

REPORT

HS2 Design Panel Meeting to discuss the Schedule 17 stage designs for Chiltern Tunnel south portal (western valley slopes)

14.00 – 16.00 Wednesday 10 June 2020
Via Microsoft Teams

HS2 Independent Design Panel

Tony Burton (chair)
Harbinder Birdi
Kathryn Moore
Martin Stockley

Attendees

Steve Austin	Town Planning Manager, HS2 Ltd
Mark Clapp	Senior Project Manager Area Central, HS2 Ltd
James Dearing	Design Manager, HS2 Ltd
Blake Edmunds	Senior Environment Manager, HS2 Ltd
James Glynn	Senior Town Planning Manager Central, HS2 Ltd
Robert Howard	Landscape Design Manager Central, HS2 Ltd
Kevin Roberts	Lead Senior Project Engineer, HS2 Ltd
Tom Podd	Town Planning Manager, HS2 Ltd
Alan Price	Design Director, Align JV
Leigh Crowhurst	Landscape Architect, Align JV
Matt Hobbs	Align JV
Diane Metcalfe	Architect, Align JV
Chris Patience	Architect, Align JV
Simon Railton	Landscape Architect, Align JV
Ben Benatt	Align JV
David Costello	Align JV
Chris Chantler	Align JV
Ben Northover	Align JV
Jo Cullis	Associate Director, Align JV
John Woodhouse	Senior Planning Consultant, Align JV
Jenny Foster	Hertfordshire County Council
Jennifer Owen	Hertfordshire County Council
Saeed Mahmood	Buckinghamshire Council
Richard Hannay	Landscape consultant, Buckinghamshire Council



Edward Bailey Frame Projects
Tom Bolton Frame Projects

Apologies / copied to

Adam Ralton	Three Rivers District Council
Martin Short	Lead Architect, HS2 Ltd
Kay Hughes	Design Director, HS2 Ltd
Billy Ahluwalia	Senior Project Manager, HS2 Ltd
Matt Dormer	Town Planning Lead Phase One, HS2 Ltd
Bernadette Hurd	Head of Benefits, HS2 Ltd
Chelsea Evans	Apprentice Project Manager, HS2 Ltd
Clive Green	Senior Communications Manager, HS2 Ltd
Giles Thomas	Phase One Engineering Director, HS2 Ltd
Nicole Linney	PA to Design Director, HS2 Ltd
Paul Gilfedder	Head of Town Planning, HS2 Ltd
Zoe Stewart	Lead Design Manager, HS2 Ltd
Design Inbox	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 design uses this framework to help the HS2 Ltd leadership, project teams and other partners to make the right design choices – and this also informs its advice on designs that are to be submitted under Schedule 17 of the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Act 2017.

The panel plays an advisory role, providing impartial and objective advice, to support the design process. At a 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.

Further details of panel membership and process are available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-design-panel>

The HS2 Design Vision is available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/607020/HS2_Design_Vision_Booklet.pdf

The HS2 Independent Design Panel comments below follow on from four pre-application reviews of the Chiltern Tunnel South Portal.

Timing of Schedule 17 meeting

This meeting took place in advance of a Schedule 17 submission for the Chiltern Tunnel South Portal. Align intends to submit one Schedule 17 request for approval incorporating the Western Valley Slopes landscaping earthworks, the Chiltern Tunnel south portal and building, and the Tilehouse Lane Realignment to be submitted in Autumn 2020 to Three Rivers District Council (TRDC). Due to the proposals extending over two local authorities (TRDC and Buckinghamshire Council), a separate Schedule 17 request for approval for the portion of the landscaping earthworks within Buckinghamshire Council will also be made at this time.

A future schedule 17 submission will be made regarding the mitigation proposals and detailed landscape design, these will be formalised in later 'site restoration' and 'bringing into use' submissions.

The ATS building, to be located adjacent to the portal building, forms part of a separate contract and approval process.

HS2 Ltd indicates that it is satisfied that the proposal would meet the aspirations of the HS2 Design Vision and the Sustainability Approach.

