

Central Chilterns

POTTER ROW

HS2 references: Area CFA9 – Zone ASZ16 and Unique ID CC077

Summary:

In our view the assessment that the impact of HS2 construction on the archaeologically important Potter Row as 'low' and 'slight' is based on statistical misdirection and lack of the intended survey evidence. As a matter of priority:

- the intended geophysical survey should be carried out, and
- until surveyed the impact level on the site should be considered as anywhere between 'low' and 'high'.

Assessment:

The archaeological significance of Potter Row is recognised in the Environmental Statement (see for example Appendix CH-001-009 paragraphs 3.6.16, 3.7.10 and 8.1.15) and its long period of settlement and industrial activity stretching from the neolithic to the post-medieval periods (Appendix CH-002-009 page 30 item CC076). Potter Row is an Archaeological Notification Area designated by Buckinghamshire County Council.

The extent of the archaeologically significant area and its proximity to the HS2 route is noted:

'Potter Row lies on the eastern edge of the route and represents a possible extensive medieval and post-medieval focus of pottery production. The area includes land around the Grade II listed buildings at Bury Farm (CC070) associated with non-designated medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains (CC066). It also includes the ancient woodland of Jenkin's Wood (CC073), where further archaeological remains have been found, and extends northwards to Hammondshall Farm (CC094).' (Appendix CH-003-009 page 14 item CC077)

The likelihood of as yet undiscovered archaeology is also recognised: 'There is a strong potential for further *in situ* and unstratified ceramic and metal artefacts and associated below ground features.' (Appendix CH-001-009 page 59 item 16).

Although Potter Row is undesignated, its Heritage Value is recognised as 'High' (Appendix CH-003-009 page 14 item CC077).

However the impact of HS2 construction on Potter Row is seriously underestimated as a result of a statistical misdirection.

The Impact Assessment Table defines the impact of construction as 'Low adverse' and its effect as 'Moderate adverse'. The justification given for this low assessment is that '...construction works will affect approximately five per cent of an area of earthwork and buried archaeological remains ... This will result in a slight impact on the asset...' (Appendix CH-003-009 page 14 item CC077)

The implication here is that because construction will leave 95 per cent of the area unaffected the impact is therefore 'slight'. This is a misuse of statistics.

There is no evidence that potential archaeological finds and features at Potter Row are spread evenly over the area concerned. Indeed if they were this would be a unique and exceptional site. Past excavation evidence everywhere shows that settlement and industrial features are usually concentrated in a relatively small area.

It is therefore equally possible that the five per cent of the area of Potter Row that will be destroyed by HS2 construction work might contain 95 per cent of the archaeology.

Our concern is strengthened by the lack of a survey of the affected area. The Environmental Statement says that 'additional locations ... were proposed for geophysical survey but due to access of other restrictions these surveys were not carried out.' One of the four unsurveyed locations listed is 'Potter Row, Hyde Heath (CC077, national grid reference SP 90354 02046).

Conclusion:

In our view the assessment that the impact of HS2 construction on the archaeologically important Potter Row is 'low' and 'slight' is based on statistical misdirection and lack of the intended survey evidence. As a matter of priority:

- the intended geophysical survey should be carried out as soon as possible, and
- in the meantime the impact level should be considered as potentially 'high'.