Department for Transport

From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
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The Earl of Glasgow
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Dear Lord Glasgow

Due to the limited time remaining at the end of the Second Reading of the High Speed Rail (London to West Midlands) Bill, I was unable to respond to many of the points raised during the debate. I therefore write to outline my response to your comments where I was unable to do so during the debate itself.

As I mentioned at Second Reading HS2 will not come at the expense of the existing transport network. The Government is investing unprecedented amounts of money to deliver infrastructure fit for the 21st century. We are investing over £38 billion in the existing rail network between 2014 and 2019, including delivering Crossrail, Thameslink, new Intercity Express Trains and the electrification of the TransPennine, Great Western and Midland Main lines. In addition, we are trebling the budget for major road schemes to £15 billion between 2015 and 2021 and we are investing £12 billion in local transport between 2015 and 2020

HS2 will be a National Network. From day one, when HS2 Phase One opens in 2026, HS2 trains will run up on the classic network to serve cities in the North West and Glasgow. Journey times from London to Glasgow will fall below four hours for the first time. When Phase 2 is complete we will see even greater connectivity and improved journey times.

The Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport Scotland have been working closely and jointly commissioned HS2 Ltd to explore broad options for upgraded and high speed railways to the North of England and Scotland. This study was published on 21 March 2016 along with a

statement on next steps. The statement expressed the UK and Scottish Governments' shared ultimate ambition for 3 hour journeys between London and Scotland's central belt, but recognised that more work will be needed - particularly to understand benefits and business cases - before decisions can be made on particular options.

With regard to joining up Liverpool and Manchester, we want to correct historic underinvestment in the north and create a Northern Powerhouse. Connecting the north's towns and cities into a single economy is essential to creating a transformed northern economy greater than the sum of its parts. That is why, as well as devolving power to the north, we are investing £13 billion in northern transport, including investment schemes to improve road access to our ports in Liverpool and the Humber.

The Chancellor has given the greenlight to the first phase of the Northern Powerhouse ambition – the connection between Leeds and Manchester - with £60m to develop detailed plans to reduce journey times towards 30 minutes by 2017, as well as plans for improving links between the North's other major cities.

In addition, we have committed over £1bn for the TransPennine Upgrade and Northern Hub programmes. The new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises will see a £1.2bn boost to rail services and deliver 220 new carriages, equivalent to 44 trains. The new Northern Franchise will see the complete removal of the outdated 'Pacers' by the end of 2019, and investment of £400million. Through the Northern Powerhouse, and HS2 which will be a core building block of the northern network, we are committed to rebalancing our economy.

With regard to Heathrow Airport, connectivity to HS2 is important. When HS2 opens in 2026, the interchange at Old Oak Common will provide HS2 passengers with a connection to frequent, direct rail services to Heathrow. As proposed, HS2 will reduce the journey time from central Birmingham to Heathrow from approximately 2 hours now, to around 1 hour.

In relation to proposals for a direct HS2 link to Heathrow, in March 2015 the Secretary of State announced that no spur to Heathrow would be built as part of Phase One or Two of the HS2 railway. More recently, the Select Committee in the Other Place highlighted that there remains a risk of blight on properties on the trajectory of the previously envisaged

spur, and directed that the Promoter should not use the Bill powers to implement passive provision for a Heathrow spur. In response, the Government has confirmed that no passive provision will be implemented for such a link.

Although the principle of a rail connection linking HS1 and HS2 is strategically attractive, the combination of very tight physical constraints and the demands on existing services in this critical part of our national infrastructure make it very difficult to achieve. Following completion of the HS2-HS1 Connectivity Study last year, we were unable to identify a viable rail option capable of meeting the strategic aspirations whilst successfully addressing community concerns. This was because the options were complex and expensive to construct and would have delivered infrequent, less attractive train services for HS2 passenger travelling to European destinations. As a result we do not intend to include a direct rail between HS2 and HS1.

Instead, we have concluded that the provision of an enhanced walking route between Euston and St. Pancras would provide a positive option for passengers connecting between HS2 and HS1 services. This option will provide HS2 passengers arriving at Euston with access to the full range of international services that operate from St Pancras, providing passengers with maximum flexibility. This option would also complement the underground works already included as part of HS2, which will provide convenient step-free access for passengers transiting between Euston and St Pancras via the Circle Line.

Finally, the design for Euston as set out in the Bill provides not only a new station for HS2, but also sufficient additional capacity for interchange with London Underground through a new concourse at Euston and a link to Euston Square. In relation to the construction of Euston station, we recognise the particular impacts in that area. We have provide a number of assurances to the London Borough of Camden (LBC). These will help remove uncertainty and mitigate impacts where reasonably practicable.

For example, an assurance has been agreed which requires the Nominated Undertaker appointed to construct HS2 to engage with LBC on the development of a community engagement framework aimed at ensuring that all sections of the community, including businesses and individuals, are made aware of developments in relation to the construction programme and local impacts.

More generally we are committed to reducing disruption on residents caused by the construction of HS2 as far as reasonably possible. In line with other major construction schemes such as Crossrail and the Thames Tideway Tunnel, a Code of Construction Practice has been developed which sets out the controls that will be applied to mitigate the effects of the construction of HS2 and will be binding on the nominated undertaker. This includes things like noise issues, and identifies where offers of noise insulation or temporary rehousing should be made to residents to ensure that their health and quality of life is not significantly affected by the construction noise.

I hope this answers the points mentioned sufficiently.

A copy of this letter has been placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Yours Sincerely.

J Ahmad of Wimbledon

LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON