

PROGRESS OF AND IMPACT OF HS2 IN HAREFIELD, APRIL 27 AND MAY 4, 2022.

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The HS2 Weekly Construction Updates for areas of the London Borough of Hillingdon on which our survey was based made it clear that the purpose of the works being carried out were on a large scale and aimed to prepare the land for the future construction of the railway. These works were associated with a number of activities.

- (a) Excavation of surface rocks including vegetation clearance and soil stripping.
- (b) Earth movement to create embankments and earthworks, some with links to road construction and culvert construction.
- (c) Pile driving for working platform construction, for the abutments for the railway bridge over Breakspear Road South and for foundations for the viaduct piers over the lakes and related land.
- (d) Drainage installation and management, including culvert construction and manhole works.
- (e) Works associated with the Harvil Road diversion and bridge over the Chiltern Line, the construction of Copthall Tunnel and Skip Lane diversion.
- (f) Miscellaneous other works such as footpath diversion, fencing, top soil stripping and viaduct launching girder assembly.

When finished this range of works will change the landscape considerably, especially along the line of the railway but also in some places at a distance from this line. Consequently our tour visited a number of sites, mainly on the line of the railway but also in other parts of Harefield.

The first stop was along Breakspear Road North (grid reference 068894). Our attention had been drawn to this land to the south of the road by the following extract taken from the Green Party's candidate's leaflet for the forthcoming council election.

HS2 have applied to court for an injunction preventing everyone from access to a large area of former Park Lodge Farm in Harefield. This land is not included within the HS2 Act. HS2 have purchased or leased from Hillingdon Council all the fields that stretch from Breakspear Road North to the back of Childs Avenue and Church Hill and around the Parish Church property.

HS2 has so far given no indication of what they intend to do on this land which is currently Green Belt countryside.

Despite several requests the Council Officers have not responded to requests for clarification.

(Reference Election News, Harefield Village, April 2022, Niki Samuel, Green Party.)

Photograph 1 shows that the locked gate prevented public access to the area concerned, which was now a construction(?) site for the company Browne. Considerable stretches of new fencing had been erected in this area, but no other work was evident.



Photograph 1. Looking south from Breakspear Road North.

We progressed to Breakspear Road South (072873) where considerable landscape changes had already been made in earlier years. Current work involved excavation, earth movement and piling focussed on the planned abutments of the bridges to take HS2 over the River Pinn and Breakspear Road South. Some of this can be seen in photographs 2-5, which give a suggestion of the impact on the landscape of the area.



Photograph 2. Looking east along the Chiltern Railway line.



Photograph 3. The road into the site in photograph 2.

We returned along Breakspear Road South to its junction with New Years Green Lane (075881). The map provided online by HS2 described the work in the field north of the junction as earthwork mound construction and culvert construction. The purpose of the actual considerable mound at the New Years Green end of the field was not stated. Although the land affected makes a small valley there is no evidence on the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 map of any stream, so again the actual purpose is unclear. There was plenty of machinery in the field for earth movement, excavation and pile driving, as can be seen in photographs 6-8. Lorries were frequently entering and exiting this site and were leaving full of earth. They made walking along New Years Green Lane unpleasant and did nothing for the quality of air along that lane. Footpath U38 had been diverted to the inside of the hedge by the lane. At a time when stiles are being abandoned in line with legislation for the disabled it was surprising to see a new stile. The footpath was also not well made and would be difficult to use.



Photograph 4. Pile driving to the south of the current railway bridge over Breakspear Road South.



Photograph 5. Construction work on the site in photograph 4.



Photograph 6. The mound at the end of the field at 075881.



Photograph 7. View of work in the above field.



Photograph 8. Diversion of footpath U38.

Continuing through New Years Green to the single track part of the lane at 066881 we were surprised by the presence of construction works. A conveyor system had been built across the lane (photographs 9 and 10), carrying material from a site north of the lane. The need for movement of earth materials and the nature of the work taking place on this site to produce it were not clear. Security was tight and they took the registration number of the car (photograph 11).



Photograph 9. Narrow part of New Years Green Lane
passing below the conveyor system



Photograph 10. The conveyor system rising over New Years Green Lane.



Photograph 11. Entrance to the site north of New Years Green Lane with attendant security.

Next we arrived at the site (0687) where the landscape changes since the start of HS2 construction have been most profound. Earth movement and excavation have changed several hectares of land (photograph 12). Changes include the movement of earth to form embankments to help facilitate the migration of Harvil Road to a new bridge which will also be linked to the movement of Skip Lane (photograph 13). The Harvil Road bridge was under construction, while a tunnel (Copthall Tunnel) was being built to help HS2 pass under Harvil Road. The move of the electricity pylons and their wires to eventually bring power into the planned substation for HS2 seemed to be complete (photograph 14). The small stream known historically as The Bourne, but named by HS2 New Years Green Bourne, was being rerouted, either in a new channel or possibly later culverting (photograph 15). Security along Harvil Road is very tight, with strong fencing along both sides, and access to the whole area is controlled (photograph 16). The construction of what will be known as the Southern Sustainable Placement Area was largely hidden behind sheeting covering the fence (photograph 17). There was a new construction area on the opposite side of Harvil Road to the SSPA (photograph 18). The whole area was a considerable construction site (photograph 19).



Photograph 12. View of Harvil Road construction area.



Photograph 13. Construction of new bridge to take Harvil Road over the Chiltern Line



Photograph 14. Site of proposed substation with new pylons and wires



Photograph 15. Management of The Bourne.



Photograph 16. Fencing along Harvil Road.

PART B.



Photograph 17. Entrance to Southern Sustainable Placement Area with sheeting covering fencing.



Photograph 18. New construction site along Harvil Road.



Photograph 19. A busy construction site.

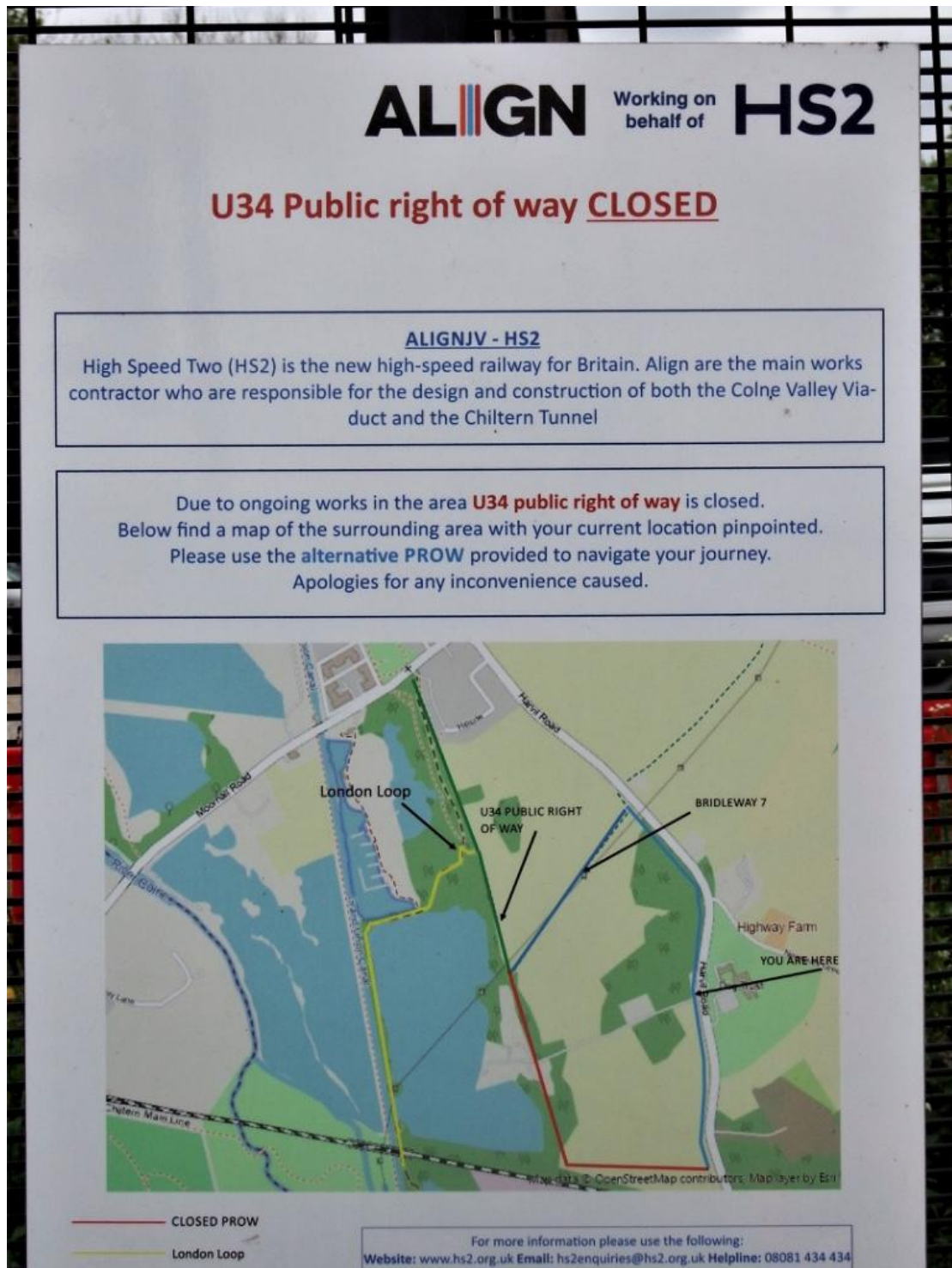
Turning back towards Harefield the conversion of the historical Dews Lane to a modern road (060880) seemed complete (photograph 20). There have been traffic lights at the junction with Harvil Road and there is the usual security to stop public entrance, although access to the garage business on the lane is still allowed. But Hillingdon Outdoor Activities Centre, an excellent resource for the area, had been closed for good, and there is another footpath diversion (photographs 21-22).



