

Notes of meeting with Buckinghamshire Council on 10th February '21

Present:

Joan Hancox, Service Director, Transport
Richard Newcombe, BC Councillor
Steve Bowles, BC Councillor (p/t)
Dave Ball, Wendover PC rep (p/t)
Ron Petersen, WHS2
Murray Cooke, WHS2
Andy Band, WHS2

Purpose: Meeting held to present Wendover's key issues to the officer responsible for HS2 Strategy and Planning.

Outcome: Significant alignment between the BC and WHS2 vision of how HS2 and EKFB are behaving, and willingness to work together to improve the design of the railway.

1. Joan Hancox explained that she has over 30 years experience of Planning, Projects, and Transport in Local Government, and took over full time responsibility for HS2 in July last year. Her remit includes Strategy, Bidding to finance projects, Highways Improvement, and Major Projects including the HS2 and East West Rail. Her remit excludes ongoing Highways or Flood Management work, which is done by others with tight budgetary restrictions. She can influence but not control their activity.
2. She has been involved in the issues at Great Missenden (Link Road etc), Little Missenden (A413 roundabout for the Vent Shaft), and Calvert.
3. Her HS2 team have the "Qualifying Authority" role, and is headed by Laura Leech as "Head of Service". She has three key reports, being Ifath Nawaz (Planning and Legal), Rod Black (Highways), and Jackie Copcutt (Community Engagement).
4. JH concurred that getting information out of HS2 and EKFB is difficult; and that there is technical expertise available "in the parishes" that BC needs. Also that EKFB are trying to "divide and conquer" by partitioning up their design into packages. She recognises that Traffic, Flooding, and Noise need consideration on an end to end basis.
5. She reported her experience with setting up the "North Bucks Working Group" for EWR, and has concluded that she needs a separate forum for HS2 "Missenden to Aylesbury". We pointed out that we're now working with those parishes, and Joan said she would be happy for BC to join those calls if invited.
6. JH is considering having an online conference where Parishes could share their key issues for co-ordination. This could be similar to the previous "Chiltern and South Bucks Information Group" activity, and the Transport for Bucks annual conference.

Aquifer / Hydrogeology

7. WHS2 presented the Hydrogeology issue in the area and emphasised that whilst HS2 had finally acknowledged that the Green Tunnel and North Cutting would impact the aquifer, their modelling so far only covered a limited area and fell far short of assessing flood impacts on Aylesbury. It was also emphasised that there is likely to be serious ecology impacts on Weston Turville SSSI and Wendover Arm GUC.

8. Karen Fisher / James Lester from BC have been participating in WHS2/EA/HS2 technical meetings and further drainage and hydrogeology meetings are due.
9. RN reported recent flooding issues at Lower Road/Brudenell Drive Stoke Mandeville from Stoke Brook exist now, before any further flow as a result of HS2.
10. JH reported that she was awaiting an updated version of the Aylesbury Flood Management Plan which is currently being revised.

Noise

1. WHS2 presented the Noise issue, where recent meetings with HS2 and EKFB had not provided evidence to change the WHS2 conclusion that more houses than anticipated in the ES would experience peak night time noise from the trains.
2. WHS2 pointed out the success achieved by BC in establishing "Bringing into Use" Schedule 17(9) indicative mitigation for noise appeared to have been undermined by HS2 and EKFB; rendering future provisions unworkable in practice.
3. WHS2 had concluded that additional mitigation should be included in the initial Schedule 17(3) submission, and had proposed the North Cutting be simply redesigned with retaining walls that could act as a Noise Barrier. Also that an arched noise fence barrier at Small Dean would provide higher performance than the design anticipated in the Act. The effect of these changes would be to bring over 520 Wendover houses under the LOAEL target, and would be overall project cost neutral if implemented as part of the initial design.
4. JH reported that she had been in contact with Richard Hiscock (BC Environmental Health), and was pleased to note that WHS2 had established a relationship with him.
5. WHS2 noted that the letter sent to Rob Butler (and copied to JH) following the recent HS2/EKFB/WHS2 technical meetings contained pointers to missing evidence that BC should acquire before accepting a Schedule 17(3) package.
6. SB reported that he had copied the noise letter to Martin Tett and Nick Naylor.
7. WHS2 noted that RH had rejected the recent "Wendover Dean Viaduct" package Noise Demonstration Report, and pointed out the threat that accepting the proposal could creating precedents that could be used against BC for other subsequent submissions.
8. JH is due to meet the EKFB Project Director (Ambrose McGuire) at their monthly review, and will query if any progress has been made about the WHS2 suggested Retained Cutting and Arched Barrier mitigation proposals.

Traffic

9. JH is familiar with the A413 congestion issues as reported by Colin Sully; and is awaiting revised construction traffic estimates from EKFB. WHS2 emphasised that it appears there had already to have been a serious under-estimation of HGV traffic and asked ought the LTMPs be challenged.

Engagement

10. It was concluded that WHS2 could assist BC by submitting technical questions on the key issues that BC could pose to EKFB prior to Schedule 17(3) submission. BC could in turn reveal to WHS2 what questions they had asked, but were unable to reveal some of the answers received due to confidentiality agreements.
11. JH valued feedback from the parishes, and is expecting to make information available on the planning portal prior to formal submission of the Schedule 17's.

12. DB queried the requirement in PFN7 that following pre-submission agreement in principle that BC were not able to “change their mind”. JH responded she thought this could be worked around, citing the recent Schedule 17(4) case (the A413 roundabout at Little Missenden) where BC had rejected the proposal following feedback from the Parishes that had exposed significant issues with the design.
13. JH pointed out that she expected that we might be able to gain “Small Wins” from HS2 and EKFB, but that the Act imposed restrictions on the scope of what the Local Planning Authority could achieve.

MJSC