[Post meeting note: HS2 Ltd have advised that the intention is to hold an additional Schedule 17 stage design panel meeting prior to the Schedule 17 submission being made in Autumn 2020.]

Local planning authority views

Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) is the consenting authority for the Key Design Element (KDE) Chiltern Tunnel south portal, the portal building, and for the majority of the area known as the Western Valley Slopes. TRDC has worked with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on all matters relating to HS2-related Schedule 17 consents.

The councils have been involved throughout in discussions with HS2 Ltd, the Colne Valley Regional Park Panel (CVRPP) and the neighbouring authorities (now amalgamated as Buckinghamshire Council). TRDC and HCC consider the proposed designs to be exciting and positive. As some material presented is illustrative, they ask for assurance on the delivery of proposed approach, including identification of guiding masterplanning principles. They also ask for more information on the nature of the viewing points presented, to understand whether they are accurate and the nature of the view they offer is realistic, and on the view from the train. They would like clarity on the status of the portal building visualisations, and ask that the design of the Tilehouse Lane overbridge and the ATS building are of the same quality.

The councils support plans to create new calcareous grassland, delivering huge ecological gain, although they have concerns over whether it can be delivered. They feel that more attention should be given to the relationship of the landscape design to the wider landscape context, including the Colne Valley Regional Park. They hope that the final Schedule 17 submission will include a detailed landscape narrative, demonstrating

how the materials and landscape on the site are integrated with their surroundings and confidence that visualisations provide an accurate picture of this context. They would welcome future detail on how the landscape strategy will approach place-making, and establishment and maintenance of landscape, and designing out of crime. Both councils look forward to continuing to work with HS2 and Align on the evolving design.

HS2 Independent Design Panel's views

Summary

The panel considers that the Schedule 17 stage proposals for the Chiltern Tunnel south portal building, and landscape earthworks meet the aspirations of the HS2 Design Vision - subject to the design quality presented being maintained through detailed design and construction. The panel supports the team's intention to include indicative information on the landscape as part of the Schedule 17 submission. It welcomes the design team's overall approach and the focus on delivering public access and ecological gain. The extension of landscape design work to include the Western Valley Slopes is also positive. The panel supports the proposals to embrace a long-term management approach, and to rewild the area as calcareous grassland. It suggests this ambition could be expanded in two areas: by extending ecological connectivity between the two sides of the railway, and by exploring opportunities to combine the two separate drainage systems proposed. It will be important that the Schedule 17 submission clearly shows how the landform of the site relates to the wider Colne Valley Regional Park setting. The panel finds much to admire in designs for the portal structures and the portal building, which it considers meet the requirements of the HS2 Design Vision and the Sustainability Approach. The panel understands that the ATS building will form part of a separate contract, but highlights the importance of this being integrated with the design for the portal building, and also meeting the same design quality standards. The ambition to create public access to the site, and to introduce viewing platforms is also strongly supported. The panel does not yet consider it has received sufficient information to assess the landscape proposals against the requirements of the HS2 Sustainability Approach. These comments are expanded below.

Portal structures, portal building and Tilehouse Lane Bridge

The panel finds much to admire in the designs for the portal structures and the portal building, and supports their proposed form, materials and detailing.

The panel saw limited information on the designs for Tilehouse Lane Bridge. It is not clear the extent to which this will form a part of the Schedule 17 submission. The panel suggests the team explore opportunities for the bridge to contribute to ecological connectivity, for example as a green bridge. *[Post meeting note: HS2 Ltd have advised that the Schedule 17 proposals for Tilehouse Lane Bridge have been approved as part of an earlier submission to the local planning authority].*

ATS building

The panel appreciates that the ATS building lies outside Align's remit and scope of this Schedule 17 submission. However, it will be important that it is integrated with the design approach taken for the other structures, south portal and portal building, and that it matches their design quality. This structure is prominent in views of the portal and will have a huge influence on the ultimate success of these proposals, and the panel asks for reassurance on how Align and HS2 Ltd will work together to achieve this.

