



## Phase 2b Western Leg Information Paper

### C6: Disposal of Surplus Land

This paper explains how landowners will be offered the opportunity to re-acquire a beneficial interest in land that has been compulsorily purchased from them in order to carry out the works required for the Proposed Scheme, where that land is not required for the operation of the Proposed Scheme.

It will be of particular interest to those potentially affected by the Government's proposals for high speed rail.

This paper was prepared in relation to the promotion of the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill. Content will be maintained and updated as considered appropriate during the passage of the Bill.

If you have any queries about this paper or about how it might apply to you, please contact the HS2 Helpdesk in the first instance.

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 High Speed Two (HS2) is the Government's scheme for a new, high speed north-south railway, which is being taken forward in a number of phases. Phase One will connect London with Birmingham and the West Midlands. Phase 2a will extend the route from the West Midlands to Crewe. The Phase 2b Western Leg will connect Crewe to Manchester. As set out in the Integrated Rail Plan, published in November 2021, HS2 East is proposed to deliver a new high speed line from the West Midlands to East Midlands Parkway.
- 1.2 HS2 Ltd is the non-departmental public body responsible for developing and promoting these proposals. The company works under the terms of a Development Agreement entered into with the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 1.3 The construction and operation of Phase One of HS2 is authorised by the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Act 2017 and Phase 2a by the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Act 2021.
- 1.4 In January 2022, the Government introduced a hybrid Bill to Parliament (hereafter referred to as 'the Bill'), to seek powers for the construction and operation of the Phase 2b Western Leg (the Proposed Scheme), which is called the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill. The Proposed Scheme comprises the Phase 2b Western Leg from Crewe to Manchester and several off-route works. It also facilitates the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail by providing the Crewe Northern Connection and junctions and other infrastructure to be used in future schemes.
- 1.5 The work to produce the Bill includes an Equalities Impact Assessment and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the results of which are reported in an Environmental Statement (ES) submitted alongside the Bill. The Secretary of State has also published draft Environmental Minimum Requirements (EMRs), which set out the environmental and sustainability commitments that will be observed in the construction of the Proposed

Scheme. For more information on the EMRs please see Information Paper E1: Control of environmental impacts.

1.6 The Secretary of State for Transport is the Promoter of the Bill through Parliament. The Promoter will also appoint a body responsible for delivering the Proposed Scheme under the powers granted by the Bill. This body is known as the 'nominated undertaker'. There may be more than one nominated undertaker. However, any and all nominated undertakers will be bound by the obligations contained in the Bill, the policies established in the EMRs and any commitments provided in the information papers.

1.7 These information papers have been produced to explain the commitments made in the Bill and the EMRs and how they will be applied to the design and construction of the Proposed Scheme. They also provide information about the Proposed Scheme itself, the powers contained in the Bill and how particular decisions about the Proposed Scheme have been reached.

## **2 Overview**

2.1 This information paper sets out how landowners will be offered the opportunity to re-acquire a beneficial interest in land that has been compulsorily purchased from them in order to carry out the works required for the Proposed Scheme, where that land is not required for the operation of the Proposed Scheme.

## **3 Land disposal policy**

3.1 The majority of land compulsorily acquired for the Proposed Scheme will be used permanently for the construction and operation of the new railway. However, in some cases there will be circumstances where land compulsorily acquired becomes surplus to requirements after construction works are complete. In those cases, in accordance with the Crichel Down Rules, and subject to key Guiding Principles set out in this paper, landowners may be offered the opportunity to buy back land, at market value, that has been compulsorily purchased from them. Further

guidance can be found relating to Crichel Down Rules within the references section at the end of this paper.

3.2 The key elements of the Land Disposal Policy, which will apply where that land is acquired by compulsory purchase under the powers of the Bill, are set out in this paper.

3.3 The interpretation of 'materially changed' will follow the approach set out in the Crichel Down Rules, which is also summarised below.

