



Department
for Transport

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From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
Andrew Jones MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: andrew.jones@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

Our Ref: MC/183036

Nigel Adams MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

- 5 DEC 2016

Dear Nigel,

Thank you for your letter of 21 November to Chris Grayling, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, about the High Speed 2 (HS2) preferred route from residents in the Church Fenton and Ulleskelf area. I am replying as Minister responsible for HS2.

I have responded to your concerns in the order laid out in your letter.

1. I understand your concern over the links between Newcastle and Leeds. Transport for the North (TfN) is working with Network Rail and HS2 Ltd to review options to improve connectivity between Leeds and Newcastle. The HS2 Phase Two network does not connect between Leeds and Newcastle, however the provision of direct services between the cities is unlikely to be affected by the HS2 plans.
2. The rationale for extending the viaduct's length in the Church Fenton area comes from lessons learned from Phase One which are incorporated into HS2 design standards (updated since 2013) which limit the minimum length of embankments between structures to 200m. This has meant that a continuous viaduct has been proposed in the Church Fenton area. The Sustainability Statement, published as part of the announcement in November 2016, sets out the potential sustainability impacts of the route which were considered in the route decision.

In preparing the Hybrid Bill for Phase 2b, HS2 Ltd will undertake further design and environmental assessment work to understand whether the design can be further improved, particularly in respect of the noise and visual impacts, where these are assessed to be significant. HS2 Ltd will

engage further with local communities during this next stage, this includes the area of the Sandwath Estate. Details of HS2 Ltd's approach to sustainability can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-sustainability-policy>

3. With regard to alternative alignments and connections from HS2 towards York I recognise that strong feelings were expressed in the previous consultation about the route in this area. These views were taken into account however the design of the connection on the national network towards the East Coast Main Line (ECML) is constrained by a number of design requirements. In determining that the best place for the connection was near Church Fenton, HS2 Ltd reviewed a range of alternative alignments and connections to the classic network to determine whether there were any options which performed better overall than the one consulted upon. These alternative routes included those north of Church Fenton, as well as connections which would leave the HS2 mainline south of the spur to Leeds. These options were considered using HS2 Ltd's sifting process which involves considering the merits of each option against a range of criteria; engineering complexity, environmental impact, cost, and demand impacts (including as a result of journey time changes). HS2 Ltd concluded that there was no better solution when alternatives were judged against these factors.

The alternative junction locations either involved greater engineering complexity, increased cost, resulted in longer journey times to key markets in the north-east thereby having a negative impact on the business case for the Phase 2b scheme, or had more significant impacts on communities.

HS2's design includes the need for a grade-separated junction between Church Fenton and Ulleskelf, where HS2 joins to the Normanton lines (the lines to the east of the Leeds-York lines within the rail corridor). The Normanton lines are, at this point, primarily used for freight. The current HS2 design is for the freight services currently using the Normanton lines to be switched to the Leeds-York lines, providing the capacity for the HS2 services to use the Normanton Lines and link directly into the ECML "fast lines" at Colton Junction.

The HS2 tracks must therefore pass over the Leeds-York lines to join into the Normanton lines. A flat junction cannot be accommodated at this location due to the level of service running on the busier Leeds-York lines. A flat junction with the Leeds lines would result in conflicting moves between services which would affect the reliability of both Network Rail and HS2 services.

HS2 Ltd will continue to work with Network Rail during the Hybrid Bill development process, when the requirements for any changes on the Network Rail network to accommodate HS2 will be considered in more detail. Such changes to the Network Rail lines could come about through development of Northern Powerhouse Rail ambitions.

4. TfN's aspiration to run additional services ("Northern Powerhouse Rail") between Leeds and Newcastle may impact upon the already congested Network Rail network. TfN's proposals are at a very early stage, with decisions still to be taken. HS2 Ltd is working with TfN to help them develop proposals. It is too early to be able to reflect these proposals in the HS2 plans. Journey times from London to York using HS2 services will reduce from 110 minutes to 84 minutes, a reduction of 26 minutes.
5. The benefit of HS2 joining the existing railway before joining the East Coast Mainline centred around the railway capacity arguments set out in response to point 3.
6. The need for grade-separating the junction between Church Fenton and Ulleskelf is explained in response to point 3.

I am of course happy to meet with you to discuss the above concerns. Please contact my diary secretary, Rita White (Rita.White@dft.gsi.gov.uk) to arrange this. I am also aware that these are some quite technical issues and if you would be interested in a Technical Briefing from HS2 Ltd to go into more depth, we would be happy to organise this for you.

Yours,

Andrew

ANDREW JONES