

## INDEPENDENT PHASE ONE PLANNING FORUM FOR HS2

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Independent Phase One Planning Forum for HS2 - #84</b>	
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	Thursday 20 November 2025  Microsoft Teams meeting 13:00 – 14:30	
<b>Chair:</b>		Independent Chair
<b>Promoter Attendees:</b>		<p>HS2 Ltd (Town Planning Manager)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Town Planning Manager)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Chief Railway Officer)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Phase 2 Town Planning Lead)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Senior Town Planning Manager)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Town Planning Manager)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Town Planning Manager)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Senior Strategic Partnerships Manager)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Town Planning Manager)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Lead Architect)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Head of Technical Support Services)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Head of Town Planning)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Phase 1 Town Planning Lead)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Town Planning Manager)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Team Administrator)</p> <p>HS2 Ltd (Senior Town Planning Manager)</p> <p>BBV</p> <p>BBV</p> <p>BBV</p> <p>BBV</p> <p>BBVS</p> <p>MDJV</p> <p>SCS</p> <p>SCS</p>
<b>Planning Authority Attendees:</b>		<p>Birmingham City Council (BCC)</p> <p>Birmingham City Council (BCC)</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Council (BC)</p> <p>Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Council (LBHF)</p> <p>Lichfield District Council (LDC)</p> <p>Lichfield District Council (LDC)</p> <p>London Borough of Camden (LBC)</p> <p>London Borough of Camden (LBC)</p> <p>London Borough of Camden (LBC)</p> <p>North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC)</p> <p>Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC)</p> <p>Staffordshire County Council (SCC)</p> <p>Three Rivers District Council (TRDC)</p> <p>Warwick District Council (WDC)</p>

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		Warwickshire County Council (WCC) West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) West Northamptonshire Council (WNC)
<b>Other Attendees:</b>		DfT

Item		Action Owner																					
1.	<b>Introductions</b> – were made.																						
2.	<p><b>Review of the minutes of the last meeting and outstanding actions.</b></p> <p>Minutes from the September 2025 Planning Forum meeting were agreed.</p> <p>Outstanding actions were reviewed:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Nov 23 (3)</td> <td>PG to arrange a visit to train mock-up site early 2026.</td> <td><b>Action open</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jan 25 (10)</td> <td>PG to explore Planning Forum being a hybrid meeting held on site at Curzon Street in 2026.</td> <td><b>Action open</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>May 25 (7)</td> <td>HS2 to circulate first draft PFN – Bringing into Use Principles for Determination and arrange a workshop.</td> <td><b>Action CLOSED</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul 25 (6)</td> <td>Organise workshop on BIU and mitigation schemes in December 2025.</td> <td><b>Action open</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul 25 (7)</td> <td>Rising from discussions in the Highways Subgroup, a special meeting on the New Burdens assessment is to be organised.</td> <td><b>Meeting held 11 September Action CLOSED</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sep 25 (5)</td> <td>PG to investigate who would be the most appropriate HS2 colleague to discuss the SLA funding agreements for HS2 funded posts within the Council and associated uplift issues.</td> <td><b>Action CLOSED</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sep 25 (6)</td> <td>HS2 to circulate a proposed list of Planning Forum dates for 2026.</td> <td><b>Action CLOSED</b></td> </tr> </table>	Nov 23 (3)	PG to arrange a visit to train mock-up site early 2026.	<b>Action open</b>	Jan 25 (10)	PG to explore Planning Forum being a hybrid meeting held on site at Curzon Street in 2026.	<b>Action open</b>	May 25 (7)	HS2 to circulate first draft PFN – Bringing into Use Principles for Determination and arrange a workshop.	<b>Action CLOSED</b>	Jul 25 (6)	Organise workshop on BIU and mitigation schemes in December 2025.	<b>Action open</b>	Jul 25 (7)	Rising from discussions in the Highways Subgroup, a special meeting on the New Burdens assessment is to be organised.	<b>Meeting held 11 September Action CLOSED</b>	Sep 25 (5)	PG to investigate who would be the most appropriate HS2 colleague to discuss the SLA funding agreements for HS2 funded posts within the Council and associated uplift issues.	<b>Action CLOSED</b>	Sep 25 (6)	HS2 to circulate a proposed list of Planning Forum dates for 2026.	<b>Action CLOSED</b>	
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3.	<p><b>Programme Reset</b></p> <p>EH gave a brief explanation of her role within HS2 and there are three exam questions she was here to provide answers to.</p>																						

	<p><b>Key Question 1: Is HS2 over budget and behind on schedule?</b></p> <p>EH advised that HS2 is both over budget and there is a delay. We were originally given a funding envelope in 2019 of £44.6 billion: to date HS2 has spent £42 billion, but the works are only approximately 50% complete.</p> <p>EH explained that there have been a number of challenges that have led to this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Works started before the scheme was fully designed;</li><li>b) multiple changes in government policy, which has changed the scope of what HS2 was building, and</li><li>c) HS2 did not have the right contracts to drive the performance of the supply chain.</li></ul> <p>This has led to the sequence of the delivery of the build getting out of sequence. HS2 needs to create a test area of approximately 80km to allow the trains to be fully tested at operational speed. Originally, this would have been delivered on the core route, however HS2 has experienced challenges with the delivery of key infrastructure, such as deep cuttings and green tunnels. HS2 has had to reprioritise this to be delivered from north to south, starting at Washwood Heath.</p> <p><b>Key Question 2: How can HS2 demonstrate they can be trusted to deliver the railway?</b></p> <p>HS2 Ltd has a new leadership team. [REDACTED] has come in as CEO and is responsible for leading the reset, using the same methodology that he used to reset Crossrail. This is a proven approach. HS2 Ltd is fixing root causes, not constructing too early when there is not a mature design in place and ensuring HS2 has the right contracts in place.</p> <p>HS2 currently has four task forces which focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Programme - ensures that the right work is undertaken in the right order, is costed and is affordable;</li><li>b) Commercial - resetting the contracts with the supply chain to make sure that there is the right attribution of risk and contractors are incentivised to deliver;</li><li>c) Organisation - resetting the organisation; and</li><li>d) Operating environment - looking at the wider governance environment and recommendations from James Stewart.</li></ul> <p><b>Key Question 3: How are we fixing the problem?</b></p> <p>EH explained that HS2 Ltd are using a proven methodology that is looking to work much better in partnerships and to become more focused as a delivery organisation.</p>	
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	<p>The first stage was an independent assessment called the Programme Assessment which concluded at the end of 2024, which gave advice on the deliverability of the project related to costs and schedule.</p> <p>The second stage identified what the scope of the railway is post network North, what will be built, the sequence and the funding.</p> <p>At the third stage, HS2 Ltd will clarify to government what needs to be delivered with associated costs.</p> <p>HS2 has £7.1 bn to spend this year (1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026). [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED] It is anticipated that another £7.1bn will be available for HS2 for the financial year of 2026-2027 based on the funding committed in the government Spending Review.</p> <p>Questions were raised by the following local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lichfield District Council –raised an issue with regards to the temporary roads which are not suitable for another four years as there are major developments coming forward within the borough. What do we say to the Members and MP?</li></ul> <p>EH advised that [REDACTED] has met with Staffordshire to discuss this area and has made a commitment to review what HS2 can get finished in the area. A statement in Spring 2026 will be released to clarify future works, and LAs should keep liaising with their respective HS2 contacts to get updates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• London Borough of Camden –asked what does the reset mean for Euston and what is the end date for Euston?</li></ul> <p>EH advised that HS2 is working on the assumption that private finance will be secured for Euston and the Spring statement is all encompassing so it will include information on the Euston area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council –raised an issue with regards to resourcing for Schedule 17 applications as there is currently a lull and some uncertainties revolving around the project.</li></ul> <p>EH advised that in Spring there will be a detailed plan showing the staging of the works. The highest focus and priority for HS2 Ltd is to deliver Washwood Heath and then head southwards for the test strategy.</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buckingham County Council –asked whether the Calvert line in Bucks is no longer a priority for testing and will it mean that construction will last longer?</li> </ul> <p>EH advised that Calvert has the same level of importance to HS2, however due to other complex challenges within this area, we are unable to bring this forward. HS2 are accelerating other parts of the programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birmingham City Council – expressed concern that the HS2 is not catering for development that is coming within the next 4-5 years in the city centre.</li> </ul> <p>EH indicated that HS2 has someone looking at development opportunities around the stations and the wider regeneration opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffordshire County Council –asked whether the costings and programme for the completion of Phase 1 all the way up to Handsacre be available in Spring 2026?</li> </ul> <p>EH advised that both the costings and programme will be available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warwickshire County Council - asked for clarity on Kingsbury Spur and its compound.</li> </ul> <p>EH indicated that Kingsbury Spur is still within scope, but it will be part of the deferred works.</p>	
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Consents and Programme Costs</b></p> <p>MW presented an overview of the programme costs and the NAO report. It is worth noting that HS2 are building 700 new physical assets and 900 contestable utilities and the volume of design and consenting work is unparalleled and unprecedented in the UK.</p> <p>The NAO Update Report was published in 2024 highlighting two aspects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Consents were a contributing factor to the increased design delivery costs in the main works civils.</li> <li>b) Scale and complexity of the project contributed to HS2’s design costs.</li> </ol> <p>Two separate independent reviews were undertaken in 2023 to help understand what had contributed to the increasing design costs. The key facets</p>	

