



Department for Transport

Baroness Randerson
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Baroness Vere of Norbiton
Minister for Roads, Buses and Places

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: baroness.vere@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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Dear Jenny,

Thank you for your contribution during the HS2 debate held on Wednesday 11 March 2020. I thought the debate was good natured and constructive.

As promised, I am writing to provide further details on questions that you raised and to touch on Old Oak Common station, the speed of HS2 and the BCR measurement of transport schemes.

Old Oak Common

As with the route, the location of HS2's stations have been thoroughly tested, not only through public consultation, but through parliamentary scrutiny and debate and reviews such as the one chaired by Douglas Oakervee.

The choice and location of the four Phase One stations at Euston, Old Oak Common, Birmingham Interchange and Birmingham Curzon Street, have been thoroughly tested by the select committee process for the HS2 Phase One Bill, which received Royal Assent in 2017. Their locations are designed to maximise connectivity within the areas they serve.

It is no secret that taking a new high-speed train line into the centre of London will be complex. However, Euston was chosen after consideration of a long list of options. This in part is because of its location in central London and its connections to several Underground lines and other surface transport modes. Old Oak Common does not have the same level of connectivity, although in time the Elizabeth Line is intended to call there.

As a permanent terminus for HS2, Old Oak Common would be under considerable strain and risks negating the journey time savings as onward journeys into central London. There is also the matter of resilience; if there is an issue with the Elizabeth Line, a passenger making an onward journey into London has very limited options for onward travel in the absence of a Euston terminus.

Speed

The savings from reducing the speed has been considered by the Government. However, as Professor Andrew McNaughton, the former Technical Director at High Speed 2 Ltd, has said there are trade-offs with reductions to speed. He believes that reducing the speed of the new railway will only have a “small effect on cost... but a major dis-benefit to the daily travellers who will use it for many decades.”

More recently, the Government asked the independent Oakervee Review to provide advice on this same issue. The Review agreed that a reduction in speed could cut costs however major savings could only be achieved by through significant changes to the route design and alignment, the like of which would require a new Act of Parliament for HS2 Phase One.

Not only would this delay the start of construction by several years, causing uncertainty and blight to communities along the line of route, but any savings would be offset by the additional costs of a new hybrid Bill and environmental statement.

BCR

The Department for Transport’s guidance on appraising the economic and strategic cases is widely respected and is held up internationally as a leading example of best practice for transport appraisal. The strategic and economic cases explore the anticipated impacts of the scheme and allow the department and the government to take a rounded view of the assessment of a scheme beyond the quantified costs and benefits set out in the economic case.

The department continues to develop its approach to transport analysis. Last year, following a consultation, the department published its Appraisal and Modelling Strategy^[1]. One key priority relates to continuing to develop our understanding of modelling and appraising transformational investments and housing.

In 2018 the Department released new guidance to allow for the quantification of benefits that result from land-use change due to the transport intervention (‘level 3’ benefits). Given the complexity and uncertainty inherent in forecasting land-use changes, the benefits of land-use changes have not been included in the BCR estimates for HS2. The Department are working closely with HS2 Ltd to develop tools to help estimate the longer-term transformational impacts of HS2 on the UK economy, which allow people and businesses to relocate in response to transport investment. The wider

[1]

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/795924/appraisal-and-modelling-strategy.pdf

economic impacts included within HS2's adjusted BCR account for over 20% of the quantified benefits.

I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Verë of Norbiton

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON