

Position Statement – Responses to OCAF Requests

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Version Change Information

Date	Version No.	Summary of Changes
08.01.2023	001	First issue

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to address the requests and objections raised by OCAF (Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum) who have raised the following points with reference to proposed design. The OCAF written requests are in black type, EKFB responses are in blue.

2 OCAF Request and Responses

2.1 Objection – public rights of way users with disabilities

There is a significant omission with the WCHAR that calls in the question the compatibility of the WCHAR with the Equalities Act 2010. The key omission is any explicit mention or recognition of the needs of wheelchair users and people with other mobility and agility issues on public rights of way. As a result OCAF calls into question the validity of the WCHAR if there has been this omission. OCAF advises HS2 to review the WCHAR and construction plans accordingly.

HS2 and their nominated undertaker EKFB understand that the current standard: GG 142 - Walking, Cycling and Horse-Riding Assessment and Review (part of the DMRB) defines users (in the terms and definitions section) as Including:

- Mobility impaired and vulnerable pedestrians;
- Mobility impaired and vulnerable cyclists; and
- Mobility impaired and vulnerable equestrians;

Therefore, it is our understanding that this is a useful and appropriate design standard to assess and consider the needs of wheelchair users and other mobility impaired and vulnerable users.

In addition, we note that the interests of all user groups are regularly discussed with the Local Authority, OCC. As a key stakeholder, this has provided the local Authority opportunity for involvement in discussion over design matters such as surface types, gradients, widths, and signage etc.

It is also relevant to note that typical locations of the HS2 designed PRowWs are often isolated sections of routes that are not otherwise accessed by routes that are currently suitable for Mobility impaired and vulnerable users. To develop isolated sections of route that are incompatible with existing conditions would require a holistic design development programme that considers future anticipated development. HS2 are not currently aware or involved with any such programme. If HS2 were to improve small, isolated sections of a much broader Bridleway network, such so that mobility impaired users could use them, they would be redundant and inaccessible. HS2 does not have the legal authority and right to upgrade the rest of the Bridleway/footpath network beyond the HS2 Act Limits.

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Reaching agreement for Schedule 17 plans and specifications in terms of respecting and maintaining local rural landscape character and amenity requirements whilst also providing facilities for mobility impaired user groups risks conflict of opposing views.

2.2 Bridleway 225/4 objection

OCAF objects to the provision set out for Bridleway 225/4 requiring riders to dismount under Goddington West Viaduct as this is not considered a reasonable adjustment or provision. There needs to be two routes for riders, a non-dismount route that is made as flood resistant as possible, and for flood periods, a dismount route that includes mounting blocks at each end. Any underpass/subway route needs to consider the echo impacts on horses and include mitigation measures to reduce these to an acceptable level. Lighting needs to be provided so that horses are not 'spooked' by either tunnel or echo issues. Surfaces must be flood/skid resistant.

Regarding providing two routes under the viaduct, HS2 and EKFB appreciate the concern and have carefully considered an alternative proposal by OCC. However, it has been deemed unsuitable for the following reasons:

- The additional route would not comply with HS2 standards with respect to flooding consideration and access. It would not be suitable for HS2, EKFB and ASC to design and construct a pedestrian/equestrian route that will knowingly flood multiple times a year, given that there is a standard compliant solution available. Furthermore, the lowered ground will be more likely to maintain standing water and the depth of water will not easily be perceived by pedestrians. This will create an increased safety risk to all users.
- To achieve a 3.4m clearance it would be necessary to lower the ground by more than one meter. This would create a localised depression and the lowest point outside of the watercourse. Considering the necessary clearance of excavations from the pier foundations, the available width at the bottom of this lowered area would be no more than 1.25m. This would require a departure therefore this would be favouring a non-compliant design over the current fully compliant design.
- This alternative proposal has been considered an additional alternative route, which in effect doubles the resources, cost and time to provide at the tax payers expense, even though the current proposal is fully compliant to the standard CD143/DMRB which covers equestrian users. The cost attributed to this additional provision would be solely for mitigating the need for a relatively low number of equestrians from needing to safely dismount and mount at the mounting block facilities provided. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that they would use this alternative route even if it is not flooded. This is deemed not As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP) given the risk

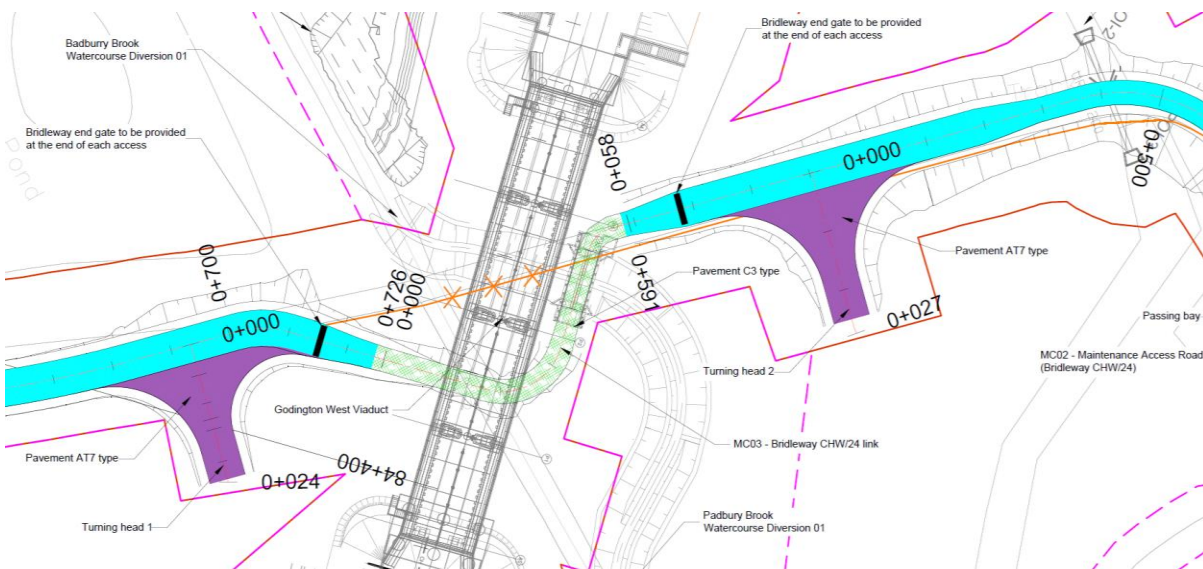
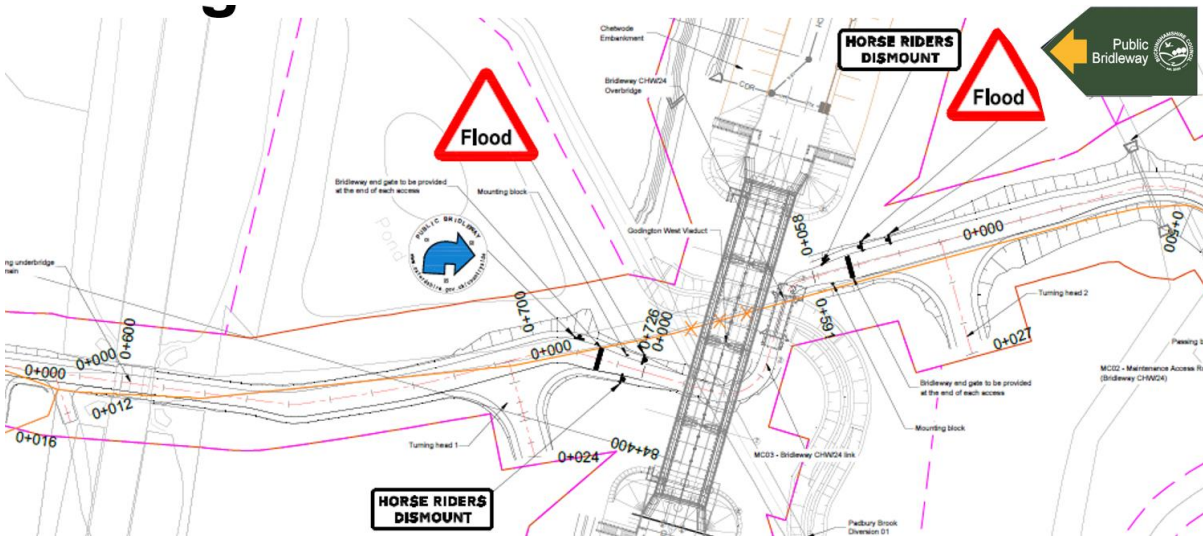
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associated with mounting/dismounting at the mounting blocks, frequency and quantity of users and the holistic cost of the mitigating solution (construction, maintenance of asset and wider area assets).

