



West London Line Group



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4 April 2016

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
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Dear Lord Ahmad

Improving HS2 and surrounding infrastructure – for the future long-term benefit of the country

I am writing to thank you on behalf of the West London Line Group for recalling the Group and its Petition to your fellow Lords during the recent debate on the Transport for London Bill.

The Group is now concentrating on the High Speed 2 Bill, especially in relation to Old Oak Common. We are proposing a set of compatible recommendations that will:-

- (i) improve connections across the country between both HS1 and HS2, the areas that they should serve, the Crossrail/Elizabeth Line and the 'classic' rail network; and
- (ii) enhance the development, attractiveness and performance of the OPDC area, with minimal adverse impacts on its present and future residents.

We note that the whole House of Lords will be debating the principles of the Bill on 14th April 2016, before the creation of a Select Committee. I am writing to ask you and other members of the House to consider before, during and after the debate the items that we have put forward in this letter and attached Appendix as they appear to concern the principles of the Bill, whereas the Select Committee may find such matters outside their scope. We trust that you and the Department will do so, as urged by Andrew Slaughter, MP for Hammersmith, in whose constituency Old Oak Common lies, during the debate elsewhere in Parliament on 28 August 2014.

We would welcome advice from you and/or your colleagues as to how the Group's concerns on the principles of the route may best be communicated to members of the House before that debate.

We have five main proposals, three of which would have an impact on the principles of the route, and all of which, if accepted and implemented, would bring significant benefits to many more areas of the country than the present plans. These are as follows:-

1. Link HS2 to HS1 via two routes through west and south London. This would involve only one new short physical rail connection between HS2 east of Old Oak Common and the West London Line north of Shepherd's Bush.

This small extra facility would not only link the two High Speed Rail networks to each other, but both HS1 and HS2 would be within one change of over 80% of all rail stations across the whole of southern England between Exeter and Ramsgate, and would allow HS2 services to reach Gatwick Airport.

2. Ensure a new set of six 12-car platforms serving the West London Line could be built immediately above (and give direct covered interchange with) the HS2/GWML/ Elizabeth Line station box at Old Oak Common.
3. Develop a new cultural venue immediately on top of this augmented rail Hub, with office/residential/hotel development above.
4. Allow the future development of up to four intermediate HS2 'way-stations' between Old Oak Common and Birmingham to inspire residential catchments to be formed or increased to aid commuting and fill London job opportunities. This would:-
 - (i) expand the capacity of the UK rail network;
 - (ii) bring the spending of London wages in the South and West Midlands (from 2026) and the North-West (from 2027) to re-balance the economy; and
 - (iii) encourage investment in much-needed housing across the country.
5. Plan the future development of HS2 via an underground extension eastwards from Old Oak Common to Baker Street/Marylebone, Euston Cross, Liverpool Street, Silvertown, Ebbsfleet (for HS1), and onward to a putative Thameside Airport.

The Group would be delighted to have the opportunity to present its proposals to you, colleagues within the House and/or the Department at any convenient time in the coming weeks.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Mark Balaam
Chairman

APPENDIX to Letter dated 4 April 2016 to Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport

Improving HS2 and surrounding infrastructure – for the future long-term benefit of the country

Recent History of the West London Line Group's Activities

Mr Syms's Committee allowed us to present our proposals in full both in the Houses of Parliament and 'on site', despite not supporting the view that the Group has 'locus standi'. As advised by the Committee, we have pursued these proposals with the Department, principally by a slide presentation to Sean Delaney and Dan Thomas. We have been particularly encouraged by the reception to our presentation, most notably from key officials from the OPDC, TfL and HS2, as well as Steven Norris, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport and Minister for Transport in London, and Jim Steer at Greengauge 21.

Their reactions have strengthened our belief in our ideas, in and outside the scope of the Bill, and we are delighted that these are to be given further consideration. TfL have stated that they will assess our proposals on the eventual pattern of all rail services at Old Oak Common once the strategic rail study (to be commissioned by TfL and the OPDC) is completed.

Foremost in our ideas are five strands.

1. A new link between HS2 and HS1

The first strand is the linking of HS2 to HS1 via the West London Line and one or more routes through south London. This involves **one simple, low-cost act that will:-**

- Bring regions of the UK – and the Continent – closer together, with efficient rail links
- Engender more nationwide interest, support and engagement for – and use of – HS2, HS1 and other rail networks
- Reduce pressure on central London's termini and the Underground
- Provide options to bring HS2 and HS1 to inner London rail hubs that need regeneration
- Cut pollution and congestion on roads and motorways across London and southern England.

This link would be simple to arrange, both in amending the enabling legislation and the extra infrastructure. Costs should be negligible when set alongside those for the rest of HS2 Phase 1 and almost invisible in relation to those for the whole HS2 network between London and Scotland.

The adage, "if there is more than one change in a rail journey most people will travel by car," would apply to all those across south London and southern England (except those starting at Clapham Junction, Brixton or a point on the Morden branch of the Northern Line).

Contemplation – and rejection – of the need to change twice to reach Euston or Old Oak Common would mean that HS2 runs the risk of being unused and unsupported – if not resented – by those likely to pay most for it, i.e., the car-borne taxpayers of virtually the whole of southern England.

Conversely, installing the very short section between HS2 and the WLL would not only fulfil the Government's original intention to link HS2 to HS1, but allow about 80% of the population of southern England between Exeter and Ramsgate to have no more than one change to reach both HS1 and HS2.

In practical terms, this would require no more than straightforward pointwork east of the HS2 platforms at Old Oak Common and a short section of track laid in a curved tunnel breaking through Little Wormwood Scrubs Park (not subject to the Wormwood Scrubs legislation). This would join the West London Line at a point between North Pole Road and a new proposed WLL station under Westway Circus.

It should be possible to authorise this link by altering the original wording of one sub-clause [1.3 (a)] in the Bill:-

<i>Works</i>	
1	Power to construct and maintain works for Phase One of High Speed 2
1.	The nominated undertaker may construct and maintain the works specified in Schedule 1, being— (a) works for the construction of Phase One of High Speed 2, and (b) works consequent on, or incidental to, such works.
2.	In this Act, the works specified in Schedule 1 are called the “scheduled works”.
3.	In this Act “Phase One of High Speed 2” means a railway between Euston in London and a junction with the West Coast Main Line at Handsacre in Staffordshire, with— (a) a spur from Old Oak Common in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to a junction with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link at York Way in the London Borough of Islington, West London Line south of North Pole Road on the boundary between the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and (b) a spur from Water Orton in Warwickshire to Curzon Street in Birmingham.

We ask that the legislation explicitly states that adequate restitution to the satisfaction of the local authorities and the local neighbourhood communities must be made to Little Wormwood Scrubs Park immediately following completion of the rail works.

We anticipate that amendments to a relatively small number of other clauses in the Bill and its Schedules may be needed to allow the implementation of this proposal.

At the very least we would trust that, even under the Bill as currently worded, enough space could be created underground now to insert this junction without later disrupting the high-speed high-frequency services that HS2 is to carry.

2. New WLL platforms – and cultural venue – above the HS2 ‘box’ at Old Oak Common

The second strand is to strengthen, for the long-term benefit of Old Oak, London and the UK and their rail networks and users, the fulfilment of HS2’s fourth Guiding Principle (July 2013), viz:-

- **HS2 must be well integrated with other transport networks so door-to-door journeys are as fast and convenient as possible**

This principle is at least doubly important at Old Oak compared to places elsewhere, given the areas nearby in the north-west London sub-region undergoing regeneration, such as White City and Earl’s Court/West Kensington, as well as the number and proximity of established major centres such as Wembley, Ealing, Hammersmith, Kensington and Clapham Junction.

The present proposals for interchange at Old Oak Common, if implemented, will

- ignore HS2’s own Guiding Principles for the development of its railway;
- offer very dispiriting prospects and uncomfortable and lengthy outdoor experiences for users;
- prevent the UK’s largest rail franchise (GTR) from connecting to or interchanging with the UK’s premier High Speed Line, despite the two crossing each other at Old Oak Common;
- adversely impact on the primary role of Hythe Road station, which is to regenerate the large north-eastern quadrant of the OPDC area;
- limit the stations’ ability to deal with future passenger demands;
- have a ten-year gestation that will result in a sub-optimal solution to a significant degree;

The present proposals are also at odds with views from the travelling public and the organisations which represent their interests. Three recent examples are:-

Passenger Focus on the West Coast Main Line

“Passengers want direct services...they do not want to change trains at all.”
 “Car drivers want direct services if they are to consider switching to rail.”

