

Warwick District Council
Town Hall
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CV32 4AT



For the attention of: Lucy Shorthouse

HS2 Ref: WAC.PS.10039
BBV Doc Ref: 1MC08-BBV_MSD-PL-CRO-NS01_NL02-100042

21 February 2024

Dear Lucy,

HIGH SPEED RAIL (LONDON – WEST MIDLANDS) ACT 2017
SUBMISSION NO WAC.PS.10039
WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL: GRAND UNION CANAL EMBANKMENT
CONSULTATION ON INDICATIVE MITIGATION (ECOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE)
PROPOSALS

Further to our request for the approval of plans and specification for Grand Union Canal Embankment under Schedule 17 to the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Act 2017 [WAC.PS.10039], HS2 Ltd is writing to you regarding indicative mitigation information plans which were provided to the authority with the request.

The indicative mitigation shown does not require approval to plans and specifications under paragraph 3 to Schedule 17 and does not form part of the request for approval Ref WAC.PS.10039.

However, the mitigation planting shown on drawings 1MC08-BBV_MSD-PL-DGA-NS01_NL02-129011 and 1MC08-BBV_MSD-PL-DGA-NS01_NL02-129012 will comprise part of the overall mitigation scheme in relation to the following scheduled works:

- Work No. 2/146 - A railway (21.57 kilometres in length) partly in tunnel and partly on viaduct commencing by a junction with the termination of Work No. 2/133 and passing north-westwards and terminating at a point 270 metres north-west of the bridge carrying Waste Lane over Kenilworth Greenway. Work No. 2/146 includes viaducts over the River Leam, Finham Brook and Work No. 2/175 and bridges over the Grand Union Canal, Work No. 2/151 and the River Avon.

Work No. 2/149 – A diversion of Ridgeway Lane commencing at a point 10 metres north of the bridge carrying Ridgeway Lane over the Grand Union Canal and terminating at a point 120 metres north of its commencement.

Further mitigation works will be brought forward by HS2's main works contractor, where necessary, and a request for approval to the overall mitigation scheme for the above scheduled works will be submitted prior to the request to bring into use the scheduled work, in accordance with paragraph 9(4)(b) to Schedule 17. Further information is provided in Planning Forum Note 10.

We wish to consult the Council on mitigation proposals on a progressive basis, to ensure its views are taken into account prior to the bringing into use request. We therefore request that you review the planting proposals shown on 1MC08-BBV_MSD-PL-DGA-NS01_NL02-129011 and 1MC08-BBV_MSD-PL-DGA-NS01_NL02-129012 and provide any comment in writing.

Key design features of the mitigation proposals are set out below:

Ecological

Bat activity surveys found an assumed commuting route (ACR) leading to Print Wood Ancient Woodland to be bisected by the proposed Grand Union Canal Embankment. The ACR is bound by Welsh Lane, which is unlit and supports trees and shrubs on both sides of the lane (habitats for bats for foraging). The ACR supports a diverse assemblage of bat species, including Annex 2 species of barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), and *Myotis spp.* The ACR is connected to areas of assumed good quality commuting, foraging and roosting habitats with three moderate and seven low and six negligible bat roosting potential trees within the extent of the proposed development. Welsh Lane is currently unlit thus reducing light pollution and increasing the potential for habitats to support bat activity. The bat assemblages were assessed as being of 'up to regional' value. Continuous woodland planting and the HS2 rail alignment (adjacent to the Grand Union Canal Embankment) has been designed to provide linear features to guide bats to other safe crossing points, including the B4455 Fosse Way Overbridge.

Bat activity surveys found an existing ACR of high importance and a bat foraging area at the Grand Union Canal to be bisected by the proposed Grand Union Canal Embankment. The ACR supports a diverse assemblage of bat species including Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*), *Myotis spp.*, noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), serotine and Leisler's (*Nyctalus leisleri*) bat. It is likely that Natterer's bats using the building maternity roost on Welsh Road assessed as being of 'County/metropolitan' value will use the Grand Union Canal as a key commuting and foraging habitat. The canal is currently unlit thus reducing light pollution and increasing the potential for habitats to support bat activity. Therefore, the canal provides a habitat link between two separate areas of woodland including Long Itchington and Ufton Woods SSSI to the south and

Print Wood LWS to the north-east. Continuous woodland planting adjacent to the HS2 rail alignment and retained hedgerow with two sets of wooden trellis fencing along Ridgeway Lane maintenance track (adjacent to the Grand Union Canal Embankment) have been designed to provide linear features to guide bats to other safe crossing points, including the Longhole Viaduct.

Ponds supporting populations of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) (GCN) are located within 250 m of the proposal. More than 3.18 ha of woodland/scrub will be created in the Offchurch cutting area (comprising of woodland, grassland and pond), and these are considered sufficient to support the small population of GCN present. At the completion of construction, the eastern and western areas will have direct routes via the Grand Union Canal area under Longhole viaduct and the Welsh Road Underbridge. These areas are not shown to have any specific planting or landscaping and the road and track would offer some barrier (though not complete) to GCN movement. It is considered likely that connectivity between the east and west of the Assumed Meta Population would be re-established via the route beneath Longhole viaduct in the longer term and that even a short area without suitable habitat would not act as a complete barrier to GCN movement.

Planting of species rich grassland is proposed in the vicinity of the proposal, which will serve to increase the availability of habitat for the potential reptile populations of 'Up to Local/parish' value' at the Grand Union Canal.

Planting of woodland and hedgerow is proposed in the vicinity of the proposed development, which will serve to increase the availability of habitat for a range of protected and notable species. Including a population of otters (*Lutra Lutra*), wintering lesser spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*) and willow tit (*Poecile montanus*) of District/Borough value at the Grand Union Canal.

Please refer to Landscape and Environmental Masterplan (1MC08-BBV_MSD-PL-DGA-NS01_NL02-129011 and 1MC08-BBV_MSD-PL-DGA-NS01_NL02-129012).

Landscape

Embankments and cuttings, both for the railway and highway alignments, have been shaped to integrate the proposal into the character of the surrounding landscape, tying the earthworks into the Welsh Road Underbridge asset and providing areas to return to agriculture and provide mitigation planting. In addition, landscape proposals will tie into the early works sites to maintain the character of the flood plain.

The proposed false cutting on Grand Union Canal Embankment in combination with a large area of woodland planting helps screen and filter views from receptors and integrates the embankment into the local landscape character. South of Welsh Road, along the western embankment earthworks will be graded to shallower gradients to enable land to be returned

to agriculture, with woodland planting to the eastern side. North of Welsh Road, along Grand Union Canal Embankment, an extensive area of woodland planting will be located along the western embankment to help integrate the railway. To the east the earthworks will be graded to shallower gradients to enable land to be returned to agriculture, with a hedgerow running along the top of the false cutting to help provide screening.

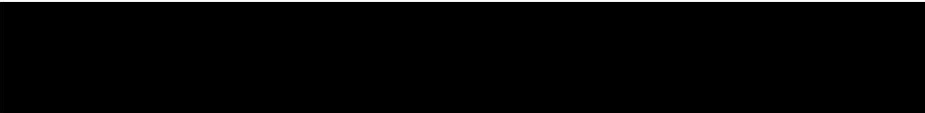
Planting will include native broad-leaved woodland, shrub and hedgerows and the selection of species will reflect tree and shrub species native to the area landscape and take into account possible climate change impacts associated with the quality and availability of water and the potential increase in pests and diseases.

In terms of the height and scale of the earthworks, these have developed as the design progressed so that across its length the false cutting has moved 1 m horizontally outwards along both sides of the trace. The northwest landscape embankment height has increased by around 3 m and the width has increased by around 80 m. It also has a significantly wider crest increasing to approximately 80 m at the Offchurch Cutting tie-in. The southeast landscape earthwork footprint has extended by up to 50 m to wrap around the balancing pond and tie-in with Welsh Road.

In terms of noise mitigation, pre-application feedback noted that for receptor locations at the south of the embankment, noise barriers on Longhole Viaduct would ultimately determine noise impact and so increasing the height of earthworks in this area of the Grand Union Canal Embankment would likely have little or no impact. Potentially, the receptor at Welsh Road Farm may benefit from some height increase to the earthworks, however consideration of cost versus land returned to agricultural use makes further height increases unlikely to be reasonably practicable.

Please refer to Landscape and Environmental Masterplan (1MC08-BBV_MSD-PL-DGA-NS01_NL02-129011 and 1MC08-BBV_MSD-PL-DGA-NS01_NL02-129012).

Should you have no objections to the mitigation planting proposals, please would you indicate this in your response. Any comment made at this stage on the mitigation proposal will be without prejudice to the Council's determination of the future request for approval to the mitigation scheme for the above scheduled works. However, the advice will inform pre-submission discussions for such approvals and will be submitted with or referred to in requests for approval.



Yours faithfully,

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