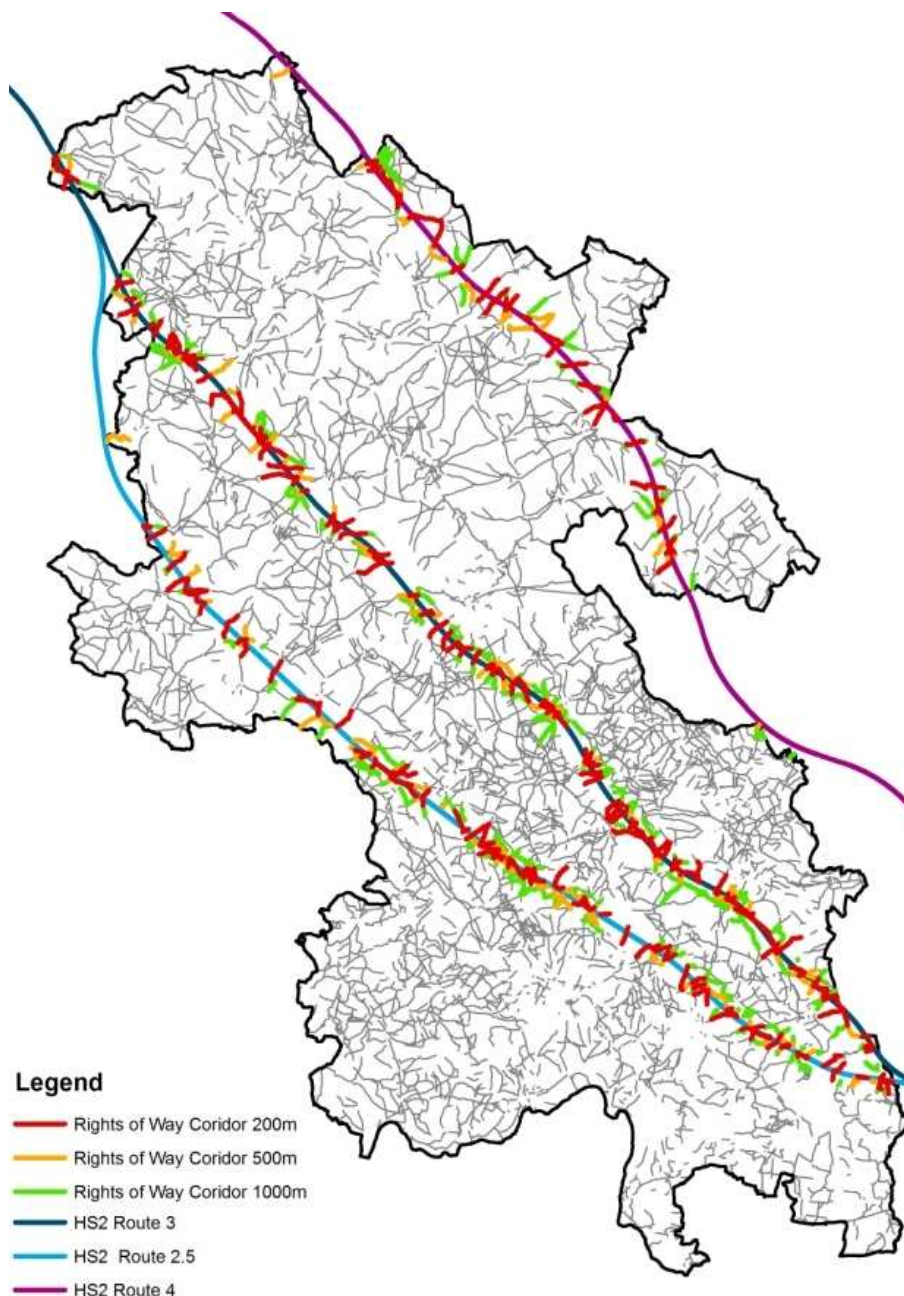


# HS2 – Public Rights of Way report: baseline impacts and associated strategy



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## **HS2 – Public Rights of Way report: baseline impacts and associated strategy**

In January 2009, the Department for Transport published details of various options for a new high speed railway in the UK and concluded that the most appropriate route for a new high speed line was between London and the West Midlands.

