

**High Speed 2 Phase 2a: West Midlands to Crewe Design  
Refinement Consultation  
Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council  
Joint Response**



## Contact Details

<b>First name</b>	Sarah
<b>Surname</b>	Mallen
<b>Address</b>	Wedgwood Building Block A, Tipping Street Stafford
<b>Postcode</b>	ST16 2DH
<b>Email</b>	sarah.mallen@staffordshire.gov.uk
<b>Telephone</b>	01785 277252

This is a response to HS2 Phase 2a Design Refinement Consultation, prepared jointly by Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council. It should be read in conjunction with the Staffordshire local authorities' response to the HS2 Phase 2a Working Draft EIA response.

## General Comments

The authorities at this stage can neither support nor object to the proposals. Significantly more detail is required to assess the impacts on the Highways Network and surrounding communities, landscape, heritage and ecology. In considering the information provided, the authorities' primary concerns are summarised as follows:

- The proposed temporary closure of Yarnfield Lane, potentially for an extended period.
- Access to and from the M6 motorway junction.
- The likelihood of increased turning movements at M6 junctions 14 and 15.
- The rail connection for the railhead to the Norton Bridge to Stone railway line which intrudes into the strategic housing allocation for Stone which benefits from outline planning permission.
- Lack of reference to the housing development currently being built at Yarnfield and that with planning permission at Walton (Stone).
- Levels of consultation with local residents and community groups.
- The importance of ensuring removal of the maintenance loop at Pipe Ridware and consequent lowering of the line, should this development proceed.
- Impact on the proposed rail network and services.

Detailed comments as far as possible are provided below.

Should this proposal be taken forward, it is expected that HS2 Ltd. engage with Highways England at the earliest opportunity to understand their proposals for capacity improvements and smart motorway programs detailed in their current delivery plan. These are likely to be in place prior to development of this proposal should it be taken forward, and the authorities would not wish to see disruption of recently installed improvements as this would have an impact on the surrounding Highway Network.

## Economic Development

Access arrangements to and from the M6 are not detailed and it is unclear as to what extent Yarnfield Lane together with the existing north and southbound emergency accesses will need to be upgraded. The authorities would prefer to see the delivery of a full standard motorway junction onto the M6 to service the proposed facility, which after the completion of HS2 construction can form a permanent feature of the highway infrastructure, and would provide the opportunity for further economic development in the area. The authorities would welcome a wider discussion with HS2 Ltd. and Highways England on this matter. A full standard motorway junction would offer significant benefits including:

- The M6 between junctions 14 and 15 is a long stretch of circa 14 miles. Incidents along this stretch of the M6 cause significant issues across the wider road network, whilst the delivery of a full standard junction would reduce the impact of such incidents.
- A full standard junction would provide significantly better access not only to the proposed facility, but also to Stone, Yarnfield and the surrounding area.
- A full standard junction would address safety concerns we have regarding the use of the junction in its current form. The authorities also question how authorised access to the current junction would be effectively monitored and policed.

A full standard junction could also open up growth opportunities. In the event of the development taking place, as the area will be covered by the DfT funded Northern Gateway Partnership Growth Strategy, to maximise the investment at Stafford, Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe Stations and wider area the authorities would wish to discuss with HS2 Ltd. how necessary technical studies can be progressed.

There is also a risk that if a full standard motorway junction is not delivered, this would increase construction traffic on the local network around Stone. Even if a full standard motorway junction is delivered to serve as the primary access to the proposed facility, full consideration is needed of any improvements necessary to Yarnfield Lane for construction traffic.

The authorities are further concerned that as this section of the project is considered further, changes may be made and a greater amount of land taken. As stated with the Design Requirement Consultation, there will not be further consultation prior to the deposit of the Phase 2a Hybrid Bill. Given that this is a potentially major development in Staffordshire for which very little detail has been provided, we do not consider this acceptable and request a further opportunity to consult prior to Bill deposit.

The issues stated above emphasise the need for further engagement between HS2 Ltd., Staffordshire County Council, Stafford Borough Council, Highways England and the affected communities.

### **Reliability of Count Data**

HS2 Ltd. acknowledges that some of its traffic count data may have been affected by roadworks, including the closure of Meece Road from June to August 2016. Whilst it would be expected that more local traffic utilise Yarnfield Lane to access Stone and other locations, traffic levels might also be lower during July as year 11, 12 and 13 students do not attend school.

Traffic flows to the conference centre could also vary greatly. When comparing July 2016 Yarnfield Lane (site 1) traffic count data with December 2015 site 29 and site 107 data the largest difference during the AM peak (08:00 to 09:00) is westbound. This is more likely to relate to conference centre traffic than local residents diverting along Yarnfield Lane.

The HS2 Walton roundabout count is missing data on certain turns. The authority would expect a full assessment of Walton roundabout with new count, queue and delay data. Queue and delay data are required to calibrate the base year ARCADY model to ensure that it predicts future capacity correctly. They would then need to make an assessment of the impact of how trips would re-assign if Yarnfield Lane was closed. This would probably entail counts at A34/Yarnfield Lane junction and/or ANPR surveys to estimate which trips would re-route to Walton roundabout along Eccleshall Road. Exact types of surveys and assessment would need to be considered in more detail, but these are my initial thoughts.

Walton roundabout is currently at or over capacity, with little room for any physical improvements, and this will be exacerbated with future growth including new houses on Eccleshall Road.

### **Traffic and Connectivity**

Paragraph 4.3.4 states that Yarnfield Lane may require temporary closure but that access is being considered as part of the ongoing design. Paragraphs 4.3.8 to 4.3.13 consider the impacts of providing a permanent maintenance facility; however no mention is made of the potential impact on Yarnfield Lane.

Yarnfield Lane provides important connectivity for the village of Yarnfield and other rural residences to the west of the M6 in this location. It is the most direct connection for Yarnfield residents to access Stone town centre and the A34, although Eccleshall Road to the south does provide an alternative route with a longer travel time, however the alignment is sub-optimal and more onerous to use.

At present, there are three school routes which operate along Yarnfield Lane from Yarnfield to schools in Stone. These routes carry 143 pupils to a mixture of Alleyne's Academy (Route 404 - 73 children), Manor Hill First School (Route 417 - 1 child) and Walton Priory Middle School (Route 419 - 69 children).

There are also a number of students who also travel to Alleyne's Academy on local service route 14 from Eccleshall and Chebsey which uses Yarnfield Lane between Yarnfield and Stone. Yarnfield Lane provides the most direct connection for the conference centre and the football club. A diversion would be the longest for the football club.

The majority of vehicles currently travelling along Yarnfield Lane would use Eccleshall Road B5026 as the alternative route. This would lead to an increased number of vehicles turning at Walton roundabout in Stone, which as mentioned above, is near or at capacity. This roundabout will also see an increase in traffic from local housing developments in Stone that already have planning consent. The physical constraints at this junction prevent any improvements to the roundabout to increase capacity.

The authorities therefore require the continued operation of Yarnfield Lane throughout the operation of the maintenance facility whether temporary or permanent.

Any large compound facility such as this must also not have a detrimental impact of parking on residential roads in this area therefore proper parking provision needs to be ensured.

It is not clear what the impact that the proposed re-location of the facility to Stone will have on the classic rail network in terms of service patterns, stopping patterns, frequencies and journey times during its construction, the construction of HS2 and the impact if it is made a permanent facility. It is also unclear what its hours of operation will be and what that impact may be on the local community. The impact on Network Rail's maintenance and renewals programme is also unclear.

## **Local Development**

The rail connection for the railhead to the Norton Bridge to Stone railway line shows rail track on the south side of the existing line which intrudes into the strategic housing allocation for Stone, on the north side of Eccleshall Road, Walton. This benefits from outline planning permission and brings the site close to both existing and approved housing in Walton. The authorities consider the rail connection for the railhead to the Norton Bridge to Stone railway line could take up land on the north side of the existing rail line, thereby not affecting the delivery of new housing in Stone, and taking the new rail lines further away from both existing and proposed housing.

The authorities understand as a result of prior discussion with HS2 Ltd. that they are aware of the housing development at Yarnfield which is under construction at the present time. It is therefore unclear as to why this and the approved housing development in Walton, both north of Eccleshall Road, Walton, and where construction has recently commenced south of Eccleshall Road, Walton has not been referenced in the consultation document. This should be picked up and impacts fully assessed in any future documentation.

## **Consultation**

The authorities (both directly and via Elected Members) have been contacted by a number of residents, Parish Councils and community groups who felt that consultation had not covered all of the affected communities and that insufficient detail was provided on the proposals.

## **Pipe Ridware Maintenance Loop**

The authorities would expect that, should this facility be constructed, that the maintenance loops currently proposed for Pipe Ridware in Lichfield District be removed, and the line of route be lowered in this area as far as possible.

## **Noise**

The site for the proposed railhead and possible IMD is located adjacent to the southbound M6 motorway. It straddles Yarnfield Lane, the Norton Bridge-Stone railway line and the B5026 Eccleshall Road. The proximity of the site to the M6 is likely to mean ambient noise levels are already high and any additional noise from the proposed facility may well be masked. However, it will be necessary to demonstrate that the combined effect of noise from the M6, local highway network and the existing railway together with operational noise from the site does not increase noise at the nearest noise sensitive receptors.

An assessment of the noise implications of a potential full standard motorway junction onto the M6 to service the construction compound / railhead / IMD at Stone would therefore be required. A full assessment of the noise implications of the railhead at Stone becoming a permanent maintenance facility should also be undertaken.

It will be important to ensure that all workers based at the site during the construction phase and also the operational phase (if the IMD is located here), are protected against unacceptable levels of noise both in terms of the Noise at Work Regulations 2005 but also WHO guidelines for both day and night time periods. This may be more easily achievable for office based workers but for external work within the sidings this may prove to be problematic and consideration may need to be given to provision of a noise barrier along the western edge of the site adjacent to the southbound side of the M6.

## **Air Quality**

Consideration should be given to the health impacts of locating residential construction workers on a site near to the M6 motorway. Consideration should be given to siting a permanent air quality ( pm10 and NOx) monitor to measure the operational impact of the Stone railhead site in combination with the existing M6 motorway impact.

## **Land Contamination**

Where there is the potential for a permanent maintenance facility, proper consideration should be given to handling and storing potentially contaminating mobile materials such as oils/fuels/lubricants and dusts arising from the maintenance operations.

## **Historic Environment**

The northern portion of the proposed facility lies approximately 1.6km to the southwest of the Scheduled Iron Age hillfort at Bury Bank. Designers of both the temporary and permanent depots on this site should ensure that lighting schemes here do not impact upon the setting of this nationally important heritage asset. Historic England should be consulted on the design aspects of both the temporary and permanent depots in this area should they go forward as part of the main scheme.

There are no designated heritage assets within the area of the proposed facility although Bury Bank Iron Age hillfort does lie in close proximity to the scheme's northern boundary. A number of late prehistoric stone tools have been recorded nearby at Cold Norton Farm and a series of possible barrow sites are recorded in close proximity. As such there remains the potential for previously unrecorded archaeological remains to be present although the construction of the M6 motorway is likely to have impacted the western section of this scheme.

## **Ecology**

This permanent railhead facility, as proposed, would mean that no mitigation would be provided for loss of Poolhouse Site of Biological Importance (LWS). Mitigation would be required outside of the permanent facility, and should be provided adjacent to the small surviving fragment of the LWS which should if possible be restored back to wet woodland by manipulation of drainage and re-use of peat from the lost site. Filly Brook would be adversely affected and proposed wetland compensatory habitat would not be achieved in this location. Design would need to account for this here and elsewhere on the route.

## **Landscape**

The proposed facility falls within Staffordshire Plain Settled Farmlands. HS2 is on embankment passing the northern sector of this area (rising to up to 16 metres in height), in cutting at the southern end. Yarnfield North and South embankments will have a significant effect on the local landscape; however they would screen a permanent facility from the east, whereas the shallow nature of the Meaford Cutting would not provide visual mitigation. To be acceptable an enhanced scheme of landscape mitigation would be required to minimise adverse effects.

Should the proposals be taken forward, the possibility of retaining only part of the site permanently should be explored in order to reduce landscape effects, along with developing a robust scheme of mitigation which should seek to protect the separation between Stone and Yarnfield. There would be potential to focus wider landscape initiatives as advocated in the HS2 Landscape Design Approach to create a new landscape and deliver enhancements across the landscape that reduce the risk of wider detrimental landscape effects.