- It is not suitable to provide a decision point for pedestrians when both routes lead to the same destination 200m away visible by the users.
- HS2 wish not to take on additional risk and maintenance burden as a result of the encouraged water flows the alternative proposal creates so close to HS2's critical assets. These alternative water flow paths pass around a pier of the viaduct and adjacent to the Maintenance Access Strip. Over time this will create sediment build up and erosion of the immediate area which could undermine the durability, sustainability and capability of the assets referenced. This would ultimately increase the cost of maintenance and refurbishment activities in the future at the expense of the Taxpayer. There is also an increased risk of safety compromise as a result of the increased exposure to the assets.
- Lighting is not deemed necessary due to the open nature of the viaduct and its narrow width. Lighting provision is also subject to strict Schedule 17 and environmental restrictions, as well as creating an additional maintenance burden at the tax payer's expense to provide light during hours of darkness for very few equestrian users. This would be a disproportionate benefit vs cost.
- The current design is fully to standard, including the provision for equestrian use which is by use of mounting blocks. Appropriate provisions and signage have been incorporated into the design. With the above reasons and justifications, the value to the potential users vs the increase in cost to tax payers and risk to all users and HS2's future (100+ years) safe operations of the railway, it is not justifiable in our professional opinion.

Bridleway 225/4 passes beneath the proposed Goddington West viaduct, and for reasons previously stated above there are no intentions to provide an underpass, or alternative design or route.

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2.3 Bridleway 213/4 and Wildmore Farm – request

OCAF requests that the bridleway 213/4 realignment onto a new overbridge is combined with a bridleway alongside or along the Wildmore Farm access road to give access to bridleways 213/4 and 303/8. This should include a non-motorised user crossing facility for the A421. If this isn't possible then footpath 303/7 and 213/1 need upgrading to bridleway. This is to provide connectivity away from the noise and visual impact of HS2.

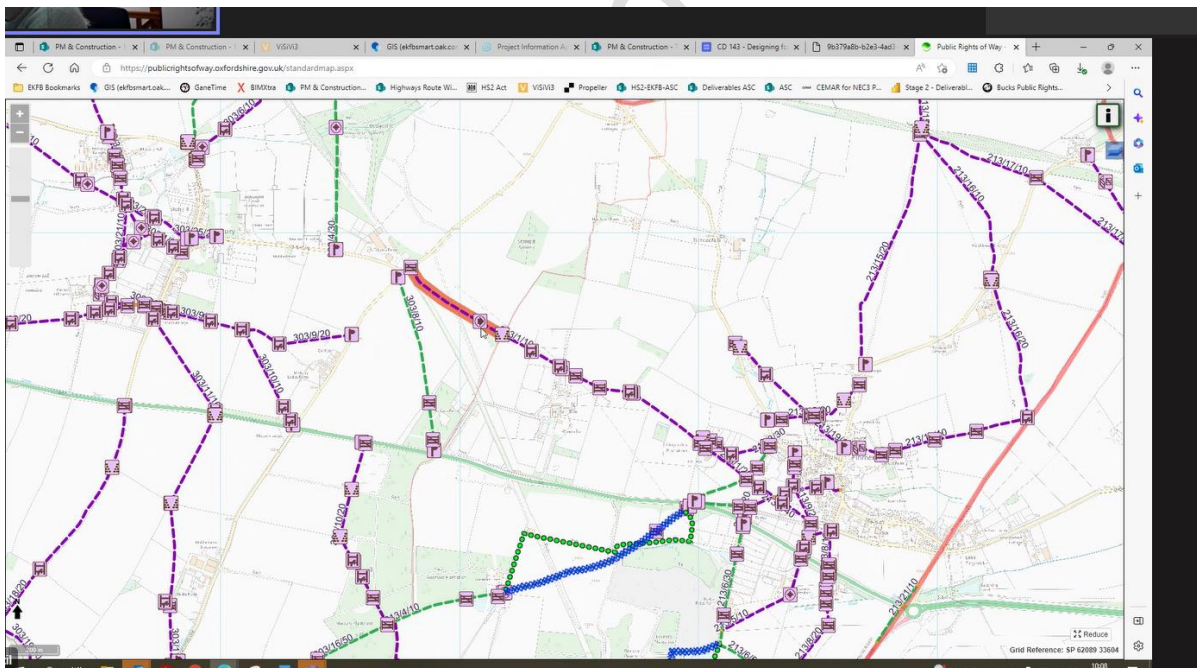
The Wildmore Farm Accommodation Access Road is a farm access located in Barton to Mixbury Cutting and is a private access. It provides a connection between the realigned A421 London Road and the existing Wildmore Farm

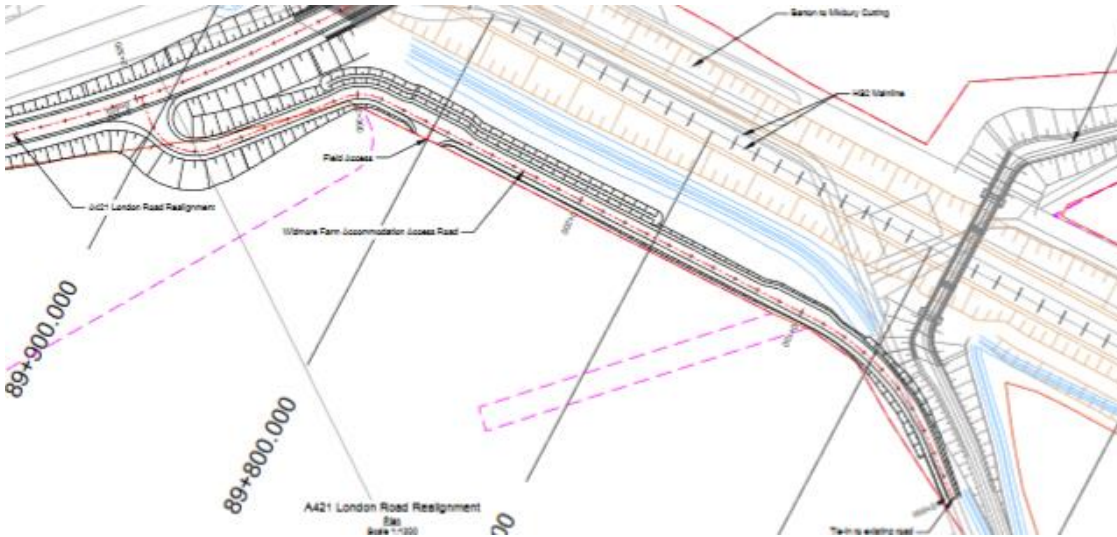
Access Road. The previous PRoW network did not offer connectivity across the A421 in this location, the access road simply serves to provide private access to Widmore farm. Therefore, this access road has not been designed for use by non- motorised users. Furthermore, there is no current, nor has there previously been a provision for non-motorised users crossing over the A421. For HS2 to provide a NMU suitable access to the edge of the A421 and onwards to bridleways 213/4 and 303/8 would require a fully developed strategy by the local authority for how it proposes to make ongoing access arrangements for non- motorised users. To our knowledge no such proposal exists and so it would not be prudent for HS2 to provide such a facility. The A421 is a busy road and introducing additional crossing points risks the safety of both pedestrians and road users. Summary of the traffic flows on the A421 is indicated in the table below:

Types of vehicles	2012 Traffic flow (AADT for vehicles, 12-hour flows for NMUs)	2041 Forecast traffic flow
Vehicle	9 086	15 860

The design has already passed through the schedule 4 consent process and has been approved.

The Local Authority, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), as key stakeholder has been involved and informed of the development of the detailed design. During the process OCC hasn't raised the subject of increased connectivity for non-motorised users as an ambition for this area and hasn't requested an upgrade of the Widmore Farm access from accommodation access to a shared accommodation access and bridleway or any non-motorised user provision on the A421 London Road.