From **‘Future priorities for the West Coast Main Line: Released capacity from a potential high speed line’**

Published by *Network Rail* and Passenger Focus – January 2012

Transport Focus on HS2

“Connections – source of stress for passengers”
 “HS2 to design changes – quick and close by”
“I don’t really want to walk more than a minute (WLLG est. 250m) to my connecting train”

From **‘High Speed Two: putting the passenger at the heart of design’**

Published by HS2 and Transport Focus – June 2015

London TravelWatch on Interchanges

“Good interchanges make travel easier for all passengers...a linked trip is only as good as its parts”
 “There is no excuse for...new infrastructure projects such as might be provided at Old Oak Common not to provide passengers with a ‘five-star’ experience”

From **‘Interchange matters: passenger priorities for improvement’**

Published by London TravelWatch – July 2015

Apart from Euston, the sole HS2 interchange in London will be at Old Oak Common and this will only be between it, the GWML and the Elizabeth Line (formerly known as Crossrail).

The Elizabeth Line already has a high profile, augmented by its recent re-naming. Property prices on its route are rising in anticipation of its opening. It will be a very effective people-mover serving five major interchanges in central London between three high-density population corridors east and west of London and serving the key nodes of Heathrow and Docklands. While it may add 10% to the capacity of London's metro systems, it will "soon be full up", according to its senior management. Opening in 2017, it will have had nine years' growth before HS2 arrives.

We have been told that, come what may, Euston will be the London HS2 terminal. However, 150 Petitions concerned about Euston have been submitted, fifty of which indicate that Old Oak Common should be a temporary or the permanent HS2 London terminal.

Even if a Euston HS2 terminal is built, how far will an Elizabeth Line station at Old Oak Common – which has yet to be confirmed – be able to cope with increasing numbers of HS2 passengers who do not want to use Euston, or cannot, if it is not built?

In 2026 these will be merely those travelling to or from Birmingham, who will be joined in 2027 by all those travelling between London and the major NW conurbations. From 2033 these will be augmented by those to be served by the rest of the network between London and Scotland.

How will it fare with continuing passenger growth over the next 50, 100 or 200 years?

By how much would these scenarios worsen if Euston were not built?

Given all the above and that Britain is the 'cradle of the railway - across the world', this 'interchange' threatens to be an international embarrassment for the Government and the country's rail industry.

To avoid this unwelcome outcome, the Group strongly believes that the HS2/GWML/Elizabeth Line Hub at Old Oak Common should be augmented to:-

- (i) aid servicing and dispersal from HS2/GWML/Elizabeth Line across London;
- (ii) increase connections and thus journey options and opportunities via Old Oak Common;
- (iii) underpin the economic success of the OPDC Area; and
- (iv) have enough platforms and circulating capacity to cater for future growth

This should be effected by connecting the West London Line – on a new alignment via a 12-car six-platform facility on top of the HS2 station box – to Willesden Junction, the Chiltern Line, the Dudding Hill Line (for the Midland Main Line) and the West Coast Main Line. (The existing section of the WLL should be retained and Hythe Road station opened and developed to service the north-eastern part of the OPDC Area.)

This Hub would then give much more extensive interchange between HS2, the GWML, the Elizabeth Line and many other established and proposed rail services through this part of NW London.

Foremost among these improvements would be the service frequency between Old Oak Common and Clapham Junction to reflect more closely those on the other Thames rail crossings, namely the East London Line Extension and Thameslink.

We have received TfL's assurance that they would, after a strategic rail study for the area had been completed, fully assess our proposed pattern of rail services at Old Oak Common. In the interim we would most strongly urge that the bodies involved (DfT, OPDC, TfL, etc.) be asked to safeguard the spaces needed for the connecting viaducts on which these services are to run. This is to prevent encroachment by other developments such as the Genesis scheme on Old Oak Common Lane.

3. A new cultural facility – on top of HS2 and the augmented Hub – at Old Oak Common

The Group proposes that, immediately above the augmented rail Hub, space is provided for a significant, if not major, cultural facility.

