

REPORT

Curzon Street Station Design Panel Meeting to discuss the Schedule 17 Stage Design for Curzon Street Station

10.30 – 14.30 Monday 9 September 2019

Curzon Street Station Design Panel

Les Sparks (chair)
Sam Richards
Xanthe Quayle
Martin Stockley (23 July only)

Attendees

Hala Lloyd	Lead Architect, HS2 Ltd
Tom Wilne	Project Director N3 Area North, HS2 Ltd
Biljana Savic	Urban Design and Integration Manager, HS2 Ltd
Laura Kidd	Head of Architecture, HS2 Ltd (23 July only)
Chris Sharp	Town Planning Manager, HS2 Ltd (23 July only)
Anne Mullins	Head of Arts and Culture, HS2 Ltd (23 July only)
Steve Fancourt	Landscape Manager, HS2 Ltd (23 July only)
Jiten Davdra	Lead Senior Project Engineer, HS2 Ltd (23 July only)
Chris Hayter	WSP
Neven Sidor	Grimshaw
Nicola Whiting	Grant Associates
Peter Higginbottom	CJ Associates
Magda Cockerill	WSP (23 July only)
Simon Delahunty-Forrest	Birmingham City Council
Nicholas Jackson	Birmingham City Council
Jenny Walters	Birmingham City Council (23 July only)
Stuart Wiltshire	Birmingham City Council (23 July only)
Gary Woodward	Birmingham City Council (23 July only)
Sarah Ridley	Department for Transport
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Edward Bailey	Frame Projects (9 September only)

Apologies / copied to

Nicola Henderson-Reid	Senior Project Manager Area North, HS2 Ltd
Alice Williams	PA to Interim Design Director, HS2 Ltd
Bridget Jackson	Head of Benefits, HS2 Ltd
Christoph Brintrup	Interim Design Director, HS2 Ltd
Clive Green	Senior Communications Manager, HS2 Ltd
Giles Thomas	Phase One Engineering Director, HS2 Ltd
Laura Kidd	Head of Architecture, HS2 Ltd
Joanna Averley	Head of Urban Integration, HS2 Ltd
Mariyam Ijaz	Assistant Project Manager, HS2 Ltd
Mike Luddy	Director of Stations Commercial Development, HS2 Ltd
Paul Gilfedder	Head of Town Planning, HS2 Ltd
Tom Venner	Commercial Development Director, HS2 Ltd
Zoe Stewart	Lead Design Manager, HS2 Ltd

Note on Design Panel process

The HS2 Independent Design Panel was established in 2015 at the request of the Department for Transport, to help ensure that, through great design, HS2 delivers real economic, social and environmental benefits for the whole country.

The HS2 Design Vision sets out nine principles grouped around three themes: People; Place; and Time. The panel uses this framework to help the HS2 Ltd leadership, project teams and other partners to make the right design choices. This also informs its advice on designs that are to be submitted under Schedule 17 of the Phase One HS2 Act.

The panel plays an advisory role, providing impartial and objective advice, to support the design process. At pre-application stage it is for HS2 Ltd to decide what weight to place on the panel's comments, balanced with other considerations. Once a Schedule 17 application is submitted, the panel's advice may inform the local planning authority's decision-making process.

The HS2 Independent Design Panel comments below follow on from seven pre-application reviews and six mentoring sessions for Curzon Street Station.

Further details of panel membership and process are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-design-panel>

Timing of Schedule 17 meeting

This report captures design panel comments made over two meetings, held: 23 July 2019 and 9 September 2019.

This meeting took place in advance of Schedule 17 submission for Curzon Street Station. The proposed station and public realm are intended to be split into three separate Schedule 17 consents packs and one Town and Country Planning Act submission as follows:

- Station (Schedule 17 submission)
- Public Realm (Schedule 17 submission)
- additional Birmingham City Council funded public realm
- Paternoster Place (Town and Country Planning Act submission)

HS2 Ltd confirmed there will be no significant design changes to Curzon Street Station building and public realm prior to applications being submitted.