2.4 Featherbed Lane and Footpath 303/7 – request

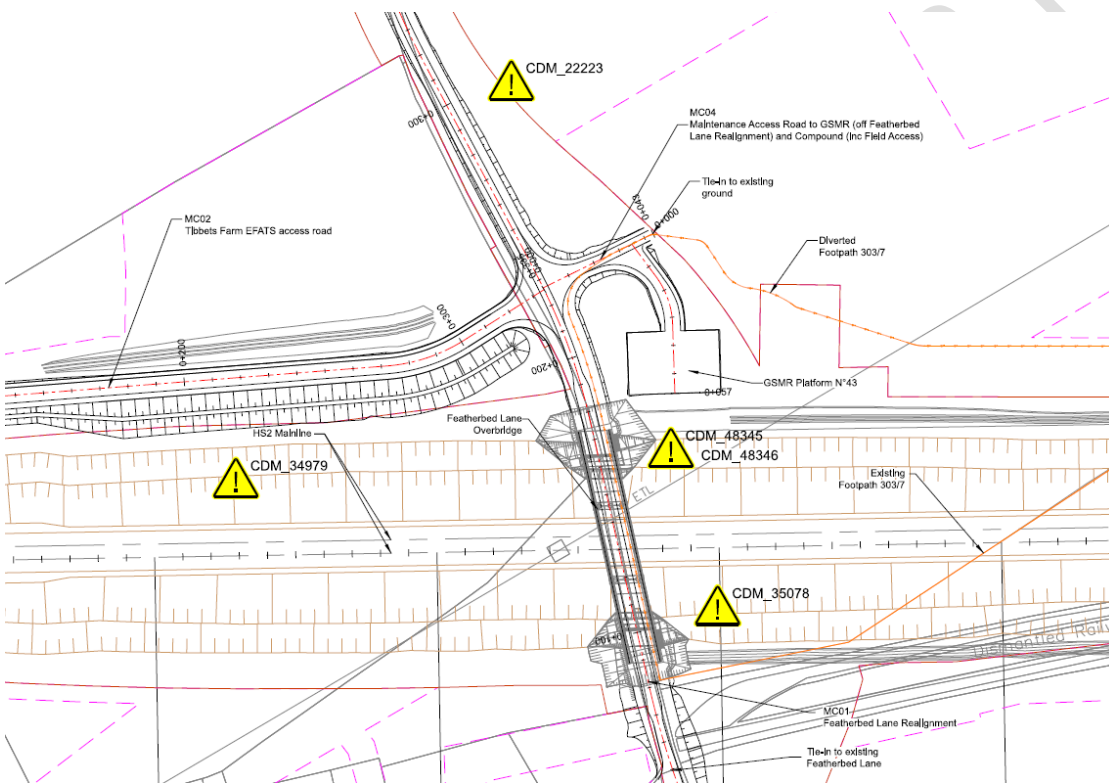
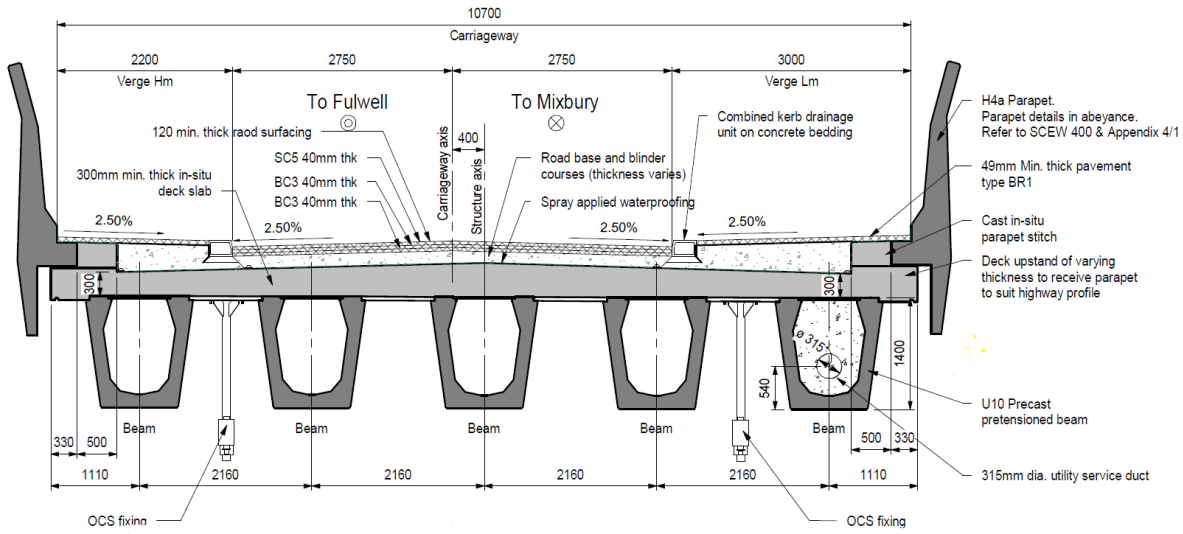
OCAF requests Featherbed Lane to be provided with a shared use bridleway instead of footway along Featherbed Lane, or a footway designated for cycle and horse use. This will enable connections to Tibbets Farm bridleway and Fulwell bridleway.

