

Community Forums are intended to provide an opportunity for local representatives to raise issues of importance to them and to reach consensus on preferred mitigations for HS2 Ltd. Attendance at a Forum does not indicate support by these groups for the scheme.

HS2 Ltd hosts and attends Community Forums, and has undertaken to record and publish issues, actions and requests raised during these events on their website. The matters raised by forum members are their views, and publication by HS2 Ltd should not be construed as acceptance or agreement with the sentiments expressed.

### **The Central Chilterns Community Forum**

**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September 7.00 – 9.00pm**

**Little Kingshill Village Hall**

**Draft minutes**

#### **Attendees**

Independent Chair – Caroline Gowing

#### **Representatives of:**

51m

Bucks CC (not in attendance)  
Tricia Birchley, BCC Chiltern Ridges County Councillor was present  
Chesham Society  
Chesham Town Council  
Chiltern District Council  
Cholesbury Action Group  
Little Kingshill Village Society  
Great Missenden PC  
Great Missenden Parish Revitalisation Group  
Little Missenden PC  
Office of Cheryl Gillan  
Potter Row Action Group  
South Heath HS2 Action Group  
Speen Area Action Group  
The Lee Parish Council  
The Chilterns Conservation Board  
The Chiltern Countryside Group  
The Chiltern Society  
The Chiltern Ridges HS2 Action Group (CRAG)

#### **HS2 Ltd**

Martin Wells, Country South Area Stakeholder Manager – HS2 Ltd

Neil Cowie, Country South Area Manager – HS2 Ltd  
Simon White, Country South Environment Manager – HS2 Ltd  
Simon Mace, Country South Area Engineer – HS2 Ltd  
Charlotte Brewster, Country South Community & Stakeholder Advisor – HS2 Ltd  
David Meechan, Press Officer – HS2 Ltd  
Farahnaz Ashouri, Consultation Team – HS2 Ltd  
Dani Fiumicelli Acoustics, Noise and Vibration Technical Director -Temple Group

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

The chair made sincere apologies for lateness and late start. She provided an introduction to the session and an outline of the agenda.

## **2. Meeting minutes, matters arising and actions**

### **Meeting minutes**

Discussion took place about the way in which minutes were taken and signed off. Some forum members expressed dissatisfaction as to how the minutes had been recorded. The concern related to the accuracy of some parts and whether the full range of views had been captured, and that certain things that forum members would like to be taken as actions were not recorded as such in the minutes. A forum member suggested that an independent note-taker would help solve these issues.

HS2 Ltd explained that minutes had been circulated for comments within two weeks of the last meeting, and they had looked to incorporate comments in an impartial manner. However, as they had not accepted all the revisions made by the forum it was agreed that HS2 Ltd. and a representative of the forum would meet afterwards to resolve any outstanding points of dispute.

HS2 Ltd also explained that, whilst they recognised that the forum had required additional actions to be recorded at the last meeting, some things were outside their control and could not be accepted as actions. HS2 Ltd has resolved that in future the minutes would show: (Please note that this was not agreed by the forum)

Actions - which represented those things which the relevant party had agreed to deliver in an agreed time scale

Requests – made by the forum which HS2 will not accept as an Action.

The forum members will send revised minutes to HS2 as soon as possible after receipt of HS2 Ltd's draft minutes. It was agreed that minutes be agreed well in advance of the next meeting and that the forum was not presented with HS2 Ltd's final revisions at the meeting.

A PAN Chiltern meeting was scheduled for 25/26 October and Charlotte (HS2) requested confirmation of which was suitable date.

