



**Sheffield &  
Rotherham**

8<sup>th</sup> March 2017

High Speed Two phase 2b: Crewe to Manchester, West Midlands to Leeds, Route refinement consultation 206.

**Part one**

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Yes – I am responding on behalf of ‘Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust’

Category: Environment group

We have approx. 6,000 members. We have requested the views of our members via our website and social media. We also held an event for members and other members of the public that took place in Aston (in the new proposed route). We invited local people, our members and members of the Rotherham Biodiversity Forum – 27 people attended. We have also had direct communication with people from the communities that would be affected by the local area. The people who we have had communication with on this subject are not all our members and we cannot say that we are representing the views of all our members on this subject, but we have given them the opportunity to give us their views. Our response is based on our own analysis of the new proposed route, undertaking site visits and information from the sources above. Our response centres on the potential ecological impacts of the new proposed route and touches on related issues of communities and access to green spaces.

Our response is limited to our operating area of Sheffield and Rotherham and we are therefore focusing our response to Q7. The proposed route change covers a larger area but after discussions with our neighbouring Wildlife Trusts (Derbyshire and Yorkshire) we will leave discussions of potential views and impacts in Derbyshire, Barnsley, north Rotherham and other parts of Yorkshire to our neighbouring Trusts. This response does also not bias further comments we may make on the Environmental Impact Assessment and detailed design in due course when further detail will be provided – for example the location of construction compounds, depots, road diversions etc.

**Question 7**

**The Secretary of State is minded to move the alignment of the route between Derbyshire and West Yorkshire to reflect a change in the proposals for serving Sheffield.**

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**Do you support the proposal to amend the route to serve South and West Yorkshire?  
Please indicate whether or not you support the proposal together with your reasons.**

This response should be read in conjunction with our previous HS2 consultation response which covers some of the broader points of the merits or otherwise of HS2. I will limit our response to the question posed.

### ***Ecological impacts***

Both the previous preferred route (which I will refer to as 'the Meadowhall route') and this new proposed route (M18/Eastern route) will have ecological impacts. The M18/Eastern route will just have different ecological impacts on different sites. After speaking with HS2 Environment representatives at the drop in consultation events held in Aston – I am basing my response on the assumption that the spur to serve Sheffield would not pose any additional ecological impacts (e.g. no route widening) so my response focuses on the main route in Rotherham. I will detail some of these impacts below.

In summary – ecological impacts of the preferred M18/Eastern route (see attached figure)

- 3 Local Wildlife Sites directly impacted
- 2 Ancient Woodlands directly impacted
- Other unprotected sites impacted
- European Protected Species impacted

There are no European or Nationally-designated sites in the M18/Eastern route.

However Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) would be impacted and we would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of LWS which are often overlooked in larger schemes as they are not held on a national database. However, they have been selected, according to criteria, to represent the best wildlife sites in Rotherham that are not designated at the national or international level. Their importance should not be overlooked. Their importance should not be ignored and need to be taken into account at all stages – not just left to the detailed design phase.

### ***Local Wildlife Sites in the M18/Eastern Leg in Rotherham (from South to North)***

#### **1. Norwood and Locks LWS**

- Partially Ancient Woodland
- Contains populations of the nationally scarce Large-leaved lime, True Fox-sedge
- Records of birds and bats. Historical water vole site. Heronry established in 1990's but not sure of current status due to disturbance
- Privately owned and managed
- Maintained PROW – these would be impacted
- Full detailed surveys are required to assess current ecology and potential impacts

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*Potential avoidance – mitigation - compensation?*

- Could the route be moved east to avoid the site?
- Viaduct piers – every 20m standard – could this be a clear-span over the woodlands at the detailed design phase?
- Woodall pond is in need of management – who owns this (the woodland owners or RMBC)?  
Could an assessment of all the waterbodies in the lock area be carried out and a discussion had with the landowner(s) and other relevant stakeholders on the potential future management of these water bodies.

## **2. Nickerwood and Ponds LWS**

- Privately owned by Aston Park Fisheries and managed as commercial fisheries with adjoining woodland
- Partially Ancient Woodland
- Old boundary oaks and acid grassland slopes, possible water vole presence
- Contains populations of the nationally scarce Large-leaved lime, True Fox-sedge
- Bird surveys have been undertaken over the years
- Possible breeding grey heron and buzzard breeding site
- Reports of wolverine presence by anglers - need investigation
- Full detailed surveys are required to assess current ecology and potential impacts.

*Potential avoidance – mitigation – compensation?*

- Viaduct to consider again – could it clear-span the woodland?
- Management of the woodland?

