STOP HS2 No business case. No environmental case. No money to pay for it.

Stop HS2 Submission to London Assembly Examination on HS2

This submission to the London Assembly Examination of HS2 is on behalf of Stop HS2, the national campaign group against HS2.

Introduction - What is HS2?

HS2 is a proposed new high speed rail line, designed for running at speeds of up to 400kph. It is proposed to join Euston and Birmingham in Phase 1 at a capital cost of £17 billion (2009 prices): rolling stock will cost another £3 billion, including some specially designed 'classic compatible' trains. It is also proposed to include a link to HS1 as part of Phase 1.

The government anticipate a second phase of the route, beyond Birmingham. This will have two branches, one to Manchester and another to Leeds. The Leeds branch is currently proposed to have stations at East Midlands and South Yorkshire. This phase will include a link to Heathrow. HS2 Ltd anticipate the total cost for both phases to be about £33 billion in 2009 prices.

Stop HS2 believe the project is fundamentally flawed, on both economic and environmental grounds.

1: HS2 conflicts with Government strategy

HS2 does not promote a "low carbon economy"

High Speed rail was included in the Coalition's Programme for Government as a means of reducing carbon emissions. Following last year's consultation the Department for Transport said:[1]

> "Our vision is of a truly national high speed rail network for the whole of Britain. We believe it can play a significant role in promoting a low carbon economy thereby helping to make our country greener and more sustainable. We believe it will be a transformational project that will revolutionise travel between our major cities and will almost eliminate the need for internal domestic flights."

However the HS2 Ltd main report published in March 2010 says

> "Perhaps the most important point to note is that this is equivalent to a range of -0.3% to +0.3% of UK transport emissions. So HS2 would not be a major factor in managing carbon in the transport sector. " p180

[1] http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/government/pfg/

On February 9th 2011, Philip Hammond sent a letter to MP's in which he said "our proposed London-West Midlands line is expected to be broadly carbon neutral".[2]

Britain needs to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. Given the cost of HS2 - £33 billion at 2009 prices – it seems illogical to spend so much money on such a large transport infrastructure project which will not contribute to carbon reductions.

HS2 conflicts with strategies aimed at a reduction in the Demand for Travel

Last year, Norman Baker, Transport Minister, was given a remit for non-travel. But HS2 Ltd's case for HS2 assumes that 22% of passengers will only be travelling because HS2 has been built, on top of any other background growth in the demand for long distance travel. This is in clear conflict with any desire to reduce travel.

Alternative ways of spending money, such as ultra-fast broadband would fit better with this part of the Government's strategy, and potentially benefit everyone in the country.

2: The Government's case for HS2

Modal Shift

The amount of modal shift which will result if HS2 is built, and if HS2 Ltd's projections are correct, is very small, with more than 85% of passengers either transferring from existing railways or being new passengers.

According to HS2 Ltd 65% of travellers will have transferred from classic rail, a less energy intense form of travel. 22% will be people who would not have travelled if HS2 had not been built. HS2 Ltd say that 7% will transfer from car. Only 6% will transfer from air.

There are currently no flights between London and Birmingham. Rail's share of the London Manchester market is increasing by about 5% a year. There is limited scope for further modal shift: in 2009, 74% of passengers on domestic flights between Heathrow and Manchester were transferring onto a connecting flight[3].

"Growth in demand for travel"?

The original growth figures used by HS2 Ltd were based on a 267% growth in demand for travel between 2008 and 2033. This suggested growth was significantly higher then any other reputable forecast (eg from Network Rail). The 2011 consultation documents use a lower annual growth rate, but have the extended forecast period to 2043. They give no reason for extending the forecast period, other than the new date is when their figures show the demand for travel will have doubled.

[2] http://stophs2.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/DfT_Hammond_letter_to_MPs_re_StopHS2.pdf

[3] Air and High Speed Rail Briefing Paper – The Realities of Rail. March 2010 http://www.bata.uk.com/Web/Documents/data/policybriefingnotes/BATA%20Air%20and%20High%20Speed%20Rail%20Briefing%20Paper%20March%202010.pdf

Demand estimates for high speed rail are frequently wrong: Fitch ratings[4] say that 9 out of 10 rail projects are overestimated. This can be seen with HS1: in 2009 the total passengers was 9.2 million whereas the original forecast said there would be 25 million in 2006.

