

Response to Chilterns CB document circulated 27-Oct-2014

(Email from Neil Jackson, Chief Conservation Officer)

2) The Deep Mill – Mantles Wood road was proposed in response to the 1st set of maps released by HS2 in Nov 2012 (as was the REPA tunnel proposal) - http://www.cheshamsociety.org.uk/HS2/AoNB%20Roads_V1.pdf – and was raised whenever possible at the Central Chilterns forum – at which the board was represented. However, HS2 refused to discuss transport issues with us 'because the traffic survey has not been completed'. It was discussed (& rejected) by HS2 in the ES - CFA9 Vol. 2 2.6.57-63 (p47,48) The Chesham Society reply to this can be found as appendix 2 of our ES response - (http://www.hs2amersham.org.uk/Resources/ES/Chesham/CheshamSoc_ES_2.3.pdf) – which compares the two proposed routes.

3) I agree with all these points, although 3.3 presents great difficulty, since the routes chosen by non construction traffic are not under the direct control of HS2 or the highways authority. I would add one further point –

3.5 Ensure a full environmental assessment of the impact of construction traffic on any existing road proposed as a construction route

since the HS2 ES is as usual completely inadequate in this respect.

4) Considerations of this sort lead us to propose the new roads –

4.1) Cf 3.5 – these impacts have not been properly assessed, but it is clear that the unclassified roads are totally unsuited for use by HGVs, and the B485 lacks the capacity for the proposed traffic, and is too steep. The 'nominated undertaker' will presumably set about remedying these deficiencies with the sensitive approach we have come to expect from HS2 Ltd.

4.2) The principal benefit of the new roads is the removal of HS2 construction traffic from all existing AONB roads other than the A413, and the provision of new purpose built junctions where construction routes join the A413. The Mantles Wood road will also reduce HGV traffic through the Deep Mill railway bridge by 2/3rds, an important safety consideration.

4.3) Both roads will be an unwelcome intrusion into the AONB. However, the Mantles Wood Portal access road can be constructed without passing through Mantles Wood at all – unlike the HS2 proposal, which requires a cutting through the wood to reach the portal. The impacts are minor when compared with all the other effects of constructing HS2 through the AONB (viaducts, cuttings, spoil dump etc) – but still unwelcome.

4.4) The Mantles Wood road would provide permanent access to the tunnel portal (so permanently removing maintenance related traffic from Frith Hill & Hyde Road). The long term requirement for the Missenden-South Heath road is unclear.

4.5) The field through which the Mantles Wood road passes (extending from the portal down to the Chiltern Line) is designated for 'offset' planting, which would screen the road. A thinner screen of trees alongside the road (to retain more of the existing landscape) would be a better option.

Restoring a temporary road to rough pasture would appear to be a possibility, while restoring an existing road which has been widened would not, so there are grounds for preferring a new temporary road to South Heath.

5) The gradient of Frith Hill is presumably acceptable to the contractors, so the new roads could be built to a similar gradient. The existing proposed routes (with the possible exception of the B485) are not 'built to a high standard' and would require reconstruction (see 4.1)

6) I anticipate all the HS2 works will be secured out of hours

7) Adding several hundred HGVs/day to the A413 will have a very significant impact on traffic flows, however it is done. A purpose built junction may be a marginal improvement on routing them all through the B485-A413 roundabout. For example, traffic lights could regulate the access of construction traffic onto the A413 during peak hours, if such traffic was segregated from general commuter traffic on a dedicated access road.

8) This is also true of the access road proposed by HS2 Ltd, which requires the construction of a cutting through Mantles Wood to reach the portal.

9, 10) I understand that Bucks CC / TfB are assessing the construction and impact of the new roads, which may clarify these points. Appendix 1 of our ES response (see 2 above) indicates that the narrower sections of the A413 will be loaded beyond the maximum capacity (calculated from the DfT 'Roads & Bridges' manual, so severe congestion appears inevitable, given the proposed volume of traffic.

11) We have petitioned for spoil to be removed by rail (as have many other organisations), although I am not aware of any studies as to how this should be done. This would not affect traffic on the AONB roads, since HS2 plan to transport the spoil along the trace to the Hunts Green dump; the traffic counts given in the ES relate to moving construction materials (and contractors), but not spoil.

12,13) Yes, a bored tunnel is the only effective mitigation under discussion. All other options are extremely damaging.

14) The Chesham Society would also wish to continue its involvement in these proposals, and support an agreed position at the select committee.