



Report to Leader (Transport Portfolio)

Date:	28 th January 2021
Reference number:	TR01.21
Title:	HS2 Little Missenden Vent Shaft Access
Relevant councillor(s):	Cllr Peter Martin, Cllr Patricia Birchley, Cllr Diana Varley, Cllr John Gladwin, Cllr Alan Bacon, Cllr Vanessa Martin, Cllr Peter Jones, Cllr Jane Macbean, Cllr Nick Rose
Author and/or contact officer:	Rod Black, Highways Approvals Team Leader - HS2 Team (rod.black@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)
Ward(s) affected:	Great Missenden, Chiltern Ridges
Recommendations:	It is recommended that the application submitted by Align under Schedule 4 of the HS2 Act for the construction of a temporary roundabout on the A413 at Highmore Cottages and alteration to the A413 to facilitate access for the construction of the Little Missenden Vent Shaft be refused

Reason for decision:

The proposal will lead to additional delays on the A413 as a result of the use of the roundabout, removal of the dual carriageway over this section and additional HGV movements to this site along with other HS2 sites on the A413 to the north west. This in turn is likely to lead to displaced traffic using unsuitable roads to the north and south which would impact the villages of Little Missenden and Hyde Heath.

1. Content of the report

- 1.1 As part of the construction of the Chiltern Tunnel running from the M25 through to Great Missenden, HS2 Ltd are building a vent shaft to the east of Little Missenden on the north side of the A413. The road at this location is a dual 4-lane carriageway operating at the national speed limit of 70mph. The access to the site as identified in

the Environmental Statement (ES) in the HS2 Act is midway between the junctions of Keeper's Lane and the unnamed road leading to Weedon Hill.

- 1.2 Over the past 12 months, discussions have been taking place between Buckinghamshire Council, HS2 Ltd and their contractors, Align, on a range of options for providing the temporary access to facilitate construction of Little the Missenden Vent Shaft (LMVS) on the A413 at Little Missenden. The access will need to be in place for the duration of construction, currently estimated to be around 4 years.
- 1.3 A range of options have been discussed culminating in a proposal to construct a roundabout on the A413 at Highmore Cottages and associated alterations to the A413 together with an access adjacent to the vent shaft site. The alterations effectively reduce the A413 to a single lane in both directions from the existing single carriageway to the west of Highmore Cottages to a point just to the east of the access to the site.
- 1.4 The proposal in outline was first shared with the local council members and parish councils at one of the monthly meetings in July 2020 when serious concerns were raised at the potential impact on the free flow of traffic on the A413. It is feared that this in turn would lead to additional traffic diverting off the A413 to avoid congestion and delays and through the villages of Little Missenden and Hyde Heath thereby resulting in prejudicial effects on road safety.
- 1.5 The formal application was submitted to the council by Align under Schedule 4 of the HS2 Act on the 15th December 2020 giving 28 days for the council to respond. As a result of representations from the council, the application was subsequently resubmitted on the 5th January 2021 and the revised date for a response is now the 2nd February. The application comprises detailed design drawings, specifications, a Road Safety Audit and junction assessment report which includes the results of traffic modelling of the junction.
- 1.6 Based on the monthly forecast vehicle numbers accessing the site and other HS2 sites to the north west on the A413, the modelling indicates that the junction would operate within normally accepted parameters. The RFC value (Ratio of Flow to Capacity) indicates a maximum value of 0.51 in the PM peak 0.47 in the AM peak. This compares to an acceptable maximum value of 0.85 so in theory the roundabout would operate well within acceptable levels.
- 1.7 However, the modelling analysis does not indicate what the impact would be of a reduction from 2 lanes in both directions to a single lane on the approaches to and exits from the roundabout. Furthermore, the assessment of the roundabout takes into account the impact of additional HGVs in terms of the space requirement but does not account for the slower speeds, particularly relating to those vehicles that

are required to perform a 'U' turn to access the site from the east. The majority of these vehicles are also likely to be fully laden delivering materials to the site.

