



Urban integration

Since the earliest days of its work, the HS2 Independent Design Panel has highlighted the need to maximise the opportunities for HS2 to deliver public benefit. It has advocated for strong urban design expertise within HS2 Ltd, to help understand and deliver the contribution HS2 could make to the places and spaces along the line of route.

In 2018, HS2 Ltd established an Urban Design and Integration Team. Since then it has developed a number of urban and context integration studies for different locations across the route. In January, the panel met with HS2 Ltd to discuss an urban integration study for east Birmingham. The panel continues to be impressed with the quality of this work, and encourages HS2 to develop more studies of this nature.

This work exemplifies the potential HS2 has to deliver its commitment to be 'more than a railway'. The study identifies a number of opportunities, some of which HS2 may deliver, and others that will require partnership working or stakeholders to take a lead in their delivery. The panel suggests that there would be value in HS2 Ltd defining priorities for their delivery. For example, a particular focus could be given to any opportunities which could help unlock long-term regeneration ambitions or deliver public benefit early on.

Phase 2a is expected to achieve Royal Assent in early 2021. Urban and context integration studies will be a valuable tool to engage with communities and stakeholders in new conversations focused on maximising the project's benefits. This will help support a place-based approach that can look beyond the project 'red line' and ensure that, through great design, HS2 delivers economic, social and environmental benefits for the whole country.

Design Panel activities December 2020 and January 2021

4

Route-wide meetings

- Green Corridor prospectus and mapping tool
- HS2 Materiality Assessment
- HS2 Landscape Design Approach update
- HS2 Ltd response to recommendations made within the DK&A 'Planning the Panel and its Future Focus' report

2

Workshop meetings

- Washwood Heath Depot and Network Integrated Control Centre workshop meeting
- East Birmingham corridor urban integration study workshop meeting

1

Phase One station meetings

- Euston joint design panel programme workshop

4

Governance meetings

- December and January monthly team meetings attended by the Design Panel chair, vice chair, secretariat and HS2 Ltd
- Governance Advisory Panel meeting attended by the Design Panel chair, vice chair, deputy chairs and secretariat
- Design Panel quarterly senior executive meeting, attended by the HS2 Ltd senior executive and design teams, the Department for Transport (DfT), and the Design Panel.

Washwood Heath

Washwood Heath will be the location for a train maintenance depot and a control centre. With a total site area of around 63 hectares, the scale of transformation in this part of Birmingham will be enormous.

At previous discussions with HS2 Ltd, the Design Panel has highlighted that the site's complexity, scale and prominence all reinforce its potential to contribute to the city and to local communities, and should be treated with the same importance as an HS2 station.

In December 2020, the panel met with HS2 Ltd to understand the progress which has been made since the previous meeting (2018). Overall, the panel welcomed the progress HS2 Ltd had made and applauded the attention being given to integration of the landscape. It stressed that this important site has the potential to be a local and national landmark, as an outstanding modern industrial centre in the Midlands and as a gateway to Birmingham – drawing on local industrial history to create a distinctive place.

Integrating the site within its context will be crucial to unlocking the potential of the area, and acting as a catalyst for future regeneration. The panel encouraged the development of an integrated masterplan, including both the depot site and the surrounding context. It will also be important for the newly established steering group to provide robust design leadership and co-ordination assuring design quality and the delivery of a wider vision.



Washwood Heath Depot site location, HS2 Ltd



Mike Lewey
Senior Architect,
HS2 Ltd

People's stories

Mike is an architect and project manager with more than 25 years of experience on the design and delivery of transport facilities around the world. He is currently the architecture subject matter expert for the HS2 Network Infrastructure Control Centre (NICC) and all HS2 depots.

“HS2 maintenance facilities and the NICC will help ensure HS2 passenger service consistently runs on time, is safe, clean and reliable. At the heart of HS2 operations and maintenance are the staff. It is important that they feel valued and respected in their vital roles. HS2 will provide world class workplaces enabling teams to perform at their best, with a sense of pride.

We work closely with our multi-disciplinary design partners to ensure that these facilities are best-in-class examples and return good value. We also regularly engage with the Design Panel, and their recommendations play a key role in helping us to achieve our ambitions.”

Landscape design approach

HS2 Ltd published the first version of the HS2 Landscape Design Approach in July 2016. In preparation for Royal Assent for Phase 2a, HS2 Ltd is in the process of reviewing it to capture lessons learned to date. At a meeting to discuss the update in January, the panel stressed the fundamental role landscape must play in the design of HS2. The panel feels that the update should be progressive, and use confident language which goes beyond mitigation to shift the focus towards a landscape-led approach to the design of HS2.



Frame Projects
Secretariat to the
HS2 Independent
Design Panel

**HS2 INDEPENDENT
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