the city as possible, and opportunities are taken to enhance the surrounding area.

Opportunities for Curzon Street Station to contribute to the aim of HS2 being a 'catalyst for growth' include commercialisation in and around the station, which could contribute to the cost of the railway while also playing a critical role in the way HS2 integrates with Birmingham.

The panel highlights that this work should investigate opportunities offered by spaces below and adjacent to the Curzon Street Viaduct, without compromising the compelling design of the station. The panel would welcome an opportunity to support HS2 Ltd as it develops any proposals. It will also be important to explore how an urban integration study will influence decision making.

3. Public Realm

The panel has found much to admire in the clear vision for the public realm surrounding Curzon Street Station, developed in collaboration with Birmingham City Council. This includes areas with different characters, ranging from a formal station square, to more informal green spaces parallel to Curzon Street. Substantial tree planting is also proposed, with a emphasis on native species. These proposals are both ambitious and deliverable.

The panel urges the team to explore how it can secure landscape maintenance, and suggests that collaboration with local people, would help ensure public spaces around the station are well curated and nurtured. As work continues further consideration should be given to how the landscape design can communicate the influence of Birmingham's rich culture and heritage. The panel suggests a cultural narrative is also developed to help ensure the delivered scheme speaks of the place.