

AGENDA ITEM 5

HIGH SPEED 2

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 2nd May 2012

Authors: Report of the County Archaeologist

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To advise members of the consultation on scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment for HS2 and discuss and help co-ordinate historic environment responses.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

- 2 The Forum is invited to:

- a) **COMMENT on issues raised by the HS2 EIA scoping consultation.**
- b) **ESTABLISH a working party to advise member organisations and local groups on the heritage implications of HS2, especially through preparation of an advice note and input to the local planning forum and community forums.**
- c) **AGREE that Hartwell registered historic park and Grim's Ditch scheduled monument be put forward for addition to English Heritage's 'heritage at risk' register.**

C. RESOURCES

- 3 Undefined but will be a major commitment over the next three years, and through to opening in 2025 if the scheme obtains parliamentary approval. BCC and other authorities are currently seeking funding from HS2 Ltd to cover their costs, including a license agreement for use of environmental information.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4. In January 2012 the Government announced the intention to proceed with HS2, and announced the preferred line of route for London to the West Midlands. HS2 Ltd is now taking forward the first phase of the project to begin the next stage of engineering, design and environmental work. Government aims to deposit a hybrid bill in Parliament by the end of 2013 to seek the powers to construct and operate Phase 1 of HS2 with the aim of obtaining Royal Assent in

environmental effects associated with the Proposed Scheme. The draft EIA Scope and Methodology Report forms the basis for consultation with key consultees on the scope and methodology for the EIA. It provides a brief description of the Proposed Scheme and sets out environmental issues to be considered in the EIA. It also outlines the approach to the consideration of significant effects and their mitigation to be employed in the EIA. The deadline for comments is midday on 30th May 2012.

- 7 An historic environment technical group has been established as a forum for English Heritage and local authorities to agree and promote best practice and consistency along the route. At present representatives of HS2 Ltd do not attend (although that may change) and views are fed back to them via English Heritage who sit on the HS2 Environmental Forum. HS2 are also establishing county-level planning forums and local community forums. There are seven community forums in Buckinghamshire. Responses to the EIA scoping will be made by each affected local authority (county and district), the Chiltern Conservation Board and the over-arching 51M group of local authorities. Quite probably there will be many other responses from local, objector and special interest groups.
- 8 Cultural Heritage is covered in chapter 8 of the EIA Scoping and Methodology Report, although there will be important overlaps with other chapters – particularly ‘landscape, townscape and visual assessment’ and ‘noise and vibration’. Initial assessment indicates that although the chapter is not particularly clearly structured it does identify most of the general heritage issues but that there is a need for improvements, notably:
 - a) Consistency with NPPF terminology relating to undesignated heritage assets, significance and harm.
 - b) Recognition of the importance of cultural heritage to the Chilterns AONB and appropriate treatment.
 - c) Clarification of the method for assessing setting impacts including recognition that both noise and visual impact (including lighting) may cause harm and loss of viability; and that mitigation measures such as landscaping or sound barriers may themselves be harmful. Proposed criteria for excluding consideration the setting of certain undesignated heritage assets need to be revised.
 - d) Identification of the need for bespoke specialist studies of the significance of the designed landscape at Hartwell and options for mitigating impact; and of the overlap with geological conservation for the potential for significant Pleistocene deposits along the route, including faunal remains and Palaeolithic archaeology (overlaps with geology considered under land quality).
 - e) Include consideration of the historic character of farms, roads and rights of way and their overlaps with other topics (e.g. agriculture and soils).

HS2 and the Historic Environment of Buckinghamshire

An advice note on responding to the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Consultation from the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum*

DRAFT v1

HS2 Ltd have to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to inform Parliament on the most likely significant environmental effects associated with the Proposed Scheme. They are now consulting on the scope of the EIA to define the focus of the subsequent environmental assessments to be undertaken. The draft EIA Scope and Methodology Report forms the basis for consultation with key consultees on the scope and methodology for the EIA. It provides a brief description of the Proposed Scheme and sets out environmental issues to be considered. It also outlines the approach to the consideration of significant effects and their mitigation to be employed in the EIA. The deadline for comments is midday on 30th May 2012.

Cultural Heritage is covered in chapter 8 of the EIA Scoping and Methodology Report which covers impacts on historic buildings, historic landscape and archaeological sites. There will be important overlaps with other chapters – particularly 'landscape, townscape and visual assessment' and 'noise and vibration'.

The County Council's own environmental baseline assessment indicates that there will be significant affects on the historic environment including:

- Destruction of part of Grims Ditch, a scheduled monument;
- Cutting through and severing part of Hartwell Park, a registered historic parkland;
- Visual and noise intrusion affecting the settings of listed buildings, conservation areas and other heritage assets;
- Destruction of historic landscape features (hedges, ancient woodland, historic lanes etc) and loss of historic character along the corridor, especially within the Chiltern AONB;
- Destruction of many archaeological sites, some recorded and others yet to be discovered;
- Harm to historic assets of value to local communities and/or for tourism.

In responding to the consultation the Historic Environment Forum suggests that groups may wish to draw attention to:

* The Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum is a consultative group attended by the County and district councils, Milton Keynes Council, the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, National Trust and Diocese of Oxford.