### **Agenda packs**

The forum highlighted how they felt it was extremely important that it should receive in advance, as part of the agenda packs, full notes (not just 'slide presentations') on any presentations due to be delivered at forums. HS2 Ltd reiterated their view that it was not HS2 Ltd's normal practice to circulate presentations notes prior to the presentation itself, but it would look to provide briefing notes where possible. The forum was dissatisfied with this response and reiterated that full notes before any meeting would enable forum discussions to be more meaningful, particularly within the limited time made available

### **Meetings**

The forum repeated their request for an additional forum to be organised as the grouping in its current form had only met for the second time. HS2 Ltd repeated their view that, whilst boundaries of the forums had changed at the request of forum members, this meeting was the third covering issues of importance to this area. The forum members disagreed with the view that members had the same opportunity as those in other areas to express their views and the forum reiterated the need for another meeting and asked for this request to be recorded.

### **Arising from minutes**

Dr Marilyn Fletcher stated that a paper had been submitted on 9 August to HS2 Ltd on an Optimum Environmental Line Speed in the AONB. She requested a written response on how the paper is progressing. HS2 Ltd said it would write to her.

Dr Simon Hook said he had submitted a paper at the July meeting on behalf of the community forum entitled "Design Issues" but had not received answers to the points raised.

The forum stressed the need for HS2 Ltd to indicate dates when answers or additional information is likely to be received.

The group requested that HS2 Ltd respond to all written submissions by providing a date as to when a full response can be provided. HS2 Ltd agreed to do this where possible.

### **Requests:**

- For HS2 Ltd to circulate detailed presentation notes in advance as part of agenda packs
- For HS2 Ltd to organise an additional Central Chilterns meeting

### **Actions:**

- For HS2 Ltd to make every effort to include detailed briefing notes on suggested topics as part of agenda packs
- For HS2 Ltd to provide dates when full responses to proposals and questions can be expected
- That draft minutes should be resolved before the meeting through conversations between HS2 Ltd and a nominated representative of the forum subject to confirmation by the forum

## **3. Terms of reference**

The terms of reference were outlined as still not complete and that further discussion about them would take place outside of the meeting.

#### **4. Bilateral meetings**

HS2 Ltd provided an outline of bilateral meetings which had taken place since the last community forum meeting and repeated the offer of bilateral meetings to all those who wished to explore impact on particular areas in more detail. HS2 Ltd. invited those who had meetings to update the forum about their content. The following bilateral meetings had taken place:

Crag – The meeting explored the tunnel options which had been considered by HS2 Ltd and Arup, as well as the 2 tunnelling options which were suggested to HS2 Ltd. by the group. It was reported that HS2 Ltd had agreed to look into those options as presented. The forum expressed the importance of the tunnelling proposal for them and that they required an urgent update before the next forum meeting. HS2 Ltd committed to responding to this proposal by the 29<sup>th</sup> of December at the latest. HS2 queried whether they were still waiting additional costing information. This information would be with HS2 Ltd by October 8<sup>th</sup>.

Cheryl Gillan MP undertook to write to HS2 Ltd and the Secretary of State formally asking for the timetable for considering the tunnelling proposal to be accelerated.

The forum expressed their unhappiness with the timescales in which proposals were being assessed. The meeting expressed strong feelings regarding a continuous tunnel as being a major mitigation. The chair asked for this to be recorded in the minutes.

Chesham Town Council – The meeting discussed the potential implications of construction traffic and road diversions on the town. There were also discussions about the potential disruption to the current shuttle link to the Metropolitan and Chiltern Lines.

In relation to Bilateral meetings concern was expressed that matters discussed affecting the forum area were not necessarily reported back to the forum so that there was a danger of forum discussions being bypassed and resolved elsewhere. HS2 Ltd was asked to ensure that, in relation to any such meetings affecting the forum area, the members involved should be specifically requested at the outset to make minutes available to the forum members. HS2 Ltd agreed to ask for organisations to circulate their own notes if requested.

#### **Requests:**

- That the Crag proposal be explored urgently by HS2 Ltd and feedback provided re analysis of the tunnelling option by the November forum.

