14th September 2020

HS2 update for the Chesham and Villages Community Board: September 2020

1. Introduction

This note reviews the direct impact of the HS2 project on the area covered by the Chesham and Villages Community Board (C&V CB). It does not consider the broader county or national picture.

The direct impacts on local communities will be vary in different parts of the C&V CB area, which stretches from The Lee (which is on the line of route), through Chartridge, Cholesbury and Chesham and on to Ashley Green, Chenies, Ley Hill and Latimer.

This note considers in particular:

a) The latest programme for HS2 works between Amersham and Wendover
b) The impacts of and the mitigation of those works in the C&V CB area
c) The HS2 project's engagement with local councils and communities.

[The next local meeting with HS2 Ltd and their contractors is due to take place on 22nd September. Updates provided at that meeting will be reported at the C&V CB meeting on 30th September.]

2. Programme of works

The latest indication of the programme of works between Amersham and Wendover - from various HS2 Ltd and contractor sources - is summarised in Annex 1, along with, where known, the latest traffic forecasts (some recently updated, others taken from the Environmental Statements).

a) Align – Chiltern tunnel construction

The two tunnel boring machines (TBMs) are due to be shipped to the UK this month. They will then be assembled at the South Portal, near Denham, and will be 'launched' in April/May 2021. The development of each of the five ventilation/access shafts has been programmed so that each shaft is ready to receive the TBMs as they arrive at each location.

Initial site set-up at the **Amersham vent shaft** has begun and below-ground work at the site is due to start in April 2021. Construction work will continue at the site until 2025, when the site will be handed over to the (yet to be appointed) rail-systems contractor.

The **Little Missenden** (A413) and **Great Missenden (Chesham Road)** shafts follow-on, with initial site set-up from October 2020 and February 2021 respectively; excavation work starts in May/June 2021 and continues until 2025.

Align's programme shows their construction work at the **North Portal** scheduled to start in December 2022, with EKFB then having handed-over the site to them. The TBMs are due to

arrive at the North Portal in late 2023/early 2024, where they will be 'de-constructed'. This site is also due to be handed over to the rail systems contractor in early 2025.

b) EKFB – civil engineering works: South Heath to Wendover

The detail of EFKB's programme of works on the surface in this area is less clear at this stage. We know they plan to construct the route between South Heath and Wendover "from both ends" using an internal haul road to be built adjacent to the railway's line of route (see Annex 2). We also know that they plan to build the Small Dean viaduct as early as possible, so as to be able to run surplus spoil over it during the construction of the Wendover cut-and-cover tunnel and thereby reduce traffic on the A413. To enable this, construction has started of their works compound, south-west of Wendover.

However, we do not yet fully understand the timing of the construction of this internal haul road, nor how the over and under-bridges are to be built at Leather Lane and Bowood Lane, nor how the construction compounds at these sites will be built, nor whether a bentonite plant has to be built at South Heath, nor how they will access it, nor how much spoil will be moved where and when, etc. We are hoping for an update on these issues together with up-to-date traffic forecasts at the meeting on 22nd September.

What is clear however is that starting in the spring of 2021, HS2 construction traffic using the A413 will ramp-up considerably - see 3.1(a) below.

c) Fusion – 'Enabling works'

Fusion continue with a number of 'enabling' activities in the area, including road works along the A413 to mitigate the impact of construction, archaeological and ecological works and 'vegetation clearance'. Most of their work should be completed in the next 6-9 months. It is understood that they will not receive any new contracts after October 2020.

d) Planning approvals

Before HS2 contractors begin major construction works, they are required to get a sign-off approval from the local planning authority and/or local highways authority under Schedule 17 or Schedule 4 of the HS2 Act.