A separate company, High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd, was set-up to study the feasibility and viability of new high-speed rail services from London to Scotland. In March 2010 the HS2 report was published, together with a government command paper setting-out government policy on high speed rail.

Various route options have been considered with a number rejected due to cost or other route related implications. The final report narrowed down the main options to three alignments but also recommends Route 3 as the 'preferred option'.

### **Introduction**

Proposals for a high speed rail route (HS2) through Buckinghamshire will, without adequate crossings, have substantial negative impacts on the public rights of way network; affecting route connectivity, amenity and the public's quiet enjoyment of the countryside. Each of the three proposed routes will cut-off green, non-vehicular transport corridors between communities, their services and routes to school and work. The many trails promoted by the County Council and other organizations would be greatly affected, including the Ridgeway National Trail.

The 3,300km network of public rights of way in Buckinghamshire is a considerable economic asset, an important part of the county highway infrastructure and a key element within the county's tourism sector. Maintaining a fully integrated network is essential to protect opportunities for the public to both safely enjoy the countryside for recreation and health; and for non-vehicular access to services and between communities.

The council is continually striving to improve the connectivity of the network and to improve accessibility for the less able. These themes are of primary importance when assessing the impacts of development on the network.

Initially this report provides an assessment of the likely impacts on the ROW network. Further it sets out the broad principles that would need to be adopted should any of the routes proceed.

HS2 Ltd are requested to take on-board this baseline report and to ensure that Buckinghamshire County Council and relevant partners are engaged in the design and implementation of alternatives or mitigation at an early stage of any development for HS2 proceeding.

### Route severance

The number of public Rights Of Way (ROW) directly severed by the three proposed lines are outlined in the tables below. In addition, data is also shown for each route using 200m, 500m and 1000m corridor assessments. Please note that a 200m corridor is equal to 100m on either side of the proposed railway line. A table is provided for each of the three proposed routes.

**Table 1:** Severance and impacts to the ROW network as a result of proposals for **HS2 Route 2.5**

Corridor	Footpath	Bridleway	Byway or Restricted byway	TOTAL
Directly severed	58	5	3	<b>66</b>
Affected within 200m corridor	108	11	3	<b>122</b>
Affected within 500m corridor	184	21	10	<b>215</b>
Affected within a 1000 corridor	325	43	15	<b>383</b>

**Table 2:** Severance and impacts to the ROW network as a result of proposals for **HS2 Route 3 (preferred route)**

Corridor	Footpath	Bridleway	Byway or Restricted byway	TOTAL
Directly severed	67	11	1	<b>79</b>
Affected within 200m corridor	123	28	1	<b>152</b>
Affected within 500m corridor	250	40	3	<b>293</b>
Affected within 500m corridor	374	66	9	<b>449</b>

**Table 3:** Severance and impacts to the ROW network as a result of proposals for **HS2 Route 4**

Corridor	Footpath	Bridleway	Byway or Restricted byway	TOTAL
Directly severed	19	4	0	<b>23</b>
Affected within 200m corridor	31	5	0	<b>36</b>
Affected within 500m corridor	54	7	1	<b>62</b>
Affected within a 1000 corridor	93	13	1	<b>107</b>

### Impacts to ‘promoted routes’ and National Trails

Buckinghamshire benefits greatly from having two National Trails passing through it: the Ridgeway and Thames Path. The former is affected by all three proposed routes (in Hertfordshire on Route 4) while the latter is unaffected.

There are a number of ROW routes promoted by Buckinghamshire County Council and other organizations that are affected by proposed HS2 lines. Details of the numbers are outlined in the table on p.4 of the ‘Baseline Environmental Assessment’ for each route.

The Chiltern Way is heavily promoted by the Chiltern Society and has two linear routes running through Buckinghamshire (roughly parallel) in a general north east to south west direction. Both routes are affected by the HS2 proposals. In Hertfordshire, the Chiltern Way is also affected by Route 4.