Photograph 20. New entrance to Dews Lane, with security.



Photograph 21.



Photograph 22. Effects on another public footpath.

Resuming the tour on May 4th at Harvil Road (059885) where the pylons and electricity transmission wires crossed the road, with those to the west of the road being reconstructed to serve the planned substation for railway power. The pylon change and extension seemed complete. The site was still operative, with pile driving gear present (photograph 23). Security wanted to know who we were and what we were doing.



Photograph 23. Site for moving pylons and transmission lines.

We moved on to the grounds below St. Mary's Church. A gate had been erected to control entry at South Harefield by the road to Park Lodge Farm 052890 (photograph 24). The contractors were identified as Browne and Affinity Water, so the issue may have been water supply and Browne were involved in the land got from Park Lodge Farm.



Photograph 24. Entry by Park Lodge Farm.

The public footpaths had been kept open, so we could reach this site from the church. There had been earth movement, both for excavation and embankment formation, and there were several new manhole covers (photographs 25 and 26). The purpose of this work was not totally clear.



Photograph 24. Earth movement near Park Lodge Farm.

The next stop on the journey was to the remaining large site affecting Harefield, on Moorhall Road (042886). This was where the viaduct across the lake at the former HOAC site will pass to continue across a corner of Broadwater Lake, and thence to the A412 North Orbital Road and on to the tunnel below the Chiltern Hills. The scene was dominated by pile driving with a whole line across Moorhall Road (photographs 26-27), New roads, not all surfaced, had been constructed to provide access to the concrete structures being built, and there were new traffic lights at the junction with Moorhall Road (photographs 28-29)..

John walked down the side of the River Colne to the fishery cottage. Here he was reminded of the other non-visual environmental aspect of the railway construction, which is having to live with the noise of such activities as pile driving. The visual signs of the pile driving here were enough to be a reminder of how the viaduct is capable of impacting on the landscape of this area (photographs 30-31). Photograph 30 was taken, with permission, from the long private driveway which goes between the lake and the river near Green Bridge to an isolated house. It shows the start of construction preparation amongst the trees on the other side of the lake. Later photographs are likely to show the effects of HS2 on this lake.



Photograph 25. New manhole covers.



Photograph 26. Pile driving by Moorhall Road.



Photograph 27. Line of pile driving sites north of Moorhall Road.



Photograph 28. New road constructed by Moorhall Road.



Photograph 29. Traffic lights and pile driving, Moorhall Road.



Photograph 30. Visual impacts.



Photograph 31. Acknowledgement of noise impacts.

After driving past the work by the A412, we made our final stop at Colney Farm (047905) to look over the view over the Colne Valley. The western slopes of the valley are dominated by HS2. An initial removal of gravel has been replaced by considerable earth movement which among other things has created a new hill south west of West Hyde. Then most obvious development was the viaduct precast factory making concrete and cement for the various parts of the viaduct and for the lining of the tunnel through the Chiltern Hills (photographs 32-33). It is probable that the chalk removed from the tunnel will be used as a raw material for the concrete. The visual

ugliness of this site had disguised the memory of the previous environment, where the land was used as a prairie-style farm with large fields of grain and occasional oil seed rape. Considerable lengths of hedge had been removed and soil erosion in places had revealed the chalk underneath. Biodiversity had suffered. HS2 have presented plans for the restoration of this area after construction is complete, and if they keep their promise there is some chance of environmental improvement.



Photograph 32. View over Colne Valley.



Photograph 33. Concrete factory on west side of Colne Valley.

It cannot be denied that the construction of HS2 has had a major impact on the environment of Harefield, particularly visual but also through noise and air pollution. Final judgement of the merits or otherwise of these impacts will await the completion of the railway, but Harefield will have been changed.

Addendum.. On the BBC News on the morning of May 31st 2022 it was stated that construction on the longest railway bridge in the country was to start that day.