Featherbed Lane Realignment is classed as a single carriageway located in Barton to Mixbury Cutting and provides a connection between the severed existing Featherbed Lane on the east and west side of HS2 mainline.

We only propose to divert Footpath 303/7 using the proposed overbridge. Below is the proposed cross section on the bridge.

During pre-app meetings OCC has requested a review of our proposed AC14 surfacing to footpath paving to ensure suitability for equestrian use.(currently under review by DD team).

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Carriageway width (m)	3.00 m	3.50 m outside of the overbridge, 5.50 m on approach to and on the overbridge
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Verge widths (m)	3.5m wide each side	1.50 m wide minimum, varying to accommodate VRS, drainage devices and utilities
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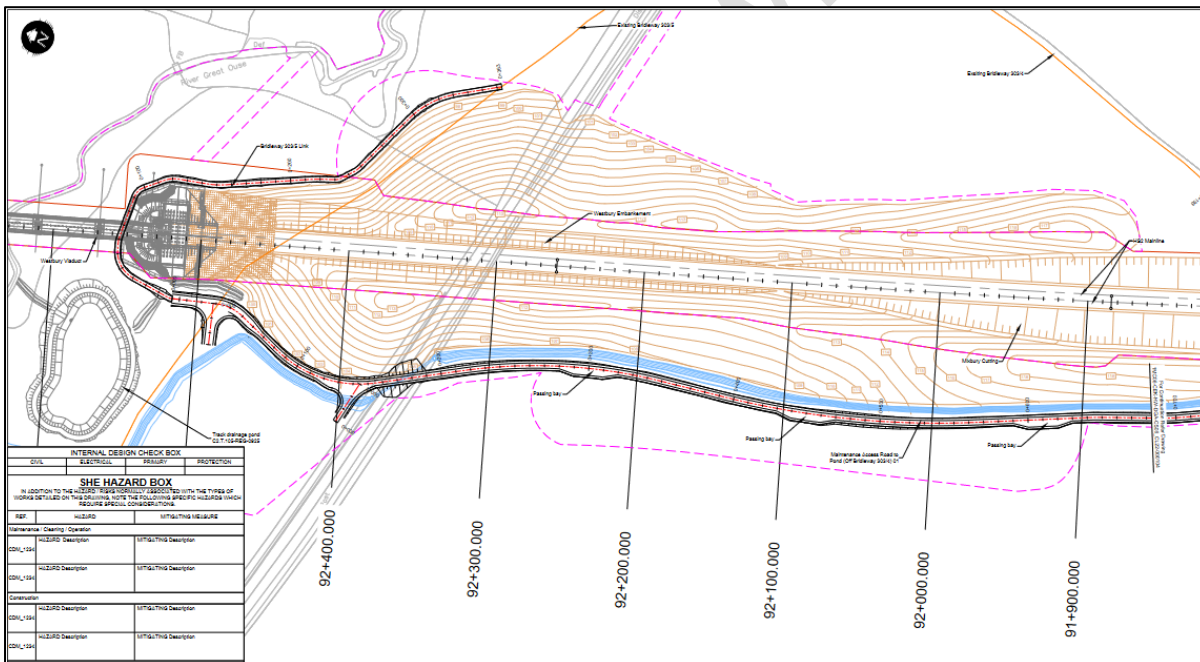
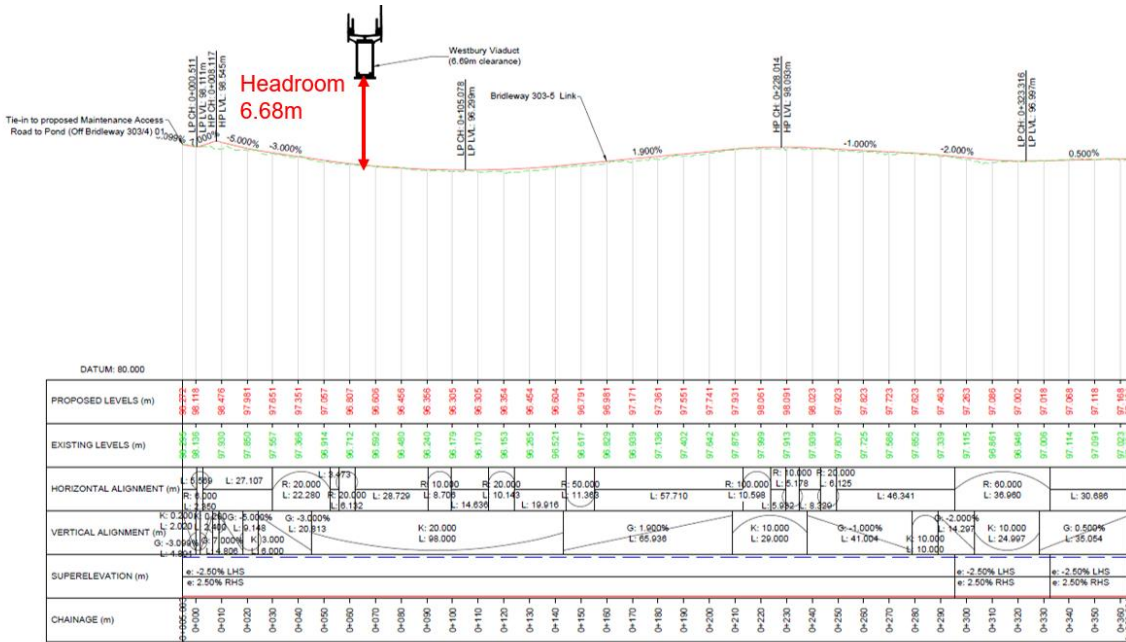
2.5 Bridleway 303/5 viaduct – clarification

