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From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
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*Dear Michael.*

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.

I would like to reassure you that consideration of alternatives has been a key part of the process. There is a separate document in the Environmental Statement devoted to alternatives.

The HSUK proposal was discussed during the House of Commons' Select Committee hearings. However, the HSUK proposal is against the principle of the Bill as established at Second Reading in the House of Commons. It is also the case that alternative configuration and alignments (including those similar to the HSUK proposal) put forward by those who responded to the national consultation on High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's future' (February to July 2011) had been taken into consideration. This is set out in the High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's future – Decision and Next Steps report, published in January 2012.

On environment mitigation, along surface sections of the HS2 route environmental measures such as landscaping, noise fences and planting will help to reduce impacts of the railway. As part of HS2, we will plant at least 2 million trees as part of Phase One, with up to an additional 5 million to be bought in the next ten years to blend the route into the surrounding landscape.

I hope this answers the points mentioned sufficiently.

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

*Yours truly*  
*Ahmad*

**LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON**