

Connection, regeneration, together with sustainability. How HS2 can lead to good, high quality urban regeneration

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INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: Map of the HS2's route (both current and cancelled sections).

HS2 is a high speed rail project currently under construction, connecting London with Birmingham (HS2, no year) as seen in Figure 1 above. The project began construction in 2020 (The Guardian, 2020) and should be completed by 2033 (HS2 in Birmingham, no year). Originally, HS2 was supposed to be part of a much larger project connecting London with Northern England and Scotland, however, the section north of Birmingham was cancelled in October 2023 (Scott, 2023).

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this dissertation is to assess the impact of HS2 on large urban communities, especially in more deprived areas. It will focus on the regeneration projects around Birmingham, particularly whether HS2 has influenced Birmingham City Council to authorise these initiatives. The aim is twofold. Firstly, a critical assessment of HS2 in relation to Birmingham city centre's regeneration projects, employment and mobility would be offered. The dissertation would focus particularly on HS2's impact on retail regeneration around Birmingham City Centre. Secondly, the extent to which HS2 has successfully and efficiently created a more robust rail infrastructure will be assessed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & DATA COLLECTION

The first series of data has been collected through research planning applications in Birmingham City Centre (on the Birmingham City Council website) between 2018 and 2024. This was done in order to find out to how much regeneration there has been in Birmingham since the first phase of HS2 was approved in 2017.

The next series of data collection, which is still a work in progress, will involve looking through official records using websites such as the Office of National Statistics (ONS) of employment figures within Birmingham Centre. Figures from both now and previous years would be used for comparison purposes. This would be done to find out whether HS2-led regeneration in Birmingham City Centre would be leading to an increase of employment (and therefore an improvement to Birmingham City Centre's economy) or not.

All of the above data collection will be supported by a research day trip to Birmingham where I would explore the HS2-led regenerated areas (where finished), take photos and investigate, on the retail aspect:

- Types of shops that have been opened
- Their location
- Commercial impact.

Finally, this dissertation will be accompanied by an interview with key stakeholders of Birmingham City Council. Various questions would be asked, including what type of sector (cultural, social, retail etc.) would regeneration have the biggest impact on Birmingham City Centre, their view as to whether HS2 is leading to regeneration within Birmingham City Centre, how regeneration has evolved in Birmingham City Centre over the past 20 years and whether the economic crisis in 2008 has had a major challenge on Birmingham City Centre's economy & regeneration.

REFERENCES

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 4. Scott, J. (2023) *HS2 to Manchester axed in favour of 'Network North'*. Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/hs2-rishi-sunak-confirms-northern-leg-from-birmingham-to-manchester-will-be-scrapped-12976382> (Accessed: 09/04/2024)
 5. Birmingham City Council (2017) *Birmingham Plan 2031*. Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/5433/adopted_birmingham_development_plan_2031 (Accessed: 09/04/2024)
- Figure 1: Cnrb (2023) *File:High Speed 2 phases map 2023.png*. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:High_Speed_2_phases_map_2023.png (Accessed: 09/04/2024)
- Figure 2: Google MyMaps