This is with an eye to assuring good all-day demand on the West London Line and all other railways at Old Oak Common and the desirability of providing, without further landtake, well-placed cultural facilities for the area's existing and emerging communities as well as supporters from across London.

This would provide a venue offering performance, theatre, concert, exhibition and/or conference facilities that would have exceptional rail connections. The latter would also benefit office, hotel and/or residential development above.

4. Four new 'way-stations' on HS2

The fourth of our five strands is the provision of up to four 'way-stations' on HS2 between Old Oak and Birmingham, for the following reasons:-

- (v) The Group contends that there has been, with no debate, a change of emphasis on HS2 from speed to capacity, i.e., expressions of the desire to cut journey times seem to have been overtaken by the need to grow passenger capacity, especially on the southern sections of HS2 and the WCML.
- (vi) There is an expectation by Government that HS2 will help to rebalance the economy.
- (vii) There has been significant opposition in the HS2 corridor to the expected disruption to the environment, people's livelihoods and homes.
- (viii) There have been moves under the 'Localism' banner to give local communities decision-making powers.

The Group is therefore proposing that, to realise the positive aspects of the four themes above, the HS2 Bill allows for the provision of up to four 'way-stations' on HS2 between Old Oak Common and Birmingham International/UK Central.

The Group does not wish to be drawn into the issues around specific sites, but merely offers the following general 'in principle' areas:-

- North Warwickshire Parkway;
- Claydon Interchange (with EastWest Rail). Mutual benefits for HS2 and EWR should be investigated by the National Infrastructure Commission's study on the Oxford to Cambridge rail corridor which is to be published in Autumn 2016;
- Chilterns Parkway; and
- Denham Parkway

Each 'way-station' would consist of an 'up' and 'down' platform, parallel to the main HS2 tracks.

Assuming demand to be evenly spread, in each 'cycle' of northbound services, one train would travel between Old Oak and Birmingham non-stop, the second would stop at North Warwickshire Parkway, the third at Claydon, the fourth at Chilterns Parkway, the fifth at Denham, followed by a non-stop train to restart the cycle. This would be mirrored in the southbound direction.

If there is less emphasis on speed, then with large radius pointwork to their platform faces, this combination of HS2 'way-stations' would embrace – rather than ignore – the populations between Uxbridge and Coventry. This would expand HS2's total catchment by over 1.3 million – and, we would hope, result in the greater acceptance, support and use of HS2 and less-crowded WCML services by these 1.3 million voters.

Allowing many from these populations to commute, especially to London, would not only fill the jobs that the capital is likely to have in the coming years, but also bring London remuneration levels to be spent in the South and West Midlands areas, thus bolstering these economies. *RAIL* magazine reports that there were 4.8m jobs in London in 2011 and that Oxford Economics has forecast that this is to rise to 6.3m by 2026.

In addition, if HS2 services are to run to and from Crewe with direct extensions and/or easy connections to Liverpool, Preston and Manchester, those in the South Midlands may feel particularly aggrieved not to have the same freedom to use and benefit from HS2 and HS1 (via our proposed link above) as those in the West Midlands, the North West and other areas of Central, Northern England and Scotland.

In addition, the provision of the 'way-stations' would allow High Speed rail travel between the South and West Midlands and (i) Northern England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Southern England, (iv) the Continent.

We think it fair that the HS2 Bill should allow the option for building these way-stations, with decisions on individual sites made by local residential and business communities, with co-operative guidance and funding from Central Government and other national and regional agencies.

5. Future development

HS2 advises that the success of High Speed rail lies in its ability to interchange with other networks. We would therefore advocate that HS2 is also extended eastwards underground from Old Oak Common to interchanges at:-

Baker Street/Marylebone (Bakerloo, Circle, Metropolitan, Jubilee and Chiltern Lines);
Euston Cross (between Euston and King's Cross);
Liverpool Street (for North-East and East London and East Anglia);
Silvertown (for the O2, ExCeL and London City Airport);
Ebbsfleet (for HS1);
and onward to a putative Thameside Airport.

Thus HS2 and HS1 would be directly connected to all Underground lines except the District.

See the map on the next page.

MLB
4 April 2016

UK High Speed Rail Network 2033

