

Part 1 of the consultation document

1. This question is about the strategy and wider context (Chapter 1 of the main consultation document): Do you agree that there is a strong case for enhancing the capacity and performance of Britain's inter-city rail network to support economic growth over the coming decades?

City of York Council agrees that there is a strong case for enhancing the capacity and performance of Britain's inter-city rail network for the reasons (such as general rising demand and reducing scope to increase capacity) stated in the Consultation Summary document and the additional reasons listed (in no particular priority order) below:

- 1 Demand forecasts, produced by Network Rail, suggest long distance rail demand using the East Coast Main Line (ECML), North TransPennine and Cross Country Routes will increase by 1-2% per annum to 2036.
- 2 Rail is a more sustainable form of transport than road transport or aviation for longer-distance inter-city travel
- 3 Technological advances (e.g. Broadband) enable good communications between London and cities in less prosperous areas of the country, thereby, enabling these cities to transform their economies by generating new businesses within them or attracting businesses to them whilst maintaining essential links with the UK's Capital city (a global financial centre). However, even with this improved communication technology, there will still be a need for personal contact to conduct business, and business travellers from the north eastern cities would benefit from a fast, frequent and available rail service to travel to the Capital and beyond.
- 4 The Eddington Study on transport and economic productivity advocated improvements to the existing rail network.
- 5 There is an identified need to strengthen the rail links between the wider Leeds area and other destinations including Manchester, Birmingham and the East Midlands.

2. This question is about the case for high speed rail (Chapter 2 of the main consultation document): Do you agree that a national high speed rail network from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester (the Y network) would provide the best value for money solution (best balance of costs and benefits) for enhancing rail capacity and performance?

From the evidence presented in the Consultation Summary document and further work commissioned by City of York Council the benefit to cost ratio (BCR) in the order of 2.6 appears to offer good value for money. By way of comparison road improvement schemes tend to be considered as offering good value for money with a BCR of 2.5 or more. In addition the council also agrees with the view that high speed rail would deliver significant non-monetorised benefits, further strengthening the case for its construction.

However, it does not appear to be explicitly clear that the scheme costs in Chapter 1 include for the environmental mitigation measures described in Chapter 2.

In considering the continued investment in the UK's rail network overall, the council advocates that any resources directed to the proposed high speed rail network must not be to the detriment of existing or future necessary improvement programmes for other routes such as the East Coast Main Line (including the Intercity Express Programme to replace existing HSTs and Class 91s). This applies not only in advance of the completion of both phases of the high speed network, but also once it is operational.

3. This question is about how to deliver the Government's proposed network (Chapter 3 of the main consultation document): Do you agree with the Government's proposals for the phased roll-out of a national high speed rail network, and for links to Heathrow Airport and the High Speed 1 line to the Channel Tunnel?

Based on the evidence presented in the Consultation Summary, City of York Council broadly agrees the proposed phased roll-out of a national high speed rail network. However, it is not clear from the Consultation Summary what the relevant merits of constructing the first phase only (London to West Midlands) versus the full 'Y' (to Manchester and Leeds) are. The potential for more abstraction from short haul air travel, if the full 'Y' route is implemented, will have a clear benefit on fare revenue, and including this, for completeness, should help to make the case for high speed rail more convincing.

The case for a direct connection with high speed 1 (HS1), to the Channel tunnel and mainland Europe beyond, is supported by City of York Council. The main reason for this view is the removal of the interchange penalty for transferring from one high speed rail route to another. However, sufficient capacity needs to be available (or provided if not) on HS1 to enable all new and proposed HS1 services (including the UK 'Javelin' services) to/from the London terminus at St. Pancras and through running HS2 services to be carried.

The spur to Heathrow airport may impose operational delays on the main HS2 route due to the junction/track crossings required to serve the spur. The Government's long term policy for air transport also needs to be considered before confirming the need for a Heathrow link.

In considering the high speed rail network as a whole, although the council appreciates that the consultation at this stage is necessarily at a 'high level' it is somewhat disappointing that the level of detail in Figure 3 is low, particularly in relation to showing where the high speed rail network connects with the existing East Coast Main Line (north east of Leeds) and the West Coast Main Line (north west of Manchester). For, York and the surrounding area, it is considered essential that the location of the connection with the East Coast Main Line (ECML) is south of the city to maximise the benefits to the city that the high speed rail network could deliver via direct links from the new 'Leeds' station on the high speed route. Also from Colton, south of York Station to Northallerton the ECML is 4 track affording potentially more train paths for reconnection than the predominantly 2 track section beyond Northallerton.

Part 2 of the consultation document

4. This question is about the specification for the line between London and the West Midlands (Chapter 4 of the main consultation document): Do you agree with the principles and specification used by HS2 Ltd to underpin its proposals for new high speed rail lines and the route selection process HS2 Ltd undertook?

This part of the route does not have a direct impact on the environment within the City of York local authority area. The following comments are, therefore, more general in nature.

It would appear (and is generally accepted) that a new railway corridor would have a lower physical 'footprint' (land take requirement) than an equivalent high capacity, high speed road. This, therefore, imparts a lower 'relative' local environmental impact, but the question as to its absolute environmental impact still remains.

City of York Council acknowledges that the route, as proposed by the government, has been refined, from a previous scheme, published in 2010, to reduce its adverse environmental impacts, through measures such as deep cuttings and tunnels etc.. However, the impacts of such measures on the local ecology etc. needs to be balanced with the economic, social and environmental benefits the scheme could deliver. A similar evaluation will need to be undertaken for the second phase of the network, which could (depending on where the connection to the ECML is made) run through the City of York local authority area.

5. This question is about the route for the line between London and the West Midlands (Chapter 5 and Annex B of the main consultation document): Do you agree that the Government's proposed route, including the approach proposed for mitigating its impacts, is the best option for a new high speed rail line between London and the West Midlands?

City of York Council does not have sufficient knowledge of the physical and social geography of this section of the route to offer any opinion as to whether the Government's proposed route is the best route option. However, with regard to the proposed approach for mitigating its impacts please see the response to Question 4 above.

6. This question is about the Appraisal of Sustainability (Chapter 5 of the main consultation document): Do you wish to comment on the Appraisal of Sustainability of the Government's proposed route between London and the West Midlands that has been published to inform this consultation?

Please see response to Question 4 above.

7. This question is about blight and compensation (Annex A of the main consultation document): Do you agree with the options set out to assist those whose properties lose a significant amount of value as a result of any new high speed line?

This part of the route does not have a direct impact on the environment within the City of York authority area. However, it is possible that the second phase of the high speed line may pass through the City of York local authority area and, therefore, devalue some properties therein.

Awaiting full consultation document (including Annex A to be able to offer further comment.

Have you attached additional evidence to this response form? (Please select one answer only)

Yes No

High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's Future
Consultation response form

Thank you for completing the response form. Please send it to:

Freepost RSLX-UCGZ-UKSS

High Speed Rail Consultation

PO Box 59528

London

SE21 9AX

The consultation closes on Friday 29 July 2011. Responses cannot be accepted after the closing date.