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	<p>of those reports identified consents and permitting were a significant challenge. It is important to highlight that obtaining consents is a process and it is not the sole reason for why design and delivery costs have risen. There are four key root causes the two reports identified for the increased design costs as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) <b>Construction schedule</b> – HS2 previously was chasing for a deterministic schedule but there was a fragmented design which led to immature costings.</li><li>b) <b>Contractual mechanisms</b> - incentivisation mechanisms and focus on cost control were not robust enough, and they allowed limited continuous improvement.</li><li>c) <b>Client role</b> - delays in obtaining crucial data which in turn meant that we could not control the risk, schedule in contracting the design.</li><li>d) <b>Contractor design</b> - the knowledge, skills and experience of a novel set of consenting regime/legislation. The increased burden of consents has largely resulted from the impact of design changes.</li></ol> <p>Both reviews found a number of contributing factors related to consents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>HS2 Client role and oversight:</b> HS2 Ltd.'s role in resolving issues and disagreement with local planning authorities, not just limited to LPAs, wasn't always effective in reducing delays. It is recognised that HS2 has had some good bilateral relations and they have been fruitful, however some of the challenges that come through the process is related to the quality of designs and HS2 are doing things differently.</li><li>• Important to call out what we are now doing differently. HS2 has got a better working relationship with the supply chain and we have improved our MI. Both of these aspects are contributing to a better oversight and understanding of where our key challenges are likely to be and where the hotspots are, so that these can be resolved earlier.</li><li>• <b>Process and integration:</b> Lack of consistent consenting strategy driven by fragmented design packages as we chased deterministic schedule. This increased the volume of consents and design documentation required, which increased the amount of assurance required, and resultantly drove up determination periods. HS2 are reviewing the assurance processes and trying to minimise unnecessary documentation, putting more onus on self-assurance within our frameworks.</li><li>• <b>Supply chain capability:</b> Allying the novelty of the legislation and the scale and complexity of work not seen in the UK before, created a unique set of conditions. HS2 Ltd did not sufficiently support the DJVs.</li></ul> <p>Local political opinion has had a much greater impact on consenting and permitting than expected. This is not limited to local authorities, but includes the Environment Agency and Natural England as they have been under intense public scrutiny and it has in turn driven a very conservative approach which has required more detailed modelling and assessment.</p>	
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	<p>The two reports were made available to the NAO when they undertook their review. They also considered a number of sources of information. However, it is important to note that consenting is only one part of the end-to-end design process and to try and break the cost down on a programme of this scale and complexity is incredibly challenging and not all the design refinements and changes had been accounted for at the time.</p> <p>On the back of this NAO review, HS2 has implemented a consent improvement plan and there are three key areas which it will focus on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Improved internal scrutiny of consent performance and risk management, where HS2 has included a KPI on consent or consent management.</li> <li>b) Tracking critical path consents early to identify risks and challenges that HS2 will need to manage, ensuring the right collaborative behaviour and discussions are being displayed.</li> <li>c) Clearing some of the historic backlog of SLA payments.</li> </ol> <p>TA requested that MW presentation is captured in the minutes as no slides were available eg. what were the two reviews and the four route causes.</p>	
5	<p><b>SLA Update</b></p> <p>MW provided an update on SLA matters, which is summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilaterals are in place with the relevant local authorities to obtain the outstanding timesheet and evidence.</li> <li>• Recognising that some timesheets have been submitted since March 2025 and HS2 are working collaboratively, streamlining and simplifying the process to speed up the decision making.</li> <li>• Reviewing the annual uplift on funded posts as there has been inconsistent approach regarding this point and HS2 Ltd. is working to get a definitive answer on this.</li> <li>• HS2 is also seeking to reduce the burden of evidence required for historic payments that go back to 23/24 and recognise that personnel have moved on and evidence may no longer exist and HS2 Ltd. will need to take a pragmatic approach.</li> <li>• Recognising that HS2 will continue to have a long relationship with the local authorities in the future, HS2 Ltd will be reviewing its funding strategy and approach in light of the programme reset.</li> </ul> <p>Comments and questions were raised by the following local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birmingham City Council –commented that there has been a lot of work done to get timesheets up to date and wanted to say thank those involved at HS2 for their work.</li> </ul>	.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Warwickshire County Council –asked whether the damage claims process would be made simpler, and the council has been advised that staff time for gathering evidence is not claimable via the SLA route.</li> </ul> <p>EH and CE agreed to take it offline to discuss the specifics in more detail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>West Northamptonshire Council - highlighted the inconsistent advice received from HS2 SLA teams due to changes of staff.</li> </ul> <p>EH advised that HS2 are making improvements in the SLA process to bring greater consistency to it and also creating an easier route of escalation will help. It is unfortunate that HS2 can't guarantee the stability of staff, however HS2 can put arrangements in place to create better consistency.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Planning Consents Performance &amp; Appeals and Judicial Reviews Update</b></p> <p>SA presented the planning consents performance and appeals update.</p> <p><u>Performance on determinations within last six months</u></p> <p>Latest performance shows a relatively good performance, compared with the last period it has improved again. SA thanked everyone both in the local planning authorities and the contractors for their efforts.</p> <p>TA noted that there are fewer applications being determined during this period and SA clarified that it is a transition period between the main works and a period of resubmission.</p> <p><u>Applications awaiting decision</u></p> <p>SA explained that there has been a steep rise in applications that are in determination due to the ramping up of restoration and bringing into use consents, and that is reflected on the latest slides. These applications have been submitted fairly recently and most of them are still within the eight-week period: however there are some very long outstanding applications that have been in determination for a long time due to various factors eg. design changes led by contractors, designs challenged by LPAs and some related to requests for further information.</p> <p><u>Application performance</u></p> <p>HS2 have for three months now sustained a period of where they have met the forecast or exceeded it. In October, HS2 has exceeded it by some distance which suggests that applications are being submitted. Some of those applications submitted in October may have been brought forward from November's forecast, but it is positive as submissions are being made as planned. Some of those are resubmissions and bringing into use consents.</p>	

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	<p><u>Appeals</u> There are no live appeals awaiting determination.</p> <p>Bromford Tunnel East Portal - North Warwickshire Borough Council has applied to the Court of Appeal (CoA) and to challenge the High Court judgment. Still awaiting a decision from the CoA if this application is accepted.</p> <p>Given the similarities of issues, the decision on the later application for judicial review of the Bromford Tunnel East Portal Building appeal decision has been stayed until the Bromford Tunnel East Portal judicial review has concluded.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Bringing into Use Principles PFN 20</b></p> <p>PG highlighted the following and the key changes from the BiU workshop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose of the PFN 20;</li> <li>• Timings of the submission of BiU;</li> <li>• Changes to mitigation post approval and concerns related to further design changes to proposals, and</li> <li>• Summary of the key changes to the PFN 20 following the workshop.</li> </ul>	
8.	<p><b>Local Authority Feedback</b></p> <p><b>Schedule 16 Site Restorations (Solihull MBC)</b> Solihull MBC have had a few Schedule 16 restoration requests and it appears from the Written Statements that accompany them that the land has already been restored and handed back to the landowner. However, the legislation in the Act sets out a definitive timeframe, “where if there is no scheme agreed within 6 months the scheme is to be such as may be determined by the appropriate Ministers...”</p> <p>PG advised that Schedule 16 is not a town planning consent and is a consent that falls to the Land and Property Team. He explained that it is a complex area, and currently there are three examples of Schedule 16 that have been submitted and each one has their own nuances. HS2’s Land and Property Team have been invited to the next Planning Forum to present how it works in practice and how they will be applying the legislation. <b>(Action)</b></p> <p>TH agreed it is a bit contentious, however from DfT’s perspective the two things that need to happen are agreement with the landowner and the local planning authority, and handing the land back to the landowner.</p> <p>TA asked what happens if it is all retrospective and the LPA has not been consulted?</p> <p>TH agrees that something has gone wrong in the process, hence the detailed conversation at the next Planning Forum.</p>	

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<b>6.</b>	<b>Forward Plan/ AOB</b>  Proposed dates for Planning Forum 2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 22nd January</li><li>• 19th March</li><li>• 21st May</li><li>• 16th July</li><li>• 17th September</li><li>• 19th November</li></ul> Post meeting note: TA requested that the Planning Forum for 2026 start at 1:30pm.  PG advised that there is a Heritage Subgroup meeting on 26 <sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 2pm to 4pm with updates around PEX contracts and ongoing site works. HS2 contact for this meeting is: [REDACTED] should anyone need an invite to this meeting.  The meeting ended at 14:26.	
	<b>End</b>	