### Tackling routes severed and affected by HS2 proposals

If an HS2 route is given the go-ahead, there is a requirement on HS2 Ltd to have early dialogue with the County Council to discuss underpasses, bridges and proposed diverted routes.

Prior to planning, design and construction, each path should be walked by county officers and HS2 design or structural engineers to imagine the railway line constructed on the ground and how the network will fit with options for crossings and diversions. Following this process, continual dialogue should be maintained during construction, to account for issues such as subsidence, unaccounted springs and drainage problems. The Council would also wish to enter dialogue with local communities on possible local impacts and would look to HS2 to support the necessary processes.

Where it is agreed that the construction of a bridge or underpass is not possible, a diversion should be made to the nearest crossing point. The council would seek diverted routes to be diagonal in order that they are more direct. Consultation with adjoining landowners will be required in such cases. Failing this, it is important that ‘L-shaped’ diversions are installed, using part of

or an extension along the HS2 corridor leading from the footpath/HS2 junction to the nearest crossing point. The Council would require a minimum specification of 4m width.

There is one permissive path (a route with public access by permission of the landowner) directly affected in Route 2.5, which would need to be considered alongside the public footpath network. Please note that 'permissive paths' have not been included in the 'buffer analysis'.

The County Council would seek to ensure that any ROW that are proposed to be 'stopped-up' or diverted is done so under Act of Parliament and that this is not left for the County Council to pursue through the Highways Act 1980. It would be a requirement that a County officer be given the opportunity to speak at any parliamentary sub-committee where Buckinghamshire associated Rights of Way are being discussed.

It is recommended that user organizations be consulted at each stage of HS2 planning when path diversions are being proposed. These should include Parish Councils, The Ramblers, Sustrans, the Cyclists Touring Club and British Horse Society. The standard 'test' for diverting ROW should be adopted, that is path diversions should 'not be substantially less convenient to the public'. There will be a requirement on HS2 Ltd to support any such processes that will arise as a result of ROW impacts.

Any structures required as part of permanent diversions, such as pedestrian and kissing gates, should be of British Standard design. Surfaces should be laid in situations of high public use or poor drainage and ramps constructed leading up to all bridges. Paths should be accessible to all-terrain mobility scooters. It is a requirement that a County officer be given suitable opportunity to discuss design and proposals.

### **Underpasses and bridges**

Routes that are an integral part of the local footpath and bridleway network, together with promoted routes, should be given a high priority with options to bridge or cross via an underpass, on or near their current line.

Underpasses should be lit, with wide entrances and generous headroom, particularly on bridleways where horse riders and cyclists need to be accommodated. They should be wide enough for the public to feel safe and not hemmed-in or intimidated.

Bridges should have the required parapet heights for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, depending on the four types of usage: footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways. It is a requirement that a County officer be given suitable opportunity to discuss design and proposals.

### **'Dead ends'**

It is an aspiration to have no 'dead end' ROW. After the Kent HS1 was constructed a number of paths were deemed 'not needed for public use' and had to be stopped-up under s.118 Highways Act 1980. This left Kent County Council with the financial burden of making the necessary legal orders and publishing them in local newspapers. Following consultation, it is a requirement in Buckinghamshire that all ROW can, at the very least, be diverted along corridors adjacent to the line, which could be screened with

native vegetation. If there are instances where paths need to be stopped-up under s.118 Highways Act, this process should be funded in its entirety through HS2 funding.

### **Temporary diversions during construction**

It is assumed that paths closed, as part of temporary diversions, in order that construction can take place, but be reopened post-construction, will be set-out in the Parliamentary Act.

Such diversions will need to take into account public convenience. Any structures required as part of temporary diversions, such as pedestrian and kissing gates, should be of British Standard design and surfaces be laid in situations of high public use or poor drainage. Signposting should be maintained by HS2.

### **Contact information**

This work has been undertaken by the Natural Environment Team at Buckinghamshire County Council.  
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