The District Councils received applications between 2017 and 2019, for works at the Colne Valley viaduct, the Chiltern Tunnel South Portal and the Chalfont St Peter Ventilation Shaft (see https://www.councilshs2information.org/schedule-17-consent-approvals)

Buckinghamshire Council (BC) were expecting to receive further submissions in August/September 2020 for:

- Chalfont St Peter vent shaft - see 3.2(a) below.
- Chalfont St Giles vent shaft
- Chilterns North portal (traffic routes only)
- Wendover Dean viaduct, including cuttings and embankments

A recent judgment in the High Court on the issue of Schedule 17 submissions has ruled in favour of the local planning authority (Hillingdon Borough Council) and against HS2 Ltd. This judgment appears to require the applicant to be much clearer in their Schedule 17 submissions as to how they will mitigate local impacts than had been previously assumed by HS2 Ltd and their contractors. Local parishes have asked BC for a statement as to how they are interpreting this ruling and are currently waiting for a response.

3. Impact and mitigation

3.1 Construction impacts

a) Traffic routes and volumes

The major areas of concern regarding construction traffic in the C&V CB area are:

- The volume of HS2 traffic on the A413 (the official construction route)
- HS2-related traffic using other routes e.g. the B485/A416 through Chesham and the hill-top lanes in local villages
- Non-HS2 traffic 'rat-running' to avoid HS2 congestion.

HS2 Ltd and their contractors are required to only use the approved haulage routes for HGV vehicles; however there appears to be nothing to prevent HS2-related LGVs, vans and cars using unapproved routes. There is local concern over the effects of sub-contracting and whether HS2 Ltd will be able to monitor and police all HS2-related vehicles. Local examples during the 'enabling phase' suggest that they will not.

HS2 Ltd and their contractors have yet to release details of their expected traffic flows at each site to local communities; in many cases the only information available is that contained in the Environmental Statements produced over five years ago. A more up to date Local Traffic Management Plan (LTMP) has been drafted which reflects the latest thinking and this has been discussed with BC. Local parishes have been seeking the opportunity to review this with BC, in order to input their local knowledge, but no discussions have so far been scheduled.

A recent planning application by Align has been made to BC for traffic routes and flows into the sites at Amersham, Little Missenden, Chesham Road and the North Portal; however, they do not seem to include EKFB traffic flows, which remain unavailable for local review.

b) Monitoring hill-top traffic

An Undertaking & Assurance (U&A) was given to BCC to measure the knock-on effect of rat-running by traffic trying to avoid any hold-ups on the A413 between Great Missenden and Wendover. It was agreed that bench-mark traffic surveys and ongoing monitoring would be carried out to measure the levels of traffic on the A413 and on nearby lanes before and after construction started. This U&A has led to protracted debate – between HS2 Ltd, their contractors and BCC – about when and where the monitoring should take place, and who should install it. The locations for monitoring were agreed over two years ago.

Automatic traffic counters are now being installed at six locations to create the monitoring 'grid-line' (see Annex 3):

- Rignall Road, Great Missenden
- Aylesbury Road, Great Missenden
- A413 Missenden Bypass, Great Missenden
- Potter Row, Great Missenden
- Village Road, Ballinger
- Chartridge Lane, Chartridge

When activated, collectively, these counters will give a good indication of changes in traffic on the A413 and the local hill-top lanes. The exact locations can be seen at: https://www.thelee.org.uk/2020/08/06/hs2-traffic-monitoring-equipment/

c) Footpaths

There is also increasing concern in the area that temporary footpath closures (and indeed temporary or partial road closures) are going to be greater than anticipated. The Missendens area has recently experienced a number of 'temporary' footpath and lane closures, some of which seem to be continuing, indefinitely. The Chiltern Society has lodged a formal complaint over footpath closures in the area.

HS2 contractors have suggested that protester action has made it difficult for them to safely reopen some footpaths in the Missenden area.

d) Landowners

Along the line of route, throughout Buckinghamshire, there have been many reported cases of delayed payments to landowners; this seem to especially affect farmers whose land is being taken permanently or temporarily by the project.

