

## **Item 5 Appendix 4**

### **HS2 Phase 2b Design Refinement Consultation response**

**West Yorkshire Combined Authority – 6th September 2019**

#### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This constitutes the response of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to the HS2 Phase 2b Design Refinement Consultation.
- 1.2 The Combined Authority works to ensure that our region is recognised globally as a strong, successful economy where everyone can build great businesses, careers and lives. We bring together local councils and businesses to achieve this vision, so that everyone in our region can benefit from economic prosperity and a modern, accessible transport network.

#### **2 West Yorkshire Combined Authority**

- 2.1 West Yorkshire Combined Authority is the transport authority covering Leeds, Wakefield, Kirklees, Bradford and Calderdale districts. We are not a strategic or local planning authority and therefore have no statutory responsibilities relating to planning. The Leeds City Region Local Planning Authorities are committed to partnership working to ensure a joined-up approach to spatial planning including tackling cross-boundary issues and agreeing strategic priorities. These strategic priorities are reflected in the objectives of the Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), specifically around Priority 4: Infrastructure for Growth.
- 2.2 As with any major infrastructure project, the impacts of the construction and operation of the HS2 would result in changes to the quality and character of neighbourhoods along the route. We expect that the individual planning authorities in the City Region will be responding to this consultation addressing these localised issues.

#### **3 Leeds City Region Growth Strategy**

- 3.1 West Yorkshire and our region's partners strongly welcome the arrival of high-speed rail to the UK's largest economy and population centre outside London. The Leeds City Region economy is the biggest outside London, worth over £65 billion and generating 5% of England's outputs. We have three million residents, a workforce of 1.9m, 119,000 businesses, fourteen further education colleges and nine higher education institutions, one of the largest concentrations in Europe. Our long-term vision is "to be a globally recognised economy where good growth delivers high levels of prosperity, jobs and quality of life for everyone".
- 3.2 The eastern leg of HS2, HS2 East, will reshape the economic geography of the UK. It will bring together the city regions centred on Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham and Birmingham into a coherent and integrated economic zone of over ten million people, five million jobs and some of the UK's most significant manufacturing clusters. Maintaining the deliverability of the eastern leg to

secure the benefits of HS2 is of paramount importance to the Combined Authority.

- 3.3 HS2 is much more than a transport project. It will act as a catalyst for regeneration and growth around our main transport hubs, it will improve connectivity to our towns and cities across the Leeds City Region and it will improve the skills and job opportunities for our workforce.
- 3.4 HS2 is part of our 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.
- 3.5 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.

#### **4 HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail**

- 4.1 Together HS2 and NPR form a new high speed rail network for the North which will provide more frequent services with much higher capacity. Transport for the North (TfN) work shows that this will lead to very significant economic benefits, bringing millions more people, and thousands of businesses, within reach of each of the key economic centres of the North. By 2050, nearly 10 million people in the North will be within 90 minutes reach of multiple economic centres in the North.
- 4.2 The current plans for the NPR network add to HS2, and the NPR network as envisaged cannot therefore be built without HS2. TfN's Strategic Transport Plan recognises that full delivery of the proposed HS2 network is estimated to generate £17.6 billion of wider economic benefits.
- 4.3 HS2 will carry over 300,000 passengers a day, releasing capacity on the existing rail network for both passenger and freight services by allowing the existing West and East Coast Main Lines, and the Midland Main Line, to be used in different ways, growing the overall capability of the rail network to meet future needs. How this released capacity can be used effectively to help the North's rail offer support the economy will be investigated through the Long Term Rail Strategy and the development of Northern Powerhouse Rail as integral components of a modern, dependable and responsive rail network.

#### **5 What are your views on the proposal to change the height of the route on the approach into Leeds?**

- 5.1 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.

5.2 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.

#### Benefits

5.3 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.

5.4 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 to 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.

5.5 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.

5.6 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

5.7 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.

- 5.8 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.
- 5.9 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).

#### The Combined Authority Requirements

- 5.10 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 businesses as a result of congestion.
- 5.11 However, 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.
- 5.12 The Combined Authority alongside Leeds City Council requires from HS2 / DfT a funded development strategy and deliverable masterplan to develop the undercroft areas and adjacent land to the viaduct which supports the city's wider regeneration and place making ambitions. With a focus on active frontages and creating places that have the flexibility to accommodate a variety of uses and building types.
- 5.13 The undercroft also provides an opportunity to maximise cycling and walking connectivity along the viaduct corridor and includes the potential for new multifunctional public spaces aligning with the City Regions Green and Blue Infrastructure and Delivery Plan.
- 5.14 HS2 to do more to engage people about the opportunity the railway provides, including investing in skills so that local people can benefit from the jobs created by the investment.
- 5.15 The viaduct proposals must not compromise a touchpoint at Stourton which will link the HS2 network to the conventional railway to the south of Leeds City Centre. A touchpoint at Stourton offers a range of important benefits including:
- New routings between the North's core cities adding options for flexibility, opportunities to release capacity and reshape the national rail network.
  - Opens the potential for HS2 services to reach wider markets beyond Leeds, such as Bradford, Huddersfield and Hull. This could mean high-speed services arriving in Bradford 10 years ahead of the completion of Northern Powerhouse Rail.
  - It would also boost the commercial benefits of HS2's eastern leg and also provide the potential for new markets such as the North East and East Midlands as well as supporting more efficient operations through enhanced connectivity.

5.16 The Combined Authority has recently declared a climate emergency and called for urgent collaborative action to tackle emissions. There has been little information from HS2 beyond a high-level statement in a previous consultation 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 and to ensure it adheres to the West Yorkshire Low Emission Strategy. The strategy outlines measures to significantly improve air quality across the region and makes a series of recommendations which include planning and new development.