

 Council 27th July 2011		Agenda Item No. 1
Title	High Speed Two (HS2) Consultation Response	
For further information about this report please contact	Tony Ward, Senior Policy Officer (Policy, Projects and Conservation).	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	8 th June 2011, Executive, minute no 11	
Background Papers	Supporting technical documents and route maps on Department of Transport website www.dft.gov.uk/hs2	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	18/7/11	Chris Elliot/ Bill Hunt
Head of Service	15/7/11	Paul Pinkney
CMT	15/7/11	
Section 151 Officer	15/7/11	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	15/7/11	Paul Pinkney
Finance	15/7/11	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	18/7/11	John Hammon
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1. Members will be aware that the Government's current consultation on the HS2 (High Speed Rail) proposal started on the 28th February and is due to close on 29th July 2011. This report recommends the response to this consultation to be made on behalf of Warwick District Council. It also endorses the detailed response made to the HS2 consultation by the 51m group (of which Warwick District is a lead member) as well as setting out specific points that we wish to raise as a local authority.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1. That the attached consultation response as set out in **Appendix A** is agreed as the Warwick District Council's formal position with respect of the HS2 proposal and that it is submitted accordingly.
- 2.2. That Warwick District Council (as a member of the 51m consortium of Local Authorities) is aligned with and in complete agreement with the full submission made by the 51m group (**Appendix B**) to follow.
- 2.3. That officers should continue to monitor the HS2 programme and process and continue to work in partnership with the 51m group and other external agencies (as necessary) to oppose the HS2 proposal. It is envisaged that a Ministerial decision on whether to proceed with the HS2 proposal will be announced in December of this year. Dependent on the outcome of this process a further report will be brought to Executive setting out options for future engagement / resistance to the HS2 delivery process.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1. Members considered a report on HS2 at the Council's Executive on the 6th January 2011, at this meeting the Council resolved to oppose the HS2 proposal (Executive Minute 107). To this end, considerable dialogue has taken place with Members, the 51m Group (a consortium of Local Authorities) other Warwickshire Authorities, Action Groups, HS2 Limited and other key stakeholders.
- 3.2. In April, Warwick District Council joined the 51m group, a network of 13 Local Authorities opposed to HS2. Officers and Members have worked with others within the 51M group to share information and jointly commission expert advice as necessary to ensure the formulation of a co-ordinated, cost effective and robust rebuttal of the HS2 proposal.
- 3.3. In May this year Warwick District Council submitted a response to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee (TSC) that is charged with evaluating the HS2 proposal via a special hearing (separate from the main consultation process). At this juncture Warwick District Council also endorsed the

substantive submission prepared on behalf of the 51m group to the TSC. A report setting out the content of this response was put before Executive on June 8th.

- 3.4. Regarding the consultation process, there are concerns that there have been strong statements from Government ministers in favour of HS2 that may have had the effect of discouraging people from engaging in the consultation process because they do not believe that is being conducted fairly. It is hoped that notwithstanding various statements to the contrary, the Government will approach these issues with an open mind.
- 3.5. Evidence that has been assembled in co-operation with the 51m group has led your officers to conclude that the case for the HS2 project has not been substantiated. It is evident that the business case does not stack up and that all other alternatives to achieve the transport capacity, regeneration, economic and environmental benefits as purported by the current proposal have not been given a fair hearing and therefore fully / properly explored.
- 3.6. There are major doubts about the accuracy and validity of much of the supportive data produced by HS2 Ltd and the Department of Transport and also serious questions about the basis of the assumptions that underpin the project. These concerns include passenger demand forecasts, estimates relating to overall benefits to the nation, project cost estimates, the expected regeneration benefits and the carbon impact of the proposal.
- 3.7. Officers are also particularly concerned that the HS2 Appraisal of Sustainability provides, at best, only a superficial examination of the issues that will have to be addressed as a consequence of the HS2 proposal. Its content has omissions that will require considerable further survey and analysis (see Question 6 Appendix A.) Such further work will manifestly raise the cost of the project even before any possible mitigation measures (requiring even further additional expense can be considered/ quantified).
- 3.8. It should be acknowledged that there is a need for strategic improvements to the national transport infrastructure where such advancements are well founded and are proven to be in the national interest. However there are considerable concerns that the HS2 proposal has not been conceived as a component part of a wider more integrated transport strategy.
- 3.9. HS2 is at best perceived as an isolated 'vanity project' that has gathered more momentum than its financial and environmental credibility should demand. It is not considered that HS2 is the best way to achieve national rail improvements as there is evidence setting out alternative strategies that can be implemented more quickly (and cheaply) and without the huge environmental sacrifices required by HS2. These alternative adjustments to existing networks / rolling stock can be delivered in an incremental way (with little disruption). The alternative strategy can also benefit from ongoing re-assessment utilising accurate (shorter term) demand / capacity evaluations.

- 3.10. Given that the overall budget for the HS2 proposal is currently in excess of £30 billion (considered to be a decidedly questionable estimate by the Government on assumptions considered to be flawed), it is the opinion of the 51m advice that the Government should not spend billions of pounds, simply because High Speed Rail (and HS2 in particular) is a modern and glamorous form of infrastructure. This is particularly the case where smaller and less expensive transport schemes would give far greater benefits in environmental, social and transport terms.
- 3.11. To conclude, HS2 is not in the best interests of the Nation with too great a cost in terms of both finance and the environment. There are other alternatives that can deliver the same benefits for more cheaply and with less environmental damage, therefore the HS2 project should be fundamentally re-appraised/withdrawn.
- 3.12. Accordingly, the consultation responses (Appendix A and B) are to be put before Members for their approval and submission to the Government before the deadline of the consultation on July 29th 2011. At the time of circulation of this report the final 51m response is substantially complete; however a final version remains to be received and will follow in due course.
- 3.13. The timetable set out in Appendix D of this report gives an indication of the Governments current project development arrangements. It is intended that the Consultation responses will be analysed by an independent company (Dialogue by Design) and a report prepared for the Government by the end of November. Taking into consideration the outputs from the consultation exercise (and presumably the report of the Transport Select Committee) the Government is to issue a decision on whether to proceed by the end of December 2011. In the interim period, Officers will continue to monitor the situation and liaise closely with the other authorities within the 51m consortium and a report will be brought back to Executive as necessary.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

4.1. **Policy Framework** – N/A

- 4.2. **Fit for the Future** – The proposed response to the consultation will help to protect the environment of the District in accordance with the SCS which aims to protect the built and natural environment.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1. The budgetary implications of preparing this response have been addressed in accordance with the Executive decision on the 6th January 2011. Warwick District Council has made budgetary provisions of £100K to oppose HS2. It is anticipated that a first invoice of £30K for our share of the consultants work undertaken so far on behalf of the consortium will be paid shortly. There is an

additional, identified commitment for a further sum in the order of £33K (that includes finance apportioned for potential Legal Challenges that may be required). The release of any further finance, through the 51m group consortium will be subject to the approval of the Head of Development Services and the Portfolio Holder for Development.

6. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 6.1. An alternative option would be to not respond to this consultation, however, this may be to the detriment of the environment of the District. An alternative response could be submitted to the consultation; however, this may not achieve the objectives of the SCS.