

HS2: Planning approval for Aston Church Road Overbridge in Birmingham

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An eco-friendly road bridge over the **HS2** line in Birmingham has been approved by planners, with new designs ensuring the structure blends sympathetically with the local environment.

HS2 Ltd has received Schedule 17 planning approval from Birmingham City Council for the Aston Church Road Overbridge, which will span the high-speed rail line connecting Saltley, Washwood Heath and Nechells in north-east Birmingham.

Initial designs for the bridge were shared with the public in 2021, with local feedback inspiring changes to provide a wider walkway, creating enough space for cyclists, and an improved lighting strategy.

LED lighting provides increased lighting levels for pedestrians and cyclists, enhancing the user experience and level of safety, whilst reducing light spill to trains below. This lighting design will also protect wildlife, particularly bats that may forage underneath the bridge, by decreasing overall light pollution.

In addition, public feedback resulted in the stainless steel finish being replaced with weathered steel panels incorporating a perforated pattern to maximise light and views, making the bridge feel warmer and

improving the pedestrian experience.

HS2's designers, consisting of a Design Joint Venture of Mott MacDonald and Systra working for BBV, have also introduced green spaces by creating new woodland planting in the area around the bridge. This includes silver birch, hazel and hawthorn, and wildflowers and grasses which will provide new wildlife havens and connectivity in the city's industrial heartland.

David King, Senior Project Manager at HS2 Ltd said: "We welcome the approval of our designs for Aston Church Road Overbridge by Birmingham City Council. We've worked closely with the Council and local community to make sure this bridge blends with the local surroundings and enhances and connects green spaces in this urban part of Birmingham.

"The bridge is a key part of the wider improvements HS2 is bringing to this area of Birmingham, providing better pedestrian and cycle connectivity for the local community which will help support longer-term sustainable economic growth for the area."

Nick McGough, Director at Weston Williamson + Partners, and Lead Architect for the Balfour Beatty VINCI Design Joint Venture, which is constructing the line in the West Midlands, said: "Reflecting community feedback, our designs balance challenging technical constraints in developing a robust but elegant bridge, whilst seeking every opportunity to both enhance the user experience and increase biodiversity through our adjoining landscape proposals.

"The integrated bridge lighting is particularly innovative and reduces urban light pollution in a way which is sympathetic to local wildlife whilst providing enhanced light levels that will help make the bridge attractive to both pedestrians and cyclists."

Aston Church Road Overbridge is located two miles north-east of Birmingham city centre. The original bridge will be demolished to create extra space for the HS2 line to pass through, and once built, the new bridge will connect to the existing road network.

The new alignment of Aston Church Road with the creation of safe pedestrian crossing points has also provided an opportunity to provide a new public space in front of the local mosque. Weston Williamson + Partners have worked with participants from the community and users of Masjid Ali Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat Mosque, resulting in proposed designs for a paved area with seating, a cycle crossing, and an area for ornamental shrubs and tree planting.

Preparatory works, ready for the new bridge, began last year. Main civil works will now commence, and the bridge and associated highway works are due to be finished in summer 2025.

Photo credit: HS2