

Thinking along new lines

A group of students has looked at the introduction of HS2 in the landscape as an opportunity rather than a problem.

BY PAUL WHEELER

Image ©: - Mathew Lee, DSDHA's Unit 11 at The Cass.

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VICTORIAN LANDSCAPE paintings often include man-made elements; a railway viaduct on the horizon, a canal or a windmill. They were, of course, the cutting edge infrastructures of their day and suggest that, at least in the eye of the 19th century landscape painter, there was beauty in the engineered interjections into the landscape.

Yet this view has somehow been lost over the years, suggests architect and urban designer Deboarah Saunt.

Saunt is co-founder of architecture practice DSDHA and also has a parallel career in academic research and teaching. She recently ran a RIBA Part II architectural diploma course at The Cass School of Design in London, in which students explored the concept of beautiful infrastructure in the context of HS2, and what needs to happen for infrastructure to become beautiful again.

‘The work of Brunel and Paxton has become part of the national vision of a beautiful Britain,’ Deborah says, ‘but while you get beautiful one-off projects, such as the Millennium Bridge, generally contemporary architects and designers don’t think too much about the aesthetics of large infrastructure.’

Students studied the line of the phase one route, and were asked to propose how much they could make of the opportunity.

‘We wanted to challenge the rhetoric that the architectural opportunity is only at the stations, the points of interchange, and not the route itself,’ Deborah said.

Ideas ranged from the potential of using the underside of structures for community purposes, such as a skatepark, ‘thereby creating meeting places that link communities rather than sever them’, to the creation of ‘parallel infrastructure’, as happens in Holland, which enables, among other things, the removal of nearby pylons.

The students’ ideas also included the use of ornamental agricultural crops and left-over line-side space being used for a wide range of industrial, energy-related, landscape, community and even housing projects, with the development of contemporary railway villages.



Adding Infrastructure

Student: Jason Bechtle

In the style of Nancy Wolf, the proposal adds a pedestrian bridge over the HS2 railway tracks.

Image ©: 1 – Jason Bechtle, DSDHA's Unit 11 at The Cass.

HS2 Viaduct

Student: Pavlos Savva

Sections of a proposed viaduct and undercroft. With some small interventions (lighting and timber cladding), the underpass becomes a more appealing space, drawing people to the viaduct, which can host a number of activities. It is proposed the highly articulated concrete viaduct is poured in-situ to create a beautiful piece of infrastructure inviting human inhabitation.

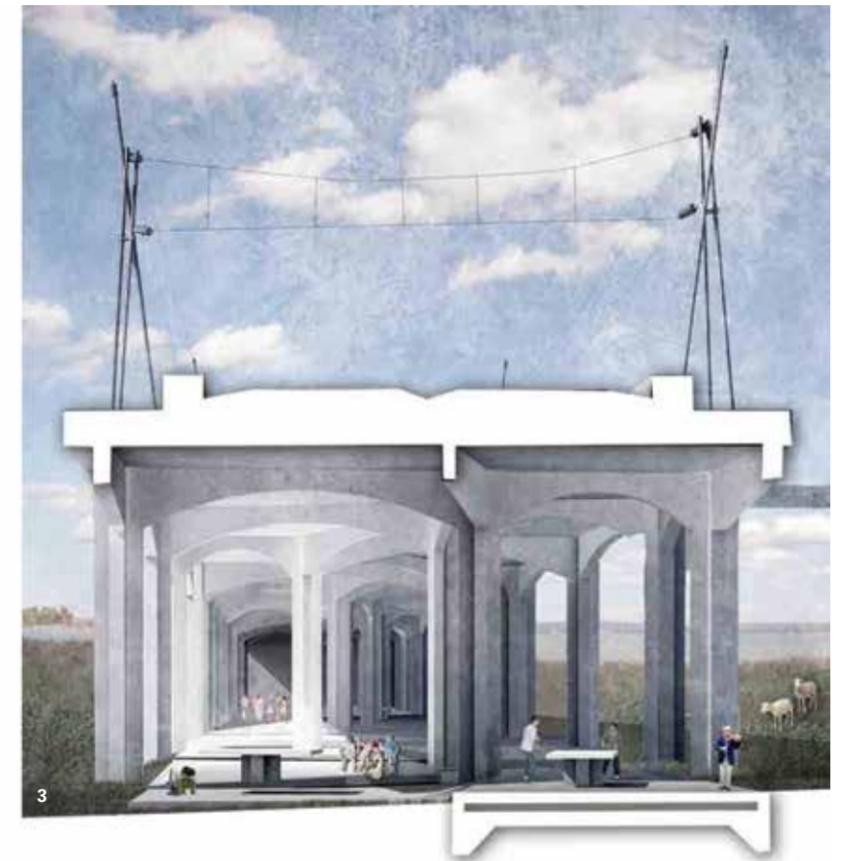


Image ©: 2, 3 – Pavlos Savva, DSDHA's Unit 11 at The Cass.



Axonometric showing infrastructure opportunities in Euston

Student: Matthew Lee

Matthew studied the Euston area and proposed alternatives to the current plans for the station and wider area.

Image ©: 4 – Matthew Lee, DSDHA's Unit 11 at The Cass.

Feature



After Mount Quainton

Student: Rich Worth

Based on Nicolas Poussin's *Landscape with Polyphemus* of 1649, the proposal uses spoil from major infrastructure projects including HS2 to create an artificial mountain in the Chilterns in order to conceal the new line as well as the

attendant servicing and storage facilities. At the same time, it creates a new idyllic landscape that would provide leisure facilities, would change weather patterns providing new agricultural opportunities, and would allow the generation of wind power.



Image ©: 5, 6 – Rich Worth, DSDHA's Unit 11 at The Cass.



Turweston Viaduct Diptych

Student: Matthew Lee

The diptych attempts to recreate landscape painter William Marlow's composition techniques using lighting and framing. The design responds to the outcome of the countryside mapping and uses a curved pier to take lateral forces from the trains, allowing the remainder of the columns to be more delicate point loads. This helps contextually to create an individual response to the place with an identity associated with the local condition.



Euston Cutting Housing

Student: Ben Rowe

After the construction of HS2 large strips of land will remain pm either side of the route. Owned by HS2, could these areas be developed to help fight the housing crisis? Different sites would require different typologies. Here at Euston brick, split-level apartments are proposed.

Image ©: 4 - Matthew Lee, DSDHA's Unit 11 at The Cass. Image ©: 8 - Ben Rowe, DSDHA's Unit 11 at The Cass.

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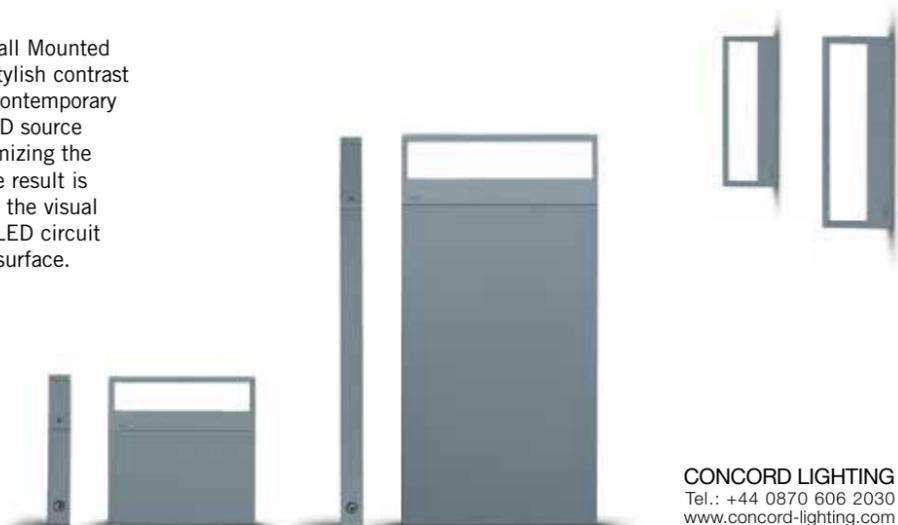


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