However, other government reports suggest the focus should be on reducing demand for travel, not simply accepting it.

The Public Accounts Committee said that the railway industry should move away from a "tendency to seek solutions through growth". It came up with a number of suggestions, including extended use of smart card ticketing across the rail network.

Similarly, the McNulty review said that the railways should move away from a "predict and provide model" towards a "predict, manage and provide" model.

It should be noted that the "predict and provide" model is no longer used for planning road or aviation projects.

"Heal North-South divide"?

HS2 was not proposed as a way of providing economic regeneration or bridging the north-south divide. It has not been compared to other schemes which could be set up for that purpose.

However evidence from academic studies is unclear as to the regional effects of building high speed rail. For instance, in the case of Lille in France high speed rail was only part of a larger package of regeneration measures.

We have no way of knowing what the opportunity cost of going ahead with HS2 is, compared to other schemes targeted on the north. Further, the cost per job is approximately £400,000, which is significantly higher then other schemes.

HS2 Ltd documents say that 22000 of the 30,000 permanent jobs (over 70%) which will result from HS2 will be in London. While this may be to London's advantage, it will not heal the North South divide nationally.

There is also concern that the jobs will not be genuinely new jobs, but jobs relocated from elsewhere.

Cost Issue

After groups opposed to HS2 highlighted the cost of HS2 - over £1200 per family in the UK- Philip Hammond has tried a new tack of saying that it's not that expensive really. However HS2 Ltd worked out the cost using Treasury guidelines: to suggest that they are wrong is to suggest that the Treasury guidelines are wrong.

The headline cost of £33 billion to build the Y shaped network does not include the cost of rolling stock: HS2 Ltd estimate the cost of rolling stock for the London Birmingham phase is likely to be about £2.8 billion.

Cost of related transport projects

The cost of HS2 is being treated as if it was a stand alone project. However many of the

[4] http://www.fitchratings.com/web_content/presentations/2010/gig/fitch_high_speed_rail_projects_apr2010.pdf

predicted benefits from HS2 will only be realised if other investments are put in place. Many organisations which support HS2, including Centro (the West Midlands Transport Authority), Virgin trains, Greengauge 21 and Birmingham Airport, agree that it is also necessary to undertake these other improvements to the transport system so as to benefit from HS2..

On the other hand, it seems that only improvements in certain places are supported by campaigners for high speed rail. The Campaign for HSR issued a news item last week[5] referring to their "anger" over a suggestion to the Transport Select Committee that HS2 would mean that London would need a new tube line.

3: Lack of joined up thinking from HS2 Ltd

Decisions about the route:

One of Stop HS2's concerns is that HS2 has not been designed as part of an integrated transport system, but as a stand-alone project. Any links to other parts of the transport system seem to be added as afterthoughts.

Choice of Speed

A recent European Union report showed that long and medium distance UK travellers are amongst the happiest in Europe over the timetabled journey times of long distance trains. Speed of the journey is not an issue for most UK passengers

Some other European high speed lines are currently being built with speeds as low as 200kph, the same speed as the WCML, the ECML and the GWR.

However, HS2 Ltd chose a design speed of 400kph. 400kph may make sense in countries like China where the distances between cities are very great. But international rail experts agree that this speed is only suitable where stations are more then 150-200km apart. London to Birmingham is only just in this range. This speed seems unnecessarily fast, because the advantage of this speed compared to a lower speed are negligible for the distances concerned.

In addition, HS2 trains will be travelling at a lower speed on their route through Greater London: the route is not being designed to use 400kph until some distance after it has crossed the M25.

By choosing a design speed of 400kph, the HS2 Ltd planners have restricted other design decisions. But with three stations on the Leeds branch, the trains are unlikely even to run at full speed on this section: the International Union of Railways (UIC) says that it takes 10-20km for high speed trains to reach their maximum.

The design speed seems to have been chosen to make a marginal business case possible. However by setting a design speed of 400kph, the design of HS2 is constrained and cannot avoid sensitive sites in the way a slower design speed would be able to.

[5] http://www.campaignforhsr.com/london-tube-%E2%80%98blackmail%E2%80%99-angers-northern-high-speed-rail-lobby

HS2/HS1 link

This highlights one of the problems with the lack of an integrated strategy from HS2 Ltd.