## **3. Foers Wood LWS**

- A privately owned woodland in positive ecological management by the current landowners
- Supports bat populations (reports available from RMBC LRC)
- Partially wet woodland that is fed from the stream – potential impacts on this stream and water source from HS2 –this needs to be properly understood and assessed to avoid negative impacts on the ecosystem

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*Potential avoidance –mitigation-compensation?*

- Possibilities of managing other parcels of land in this area for wildlife (need further detailed discussions)

#### **4. Kings Pond Plantation LWS/ Slacks Pond**

- Freshwater ponds and surrounding natural habitat
- Used by a variety of birds – recent records of Heron, Black-headed Gull, mallard, coot and moorhen
- Records of bats using the area – bat, bird and butterfly surveys have been carried out
- Full detailed sites are required to assess current ecology and ecological impacts

*Potential avoidance – mitigation – compensation?*

Although well-used by wildlife, this is quite an isolated site ecologically - it would be worth exploring the possibility of ecological corridors in the area

#### **5. Hooton Cliff LWS**

- This is a private woodland (including Ash and large-leaved lime)– much of which is designated as ancient woodland.
- The corner of the site that would be directly impacted is not designated as Ancient Woodland, although it is still LWS and it would be worth checking whether the Ancient Woodland boundaries are correct.
- The site looks suitable for bats, although records would need to be checked and surveys undertaken.
- Over the road there is an area of marshland in the field (in the route) that requires further investigation.

*Potential avoidance – mitigation – compensation?*

Ideally, the route would be shifted slightly east to avoid this woodland, although we appreciate that there are other consideration such as neighbouring farms.

#### **6. Firsby Reservoir LWS**

- The route would pass nearby this reservoir
- The reservoir supports bird life including Gadwall and willow tit – records from this site available from the Rotherham LRC

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- Records of two nationally scarce invertebrates
- There are air shafts in route in this area – these would need a bat assessment carried out
- An assessment would be required on the impacts on the water source linked to the reservoir (the route would cross a ditch)
- A full assessment of the potential impacts on birds using the reservoir would be required

*Potential avoidance – mitigation – compensation?*

This site is not as good for wildlife as it has been in the past. This was because there was a risk of the reservoir wall bursting. There were insufficient funds to repair it so the wall and waterlevels were both lowered. This has had a negative impact on the wildlife using the site. If there were funds available it would be worth exploring the possibility of restoring the site to its former glory and securing long-term management.

***Other non-designated sites in the M18/Eastern Leg in Rotherham***

One of the lessons we can all learn from Phase 1 of HS2 is that there are likely to be other good sites for wildlife on the route that have not been previously identified or designated and we all for HS2 Ltd and their consultants to conduct a thorough extended phase 1 survey for the whole route corridor and buffer zone.

For example:

- Pea Carr Wood is near the route – it is an ancient woodland which currently no designation – should it?
- And marshland/ponds at Ravensfield Grange need investigating.
- We have also had a record of Great Crested Newt (confirmed by photograph) in a garden at 4 Hollies House Road, S65 4LS– an assessment of GCN in the area should be undertaken.
- There is orchard off Workshop Rd (165) that it is in the safeguarding zone and is of concern due to its ecological value.
- There is also woodland adjacent to the A57 south of Aston in the route that requires appropriate surveys.

If this route is decided upon, the Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust are offering to stay involved in future discussions about the potential ecological avoidance, mitigation and compensation of these site and any others in the route in our operating area. This would also entail working with local landowners, local interest groups, knowledgeable local individuals and communities. We will also comment on the draft EIA.

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### ***Impacts on communities and access to green space***

We have spent some time talking to the local residents – especially of Aston and Bramley who will be making their own separate, more detailed consultation responses. We would like to highlight the following issues:

- The community of Workshop Rd in Aston will be severely compromised by this route. I say community, rather than residents on purpose as I know that these people have been working together for the past few years on a number of issues which have threatened this conservation area. As you will know, Aston Cricket Club and the Riding Schools – two community assets which are not easily re-located in the area – would be directly affected. If this route is to go ahead, we urge you to work closely with this community to minimise disruption and make use of their local knowledge.
- There are a number of public rights of way in the Aston area and around all the LWS listed above that would be severed by a HS2 line. These impacts need to be properly assessed by HS2 and mitigated and compensated for.
- The community at Bramley are also concerned about impacts to their village. Although the route passes the edge of the village, there would still be direct and indirect impacts on the community. These will be covered in more detail by the local group.

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