

Introduction by Professor Sadie Morgan

The Hybrid Bill for Phase 2a is currently being considered as part of the parliamentary process. COVID-19 has undoubtedly impacted on this process, but Select Committee resumed its hearings virtually, on 20 July. Once Royal Assent is achieved the bill will become the Phase 2a Act, and the next stage of design work can begin.

The design stage following Royal Assent will involve the appointment of a series of contractors who will be tasked with taking the technical requirements of the Hybrid Bill and translating this into fully resolved designs to deliver the transformational rail system the HS2 Design Vision expects.

In an effort to support the start of this transition, the Design Panel has undertaken a review of key lessons from Phase One panel meetings. This will help support the onboarding of a new supply chain, and ensure they are able to benefit from the wealth of knowledge and experience the project has developed to date, including contributions made by the Design Panel.

Post-hybrid bill shift

The Hybrid Bill process is long and demanding, focused on establishing the project's impacts and setting minimum requirements. The panel understands that the bill process places restrictions on the project. However, there have been significant changes to the context in which HS2 will be built since the Phase 2a Bill was submitted. The outcome of the Oakervee Review has been published, a series of government announcements have been made on infrastructure and building, as well as changes in policy (such as the 2019 Environment Bill) - and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once Royal Assent has been granted, HS2 Ltd must ensure that public value is placed at the heart of the project's narrative and approach throughout the long delivery period until HS2 becomes operational. It is important that HS2 Ltd

moves away from a 'consent' focused mindset, and focuses on its stated aim to deliver more than a railway. A place-based approach looking beyond the project 'red line' will be essential to ensuring that, through great design, HS2 delivers real economic, social and environmental benefits for the whole country.



Schedule 17 stage designs for Small Dean Viaduct, HS2 Ltd

Landscape-led approach

The success of HS2 will depend hugely on the landscapes it creates and enables along its route - and landscape design is therefore as important as the effort put into the design of buildings and civil engineering structures.

There have been a number of good examples on Phase One of where a balance between landscape and structure is being successfully achieved, such as Small Dean Viaduct, designed by Effiage Kier. Here the landscape is informing both the proposals for land below the viaduct and the civil engineering structure itself.

A landscape-led approach, across contract boundaries, must also play a key role in delivering project requirements such as those for water management. It is equally essential to delivering on the wider benefits of HS2, such as providing new landscapes that help meet a local need or ambition. 'Green Corridor' projects must inform, and be informed by, decisions within the project 'red line' - and become part of everyday conversations HS2 Ltd has internally with its supply chain, stakeholders and communities.

Context integration

There has rarely been a greater opportunity for infrastructure investment to contribute so significantly to local regeneration. The panel has welcomed the increasing emphasis being given to urban integration and maximising regeneration benefits along the line of route. This has undoubtedly been helped by the creation of an urban integration team within HS2 Ltd, something the Design Panel championed. Positive initiatives already underway include: the Leeds Urban Integration Study; and an ongoing Context Integration Study for the Phase One route into Birmingham.

Although the Phase 2a route does not include an HS2 station, it will pass through or close to a number of towns and villages. The panel has asked HS2 Ltd to give careful consideration to these smaller opportunities. While they may not generate the same scale of regeneration that would be expected around a station, their impact is likely to be significant and valuable for their particular locations.

Some such sites will be within the HS2 'red line' and may be worthy of exploration in their own right. However, the majority will be under the ownership and governance of others. The panel has encouraged HS2 Ltd to take the lead in championing the potential of these sites, as part of its role ensuring HS2 delivers value for the nation.



Schedule 17 stage design for Interchange Station, HS2 Ltd

Engagement

Once Royal Assent is achieved, there is an opportunity to move from formal consultation to actively involving people in decision making – allowing genuine influence on the design of HS2. Local communities, stakeholder bodies including local planning authorities, will have valuable local knowledge to contribute to the design process. The panel has also highlighted the advantage of seeking the expertise of specialist organisations such as the National Trust, Forestry Commission and the Canals and Rivers Trust.

Early engagement will play a vital role in unlocking solutions to challenging issues such as noise mitigation. Engagement will also play a role in establishing local ownership and exploring opportunities around the management and maintenance of landscapes. These form a key part of the HS2 Design Vision's definition of success, that "national pride in the system is matched by a sense of local ownership".

Design leadership

It is essential that HS2 Ltd, as a client, provides clear leadership on design and demonstrates that it will insist on delivery of the HS2 Design Vision (and the project's other ambitions) and HS2 Ltd's strategic goals.

Strong design leadership, at all levels, will send an important message about HS2 Ltd's ambitions for design quality, and help to ensure that the supply chain perceives design as a priority. Leadership is essential to the successful implementation of HS2's design guidance and requirements, and ensuring that HS2 Ltd delivers value for money. It can also help to instill the cross-cutting working relationships needed to resolve design challenges, and identify and minimise design risks.

The role for design leadership at HS2 Ltd is wide ranging. At the stage when design teams and contractors are procured, there is an opportunity to set clear expectations, and secure the involvement of skilled designers.



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The procurement stage can also secure the involvement of SMEs, bringing a fresh creative perspective to the project. Tools, such as specimen designs have proved to be a powerful tool in demonstrating potential design solutions. Design leadership can also help to ensure that lessons learnt from Phase One are used to help inform the approach on Phase 2a.

The Design Panel is in a unique position to provide independent expert advice on HS2 - but the impact of this depends on design leadership skills and resources within HS2 Ltd.

Design quality across HS2

The panel has seen some high quality designs for structures, buildings and landscapes across Phase One. However, it is important that all of HS2 is held to the same design standards. This includes large projects, such as depots, and smaller elements such as security fencing. These elements will have a significant collective impact, and therefore need careful consideration. The panel has encouraged collaborative working across departments and contract boundaries, and a multidisciplinary approach to realise HS2 Ltd's design quality ambitions.

Joint working

Joint working with local planning authorities and key stakeholders will be critical to unlocking HS2's value to the nation. The relationship HS2 Ltd has developed with Birmingham City Council during the design of Curzon Street Station has proved hugely valuable, including in helping identify opportunities beyond the project's 'red line' boundary.

Exploring how HS2 Ltd and its supply chain can proactively involve key stakeholders should be a priority on Phase 2a, following Royal Assent, which will mark a change in the dynamics of its relationships with the places along the route.



Schedule 17 stage design for Curzon Street Station, HS2 Ltd

Looking ahead

The panel's role is to help ensure that, through great design, HS2 delivers real economic, social and environmental benefits for the whole country. While the Design Panel sees only a snapshot of the project, it has a broad perspective through its involvement across the entire project. This provides HS2 Ltd with insight into both local and project-wide themes and issues.

While the outcome of the Phase 2a Hybrid Bill process is not yet known, the panel is keen to note that it can offer support to the Phase 2a team in a variety of ways, and would welcome a discussion with HS2 Ltd on where its input would be most valuable.



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