

Report to: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Date: 1 August 2019

Subject: **HS2 Consultation Response**

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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide an update on the proposed response to the HS2 Phase 2b Design Refinement Consultation which relates to changes to the proposed HS2 route between Woodlesford and the HS2 Leeds station.

2. Information

Background

- 2.1 HS2 is the single largest investment in national infrastructure in the UK. It will act as a catalyst for regeneration and growth, stimulating connectivity to towns and cities across the Leeds City Region and the North, improving the skills and job prospects and creating opportunities for businesses and supply chain.
- 2.2 Once completed HS2 will connect Leeds to London in 1 hour and 21 minutes and Leeds to Birmingham in 49 minutes with services every twenty minutes. Delivery of HS2 is anticipated to generate an extra £54bn GVA to the region's economy and create 41,000 jobs through interventions proposed by the HS2 growth strategy.

- 2.3 HS2 Ltd is currently consulting on eleven proposed changes to the design of the HS2 Phase 2b route which includes one design refinement within West Yorkshire. The consultation period on these proposed changes opened on the 6 June 2019 and closes on 6 September 2019 and includes a number of information events in the Hunslet Area.
- 2.4 A previous consultation on 'Working Draft Environmental Statement' which covered the full HS2 phase 2b route was undertaken in autumn 2018. The Combined Authorities response at this time called upon HS2 to plan for and mitigate as far as possible the following:
- The disruption to the transport network including where it will worsen congestion, increase journey times and have a negative impact on local bus and rail services.
 - Where HS2 is expected to have an adverse environmental effect for example on existing green and blue infrastructure and air quality.
 - Where businesses are affected particularly the need for support packages to be implemented well in advance of any relocation dates.
 - To ensure that Leeds station is HS2 ready, with the full implementation of the masterplan
 - To work with Transport for the North to properly integrate HS2 with Northern Powerhouse Rail.
 - To continue to align plans for the depot with the plans for the Enterprise Zone (EZ) and compensate the Combined Authority for the loss of income that building the depot in the EZ has caused.
- 2.5 The revised proposals between Woodlesford and Leeds and resulting changes in impacts of construction and operation will result in changes to the quality and character of neighbourhoods along the route. Leeds City Council as the planning authority will be addressing these local issues.

Main Issues

- 2.6 The previous design proposals towards Leeds included a 2km bored tunnel under Woodlesford which emerged between the Hallam Line (which connects Leeds to Wakefield Kirkgate, Castleford and beyond) and the Aire and Calder Navigation Canal approximately 1km to the west of Woodlesford. Into Leeds HS2 is predominantly in a new cutting adjacent and lower than the existing Hallam Line. This design will require the existing rail line to be realigned southwards for 2.5km, substantial works to twelve road bridges and the closure of Jack Lane.
- 2.7 The design refinement for the Leeds corridor involves a change to the height of the route for 8km on the approach to Leeds from Woodlesford so that the line is predominantly on a viaduct, rather than a combination of at ground level, cutting and embankment.

- 2.8 The proposed design changes will impact both local communities along the 8km corridor and across the wider transport networks in South Leeds and beyond and offer both benefits and dis-benefits compared to the original proposals.

Benefits

- 2.9 Based on the new HS2 assessment, the viaduct avoids the need to realign the Hallam line and requirement for lengthy closures which results in less disruption for rail passengers and freight movements into Leeds from the south.
- 2.10 The new design also removes the need to reconstruct nine bridges along the HS2 corridor between the M1 and Leeds centre and therefore avoids the need for 9-12 month road closures. Changes will still have to be made to the local road network but this offers a significant improvement with regards to how the highway network will operate during construction compared to the previous proposals. Therefore reducing the negative impacts on congestion and associated implications for bus passengers, non-motorised users and air quality.
- 2.11 The viaduct proposals reduce the amount of land take during construction and operation and offer the opportunity to utilise space under the viaduct for commercial enterprise or provide facilities for the local community.
- 2.12 It reduces constraints in the construction programme and brings about a cost saving which improves the deliverability of phase 2b of HS2 between Birmingham and Leeds.

Dis-benefits

- 2.13 There will be a significant visual impact of the viaduct structure through South Leeds including residential areas in Rothwell, Woodlesford, Hunslet and Belle Isle. The Viaduct will have a typical clearance height of 5.7m and vary in width between 14m and 32m leaving large undercroft areas.
- 2.14 It will result in increased noise pollution for communities along the viaduct. Noise assessment data has not been made available but mitigation measures may increase the visual impact or height of the structure.
- 2.15 The revised proposals require additional construction works in Rothwell Country Park and construction compounds closer to residents in Woodlesford (although it negates the need for a vent shaft in village which would also be disruptive).

Potential outline response

- 2.16 The consultation requires a response to the following question – ‘What are your views on the proposal to change the height of the route on the approach into Leeds?’
- 2.17 The following paragraphs set out the proposed principles of the Combined Authority’s response. The Combined Authority continues to welcome the arrival of high-speed rail to the UK’s largest economy and population centre outside London. The Combined Authority recognise that HS2 is much more than a transport project. It will act as a catalyst for regeneration and growth around the region’s main transport hubs, it will improve connectivity to towns and cities across the Leeds City Region and it will improve the skills and job opportunities for the workforce.
- 2.18 HS2 is part of the region’s wider ambitions for inclusive growth across the Leeds City Region. This growth is essential in order to raise living standards and tackle deprivation, boost innovation, exports and create new jobs. HS2 helps to achieve our goals by strengthening business links, by opening up new markets and access to talent and by connecting people to jobs.
- 2.19 The Leeds City Region have committed to becoming the UK’s first zero carbon city region. HS2 will not only improve long distance rail travel but free up capacity on the existing rail network enabling modal shift from private car and air travel for existing and future trips. HS2 as part of an integrated transport network provides an opportunity to de-carbonise public transport within the City Region.
- 2.20 The Combined Authority recognises the challenges and complexities of the construction of a high speed route into Leeds City Centre and welcomes the opportunity to reduce the impacts of construction and travel disruption to both the road and rail network and the knock-on effects on local communities and business as a result of congestion.
- 2.21 However, it is proposed the Combined Authority makes clear that the final design of the viaduct should minimise visual intrusion and noise pollution with enhanced landscaping, high quality design and noise mitigation measures for local residents.
- 2.22 It is also proposed that the Combined Authority requires HS2 to make the viaduct undercroft an area to be utilised for employment opportunities with active frontages or community space and not a sterile environment. It also provides an opportunity to maximise cycling and walking connectivity along the viaduct corridor and the potential for new multifunctional public spaces aligning with the City Regions Green and Blue Infrastructure and Delivery Plan. In the first instance, this should be funded by HS2 as part of benefit to the community through which the railway passes. Also, for the community and beyond, it is proposed that the response presses HS2 to do more to engage people about the opportunity the railway provides, including in investing in skills so that local people can benefit from the jobs created by the investment.

- 2.23 The viaduct proposals must not compromise the proposed Stourton touchpoint which will allow NPR services south of Leeds to access the existing station and continue towards York and the North East.

Leeds City Council draft response

- 2.24 Leeds City Council in their proposed response continue to welcome the principle of HS2 and the economic investment it will bring to the city but are mindful that greater attention is paid to the project's impacts on communities and the environment. They propose to raise concerns that the current visual information is inadequate and they are therefore unable to determine if the viaduct proposals are acceptable. Their response asks that visual intrusion is minimised, a high level of noise mitigation is provided, walking and cycling is incorporated into the new design as well as public spaces, green infrastructure and flood mitigation. They also call for a funded development strategy and masterplan to develop areas under and adjacent to the proposed viaduct. The link below is to Leeds City Council's Executive Board report that explains their proposed response in more detail.

Climate emergency

- 2.25 HS2 published the Working Draft Environmental Statement (WDES) in Oct 2018 which sets out the mitigation measures for the preferred route. The WDES does not provide sufficient level of details beyond a high level statement indicating that measures will be implemented to manage dust, air pollution and odour during construction and that it is not predicted that there will be significant adverse route-wide air quality effects during operation. The Combined Authority will engage further with HS2 to assess the implications of HS2 on the climate emergency. A West Yorkshire Low Emission Strategy has been adopted by the Combined Authority and all West Yorkshire Partner Councils. This outlines measures to significantly improve air quality across the region and makes a series of recommendations which include planning and new development. We have asked HS2 Ltd to consider this strategy as part of their development.

3. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 3.1 There are no inclusive growth implications directly arising from this report. However, through the response to the HS2 consultation, as set out above, it is proposed that the Combined Authority presses for mitigation of the impacts of the route, new community facilities and investment in skills for people to take advantage of the opportunities presented by HS2.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

6. Staffing Implications

- 6.1 Response to HS2 consultation is currently dealt with by the existing resources within the Policy and Strategy Directorate.

7. External Consultees

- 7.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That the Combined Authority endorses the principles of the consultation response in sections 2.16 – 2.23.
- 8.2 The final consultation response is approved by the Transport Committee prior to submission on the 6 September 2019.

9. Background Documents

- 9.1 HS2 Phase 2b Design Refinement Consultation can be downloaded at - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807420/hs2-phase-2b-design-refinement-web.pdf
- 9.2 Leeds City Council proposed response can be downloaded at - <https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/g9770/Public%20reports%20pack%2024th-Jul-2019%2013.00%20Executive%20Board.pdf?T=10>

10. Appendices

Figure 1 - Revised HS2 route to Leeds

Figure 2 – HS2 alignment into Leeds