

 Executive 22nd December 2010		Agenda Item No. 10
Title	Scoping of High Speed 2 Impacts on Warwick District	
For further information about this report please contact	Gary Stephens Group Leader (Policy, Projects & Conservation)	
Service Area	Development Services	
Wards of the District directly affected	Radford Semele, Cubbington, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth Park Hill, Kenilworth Abbey	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No	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	Executive 24 th November 2010	
Background Papers	Supporting technical documents and route maps on Department of Transport website (www.dft.gov.uk)	

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

Officer/Councillor Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports <i>must</i> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Deputy Chief Executive	19.11.10	Bill Hunt
Chief Executive	24.11.10	Chris Elliott
CMT	24.11.10	
Section 151 Officer	19.11.10	Mike Snow
Legal		
Finance	19.11.10	Marcus Miskinis
Portfolio Holder(s)	29.11.10	Councillor Hammon
Consultation Undertaken		
Final Decision?	Yes	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 As requested by Full Council at its meeting of October 20th 2010, this report scopes the case for the defence of the District against the incursion of the proposed route of High Speed Two (HS2) with reference to the potential impact on the District's environment, local community, economy and employment, particularly the Stoneleigh Park and the Warwick University developments, recreational facilities, future housing needs and provision, and existing rail services from Coventry as well as from Leamington and Warwick. The report also contains a strategy for the Council's response to this issue, including cooperation with neighbouring Councils along the route.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Executive notes the report and the potential impacts of the proposed HS2 route on Warwick District.
- 2.2 That Executive endorse the approach of joint working with Warwickshire County Council, Stratford District Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council to critically assess any forthcoming consultation material and technical assessments published by the Government in relation to the impacts of HS2 within the District.
- 2.3 That Executive instruct relevant officers to liaise with colleagues from the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership, other authorities, including those outside of Warwickshire, representatives of HS2 Limited, and other interested organisations, including HS2 Action Alliance, in formulating a draft response to the consultation.
- 2.4 That Executive agrees to allocate £50,000 towards preparing its response to any forthcoming HS2 consultation and that the amount is included in the 2010/11 Estimates, financed from the capital element of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.
- 2.5 That Executive notes that authorities along the proposed HS2 route will be invited to attend a meeting in January to explore the potential for either a joint response to the proposed consultation and/or the co-ordination of individual responses.
- 2.6 That Executive receives a further report once further details are available on the Government's consultation and the preparation of the Council's response.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

Context and Potential Routes

- 3.1 In January 2009, the former Government set up High Speed Two Limited (HS2 Ltd) to advise on the development of high speed rail services between London and Scotland. In December 2009, HS2 Ltd reported to the Secretary of State for Transport that there was a strong business case for a high speed rail link between London and the West Midlands and a preferred route was recommended. The then Government's response was published on 11 March 2010, supporting further investigation of the case for HS2 and the preferred route. The new Government have subsequently maintained the commitment to developing a high speed rail network and have placed HS2 top of the Structural Reform Priorities in the Department for Transport's Business Plan (2011-2015).

- 3.2 The preferred route published in March 2010 runs north-westwards through the District for approximately 15km. It would enter on the eastern border just north of the A425 and would pass to the east of Offchurch and Cubbington before heading through Stareton. It would then run between Kenilworth and Gibbet Hill, before joining the former Kenilworth to Berkswell branch line at Burton Green where it would leave the District.
- 3.3 In September 2010, various realignments to the preferred route were published by HS2 and the Government has not ruled out further modifications being made to the route. In Warwick District, the realignments moved the route away from Stareton to cross Stoneleigh Park. The initial and modified preferred routes, which will be referred to as Preferred Route A and Preferred Route B respectively, are shown on the attached plan (**Appendix One**).
- 3.4 It is understood that further work is being undertaken by HS2 prior to the Government announcing the package for consultation, including its preferred route, by the end of the year. Public consultation will then commence in early 2011, covering the principle of high speed rail, the broad corridor for a new line, the detailed route, and the approach to blight. This is likely to last for up to five months and draft details of the consultation exercises in the County were appended to the November Executive report. Following the consultation, it is the Government's aim to announce its preferred strategy and route by the end of 2011.

Scoping of Impacts

- 3.5 It is not possible to fully quantify the impacts of HS2 on the District until the preferred route is identified and the consultation material, including an environmental impact assessment are published. The following analysis is therefore based on what information is currently publicly available.

Potential Environmental Impacts

- 3.6 **Landscape and Townscape:** The character and appearance of the landscape of Warwick District would undoubtedly be impacted upon by HS2 infrastructure, including lines, viaducts and bridges, although the majority of the route would be in cuttings. Once the final route is selected for consultation, it will be important to understand the significance of the impact on the landscape, particularly its openness and rural character, and whether those impacts can be mitigated.
- 3.7 HS2 Ltd state that impacts on the townscape are generally avoided, and although the preferred route would run close to the built up areas of Offchurch, Cubbington and Kenilworth there is no evidence that these townscapes would be adversely affected. However, both preferred routes would run through the centre of Burton Green and Preferred Route A would run through Stareton village. More information will be required on the impact on the townscape, as part of the consultation.
- 3.8 **Habitats and Biodiversity:** Warwickshire County Council has analysed the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA) to assess what habitats, linear features, ecosites, and protected species would be potentially impacted by the preferred route. Potentially, 490.6ha of habitats in the County would be directly affected with a further 11,775ha indirectly affected. The majority of these habitats are arable and improved grasslands which do not potentially have local or national importance, although there are some pockets of important habitats which could be affected including 24.8ha of broad-leaved semi-natural woodland and 14.6ha of semi-improved neutral grassland.
- 3.9 Within Warwick District, 146 linear features could potentially be affected totalling 8085m, the majority of which are intact hedges which could potentially have either

local or national importance. There are also a number of sites of nature conservation importance or 'ecosites' that would be affected by the preferred route, including Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), and Local Geological Sites (LGS). **Appendix Two** lists the sites that will be directly or indirectly affected. Once the final route is selected for consultation, further analysis will be required to understand the significance of those habitats affected within Warwick District, and the appropriateness of mitigation and/or compensatory measures.

- 3.10 **Appendix Two** also lists the European, Nationally and Locally Protected Species that may be using the preferred route and surrounding area. These records do not necessarily infer that a species is or is not present, and appropriate survey work will be required to establish their presence as well as to inform appropriate mitigation.
- 3.11 **Water:** The preferred route crosses four water courses within Warwick District: The Grand Union Canal; River Leam; the River Avon/ Sowe confluence; and Finham River. Each would be traversed by means of a viaduct. All flood plains, except the River Leam, are classed in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) as Zone 3a - 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of the river flooding. At Offchurch, the River Leam's floodplain is classed as Zone 3b – 1 in 20 or greater annual probability of flooding. The SFRA also recorded past flooding at Stoneleigh Park where the Preferred Route B runs through. HS2 Ltd state it is possible that adverse impacts may arise at locations where rivers are crossed, and these will need to be explored further.
- 3.12 HS2 Ltd have identified Kenilworth as an area where high quality aquifers are prevalent and that the passage of the scheme would present major risks and would require mitigation to be put in place.

Potential Community Impacts

- 3.13 **Air Pollution:** HS2 would be electronically powered and so it would not directly result in air pollution.
- 3.14 **Noise:** According to HS2 Ltd noise impacts along the preferred route from London to Birmingham would result in approximately 350 dwellings potentially experiencing high noise levels; 21,300 dwellings experiencing a noticeable increase in rail noise and 200 non residential receptors experiencing significant noise impacts. Some of these dwellings will be in Warwick District, although exact numbers are not available as of yet. Detailed modelling and assessment would be required in order to identify impacts and necessary mitigation measures.
- 3.15 **Construction:** HS2 Ltd state that construction would not start until 2018 and would be completed by December 2025 at the earliest meaning construction would occur on the entire route for a minimum of seven years. No information is available on the timeline of construction in Warwick District. There will inevitably be disruptions during construction, including noise and air pollution and roads and other access routes will be temporarily affected whilst new bridges are built.
- 3.16 **Physical Impacts:** There are a number of communities that would be in close proximity to the preferred route namely Offchurch, Cubbington, Weston-under-Wetherley, Stareton, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Gibbet Hill, and Burton Green. High-speed rail is not a means of transport that many residents will have experience of and it will take some time to obtain a clear idea of the visual, noise and atmospheric impacts and the effects of property acquisition, land and community severance.
- 3.17 **Property:** A number of properties would need to be demolished, including potentially two Grade II listed buildings. These have not been identified by HS2 Ltd,

but we believe East Lodge is one of the listed buildings at risk of demolition. In some cases therefore compulsory purchase of property would likely to be required and property blight would also occur, leading to significant losses for property owners. HS2 Ltd are reporting that properties in the locality of the preferred route option have already been blighted, with reports of buyers withdrawing from the purchase of nearby properties, reducing offers, and owners being professionally advised their properties are unmarketable. Further details on blight provisions are expected as part of the consultation material.

- 3.18 **Community facilities:** There is no evidence that any community building in Warwick District would be directly affected by the preferred route.
- 3.19 **Community Severance:** HS2 Ltd have highlighted that HS2 could increase the isolation of residents where properties become 'islanded'. In Warwick District, there are a number of houses in close proximity to the preferred route which isolation would potentially be increased. In addition HS2 would act as a barrier between villages such as Stoneleigh, Weston-under-Wetherley, Bubbenhall, Hunningham and the urban area of Leamington Spa.
- 3.20 **Health and Well-being:** According to HS2 Ltd the scheme has the potential to negatively affect health and well-being. Adverse impacts could arise from environmental impacts such as noise; however in very few cases are such impacts considered likely by HS2 Ltd to result in adverse health effects.

Potential Economic Impacts

- 3.21 **Agriculture:** According to HS2 Ltd's Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS), the route from London to Birmingham would affect none of the most productive Grade 1 farmland but would cross approximately 23km of Grade 2 farmland. Provisional studies show that the majority of agricultural land in Warwick District directly affected by the preferred route is Grade 3 farmland. However, some Grade 2 farmland is also directly affected around Offchurch; to the north and south of Stareton and Stoneleigh Park; and within the Crackley Gap. However, these surveys were taken between 1976 and 1990 and further research needs to be undertaken to evaluate the current productivity of the farmland affected.
- 3.22 **Tourism and Recreation:** Tourism is important to Warwick District attracting three million visitors per year who spend an estimated average of £19 million per month, supporting just under 5,000 jobs. One of the main attractions is Stoneleigh Abbey, a Grade II* listed stately house, which is in close proximity to both Preferred Routes A and B. HS2 Ltd have acknowledged that Stoneleigh Abbey will be affected, however the impacts could be avoided through further changes to the alignment.
- 3.23 A number of other historic areas that attract tourists are in close proximity to the proposed line, including Stoneleigh Park. HS2 Ltd have acknowledged the importance of this area and they state the Preferred Route B would significantly reduce the degree of severance of the historical parkland at Stoneleigh, would better maintain the outlook of the Grade II* listed and scheduled monument of Stare Bridge, and avoid passing through the historic hamlet of Stareton.
- 3.24 The District's countryside also attracts visitors and a number of footpaths and cycleways in Warwick District would be severed by the route, although it is anticipated by HS2 Ltd that all will be reinstated where feasible. In addition the preferred route runs through South Cubbington Woods which has some public access. The public's enjoyment of these areas will though clearly be affected.
- 3.25 **Stoneleigh Park Development:** Preferred Route B runs through Stoneleigh Park. The Royal Agricultural Society of England have planning permission, subject to

Section 106 Agreement, for the refurbishment and redevelopment of the park to provide exhibition, hotel and conference facilities along with showground and livestock facilities, a business innovation park, and leisure, retail and catering facilities. The development would become bisected, as well as losing part of the site. Once the preferred route is selected, discussions would need to be undertaken with the landowners to understand the full effect of HS2 on their plans.

- 3.26 **Warwick University Development:** The University of Warwick has been granted planning permission to extend their campus by 171,000 square metres. Although the preferred route passes through University owned land it does not directly affect their development. However, it could impede on any future expansion to the south. Further examination of any indirect impacts would also be required, particularly noise.
- 3.27 **Other Businesses:** Preferred Route B runs alongside the north eastern border of Kenilworth Golf Club, and both preferred routes run in close proximity to Offchurch, Cubbington, Kenilworth and Burton Green, therefore research would be required as to indirect impacts to businesses in these areas.
- 3.28 Indirectly, HS2 is also likely to have a wider impact on the strength of the District's economy, and further assessment will be required as to the implications of the line and the proposed interchange station east of Birmingham on the attractiveness of the area for inward investment.

Future Housing Needs and Provision

- 3.29 There is currently no evidence on how high speed rail may affect future housing need in Warwick District. In terms of future land supply, the preferred route would impact on a number of potential housing sites that were put forward by landowners/developers to the Council as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), namely Cubbington Wood Yard (1.04ha) would be directly affected by Preferred Route A; Kenilworth Golf Club on Dalehouse Lane (4.02ha) would be impacted upon by Preferred Route B, although it was deemed in the assessment that both sites would have a low level of suitability due to their location. In addition, Hurst Farm South, Burton Green (99.19ha), is also in close proximity to both preferred routes and could be indirectly affected. Overall, however, the preferred routes would have limited impact on future housing land supply.

Existing Rail Services

- 3.30 HS2 Ltd state that rail users would benefit from additional services introduced to the West Coast Mainline (WCML) to take up the space vacated by intercity trains. HS2 Ltd's assessment indicated that the construction of the HS2 would release significant amounts of rail capacity on the southern section of the WCML. It is not known what effects HS2 might have on other rail services, such as Chiltern services, at this stage.

Key Potential Impacts

- 3.31 HS2 could have a number of potential impacts on Warwick District. The following impacts are considered to be of most significance:
- Visual impact on landscape character and appearance, and the public's enjoyment of the countryside;
 - Impact on the setting of Stoneleigh Abbey and historic landscapes;
 - Impact on biodiversity, including the loss of protected habitats and species;

- Impact on the environmental quality of watercourses and the risk of increased flooding elsewhere within the District;
- Noise pollution and its impacts on residential properties near to the preferred route;
- Property blight and community severance;
- Loss of agricultural land and the impact on rural businesses;
- Impact on the future development of Stoneleigh Park; and,
- Impact on the strength of the District's economy.

Strategy for response

- 3.32 Until the Government announce its preferred route and publish its own assessment of impacts, it is considered premature for the Council to devote resources now to assessing impacts in Warwick District in any great detail. However, the Council should use this period to prepare itself for the consultation in order to be in a position to respond to the consultation material once it is published early next year. This will be particularly important in relation to examining the Government's assessment of impacts on the District, and the appropriateness of any mitigation or compensatory measures put forward.
- 3.33 The Council clearly have expertise internally in some areas, particularly in relation to heritage, noise and flood risk, to assess the consultation material. Expertise in other areas, such as landscape, ecology and property law matters could be drawn from officers of the County Council. Approaches have been made by officers to the County Council as to the possibility of working jointly on the HS2 consultation, sharing expertise and skills in different disciplines, and these have been met favourably. The two other District Council's affected in Warwickshire, namely Stratford and North Warwickshire, have also been invited to work together.
- 3.34 It is recommended therefore that the Council agrees to joint working with the County Council and other Districts on assessing the HS2 consultation and that relevant officers be instructed to join an Officer Working Group where necessary. This shall initially include the Head of Environmental Health, Head of Community Protection, and Principal Senior Architect/Planner.
- 3.35 The County Council have also established a Member Working Group of county councillors to guide the Officer Working Group in their work on this matter. This group includes Councillors Doody and Shilton, who are clearly also district councillors.
- 3.36 It is possible that the Officer Working Group may require specific technical expertise and advice during its work which cannot be met from internal resources. The County Council have allocated a budget of £50,000 towards such costs. It is recommended that the District Council make a similar budget available for such technical assistance as necessary to inform the Council's response to the consultation. Such a contribution could be pooled with the County Council's and other District's allocations if appropriate to reduce costs. The authorisation of allocating the budget to specific tasks would be delegated to the district councillors on the Member Working Group, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Head of Development Services.
- 3.37 The Portfolio Holder and relevant officers will also liaise with the West Midlands Councils, particularly Coventry City Council, and all the other authorities, county and district/borough, along the line of the proposed route to explore their position on both the principle of a high speed rail scheme and the particular issues regarding the proposed route. An invitation will be extended to those authorities to attend a meeting in January to explore the potential for either a joint response to the

proposed consultation and/or the co-ordination of individual responses to ensure they cover the breadth of relevant issues that require consideration.

- 3.38 In addition to the Member-led process of determining a Council position on the issue, a public meeting will be arranged within the District, probably in February or March but certainly early in the consultation period, to which both action groups and HS2 Limited would be invited to attend.
- 3.39 The output of the work of the Officer Working Group will be reported to Executive in due course and will provide additional information to that obtained from the other local authorities to assist Members to develop the Council's response to the consultation.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Council could choose to proceed on its own in preparing its response to the forthcoming HS2 consultation next year. However, this is likely to require more financial resources as the Council would need to buy-in more professional expertise and advice on certain technical areas, and if not resourced properly, may potentially weaken the Council's response to the consultation.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 The costs of preparing this report have been met from the balance of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.
- 5.2 The preparation of the Council's response to the forthcoming HS2 consultation will have implications for staff resources across various service areas. Additionally, any costs associated with securing external expertise may be financed from the capital element of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant which currently has £91,700 remaining.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 The HS2 proposal clearly raises issues in relation to the achievement of the local objectives set out in the District Council's Local Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy which will need further consideration when the preferred route is published for consultation.