RESULTS SO FAR

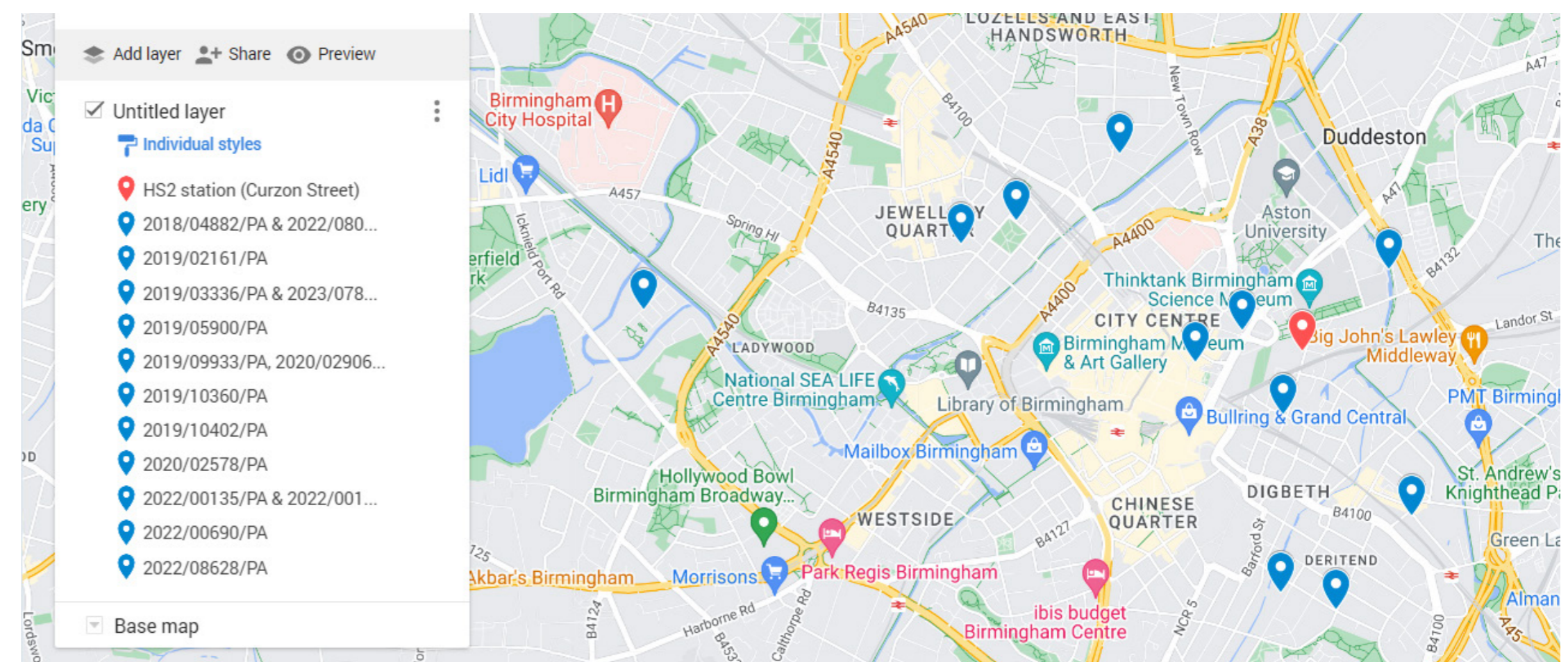


Figure 2: Map showing the location of Curzon Street HS2 station (red) and the location of the 11 regeneration projects (from my planning application data analysis) that mention HS2.

By researching planning applications between 2018 and 2024, the research was able to find 51 planning applications in relation to 35 regeneration projects within Birmingham City Centre:

Of these 51 planning applications:

- 41 were approved in total of which:
 - 35 were approved with conditions
 - 6 were approved without any conditions needed
- 8 were undecided (total) of which:
 - 7 were new projects
 - 1 was a variation to an existing project that was already approved with conditions
 - 1 had a non-determine appeal
 - 1 was withdrawn

TYPES OF DEVELOPMENTS

- 44 planning applications include retail (class A1, E[a] & F2[a])
- 28 planning applications include homes & apartments (class C3)
- 34 planning applications includes bars, cafes, takeaways & restaurants (class A3, A4, A5, Sui Generis Drinking Establishments & E[b])
- 34 planning applications include offices & business uses (A2, B1, E[c] & E[g])

OTHER DATA

- 16 planning applications are related to 11 projects in which HS2 is mentioned. The location of the 11 projects can be found in Figure 2 above.
- Of these, 13 planning applications were approved and the other 3 were undecided (1 of which was a variation to an existing project that was already approved with conditions).

KEY RESULTS FROM HS2 MENTIONED PROJECTS

- Of the HS2 mentioned regeneration projects that involve housing, most of them don't mention affordable housing. The very few that do look to deliver affordable housing in very small units (typically 5% of the total). This is a violation of policy TP31 of the 2031 Birmingham Local Plan (adopted by the city council), in that it's stated that any developer that contributes to delivering more than 15 dwellings must include at least 35% of affordable housing (Birmingham City Council, 2017). Therefore, this means that regeneration within Birmingham City Centre could potentially be leading to gentrification.

NEXT EXPECTED KEY FINDINGS & RESULTS

- Data from looking at online statistics (through use of ONS data etc.) on employment figures will be expected to show that HS2 regeneration is leading to an increase in employment within Birmingham City Centre.
- Photos from my research day trip will be expected to demonstrate that HS2 is leading to new types of retail traders opening up in the HS2-led regenerated areas. Collective data will be compared to the area prior to the HS2-led regeneration project. Data will be plotted on a graph so as to show the extent to which regeneration has been effectively implemented.
- Data interviews will expect to confirm the viewpoint that HS2 is a major factor in influencing regeneration throughout Birmingham City Centre.