

HS2 Phase 2a: Background, progress to date and Parish Council position

High Speed 2

High Speed 2 (HS2) is a new high speed railway proposed to connect major cities in England. When HS2 is completed trains will run at up to 225mph from London to Birmingham and on to Leeds, and from London to Crewe and on to Manchester.

HS2 is to be built in phases.

- **HS2 Phase 1**, from London to Birmingham, has started construction and is due to be operational in 2026.
- **HS2 Phase 2a** will run between Birmingham and Crewe. The line of the new high-speed line runs straight through South Cheshire and the Weston and Basford Parish, mostly parallel to the existing West Coast Mainline, terminating at a tunnel entrance just south of Weston Lane. A Bill to authorise the building of HS2 Phase 2a is currently going through Parliament. Construction is due to commence in 2020 and Phase 2a is scheduled to be operational in 2027.
- **HS2 Phase 2b** covers the lines to run from Crewe up to Manchester and between Birmingham and Leeds. The line from Crewe to Manchester starts at the tunnel entrance just south of Weston Lane. Phase 2b is in the early planning stages and is currently planned to become operational in 2033.

HS2 Phase 2a progress to date

On 17 July 2017 the Government introduced the High Speed Rail (West Midlands to Crewe) Bill into Parliament. This hybrid Bill is to authorise the building of Phase 2a of the HS2 railway network, running from West Midlands to Crewe.

On 30 January 2018 the Bill secured its Second Reading in the House of Commons by 295 votes to 12.

The Second Reading triggered a petitioning period during which those whose property or interests are directly affected by the Bill could submit a petition or objection against it. A Select Committee was appointed to hear those petitions. A total of 187 petitions against the Bill were deposited and the Select Committee began its hearings on 19 March 2018.

Weston and Basford Parish Council joined with four neighbouring parish councils affected by HS2 - Doddington and District Parish Council, Hatherton and Walgherton Parish Council, Hough and Chorlton Parish Council and Wybunbury Parish Council (together the 'Wybunbury Combined Parishes') to send a petition objecting to the proposed use of local roads for heavy construction traffic and other matters.

Janet Clowes, the Cheshire East Councillor for Wybunbury Ward, John Cornell, Head of Planning Weston and Basford Parish Council, and Anne Broome, Chair Hough and Chorlton Parish Council, appeared before the Select Committee on 4 June 2018. Janet Clowes reported that a constructive meeting had been held with HS2 and positive assurances received from them on the matters raised in the petition, specifically HS2 undertook to reduce the number of HGVs on local roads in

South Cheshire by making more use of the A500 and a haul road that will run alongside the new railway line.

The Select Committee published their first major decisions on 24 May 2018 and their second report on 23 July 2018. On 13 November 2018 the Government published its response to the Select Committee's report.

On 8 February the Government deposited a second Additional Provision and Supplementary Environmental Statement to the Bill proposing a number of changes to the powers in the bill. These changes have arisen as a result of requests from petitioners, directions from the Select Committee currently considering the bill, and further design development, principally in relation to utility works.

A public consultation on these documents will run until 29 March 2019. Those directly and specially affected by these changes may petition against them, and once any petitioners have been heard, the Select Committee will decide whether the amendments to the bill should be made.

Cheshire East Council's position

Cheshire East Council is supportive of HS2 providing that the right level of connectivity is provided through Crewe. It is lobbying for a new HS2 Hub Station at Crewe, and more HS2 trains stopping at Crewe, so as to increase connectivity between HS2 and existing rail services. It believes this will bring support for existing businesses, inward investment and job creation.

Parish Council's position

Since 2014 the Parish Council has met regularly with representatives from the HS2 Phase 2a team, including conducting a 'site visit' with the senior project manager in May 2016. These meetings have enabled the Parish Council to discuss issues that affect our Parish directly with HS2 and to suggest ways to mitigate. Two of the key issues discussed during the site visit in May 2016 were the then proposed 3-storey viaduct and the siting of the tunnel entrance. We are pleased that these issues have been addressed in the current design.

We have submitted responses to each of the Consultations held by HS2, including sending a full response to the Environmental Impact Statement in September 2017. A copy of our response is on the Parish website.

We joined with our neighbouring Parishes, forming the Wybunbury Combined Parishes, to submit a petition to the House of Commons Select Committee in June 2018 objecting to the proposed use of local roads for heavy construction traffic and other matters. We are pleased that our concerns have been taken on-board and HS2 is now planning to use the haul road along the line of the new railway, with access from A500, for most of their construction traffic.

The Select Committee recommended that the membership of the HS2 Highways Sub-group be extended once a year to include representatives from all the Parish Councils that are affected so that local residents can be represented. HS2 has committed to do this and confirmed that it will meet with us and with the Wybunbury Combined Parishes on a regular basis going forward.

The Parish Council is reviewing the Additional Provisions and liaising with the other members of the Wybunbury Combined Parishes and with Cheshire East to decide if a petition is required.