

HS2 fails the Chilterns Challenge

The proposed HS2 route through the widest part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and through much unspoilt countryside further north has caused huge controversy. So far, HS2 has been justified by the twin assertions, that the chosen route represents the best routeing option for HS2, and that the obvious alternative of the M1 corridor is not a practicable proposition.

However, the detailed route design undertaken for the emerging High Speed UK proposals demonstrates conclusively that a high speed line closely following the M1 is both feasible, and far less damaging than the proposed HS2 route through the Chilterns AONB. It offers the following key advantages:

- Complete avoidance of the Chilterns AONB;
- Minimal additional environmental intrusion through close adherence to existing M1 route;
- Minimal requirement for property demolition, due to the M1's historic noise and atmospheric pollution discouraging adjacent residential development;
- A feasible 4-track route from London to the UK regions, providing sufficient capacity to serve all regional cities;
- Hugely enhanced connectivity for M1 Corridor communities i.e. Luton, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Coventry and Leicester;
- Shorter journey times from London to most West Midlands communities, due to HSUK serving the existing primary West Midlands rail hub at Birmingham New Street;
- A London-Birmingham route **£8 billion** cheaper to construct than HS2's route via the Chilterns AONB;
- A London-Birmingham route requiring only 12km of tunnel as opposed to HS2's 50km – *an unprecedented total for a UK intercity railway, comprising 28% of the route length*;
- Massively reduced impact on Ancient Woodlands and SSSIs.

These many advantages must call into question every aspect of the process by which the HS2 scheme has been developed. It is also highly concerning that all route options following the M1 corridor were dismissed very early in the sifting process, despite the acknowledged fact that these were the only options to avoid the Chilterns AONB.

HS2

London-B'ham
Phase 1 cost

£22bn

Route length

175km

Tunnel length

50km

HSUK

London-B'ham
Phase 1 cost

£14bn

Route length

180km

Tunnel length

12km

HS2

Journey time from
London Euston to
Birmingham Curzon St:

49mins

Walking transfer to New
Street for onward West
Midlands connections:

10mins

TOTAL: 59mins

HSUK

Avoids the
Chilterns AONB
by following M1

Requires 11km
of tunnel to
reach north scarp
of Chilterns
from Euston

HSUK

Journey time from
London Euston to:

Coventry: **38mins**

Birmingham Inter-
national: **46mins**

Birmingham New
Street: **56mins**

