



## The Campaign to preserve the Chiltern Lanes

21-Feb-2022

Dear Minister,

We are writing regarding the planned HS2 construction works at Leather Lane, in the Chilterns AONB. Local residents are greatly concerned that the current proposals will inflict damage on a wildlife corridor (a line of 99 Oak trees, of which 87 remain), which can and should be avoided.

Leather Lane is broadly aligned west-east perpendicular to the A413, making it one of only three single carriage way roads across a stretch of the Chilterns AONB over 7km long between Frith Hill at Great Missenden to the south and Hale Road at Wendover to the north – through which HS2 runs on embankments, viaducts and in cuttings.

Particular to Leather Lane though is the fact that it is also below the level of the adjacent land for much of its length; a 'Holloway', and there is a continuous hedgerow along the southern side for the entire length of the lane. These two characteristics create a sheltered corridor and optimal conditions for bat activity and it is not unreasonable to suggest that the lane is unique when compared to the other lanes.

The problem originates in the inadequacy of the ecological surveys conducted in connection with the HS2 Environmental Statement (ES). Baseline surveys failed to identify the rich diversity of wildlife, of regional significance, in the section of line between the Chiltern tunnel North Portal and Wendover. In particular, the area is home to a wide variety of bats, including a maternity colony of the rare and protected Barbastelle, not identified in the ES, and now the only one recorded in South Bucks. The Environmental Baseline map does not even show trees on Leather Lane! No mitigation measures were put in place as required by the ES and the Environmental Minimum Requirements have not been met. The Mitigation Hierarchy and other measures have not been applied, which requires HS2 to avoid any impacts on Biodiversity where possible- as described in our report<sup>1</sup>

Local residents and professional ecologists have established beyond doubt that the oak trees on the south side of the lane are an important corridor for bats travelling between roosts and feeding grounds. The Lane also provides the only connectivity in an area that has lost 247 hedgerows and provides natural mitigation for the cumulative effect of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://misbourneprotection-wp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/HS2-Failure-to-Protect-Biodiversity-Report.pdf>

felling in the area, including a Barbastelle maternity roost at nearby Jones Hill Wood.

However, the current plan places a new Leather Lane overbridge on the south side of the existing lane, so that the new road passes twice through the corridor, necessitating the felling of a further 40 or more trees. Local residents have maintained since the first consultations that the new bridge should be on the north side, to preserve as many trees as possible.

Once the level of bat activity became clear, the same residents launched a crowd funded campaign for their protection, and employed an engineer to develop a bridge design for the north side; these efforts are ongoing, but this alternative is clearly practical and avoids any further harm to the corridor, although necessarily lies in part outside the area marked for the original bridge works.<sup>2</sup>

**We are asking DEFRA to intervene to ensure that the Mitigation Hierarchy is applied in order to protect the biodiversity on Leather Lane, including endangered bats by insisting that HS2 build a bridge on the Northern side.**

This may require a Transport and Works order (or similar), and we have grave doubts that DfT/HS2 are prepared to seriously consider requests which might delay their operations.

As the department responsible for the protection of wildlife, we believe that it is your duty to ensure that wildlife protection is given proper weight in assessing the two options and that all laws and practices in place to protect wildlife and biodiversity are upheld.

Will you please direct the DfT:

To adhere to laws and practices put in place to protect wildlife and biodiversity and:

- Apply the Mitigation Hierarchy;
- Fully consider designs for an over bridge on the North side
- Undertake whatever steps are necessary to enable this, including applications to change the Limit of Deviation;
- Abide by HS2's own commitments and regulations put in place to protect biodiversity and achieve zero net loss.

The design currently proposed by HS2 would be an unacceptable failure to implement the best possible protection for protected species and biodiversity and a breach of its own regulations and commitment to zero net loss?

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<sup>2</sup> See plan, <https://misbourneprotection-wp.co.uk/leather-lane-letter-to-defra#Bridge-Plans>

Regards,

The Campaign to Save Leather Lane , *and*

**Sam Watson** MCIEEM BSc (Hons),  
Principal Ecologist at Bioscan

**Kevin Hand** MSc MCIEEM  
Course Director, ACE Foundation Stapleford Granary  
Cambridge,  
formerly President Cambridge Natural History Society and  
Director at the Tree Council

**Steve Morton**, Friends of the Earth (Wycombe Branch)

*In addition, our campaign is supported by the following organisations and experts in this field:-*

Dr [Anna Berthinussen](#) – Conservation First

Prof. [John Altringham](#) – Emeritus Professor of Ecology and  
Conservation, University of Leeds

[Dominic Woodfield](#) – Managing Director, Bioscan

[Adam Cormack](#), Head of Campaigning The Woodland Trust

The [Chiltern Conservation Board](#)

The [Chiltern Society](#)

see also

<http://misbourneprotection-wp.co.uk/leather-lane-letter-to-defra>

### **Further Details**

See [this page](#) for more information about our supporters, and the alternative bridge design