#### **Actions:**

- Cheryl Gillan MP to write to the Secretary of State to request that proposals submitted by forum members be explored as a priority by HS2 Ltd
- HS2 Ltd will feedback on the Crag tunnel proposals by 29<sup>th</sup> December.

#### **5. Specific items identified by the forum for discussion**

Members of the forum described how the post-consultation changes of the route had significant impacts upon the AONB. Members referred to a number of documents which had been submitted to HS2 Ltd over the previous months.

The changes included shallower cuttings and the route being designed very close to South Heath. The forum stated its belief that 9km of the 11km surface route in the AONB had been made worse at the January announcement.

Michael Jepson submitted a document – CCCF Adverse Changes - which forum members agreed was to be added as an appendix to the minutes. It outlined just some of the concerns over the post-consultation changes. Dr Fletcher said that in addition to those listed there were concerns over the 1km embankment situated between the Wendover Dean Viaduct and the Wendover Viaduct. She said the mean height of this 1km embankment has been raised by 40% from a mean height of 4.9m to 6.9m. In addition, she said the height of the Wendover Viaduct had been raised by 50%.

The forum disagreed with the statement which had been released by HS2 Ltd earlier in the year which stated that all of the post-consultation changes had been designed to lessen impacts on local communities and the environment and pointed out the adverse effects in the forum area of the proposed route and requested that the HS2 Ltd statement be withdrawn.

HS2 Ltd asked for confirmation on whether the forum was requesting a return to the earlier design that pre-dated the January announcement. The forum indicated that they wanted the £250/300million taken off the Budget for the AONB section of the route to be restored for mitigation purposes and they wanted to record their dissatisfaction with key elements of the current scheme. HS2 Ltd outlined that there was no budget aligned to any particular section of the route, and that measures would be adopted to mitigate likely significant effects route-wide. For the avoidance of doubt, members also wanted it reiterated that they were fundamentally opposed to the scheme in any form. (In this respect as previously minuted, Appendix B setting out the views of the forum are attached to these minutes and, as already resolved, are to be attached to all minutes or records of forum meetings.)

HS2 Ltd representatives reiterated their belief that the statement made by them was correct. They explained how, in making their decision regarding the alignment, they had to balance a number of factors. For example, consultation respondents had outlined concerns about amount of spoil which would be generated in the Chilterns and which would need to be moved around local roads. This was one of the considerations in the decision to reduce the depth of the cutting at South Heath.

The forum stated there are ways of reducing spoil other than by reducing the cutting depth. It said bored tunnelling would reduce spoil, as would making the side slopes of cuttings steeper. HS2 Ltd's Simon Mace explained the design now incorporated steeper side slopes for cuttings. The forum felt that the priority was noise and visual impacts and expressed the view that the post-consultation changes had been made to save money and that the AONB status of the area was not being recognised. Members reiterated that the forum requested that the saving, announced post-consultation, should be restored for mitigation. Considerable frustration was expressed about the nature of the consultation process and what some members regarded as a consultative box-ticking exercise.

Steve Rodrick, Chief Officer of the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) stressed that the national consultation had produced an unsatisfactory result for the AONB. He stressed the need for genuine dialogue and that the forum does want to influence the design and work with HS2 Ltd. It was suggested that a bilateral meeting be established. The CCB would produce a list of names to participate in this meeting. A convenient date would be fixed in the immediate future. HS2 Ltd agreed to the principle of establishing this bilateral meeting but could not at this point commit to the level of detail available to underpin the discussions and would have to seek further advice.

The forum reiterated the request that the saving, announced post consultation, should be restored for mitigation. HS2 Ltd stressed that there was no specific budget for any one area and that the finances did not work like that.

The forum was keen for further opportunities to explore aspects of the route in more detail. HS2 Ltd said they were happy to organise 'thematic' meetings if there was sufficient interest. However, they reminded the forum that the scope of discussions should be limited to the route that was announced in January by the Secretary of State for Transport.

The forum read out an extract from a letter from Justine Greening to David Lidington, dated 19 July 2012, in which she stated:

"Whilst the corridor of the line is now set the line of the route is not and I would like to reassure your constituent that there are plenty of opportunities ahead to influence the design."

Staff from HS2 Ltd said that what they were suggesting regarding the submission of proposals was in keeping with this letter, but that it would be necessary to demonstrate the reasoning behind any suggested changes to the route.

Steve Rodrick, CCB Chief Officer, raised the point re:the value of the landscape of the AONB and that inappropriate costing methodology to reduce the land value was used to strengthen the business case. He stressed that the true value of the landscape should be reflected in the level of mitigation.

The Chiltern Countryside Group circulated a statement endorsed by the Chilterns Conservation Board which indicates that there should be better protection for AONB land in all respects from HS2 than there was from HS1. This is because law and Government planning policy specifically concerned with AONB status, conservation and enhancement have been issued since the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act (1996). It was agreed that this paper would be attached as an appendix to the minutes.

HS2Ltd stressed that it will comply with the law in all aspects of construction and environmental considerations.

The Chair suggested that given the time constraints this debate could be further considered at the next meeting.

The point was made that it is difficult to convey the depth of passion members feel for the AONB and its protection. HS2 Ltd. stressed that they knew the area and had walked parts of the route to which they could gain access.

Forum members offered to take HS2 Ltd on a walking tour of accessible parts of the scheme and possible viewpoints as part of a bilateral meeting. HS2 Ltd confirmed that they were happy to accept this offer.

Further questions were posed about eco-system services. In advance of the announcement in January 2012, the Department for Transport undertook a valuation of the environment in accordance with WebTAG guidance. This included a quantitative valuation of impacts, including noise and landscape. For other environmental matters, such as the historic environment, the assessment was qualitative. HS2 Ltd stated that they will follow current guidance and legal requirements through the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process which is being undertaken. The DfT is committed to incorporating eco-systems services and is working with Defra and Treasury counterparts to work out how the eco-systems guidance can be incorporated into WebTAG. HS2 Ltd will provide for the DfT any information, including, if required, the need for further WebTAG analysis, to support the hybrid bill.

**Requests:**

- That the statement which suggests that post-consultation changes are beneficial be removed from literature
- That the financial savings made as a result of post-consultation changes be reallocated for additional mitigation in the local community
- That HS2 Ltd acknowledges that post-consultation changes are detrimental for the AONB and to specific communities such as to residents of Potter Row, South Heath or Little Missenden.
- That the status of the area as an AONB is fully recognised in HS2 Ltd's approach.

**Actions:**

- To organise a bilateral meeting with the Chilterns Conservation Board to enable specific areas of mitigation to be explored in more detail. HS2 Ltd agreed to such a meeting but needed time to consider the depth of detail available
- HS2 Ltd to consider an offer to walk through relevant parts of the route to appreciate the impact on the environment viewpoints.
- For the Chilterns Conservation Board to provide a suggested attendee list and suggested subjects for discussion upon which HS2 Ltd could comment
- For HS2 Ltd to provide an outline of how the AONB status of the Chilterns was taken into account when developing the design of the route.
- For the statement provided by the Chiltern Countryside Group to be attached to the meeting minutes.
- To add the paper CCCF Adverse Changes as an appendix to the minutes.

## **6. Noise presentation**

As allocated time was running out, – Dani Fiumicelli Acoustics Technical Director from Temple Group gave a curtailed presentation on noise and vibration, which briefly covered:

- A non-technical introduction to noise
- An overview of the assessment programme
- An explanation of design methods that are used to minimise noise effects

Mr Fiumicelli said the noise contour maps in the EIA would only show propagation of noise from the operational railway i.e. only the scenario showing the “with scheme” noise levels from the noise model would be presented; as shown in the example in the presentation. This was because it wasn't technically feasible to generate noise contours for current or future baseline situations “without the scheme”. (added at the request of Mr Fiumicelli)

A number of questions were posed about the following issues.