- 1.8 While the assessment in the application has focused on the operation of the roundabout, no assessment has been undertaken of the overall impact of the roundabout and alterations to the A413 on the performance of the A413 itself and the resulting risks of traffic diverting on to unsuitable roads to the north and south to avoid the route. No mitigation to address this has been suggested.
- 1.9 The risks of displaced traffic will be much more significant during construction of the roundabout and alterations to the A413. Align has estimated this to be a 3-month construction programme during which time there would be significant disruption to the free flow of traffic as a result of the temporary traffic management required to facilitate construction.
- 1.10 Likewise, at the end of construction there would be similar significant disruption of the A413 created by the temporary traffic management needed for the removal of the roundabout and reinstatement of the A413 to the current layout. The access to the vent shaft site would remain in place to allow access for occasional maintenance vehicles albeit with some minor modifications.

2. Other options considered

- 2.1 A report on possible options for creating an access to the site was prepared by Align in early 2020 and discussed with officers. The options can be summarised as follows:
 - Priority junction with shared access/egress
 - Priority junction with separate access/egress
 - Signalised junction with shared access/egress
 - Signalised junction with separate access/egress
 - Roundabout (at the site entrance)
 - Signalised junction with uncontrolled access
 - Signalised egress to the east

It should be noted that none of the above options have been assessed in terms of their impact on the A413 and there would, therefore, need to be a detailed assessment of any options taken forward, including traffic modelling and the impact on safety. HS2 Ltd has indicated a willingness to work with the council on developing

an alternative to the roundabout based on a signalised junction as outlined in the option report.

3. Legal and financial implications

- 3.1 The proposed roundabout is outside of Act limits and under the powers contained in the HS2 Act the council's consent is required.
- 3.2 The costs associated with the construction of any temporary highway alterations is covered by HS2 Ltd. In the event that the application is refused by the council, it is likely to be referred to arbitration and there would be associated costs to the council in the arbitration process. Alternatively, if as indicated HS2 Ltd agree to carry on working with the council to find a suitable alternative, these costs would not materialise.
- 3.3 It should be noted that discussions are ongoing with HS2 Ltd in respect of responsibilities for maintaining any temporary schemes within the highway. The council's view is that HS2 Ltd should be responsible for the maintenance costs for the duration of the life of the temporary scheme. Discussions are ongoing with HS2 Ltd through the Planning Forum Highways Sub Group.

4. Corporate implications

- 4.1 The contents of this report do not involve the processing of personal data and do not therefore require a data protection impact assessment.

5. Consultation with local councillors & community boards

- 5.1 No formal consultation has been undertaken by HS2 Ltd or Align as this is not required under the HS2 Act. Nonetheless, engagement has been undertaken initially via the monthly meetings with the local members and parish councils impacted by the proposal. In addition, separate engagement events have been undertaken by Align including a series of webinars.
- 5.2 Local members have been involved in all the monthly meetings so far held and in the majority of the other engagement events. They support the concerns expressed by the local community regarding the delays and congestion resulting from the impact of the roundabout and alterations to the A413 and in particular that the proposal will result in vehicles being displaced into the adjacent unsuitable roads including Little Missenden and Hyde Heath.

6. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 6.1 A meeting of the Members Information Group (MIG) is to be held on Thursday 21st January at which a presentation is to be made on the background to the proposed scheme and recommendations in this report. In addition, the monthly meetings involving local members and parish councils will continue.

7. Next steps and review

- 7.1 The council will need to respond to the Schedule 4 application by the 2nd February 2020. If this date is missed the application will be deemed and be automatically approved under the HS2 Act.
- 7.2 If this recommendation to refuse the application is agreed, the council has requested further discussion with HS2 Ltd and Align on an alternative access arrangement and they have expressed a willingness to continue discussions with the council whilst also recognising the need to engage with the local community on any emerging proposals.
- 7.3 Initial discussions have already commenced and whilst it is too early to say which option is likely to be progressed, indications are a possible arrangement could be in the form of a signal-controlled junction adjacent to the vent shaft access.

8. Background papers

- Schedule 4 Application under the HS2 Act
- Options Report on alternative access arrangements

9. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 9.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone on 01296 383680 or email to democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.