OCAF requests confirmation that this underpass will be a non-dismount crossing. Any underpass/subway route needs to consider the echo impacts on horses and include mitigation measures to reduce these to an acceptable level. Lighting needs to be provided so that horses are not ‘spooked’ by either tunnel or echo issues. Surfaces must be flood/skid resistant.

Indicated below is a general arrangement and long profile of bridleway 303/5 link: This bridleway passes beneath Westbury Viaduct where there is 6.68m of headroom under the viaduct which permits equestrians to pass without dismounting. We are not considering any lighting requirement as the viaduct is only 12m wide and 6.6m high therefore natural light will enter under the structure. Lighting provision is also subject to strict Schedule 17 and environmental restrictions, as well as creating an additional maintenance burden at the tax payer’s expense to provide light during hours of darkness for very few equestrian users. This would be a disproportionate benefit vs cost.

Pavement surfaces will be type C3, which feature a surface layer of self-binding compacted limestone gravel, the material reference is SB5.

Pavement Layer
<u>Pavement Type C3</u>
Surface Course
SB5 40mm thick
Subbase
SB6 150mm thick
Total Thickness (mm) 190



2.6 Footpath 308/13 – clarification and request

OCAF requests clarification on proposals for connecting Footpath 308/13 to other paths and negotiating the realigned A4421. There needs to be a connection provided to bridleway 308/7,

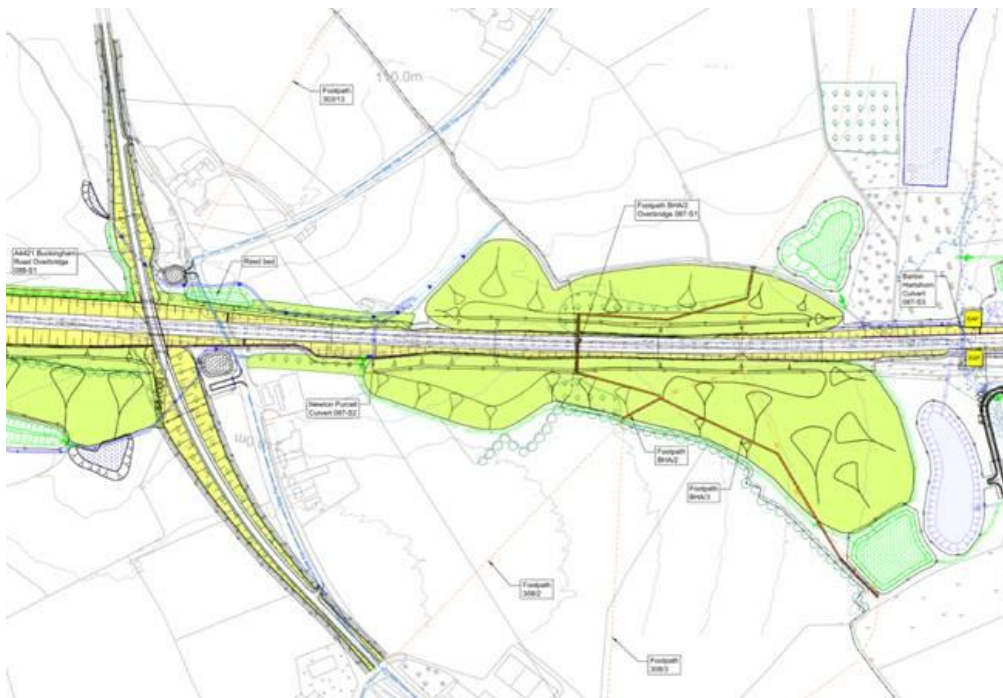
footpath 308/1 and footpath 308/2. A footway/cycleway is required along the A4421 or an underpass on the old A4421 road.

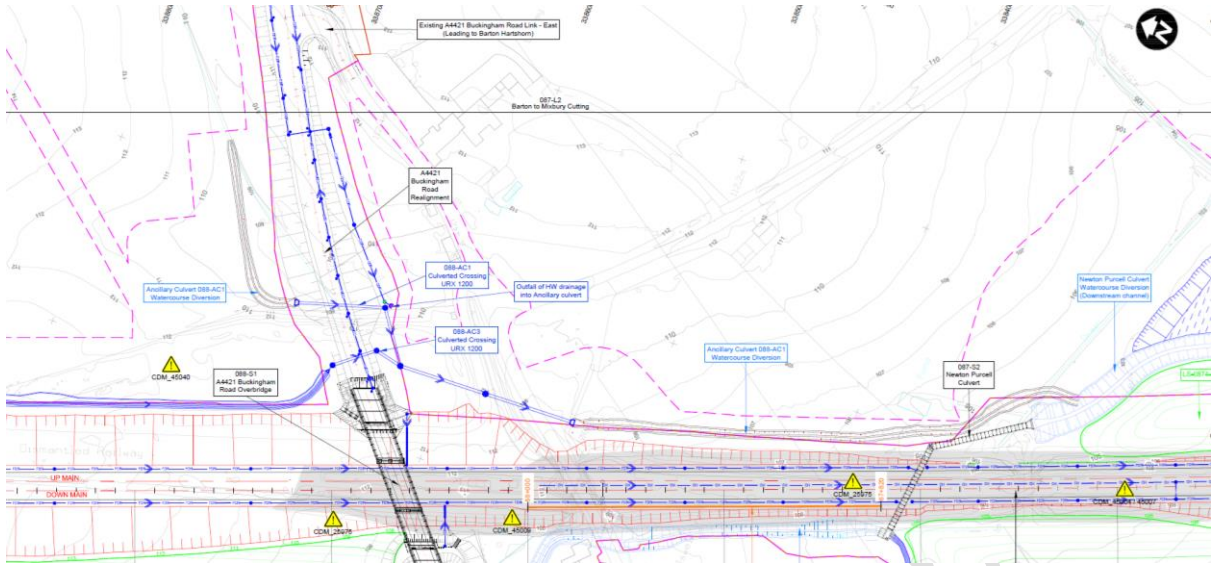
Footpath 308/13 is not impacted as shown below and is connected to existing A4421 link that is connected to the new A4421 diversion.

Bridleway 308/7, Footpath 308/1 and 308/2 are not impacted by the HS2 project and connections between them are as existing.

There is no provision of an underpass under the existing A4421 road or cycleway along the A4421.

It is proposed that the southern verge will be used as a footway up to the existing road link – east that will allow connection to the 308/13 users along the realigned A4421 Buckingham Road. During the development of the detailed design, OCC as a key stakeholder hasn't requested a shared footway/cycleway along the A4421. (A4421 is consented under Sch4)





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