Landscape approach

The panel is excited by the potential of the proposed reintroduction of calcareous grassland as the site restoration strategy. It acknowledges the inherent risk in applying an unusual approach, using chalk cake made from stabilised chalk slurry extracted during tunnelling, but considers the risk is worth taking, especially as the team has alternative strategies in place. The ecological benefit would be significant, and rewilding the area would represent an important achievement. The panel congratulates Align and HS2 Ltd on this innovative approach.

The initiative to extend the landscape design to include the Western Valley Slopes is significant and welcome. The panel suggests that this expansion increases the need for ecological connectivity across the railway. It suggests the design team explores whether there opportunities such as the potential of utilising the Tilehouse Lane Bridge as a green bridge.

The relationship between the landform being created through the project and the wider landscape setting will be important to its success. Visualisations showing the new landform in its wider context, could provide reassurance that different elements within the project come cohesively, and sit well in the context of the Colne Valley Regional Park.

The panel welcomes the team's efforts to minimise fencing. It questions the need for vegetation to end short of the security fences, and asks whether it can be extended closer to the barriers and railway.

Viewing points

The panel strongly supports the introduction of multiple public viewing points to see the railway. As detailed design work progresses, it suggests exploring different materials that could make the viewing points feel more tactile and inviting. They could be made more welcoming, creating informal places to sit and to lean. An artist could also potentially be involved in developing these designs further.

The panel also suggests that further cross-sections are produced to demonstrate why these particular locations have been chosen for the viewing points, how they fit into the landscape contours, and what views they will provide.

Art strategy

The panel notes that there is ongoing work with BOP Consulting to explore opportunities for land art at the site, as part of the HS2 Art Strategy. While it supports the Art Strategy, it cautions against introducing a further, separate element into the landscape and considers it important that any commission forms an inherent part of the overall design approach, such as the viewing points, landform or the portal buildings.

Community engagement

The panel supports engagement with the local wildlife trust over the future of the site, and suggests that there are many other organisations that would want to be involved in such an exciting project, as well as local communities. It encourages the design team to expand engagement to ensure its ambitions can be achieved.

Water management

The panel notes that separate drainage systems are proposed for track and landscape drainage, guided by HS2 design standards. There is some debate over whether or not this is an HS2 Ltd requirement, and the panel feels that combining the two systems could benefit the landscape design. It asks the design team to explore how any appearance of engineered railway retention ponds can be avoided, and the need for two drainage systems challenged.

It will be important that drawings and supporting information submitted as part of the Schedule 17 submission give an accurate picture of the landscape, including the proposed drainage systems. If, for example, retention ponds will predominately appear as low recesses of grassland, then this should be clearly communicated.

Sustainability approach

The panel welcomes the information on sustainable design, and notes the design team's intention to comply with HS2 Ltd requirements by achieving BREEAM Infrastructure Level 2 certification.

It is confident that the buildings and structures will meet the ambitions of the HS2 Sustainability Approach.

However, it has not received sufficient information to assess the landscape proposals against the requirements of the HS2 Sustainability Approach, and asks for additional details to demonstrate how the project will meet these.

Next steps

The panel feels that the Chiltern Tunnel south portal, portal building, landscaping earthworks meet the aspirations of the HS2 Design Vision at Schedule 17 stage - subject to the design quality presented being maintained through detailed design and construction.

The panel supports the team's intention to include indicative information on the landscape as part of the Schedule 17 submission. As part of this, it suggests the team give careful consideration to how it communicates the relationship with the wider landscape setting of the Colne Valley Regional Park.

The landscape design will play a fundamental role in the success of these proposals. The panel therefore asks for an opportunity to be involved in commenting on this at 'bringing into use' and site restoration stages, once Schedule 17 decisions have been made. This would allow for further information to be provided on whether the landscape proposals meet the requirements of the HS2 Sustainability Approach.

Once a Railway Systems contractor is in place it urges HS2 Ltd and Align to ensure that the ATS Building is integrated as part of the design, matching the design quality of the south portal and portal building.