3.4 Nothing in this policy is intended to affect the rights to compensation of owners of an interest in land that is compulsorily acquired for the Proposed Scheme.

3.5 This policy applies the Crichel Down Rules to property acquired under compulsory purchase powers and under statutory blight including express purchase. The Crichel Down Rules do not apply to:

- Property purchased by private treaty agreement (where the power to acquire the land under compulsory purchase did not exist at the time of acquisition);
- Property purchased under the non-statutory HS2 Property Schemes (save where the property owner was also entitled to serve a blight notice at the time of acquisition).

## **4 General approach**

4.1 Where any land has been acquired compulsorily for the construction of the Proposed Scheme and is no longer required for the satisfactory completion of the works, or not required in connection with the operation of the Proposed Scheme, it will be sold subject to the Crichel Down Rules.

4.2 The Crichel Down Rules have been developed for over half a century and have been endorsed by previous Governments. They provide for the circumstances in which land acquired by or under threat of compulsion or statutory blight, but no longer required for public purposes, will be offered back to the former owners, their successors or sitting tenants as

the case may be. The Crichel Down Rules also apply to land acquired under the statutory blight provisions (but not to land acquired by agreement in advance of any liability under these provisions). The Crichel Down Rules are set out in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Guidance on Compulsory Purchase Process and The Crichel Down Rules (see link at 8.1). The basic principle behind the Crichel Down Rules is that where Government wishes to dispose of land to which the Crichel Down Rules apply former owners will, as a general rule, be given first opportunity to repurchase the land at current market value, provided it has not materially changed in character since acquisition.

- 4.3 It should be noted that the Crichel Down Rules are commended to statutory bodies but it is recognised that an authority's approach to the disposal of surplus land will depend on their particular function and circumstances. It should also be noted that the requirement to offer land back is not unqualified but subject to limitations and exceptions set out in the Crichel Down Rules themselves. Any land disposal under Crichel Down Rules by the Secretary of State will be subject to changes to the Crichel Down Rules which might be made in the future.
- 4.4 In particular, by virtue of Rule 10, there will be no obligation to offer land back to the former owner where the land has materially changed in character. Examples of where this may occur are when works for the Proposed Scheme have involved substantial alterations to existing buildings to change their character or where new works or buildings have been erected on open land. When deciding whether works have materially altered the character of the land, a consideration which will be taken into account would be the likely cost of restoring the land back to its former use.
- 4.5 Works for the Proposed Scheme, such as at working sites, require the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of the railway works. Following completion of the railway works some of these sites (or parts of former sites) may become available for disposal. However, it is unlikely the Crichel Down Rules would require an offer back in these circumstances, as there will have been a material change in character of

the land. However, where land is used for the purposes of long-term agriculture or forestry, an exception is provided for under the Land Disposal Policy in certain circumstances so as to require an offer to be made to a former owner for the former owner to buy back land under the Crichel Down Rules notwithstanding that there has been a material change in character of the land. Further information is contained in Information Paper C2: Rural landowners and occupiers guide.

### **Guiding principles**

- 4.6 Where the Secretary of State intends to dispose of an interest in a site to which the Crichel Down Rules apply, holders of Qualifying Interests will, subject to the provisions of this Policy, be given first opportunity to acquire that interest at the market value before it is offered to the general market.
- 4.7 The Secretary of State will determine the nature of the interest to be offered and the terms of any transfer. In so doing he will have regard to the following principles:
- the proper completion and operation in the public interest of the works as authorised by the Bill;
  - the paramount requirement to protect the future safe and efficient operation of the railway;
  - the need to fulfil any undertaking given by the Secretary of State in respect of the Bill or comply with any legal obligations to which he is subject;
  - the need to secure in the public interest the carrying out of development or redevelopment associated with the works, in accordance with the planning, environmental and heritage considerations applicable to the sites affected; and
  - the need for the land disposal to achieve the best value reasonably obtainable.