Views of the Local Planning Authority

The Birmingham City Council (BCC) welcomes the proposals for Curzon Street Station and feels that the designs are broadly successful in delivering on the aspirations of its 'Big City Plan'. The Schedule 17 stage scheme promises to create a station that people in Birmingham can be proud of. Some issues remain to be resolved as detailed designs are developed towards construction, for example tree selection. The Council will need to be involved in decision making as this work continues.

In the area around the station, an enhanced scheme has been developed for the landscape design, which will be part-funded by BCC. In general the council supports these public realm proposals. The main area in which they feel there is scope for improvement is the design of Paternoster Square. The Council has also commissioned AECOM to produce designs for Moor Street Queensway. The intention is for these schemes to be delivered at the same time as Curzon Street Station and public realm. HS2 Ltd is also working with the Council to develop a long-term public realm management and maintenance strategy.

There are a number of commercial development opportunities around the site, and it is essential that the Council is fully engaged in the design development for these, should they be taken forward.

The Council confirmed it will make all Schedule 17 documents publicly available including the report of the Schedule 17 stage Design Panel meeting. Birmingham City Council thanked the panel for its support throughout the design process.

Curzon Street Station Design Panel's views

Summary

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. It 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 is supportive of the overall approach and 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 welcomes the clarity of the landscape vision for the public realm, including the variety of typologies developed for different spaces. It considers the proposals to be both ambitious and deliverable. Confirmation that the enhanced scheme will be delivered at the same time as the base scheme, and that high-quality materials will be used seamlessly across both, is also welcomed. The main area of the landscape design that requires further exploration is Paternoster Square, however, this will be the subject of a separate Town and Country Planning application. The panel also thinks that the Schedule 17 application should be very clear about the areas of the landscape that will become development sites in the future – so that the public understand those areas which are 'meanwhile' spaces.

Whilst offering its support to the Schedule 17 stage designs for both station and the surrounding public realm, the panel made a number of suggestions to be considered as detailed design work continues. It will also be essential that any commercial development adjacent to the main station square, does not compromise the quality of this important new civic space.

Station architecture

- The panel thinks that the designs for Curzon Street Station represent a deceptively simple celebration of the building's engineering – following on in the tradition of great stations such as St Pancras.
- The arch structure on which the station design is based is a simple concept, but it has been realised in a refined and subtle way. The panel thinks this is successful in creating a station design with the civic quality that Birmingham deserves.
- Technical details such as the roof cowls, lighting poles, and retail frontages have all received careful thought, so that they contribute to the quality of the station overall.
- The panel is particularly appreciative of the way lifts have been integrated, so that the experience of using these is equal to the experience of using escalators – which is often not the case in existing stations elsewhere.

- It will be essential that the design quality promised by the current scheme is maintained through to construction stage.
- For example, where in situ concrete columns are proposed, craftsmanship at the construction stage will be critical to achieving the design intent of the Schedule 17 scheme.

Station management

- The panel warmly welcomes the confirmation that no 'ad-hoc' commercial units will be allowed in the station and that guidelines will be developed to ensure long term management arrangements are in place to maintain the station's design quality.
- Careful thought has been given to the integration of advertising space, but it will be equally essential for clear guidance to be put in place to control the way this is used – so that it does not detract from the experience of arriving in Birmingham, for example, at the entrance for the eastern concourse which will be framed by retail units.

Public realm design

- The panel finds much to admire in the clear vision for the public realm surrounding Curzon Street Station, including the different typologies for each space and the emerging tree and planting strategy. Proposals are both ambitious and deliverable.
- The panel suggests the team give further consideration to how the vision can communicate the influence of Birmingham's rich culture and heritage.
- During detailed design, the panel suggests a cultural narrative is developed that will help ensure the delivered scheme speaks of the place.
- It thinks careful consideration should be given to usability, in particular, who will use these spaces and what their needs are. This will help ensure decisions made during detailed design and in terms of the ongoing management and maintenance, foster an environment that is welcoming and inclusive of Birmingham's broad range of communities.
- The panel notes the importance of learning lessons from projects such as the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, to help guide solutions to this complex but critical issue.

Base and enhanced schemes

- The panel is pleased that the enhanced scheme will be delivered at the same time as the rest of the public realm and that high-quality materials will be used seamlessly throughout.

Paternoster Place

- The panel understands that Paternoster Place will be the subject of a separate Town and Country Planning application. Insufficient information was presented on this space for the panel to give this its unequivocal support, and a further review would be welcomed.
- The move away from long security bollards to embedding security features within the landscape is positive. However, investigations are ongoing to understand the feasibility of these revised security proposals.

Planting

- The panel welcomes the overall tree and planting strategy, including the focus on selecting native and local species; this will play an important role in ensuring the different landscapes are specific to Birmingham.
- During detailed design, it suggests the team undertake a review of the proposed species selection to take account of any known issues. For example, pathogens affecting Plane trees, and the suitability of Digitalis plants which contain toxins harmful to humans if ingested.
- The panel has some concerns about the strategy of allowing flexibility in species selection at delivery stage. Tree planting is an important element of the landscape design, and it suggests the team further considers what mechanisms can be put in place to ensure this will not be compromised.

Biodiversity

- The panel welcomes the emerging ideas for habitat creation but thinks the team should further consider how this can be made specific to Birmingham and the West Midlands. One way in which this could be achieved would be to plant 'local' wildflowers to maximise biodiversity, for example bird life.
- During detailed design, the panel thinks further consideration should be given to how the landscape could evolve over time, and how maintenance regimes can help support biodiversity in this urban environment.

Landscape maintenance

- The panel recognises that giving responsibility for landscape maintenance to the station operator could help ensure the landscape retains its important role in the station's operation.

- However, it thinks the landscape needs to be managed by an organisation who will put their heart and soul into protecting, nurturing, and curating public spaces around the station. This might be better achieved by a local organisation, committed to maintaining the vision for what will become highly valued green spaces in Birmingham.
- As detailed design work continues, the panel encourages HS2 Ltd and the City Council to investigate innovative models for landscape maintenance, that could involve the local community. This could help achieve much richer public space, that creates a lively environment around the station.

Security

- The panel acknowledges the careful thought that has been given to integrating security requirements into the public realm – but thinks there remains scope to make this less obtrusive.
- For example, on Bordesley Street the security solution has the appearance of bollards with depth, and the panel finds this cumbersome.
- Although the use of bollards is minimised, the security line remains quite apparent. The panel would encourage further thought about how to integrate security seamlessly into the landscape designs.
- Collaboration with the HS2 Ltd Arts and Culture team could help achieve more creative solutions.

Commercial development

- The panel welcomes the exploration of commercial development opportunities around Curzon Street Station, recognising the potential this has to ensure that HS2 is a 'catalyst for growth'.
- It appreciates these studies are a separate piece of work to the Schedule 17 stage submissions for the station, however it will also be essential that any commercial development adjacent to the main station square, does not compromise the quality of this important new civic space.
- It suggests as this work continues HS2 Ltd give careful consideration to the impact on existing proposals, such as the 'quality' of spaces, and any necessary changes to the design, for example where new desire lines would be generated. It will be essential that the intent and design quality of the station and public realm developed to date is protected.
- The panel also thinks that it is important that the public is given clarity on where commercial development opportunities are being explored. For this reason the Schedule 17 submission should make clear which parts of the public realm will be 'temporary'.

Next steps

Overall the panel feels the Schedule 17 scheme for Curzon Street Station, including public realm, meets the aspirations of the Design Vision. It trusts that this level of design quality will be followed through as detailed design work continues towards construction, and that the comments outlined above can help inform this process.

The panel suggests the Design and Access Statement included within the Schedule 17 submission refers to issues raised in this report and responds to them.

The panel would welcome an opportunity to comment on Paternoster Place, once more design information is available. It also offers its continuing support at the detailed design stage for both station and public realm, and for the adjacent commercial development.