- Acceptable noise increases from the baseline - HS2 Ltd outlined that there would be no ‘pre determined’ acceptable increase in noise levels, but that increases in noise levels from the baseline would be mitigated appropriately. The criteria adopted by which to assess both baseline noise levels and anticipated increases from this would be detailed within the EIA scope and methodology document.
- Involvement of the local community - The forum felt that local residents should be involved in determining where sound monitoring equipment should be placed. HS2 Ltd clarified that they would be open to suggestions as to where noise monitoring would be appropriate, but reminded the forum that consent from landowners was necessary to access certain sites.
- Forum members expressed concern about statements associated with the January announcement which suggested that fewer than 10 houses in the area would experience high levels of noise and would therefore obtain noise mitigation measures. HS2 Ltd. explained that this statement was based upon predictions taken from the best knowledge available of a high speed train at the time. Presently, more precise information would become available which would allow for more accurate predictions of noise.

## **7. HS2 Ltd update**

HS2 Ltd. provided an overview of current thinking regarding the route in the area, talking the forum through scheme developments, any changes from the published plans and thoughts on other elements such as construction sites. HS2 Ltd. stressed that these were not firm plans, as design development remained on-going and, as such, they could be subject to further change. However, they were sharing emerging thinking at this stage form information and in the spirit of engagement.

- Chilterns tunnel portal in Mantle’s Wood – construction site associated with portal – will be accessed via Chesham road or Hyde Heath road
- A Porous Portal would be required at the end of the Chilterns tunnel to mitigate sound impacts when trains exit.



- Hyde Lane Bridge: no change to the proposals as illustrated in the post-consultation plans. A construction site accessed from Chesham Road would be required to enable construction.
- The same construction site would be used for construction of the tunnel at South Heath.
- Current thinking is that the South Heath green tunnel would be likely to require a porous portal at both ends. These were likely to be smaller than those required for the long Chilterns tunnel.
- At Kings Lane, the current thinking is for a permanent diversion, of length approx 250 metres, alongside the route of the green tunnel, onto Chesham road. This was for construction purposes. The forum expressed concern that an additional four residential demolitions would be required as a result of this proposal.
- At Leather Lane there had been a request by a member of the public to switch the offline diversion to the north-west side of the existing alignment which is currently being considered. The forum wished it to be recognised that this would bring the road closer to Grim's Ditch and also expressed concern that HS2 Ltd was prepared to consider changes based on any such a request without any discussion in forum
- Frith Hill would likely house access and some form of construction site to enable building of the north end of the green tunnel.
- The forum made the point that the construction sites were very close to each other. Indeed the forum felt that the whole area is likely to be one construction site.
- The forum stressed the need for more information including, grid references and the need for information re temporary closure of rights of way.
- The potential for isolation of South Heath and Chesham was stressed. The need for ongoing access to medical facilities, schools, emergency services and deliveries was emphasised.
- Briefing notes in advance would have ensured that this item would have been given greater priority

## **8. AOB**

Forum members asked for the environmental update to be provided in writing outside the meeting and for confirmation of the response time in which answers to questions are provided. The forum also asked for confirmation of the likely size of construction sites.

HS2 Ltd agreed to maintain a key issues log for the group and to add two new concerns expressed at this meeting.

### **Actions:**

- To provide the forum with further information about the size and siting of construction sites.

Meeting closed. The forum thanked the Chair.