3.2 Design of structures

Ventilation shafts, viaducts and tunnel portals in the AONB are known as 'key design elements'. The contractors are therefore obliged to formally *"engage with the public on the development of the design"* before submitting their final proposed design to the planning authority for approval. The Detailed Design Principles document (DPP) produced by the HS2 Chilterns AONB Review Panel in 2017 contained guidance on the design of all structures in the AONB. However, in practice, the detailed designs are being produced by the contractors before meaningful public engagement. As a result, community engagement events seem to be having little impact on key aspects of the development of the design.

a) Ventilation and Access Shafts

The DDP document suggested that, for all sites, except Amersham, the strategy should be *"maximum concealment and integration within the landscape context, through a combination of adjustment of ground levels, building design and screen planting*". At Amersham, however, the DPP states *"… the site particulars will prevent this approach. This development should acknowledge its inevitable visibility and aim to make an appropriate architectural statement*".

Local community engagement has already taken place on the design of the Chalfont St Peter shaft and a final design has been submitted recently to BC. Images of what this vent shaft building will look like (the first of four similar sites) have been released by the contactors, saying: *"Taking its inspiration from the style of local barns and other agricultural buildings, the headhouse is designed to fit into the surrounding landscape".*

Images of the proposed Chalfont St Peter Ventilation Shaft (Align JV)

At Amersham on the other hand, the archtects have come up with a radically different design, referencing *"its inevitable visibility and the aim to make an appropriate architectural statement"*. Local public engagement on this design runs until 27th September.

Image of the proposed Amersham Ventilation Shaft site (Align JV)

The indications are that this design has not been well received locally. It will be a test of the contractors and HS2 Ltd how they respond to the feedback from public engagement.

Further engagement events are being planned on the design of the Little Missenden and Chesham Road, Great Missenden shafts over the next six months. It is assumed locally that they will be similar to the Chalfont St Peter proposal.

b) Chiltern tunnel North Portal

Indicative designs of the portal at South Heath were displayed at local community events in 2019. Again, a full local engagement is expected over this coming winter, before the Schedule 17 submission is made.

Indicative image of Chiltern tunnel North Portal (Align)

c) Wendover Dean viaduct

A consultation on the design of this viaduct took place in 2019 and the final design appears now to be settled. A Schedule 17 submission for this construction was expected in August.

Indicative image of Wendover Dean viaduct (EKFB)

d) Small Dean viaduct

Similarly, a consultation took place on the design of this viaduct in 2019. It is understood that further discussions have taken place with BC on detailed issues, such as 'dual carriageway-proofing' the route under the viaduct and 'safe cycleways'. A Schedule 17 submission is expected soon.

3.3 Noise

Apart from the general issue of noise during construction, which is controlled by the Code of Construction Practice, there is still concern amongst those living near the line that the original estimates of the noise impact of the trains when running, made in the Environmental Statements, fail to fully reflect the likely actual impact on residents.

EKFB are contracted to design and construct the railway in such a way as to ensure that the ES levels are not breached and where possible (at reasonable cost) they are improved. To support this, they have undertaken further noise modelling, incorporating the proposed design of the line, the chosen catenary system, and the likely locomotive units. They have reported that this modelling suggests (see Annex 4) that, although there may be a small number of receptor sites (in the vicinity of Rocky Lane) which may experience noise levels above that contained in the ES and which would therefore need specific local mitigation) all the rest will be no worse, and over 50% would be better. However, this has not convinced residents close to the line in South Heath, The Lee and Wendover, and further discussions are planned on this subject, involving BC's noise officer.

3.4 Water

Concerns have been expressed as to how the tunnelling will affect the aquifers and hydrogeology in both the Chess and the Misbourne valleys. In addition concerns have been expressed, at Wendover, in relation to the effect the 'cut-and-cover' tunnel will have on the flow of water off Bacombe Hill and, more generally, about water quality and the supply of water to the project.

The Chiltern Society, the Chess Association, 'Impress the Chess' (Chesham), the Chiltern Conservation Board and others are all in discussions with HS2 Ltd, the contractors and the Environment Agency. Concerns have been strengthened by recent incidents leading to turbid water, in Shardeloes Lake and near the Colne Valley test pile site – both believed to be associated with HS2 drilling operations in the vicinity.

In addition, Affinity are constructing a pipeline to convey water from their Chalfont St Giles extraction point to be purified at the Amersham pumping station.

4. Local engagement and consultation

4.1 2017-2019

Until 2019, 'community engagement' on the HS2 project took a number of forms:

- HS2 Ltd and contractors held **local open events**, sometimes on specific issues, sometimes a more general 'drop-in'. These events also provide updated construction information, which was valuable to local communities.
- The contractors ran specific **community consultations** e.g. on the design of the viaducts
- **Chiltern District Council** held regular (but not frequent) large open forums to which senior HS2 Ltd and contractor staff were invited to present updates on their current plans
- Buckinghamshire County Council and Chiltern District Council hosted regular (but not frequent) **meetings for Town and Parish Cllrs** to discuss HS2.

None of these have resulted in any significant changes to the design of the project, although they have helped to ensure that promised mitigation is delivered – eventually – and, to some extent, have enabled residents and local groups to keep up to date with the project plans.

Protest groups

Alongside the long-established local opposition groups, a new wave of 'Active Resistance' organisations has spread northwards from the Colne Valley camp at Harvil Road.

The protest camp on the Great Missenden Link Road (now removed) had some success in preserving most of the Link Road trees. However, two much larger protest camps are now well-established – in the woods on the A413 just south of Wendover and in Jones Hill Wood (on the Wendover / The Lee border) – and look likely to be there for some time… or at least until forcibly evicted.

These activities have attracted the attention of HS2 security and CCTV vans patrolling the area, adding to local concerns about the role of HS2 and its contractors, and the wider impact of the project on people's lives.

Chilterns local meetings

In 2017, in the Chilterns, a **Joint Chiltern Parishes Liaison group** was established with HS2 Ltd and the contractors, initially including just three Chiltern Parish Councils – Great Missenden, The Lee and Wendover, who shared interest and concerns about the development of the railway, above ground, in the AONB between South Heath and Wendover. This forum provided a useful vehicle for keeping local groups appraised of the latest plans and, to a limited extent, an opportunity to influence some decisions. The group grew to include Little Missenden PC, Chesham TC, Chesham Society, Chiltern Society, Wendover Society, the Great Missenden Village Association and the Chiltern Conservation Board. Cllrs and officers from BCC and CDC also regularly attended meetings. Such was the interest in simply 'finding out more' about the project that the meetings sometimes grew to over 30 people attending. The last meeting of this group was in December 2019 and was notable for the absence of any representatives from HS2 Ltd. Since then, no further meetings of this group have taken place.

4.2 Moving forward

Effective local engagement between HS2 Ltd, the contractors, the planning authority, town and parish councils and local residents has been difficult over the past 12 months, because of:

- The uncertainty over the future of the project and delays to the 'Notice to Proceed'
- Frequent changes in personnel at HS2 Ltd and within the major contractors
- The move to the Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority

- HS2 Ltd's decision to delegate key communication roles to subcontractors
- Differences of opinion between HS2 Ltd and BC as to whose responsibility it was to engage with local communities
- The impact of Covid-19

It is now understood that BC and HS2 Ltd (through their contractors) are evolving new community engagement and communication frameworks.

In the meantime, in the Missendens, a new, smaller group, initially led by County and Parish Cllrs, has been formed to continue meetings with the major contractors to discuss the project in the immediate area. The group has been meeting regularly again since April 2020 and is now led by BC officers. HS2 Ltd are expected to attend the September meeting.

Some local County Cllrs have expressed concern to senior officers in BC that, at present, they are not kept sufficiently in the loop on discussions between BC, HS2 Ltd and the major contractors. It is understood that a possible solution may be to introduce regular meetings between BC officers, Community Board representatives and HS2, perhaps following the Missendens meeting approach described above.

5. Summary

This note reviews the current and expected direct impacts of the HS2 project on the C&V CB area as at September 2020. What emerges is that 2021 will see a huge increase in HS2 excavation and construction works all along the A413 – at the five ventilation / access shafts; at the north portal of the Chiltern tunnel, along the cuttings heading north from the tunnel and at the two viaducts south of Wendover. Should traffic in the area return to pre-Covid levels, then severe congestion is likely.

Much work still has to be done by HS2 Ltd and their contractors to finalise the detail of their works in this area, and to get them approved by BC. Local towns and parishes, community interest groups and residents expect to be properly engaged and, where appropriate, consulted as these details emerge.

There has been a feeling that the groups with the greatest knowledge of where and how HS2 will impact on the community, and what measures might mitigate these impacts, have been marginalised in the engagement strategy, in part because these groups have no executive authority in decision-making processes and in part because their views have been seen on occasion as being unduly negative and obstructive. However, now that the project is 'proceeding', it is hoped that by working together, BC Officers and Cllrs, Town and Parish Cllrs and local interest groups can establish a framework for regular engagement with HS2 Ltd and their contractors, to run alongside the statutory engagement processes.

Communities have now lived with the prospect of HS2 for over 10 years… there will probably be another 10 years of 'engagement' before the project is finished. An improved method of communicating with residents and community groups is still needed.

I am happy to produce (briefer) updates for future meetings of the C&V CB.

Cllr Colin Sully; The Lee Parish Council; September 2020

Annex 1: Programme of Works between Amersham and Wendover

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Traffic *
ALIGN JV *(general)*	***Sept:*** *Receive and assemble TBMs*	***April/May: T****BM launched from south portal*	***July:*** *Colne Valley viaduct construction start*		***TBMs arrive*** *at north portal*		
Amersham Vent Shaft	**June:** initial site establishment; site set-up	**April:** below ground work starts	→	**November:** above ground structures start	→	**March:** Handover to rail systems	*HGV up to 190 LGV/cars ??*
Little Missenden Vent Shaft	**Oct:** initial site establishment; site set-up	**May:** below ground work starts	→	→	**January:** above ground structures start	**February:** Handover to rail systems	*HGV 160-200 LGV/car 20-30*
Chesham Road Shaft		**Feb:** initial site establishment **June:** below ground work starts	→	**March:** above ground structures start	**October:** Handover to rail systems		*HGV 180-220 LGV/car 80-90*
North Portal: South Heath	*[See EKFB]*	**Oct:** Handover of site from EKFB (?)	**Dec: a**bove ground works start	→	Arrival and deconstruction of TBMs	**February:** Handover to rail systems	*HGV 30-40 ** *
EKFB							
North Portal (inc South Heath cutting)	* Vegetation clearance * Drainage shaft and micro-tunnel	**April:** start of excavation of portal and cuttings	→	→	→	Handover to rail systems	*HGV 70-230 ** LGV/car 150-210*
Leather Lane Overbridge			Start overbridge	→	Completion	Handover to rail systems	*HGV 30-50 LGV/car 80-120*

Bowood Lane Overbridge			Start overbridge	⇨	Completion	Handover to rail systems	*HGV 20-30* *LGV/car 80-130*
Wendover Dean Viaduct		* worksite mobilisation	Construction of viaduct	⇨	Completion	Handover to rail systems	*Not Available*
Small Dean viaduct	* Construction of site access road and compound * Construct concrete batching plant	* A413 re-alignment * Piling work	Constriction of viaduct	⇨	Movement of surplus material over Small Dean viaduct to back-fill Wendover tunnel	Handover to rail systems	*Not Available*
Wendover 'cut-and-cover' tunnel			Commence excavation / construction	⇨	Completion	Handover to rail systems	*Not Available*
FUSION							
B485 Frith Hill	To be completed						
B485 / Kings Lane	To be completed						
Link Road, GM	To be completed						
Small Dean lane	To be completed						
Ecological	Various	)					
Archaeology	Various	) ⇨ ??					
De-vegetation	Various	)					
NATIONAL GRID	* Complete re-alignment work at South Heath and Wendover						

* Latest estimate of 2-way vehicle movements per day - 'normal' to 'busy'
Align HGV figures taken from their Schedule 17 submission 2020
EKFB figures (and Align LGV/Car) taken from the Environmental Statements

** ES suggests combined figures much higher than that shown by Align alone

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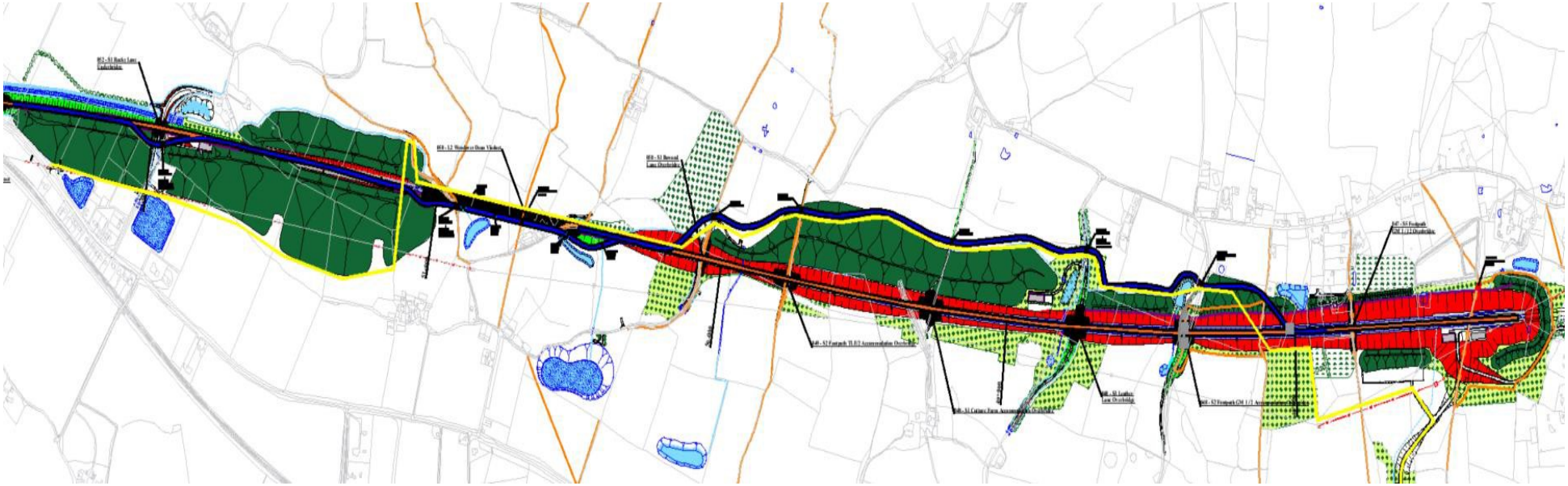
Annex 2: Schematic showing works between South Heath and Wendover

The thin yellow line shows approximate route of an HS2 internal haul road between the North Portal at South Heath (far right) and Rocky Lane (far left).



Annex 3: Locations of automatic traffic counters

Annex 4: Changes to Noise Levels from ES reported figures (estimates made for EKFB in 2019)

Change to Noise Level from ES

Night-time:

- No significant changes to ES reported figures
- 3 receptors increase by <0.8 dB
- 46 receptors no change
- 53 receptors reduced by 0.1 - 3 dB

- $L_{Aeq(night-time)}$ ranges from 39 to 69 dB
- LOAEL exceedances
  - ES stage - 48
  - Current - 46