- 4.8 This policy seeks to strike the right balance between ensuring the project is implemented successfully and protecting the principles of disposing of land no longer required for the Proposed Scheme.

## 5 Qualifying interests

- 5.1 The holders of the following "Qualifying Interests" may qualify for the offer back of an interest under the terms of this policy:

- former freeholders of the whole or part of a site; or
- where the freeholder does not wish to buy back the site, the former leaseholder who had a lease of the property which had an unexpired term of more than 21 years at the time the property is being disposed of, may (at the discretion of the Secretary of State) be offered the freehold interest; or
- the successors of anyone who would have fallen into either of the above categories where, had the property not been acquired, the land interest would clearly have devolved upon those successors under a former owner's will; or
- where there was fragmented ownership of their site at the date the property was acquired or occupied for railways works under the provisions of the HS2 Bill as enacted, a consortium of former owners who have indicated a wish to purchase the land collectively; or
- in certain circumstances where a dwelling has a sitting tenant at the time of the proposed disposal, the freehold will first be offered to the sitting tenant. If the tenant declines to purchase the freehold it will then be offered to the former owner although this may be subject to the tenants continued occupation. It should be noted however that this does not apply to agricultural units and only applies to certain types of tenancy agreement.

## 6 Exceptions

6.1 In the following circumstances, the Secretary of State may decide that the property should not be offered back under the Crichton Down Rules:

- where the works have materially changed the character of the land since the acquisition, examples may include:
  - where a building with land was originally compulsorily acquired for the Proposed Scheme and the building was demolished for incorporation of some, although not all of the land within the proposed railway, and some land becomes surplus;
  - where property has been compulsorily acquired under material detriment i.e. where part only of the land is required but the effect of the scheme is so material that the owner forces the Promoter to acquire all of the property;
- sites that, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, are of such a nature or so small or isolated that their sale would not be commercially worthwhile;
- where agricultural land that has been severed is no longer capable of farming economically;
- where it makes sense to pool the land with adjoining ownerships in a joint disposal;
- where it would be inconsistent with the purpose of the original acquisition to sell it back;
- where it is decided by the Secretary of State that all or part of the surplus land forming a site is needed for railway purposes or associated redevelopment, regeneration, or the relocation or reconfiguration of a business affected by the Proposed Scheme, or it is required by a Railway Authority, Infrastructure Company, Operator or otherwise;
- where former owners are not prepared to commit to provisions that protect the future safety and operation of the Proposed Scheme or

any railway with which the Proposed Scheme interconnects both during construction and thereafter;

- where the site is needed, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, for railway purposes or associated redevelopment, regeneration or the relocation of a business affected by the Proposed Scheme;
- where the site is required for environmental mitigation, and where the former landowner is unwilling or unable to accommodate those requirements for recreation of community facilities or wildlife habitats;
- where planning consent has not been obtained by the Secretary of State at the time of disposal and the value of surplus land is so uncertain that clawback provisions would be insufficient to safeguard the public purse, and where competitive sale is advised by the Department for Transport's professionally qualified valuer and specifically agreed by the Secretary of State;
- where holders of Qualifying Interests are not prepared to comply with the details of any undertakings given by the Secretary of State or nominated undertaker to planning authorities;
- where former owners are not prepared to pay the market value of the site or are not prepared to offer terms that the Secretary of State considers to represent best value having regard to all the circumstances;
- where the Secretary of State considers that in the public interest the land should be transferred to another Public Body with compulsory purchase powers; and
- in any of the other circumstances (not identified here) which are set out in paragraph 15 of the Crichel Down rules

## **7 More information**

- 7.1 More detail on the Bill and related documents can be found at [www.gov.uk/hs2-phase2b-crewe-manchester](http://www.gov.uk/hs2-phase2b-crewe-manchester).

## References

Compulsory Purchase process and the Criche! Down Rules:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/compulsory-purchase-process-and-the-criche!-down-rules-guidance>