Next meeting: 27.11.12 19.00 Little Kingshill Village Hall (same venue)

## Appendix A

### Grid of over-arching issues and concerns discussed at forum meeting

Government Policy	Road realignment	Landscape, Noise & Vibration	Rights of way	Infrastructure	Heritage / Cultural	Socioeconomic	Environment
Natural Environment White Paper 2011 says AONBs are ‘National Treasures’	Impact of construction	Impact of Post consultation changes	Impact on bridleways	Route alignment *	Impact on Chilterns Gateway Project	Impact on Tourism	Impact on Vistas
	Concerns of severance		Impact on Cycle paths	<del>Optimal speed</del> Optimum Environmental Line Speed	Impact on Grim’s ditch	Impact on Health & Wellbeing	Impact on Habitats
			Impact on Footpaths			Impact on local businesses	AONB status (and value)
			Re-routing of RoW			Compensation	Government commitment
	Concerns that South Heath and Chesham would be isolated *					Concerns that South Heath and Chesham would be isolated from Great Missenden and the A413	Depth of cuttings
			Impact on the Chilterns Gateway Project				

## **Appendix B –Statement by Forum re opposition to HS2 to be attached to all minutes**

Note for inclusion in all records of the Central Chilterns Community Forum meetings

1. Forum Members are resolutely opposed HS2
2. Consequently, participation in the Community Forum discussions regarding possible mitigation is not to be taken as any agreement to or acceptance by Forum Members of HS2 or of the current HS2 proposals.
3. If, notwithstanding discussions and objections, HS2 is to proceed along the existing proposed route or otherwise through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, despite its statutory designation as a nationally protected landscape, then mitigation should be to the highest international standards. Mitigation should be particularly concentrated on and addressed to ensuring the greatest possible protection of the Chilterns AONB; and in particular its tranquillity and natural beauty.
4. The most effective and preferred form of mitigation for this section of the route is therefore considered to be a fully bored tunnel throughout the Chilterns AONB.
5. DfT/HS2 Ltd is reminded that in presenting the HS2 proposals for consultation, the budgeted cost for the section of HS2 between Mantles Wood and Wendover was £250-300 million more than that now budgeted cost for the revised, more damaging, proposals, which were announced only after the consultation; and despite this being a nationally protected area of countryside at the heart of the AONB. This expenditure should be reinstated in the budget and applied to further mitigation, including the full tunnelling option, for this area.
6. Presentations at Community Forums should not be taken as final statements on any topic.
7. Community Forum members will not be able to make decisions on any propositions put forward by HS2 Ltd. Proposals will be referred for discussion to the communities and organisations they represent.

## **Appendix C: AONB Land: Better Protection from HS2 than from HS1 - Statement provided by Chiltern Countryside Group**

“Law and policies of recent years, which now conserve and enhance the nation's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, must be applied to achieve better protection from HS2 than was achieved from HS1.” - CCG 25 September 2012

Context:

The Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act was enacted in 1996. HS1 was accordingly designed and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act enacted, before law and Government planning policy statements specifically concerned with AONBs' status, and conservation and enhancement had been issued.

Such law and planning policy statements are the following:

- a) Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) Part IV.
- b) National Planning Policy Framework (2012) paragraphs 14 (and Footnote 9), 115 and 116. This replaces Planning Policy Statement 7 (paragraphs 21, 22 and 23) which was issued in 2004.

A recent further statement on AONB status is given in the Natural Environment White Paper (2011) paragraph 4.35.

Accordingly, at a similar stage of design some twenty years later, the legislation and policies introduced post HS1 must be applied whilst seeking the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and seeking protection from the scheme's impacts in all aspects. Such an application must achieve better protection of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty from HS2 than was achieved for AONB land from HS1.

This statement is endorsed by the Chilterns Conservation Board.

The Chiltern Countryside Group would like to acknowledge the help and expert advice of the Board in preparing the statement.