As soon as the route of HS2 was announced, there were criticisms about the lack of a link between HS2 and HS1. A high speed network that has two lines very close to each other, but not actually connecting, does not seem to have been designed for 21st century travel requirements.

The current proposal from HS2 Ltd is to use the North London Line to connect HS2 and HS1. London Overground has concerns about this.

1) The HS2 train will have to slow down considerably to travel along this section.
2) It may impact the reliability and performance of London Overground trains on this section.
3) It limits future enhancements to capacity and frequency of London Overground trains on the line
4) HS2 Ltd plan to use three train paths per hour on this line, but London Overground think only one would be available for HS2 trains.

Some of these concerns were raised by Frank Dobson MP during a Westminster Hall debate in March.[6]

It should be noted that the original specification for HS1 was to include a link to WCML, but this never happened. Frank Dobson has stated that the engineers considered using the North London line, but decided it was too expensive to improve it to the appropriate standard.

Heathrow Link

The connection to Heathrow – or rather the absence of one designed into the project - is another example of a poorly integrated strategy by HS2 Ltd. It is clear that construction of the link will have a massive impact on the surrounding area, but no decisions have been made as yet about which route to use.

HS2 Ltd have suggested that Heathrow Express trains should stop at Old Oak Common. Clearly this will slow down the express trains. It is not clear what effect this will have on the frequency of Heathrow Express trains, and therefore the attractiveness of the link. This may have a knock on effect on Heathrow as an International Hub airport.

Other Transport Links

HS2 Ltd do not appear to have considered connections with other railways, such as the proposed East West line between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge.

4: Other Effects on London's transport

Increase capacity for commuters?

According to Philip Hammond, there is only a capacity problem on railways for a couple of hours a day, during peak commuting times.

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6 http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110331/halltext/110331h0001.htm#11033165000135

This is an issue that has been looked into by recent government studies, the Public Accounts Committee and the McNulty review. Both of these reports have said that the answer to overcrowding on railways is not necessarily to build new railways.

Further, HS2 would not reduce overcrowding on the WCML until after 2026. But if the Department for Transport predictions are correct, the WCML will be full sooner, and so something should be done earlier. The solution found will have a knock-on effect on the case for HS2.

HS2 will have no effect on other main lines into London, such as the Great Western Line, or the route from Brighton.

Further, HS2 Ltd considered additional stations between Birmingham and London. They decided against a station at Milton Keynes, because too many commuters would use it. Similarly they decided against a Bicester station because too many Oxford travellers would use it, and against one at Aylesbury because too few people would use it.

Euston

Commuters will have to suffer 8 years of the complete re-building work of Euston station. Eventually the tracks will reach as far as the existing bus stops, yet HS2 does not seem to have included replacement bus stops in their plans.

HS2 Ltd say that there would be around 32,000 passengers using Euston to access HS2. This will add to the pressures on the London transport infrastructure.

There will also need to be work on the WCML where the HS2 route joins it.

Old Oak Common

Evidence to the Transport Select Committee on HSR said that road access to the Old Oak Common site is poor and there is a need for integrated planning. HS2's record to date on integrated planning is poor.

5: Other Issues

Stop HS2 has identified other issues which may be of concern to members of the London Assembley.

Chilterns Aquifer

HS2 will tunnel through the Chilterns aquifer which supplies drinking water to over one million people, including many thousands in London. Aquifers are a vital natural resource

Ruislip Waste Transfer site/Calvert Landfill site

Currently waste from London is transported by rail from the Victoria Road Transfer Station in Rusilip to a landfill site at Calvert in Buckinghamshire. HS2 will affect both ends of the operation.

At the Victoria Road Transfer Station, there is concern as to how HS2 will affect the sidings which are used to load the containers with rubbish.

At the Buckinghamshire end, HS2 Ltd plan to use the existing railway corridor for the proposed railway. However the route they plan to use is currently used by the trains taking rubbish to Calvert. Although HS2 Ltd are aware of the landfill site, the extent and timing of the changes at the Calvert landfill site which would be necessitated by HS2 are not clear at the moment.

This is a critical landfill site for London, and should be included when considering the effects of HS2 on London.