#### Chiltern Countryside Group HS2 Position Statement

The Chiltern Countryside Group believes HS2 should not proceed. If HS2 should go ahead, then the Group believes that it should be designed and operated to the highest possible environmental standards in all respects. To satisfy this requirement CCG believes that the route should be designed in a fully bored tunnel under the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Chilterns Conservation Board is the public body established to conserve and enhance the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)

The Chiltern Countryside Group is an action group whose aims are to help preserve the tranquillity and beauty of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. [www.chilterncountrysidegroup.org](http://www.chilterncountrysidegroup.org)

### **Appendix D- CCCF Adverse Changes, submitted by members of the forum**

#### Central Chilterns Forum

At the recent meeting of the Central Chilterns Forum we referred to a key HS2 Ltd document entitled "HS2 Consultation and Engagement Programme". The Introduction to this document stated:

"Nearly 55,000 responses were submitted to the consultation, which were essential in helping the Transport Secretary arrive at her decision. As a direct result of the consultation several important changes have been made to the London to West Midlands route, all designed to lessen its impacts on local communities and the environment."

We went on to refer to the adverse changes resulting from the January 2012 announcement to the section of the proposed line running through the Chilterns

AONB from the north end of the Amersham bored tunnel to the south end of the Wendover green tunnel. These changes were largely caused by shallower cuttings necessary to reduce the amount of spoil which had been seriously underestimated in the consultation documents. The changes are said to result in cost savings of £300m compared with the proposals submitted for consultation.

At the Forum meeting Simon White of HS2 Ltd expressed surprise that it was considered that there were any adverse changes. Given that he is the Environment Manager, and therefore presumably conscious of the environmental effects of HS2 on the AONB, the members expressed great surprise that he and HS2 Ltd had not appreciated that these changes would result in a significantly more adverse effect to this section of the line than the deeper cuttings originally envisaged. In this respect, the fact that there is to be an extended bored tunnel at the Amersham and Chalfont end does not detract from or in any way justify the serious adverse effect of the changes between South Heath and Wendover, the section covered by the Central Chilterns and Wendover/Dunsmore Forums.

It is these changes which the meeting referred to. They are:

1. The cutting between South Heath and Leather Lane has been made shallower by 7-8 metres compared with the February 2011 Consultation design. In places the cutting is now planned to be only 2-3 metres deep.
2. The effect of this and the viaduct changes has been to raise the line and therefore also the line of the gantries for the 5 miles between South Heath and Wendover by 7 metres (23 feet) at Leather Lane and 3 metres (10 feet) at Rocky Lane and Wendover Dean.
3. In addition, the shallower cutting has resulted in Leather Lane – a historic landscape feature of the Chilterns AONB – being diverted from its ancient pathway. Instead of being sunken it will be raised on an embankment. In addition, the grubbing up of hedgerows along the lane will result in a severe local loss in biodiversity.
4. Nearer Wendover, the horizontal alignment has been moved 35m closer to the houses in Bacombe Lane, but with no benefit to other houses.
5. HS2 Ltd plans to construct false ‘bund’ cuttings where the total depth of the ‘Deep Cutting’ will be 8 metres (FOI11-375). Although the Government has said the bunds would be constructed so as they would be blended into the landscape, we believe that - in practice - this may be very difficult to achieve without marked deterioration of the landscape and additional land purchase. This is a serious consideration in an area which has been designated in law as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

These changes will directly affect the visual impact of the line and the gantries, as well as impacting seriously on the noise interference. To even attempt seriously to mitigate these, as required within the AONB statutory protection guidelines, will cause a major increase in mitigation costs.

Given the above, it is untrue to say that the changes that have been made to the London to West Midlands route “have all been designed to lessen impacts on local communities and the environment”; indeed, in relation to this section of the AONB just the opposite is the case. In the heart of the AONB, which should be given

special protection and where the changes will be much more noticeable, the visual and environmental impacts will be worse as a result of the Consultation and these will have a severe impact on this section of the Chilterns AONB.

We again emphasise that the only acceptable mitigation is to continue the bored tunnel throughout the AONB area to beyond Wendover. We have presented to you proposal in this regard by which this could certainly be achieved at a cost well within the original budget, and we believe this is still feasible even within the now arbitrarily reduced budget announced after the Consultation.

We request that this letter be recorded as part of the minutes and records of the Central Chilterns Forum.