



Angela Smith MP
Penistone & Stocksbridge Constituency
The Arc
Town Hall
Manchester road
Stocksbridge S36 2DT
SW1A 0AA



17 January 2014

Freepost RTEL-YAZT-HAZT
Phase Two Route consultation
PO Box 1152
Harrow
HA1 9LH

Our Ref: SW/SMIT01075/01140051

Re: Response to the HS2 consultation of Phase 2

I am responding to this consultation on phase 2 of the HS2 project in my capacity as Member of Parliament for Penistone and Stocksbridge, one of the constituencies affected by the government-preferred route.

I intend to keep my detailed responses confined to the route through Sheffield and my constituency, however, before that, I would like to make a few general comments on the whole project.

Consultation Question (Please let us know your comments on the introduction)

I have always been supportive of the project to build a new north/south railway since its inception under the guidance of the then Secretary of State for Transport, Lord Adonis. Further, as a former member of the Parliamentary Select Committee for Transport, I am fully aware and appreciative of the need to increase rail capacity in England. I agree with the HS2 Ltd assessment that because much of England's rail infrastructure dates to the late 19th and early 20th century and because of the piecemeal improvements that have taken place in the past, future pressures on the network will be immense. These pressures include population growth, the growth of cities as urban centres and rail becoming more competitive against other modes of transport. This is especially the case for Midland Mainline and East Coast the line.

Evidence I have seen suggests upgrading existing lines will not answer future capacity issues on most lines. Of course, another great advantage of a completely new line and the increased capacity that brings is that existing capacity can be

WORKING FOR PENISTONE AND STOCKSBRIDGE
0114 2831855 fax 0114283185 e:angela.smith.mp@parliament.uk w: angelasmith-mp.org.uk



released for shorter commuter journeys as well as increased freight traffic allowing for a modal shift from road to rail.

Of course, it is important a project of this magnitude is properly managed with tight and rigorous financial controls exercised at all times. It is therefore important that it be kept within budget and within the existing timescales. This is especially so if the project is to win over an often sceptical public and maintain that support over what will be a long construction phase.

Reponses on the benefits of HS2 to the Sheffield City Region

I am firmly of the opinion that the Sheffield City Region has a great deal to gain from a new high-speed line that connects the major cities of England. A new line also opens the possibility of connections further afield, including the continent. I believe estimates are that growth in passenger rail traffic to many areas from Sheffield City Region is likely to increase by close to 100%, with demand to London exceeding that at 132%. The greater connectivity that a new high-speed line would bring to the region will help the region's productivity and will help increase inward investment and other agglomeration benefits. Therefore, I believe it is vital any new line connects to the Sheffield City Region, in fact not to do so would I believe place the region at a massive comparative disadvantage.

The route through South Yorkshire and Sheffield

My understanding is that the government's preferred route will bring the line into south Yorkshire via Killamarsh and then close to Catcliffe, entering the lower Don Valley and running close to the M1 motorway through Meadowhall. The route then takes the line out of Sheffield via Ecclesfield and Chapeltown, again running close to the western side of the M1. It then crosses underneath the M1 just north of Chapeltown/Thorpe Hesley passing in to the constituency of Barnsley East, where it tunnels under the village of Hoyland, continuing to the west of Cudworth and east, of the village of Royston before moving into the Leeds City Region area. The main station for Sheffield City region I understand is to be located at Meadowhall, adjacent to the M1 as it traverses the Don Valley and at the same height as the motorway viaduct.

Further to this preferred route, I understand there is an option to construct a loop into Sheffield City Centre via Orgreave, Handsworth and Darnall, with a station located on the site of the present Victoria hotel. This line would then exit the city via Burngreave and a tunnel under Shirecliffe rejoining the main HS2 line in the Penistone & Stocksbridge constituency north of Ecclesfield. With this option, I understand there would be no station at Meadowhall.

WORKING FOR PENISTONE AND STOCKSBRIDGE

0114 2831855 fax 0114283185 e:angela.smith.mp@parliament.uk w: angelasmith-mp.org.uk



My response to the government's preferred option as it passes through South Yorkshire and in particular Sheffield and the option of a Sheffield Loop

I do not intend to comment on the route of the line in the south of the city, I will leave that to those who know the particulars of that area in much more detail than I do. However, I am pleased HS2 Ltd has already listened to concerns raised by myself, other Members of Parliament and representatives from the Sheffield City Region and have altered the alignment of the track so that it will not directly blight the strategically important manufacturing site occupied by Firth Rixons. I do believe this alteration is important in protecting the future of that organisation and the many jobs on that site.

As the line leaves the city and makes its way through the constituency of Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough, first alongside the old rail lines and then moving into the greenbelt, area it starts to mount the steep incline into my constituency. At this point, there is concern that the line will be at a high level and that it will therefore be highly visible, with the possibility of excessive noise for those living nearby. I do believe my colleague Rt Hon David Blunket MP intends to make comments on this part of the route.

The Ancient woodland of Smith Wood

Once the line enters my constituency it goes to the east of St Paul's industrial estate on green belt land and will need to be deeply cut to manage the steep incline. The route then passes through the ancient woodland of Smithy Wood. This is of huge concern to me. Smithy Wood has a well-documented history covering at least 600 years and therefore classed as ancient woodland. We know it was used as a coppice wood in the 15th and 16th centuries and is, along with Hesley Wood all that is left, after the construction of the M1 motorway in the 1960s, of a much larger wood.

I feel it would be an absolute travesty if this area was heavily blighted by the line. Indications from the technical drawings show this part of the route will need to be heavily cut to keep the right vertical alignment, meaning that a large part of the woodland will be lost forever. Whilst I appreciate HS2 Ltd has mitigation strategies to replant areas of woodland lost to the route, it needs to be clearly understood that ancient woodland is irreplaceable. I also understand various other organisations will be making similar representations over the possible loss of this woodland.

As the route bridges the A629 it then crosses another small area of woodland and then on to land presently owned by Recycoal, who are currently planning to remove 395,000 tonnes of coal from the spoil heap of the old Smithy Wood Colliery. Once complete, this area will be turned into a country park.

WORKING FOR PENISTONE AND STOCKSBRIDGE

0114 2831855 fax 0114283185 e:angela.smith.mp@parliament.uk w: angelasmith-mp.org.uk



The present preferred route of HS2 will take the line straight through the middle of this proposed development with deep cutting either side of the line. This, I feel would be unacceptable to many local residents who for many years have had to live with the blight of industry, then the spoil heap from that industry. Now just when they can see that land being re-used and landscaped for the benefit of the local population, once again they could see it used for a infrastructure project with a footprint that would make much of the land inaccessible to the community.

As the line, proceeds further north and before it crosses the motorway, the route again passes through another ancient woodland, this time Hesley Wood. Also at this location is a popular and well-used scout camp. As presently configured deep cutting will again be required which will leave the woodland split into two, with a huge loss to the amenity for local people and to the flora and fauna of the landscape. Again, I believe many local and national groups will be making similar representations about this possible loss of ancient woodland and that fact that it is impossible to effectively mitigate the damage caused.

Whilst I can appreciate the technical difficulties and extra costs involved in mitigating the effects on these areas, I do believe modern tunnelling techniques would allow a tunnel to be constructed from the area to the south of Smithy Wood, which would exit on the western side of the M1 motorway. This would allow the whole area to be left untouched. This approach would also have the advantage of reducing the sharp incline the route faces as it leaves the Don Valley.

A second less preferable suggestion is that a cut and cover technique could be deployed. I am informed that modern technologies allow for the top soil and much of the fauna to carefully moved while the line is built and then restored above the new line. This approach, while not perfect, would allow much of the characteristics of the area to be maintained and the ancient woodlands to be largely kept intact. Both these options would also have the advantage that the proposed new Country Park would remain intact, something I believe local people would appreciate. Both these strategies would also mitigate against any noise that would otherwise blight the Cowley Lane estate of around 500 properties, which while outside the area that will qualify under the compensation scheme will nevertheless experience increases in noise levels.

Sheffield Loop and location of the South Yorkshire Station
(Consultation Question South Yorkshire station to be located at Sheffield Meadowhall)

With regards to the station location I am in full agreement with HS2 Ltd that the preferred location for the Sheffield City Region should be Meadowhall. In the consultation document HS2 Ltd state the location already has good connections to the rest of the city region, something I agree with. It would have good road



connections in easy reach of the M1 motorway at Junction 34. There is an existing supertram service to Sheffield city centre, which runs at 10-minute intervals and takes 20 mins. The heavy rail service at Meadowhall station means the area is well connected to existing rail networks and much of the region. The area itself is part of the enterprise zone and therefore fits well with the regeneration of the lower Don Valley.

This station would also be close to existing bus and coach connections again allowing easy access via public transport.

Another important point I feel is that a station at this location would also send out the clear signal that the station is for the whole city region and as Barnsley/Sheffield MP I don't think I can under estimate the importance of that making sure the project gets buy in from the whole area.

However, I do believe that more work needs to be carried out on connectivity to ensure the whole city region is in easy reach of the station, including parts of south west of Sheffield and north Nottinghamshire. Finally, I think it is obvious the local road infrastructure around Meadowhall would need modernisation and upgrading to take full advantage of what would be an international gateway.

Moving to the proposed Sheffield City Centre location for the station I feel this would not have many of the same advantages and certainly not the same connectivity to the rest of the City Region. Indeed the proposed location on the site of the present Victoria hotel, a grade 2-listed building, would mean many new rail and road connections would need to be constructed. The site itself is extremely tight and would no doubt be difficult to configure, making it even more difficult to build in connectivity.

The loop to service this station would not only go through large tracks of industrial and residential land, including Waverley where a completely new housing estate is presently being constructed, the cost would also be large at an estimated £1bn. This figure I feel could also substantially increase once detailed design work commenced on the loop.

Another factor that needs to be considered is that a loop into Sheffield would add around 10 minutes on to journey times and of course the temptation would be for some trains not to take the route into Sheffield meaning South Yorkshire could actually lose out on connections to other areas. Indeed, I think this is borne out by research that suggests the market for high-speed travel in South Yorkshire, while important, is much smaller than that of other cities such as Leeds or Birmingham. Finally, while a Sheffield centre location might allow better connectivity to Sheffield City Centre and the south West of Sheffield that would be to the disadvantage to most of the rest of the City Region.

WORKING FOR PENISTONE AND STOCKSBRIDGE

0114 2831855 fax 0114283185 e:angela.smith.mp@parliament.uk w: angelasmith-mp.org.uk



There is also the issue of building a new rail line through a city the size of Sheffield, with its difficult terrain. Construction would mean major disruption in many areas of the city over a number of years. Blight would certainly increase affecting many more businesses and residential areas. For example, the proposed route would mean that as the line goes north and into the Penistone & Stocksbridge constituency, it would have to traverse a largely residential area, in the village of Ecclesfield, crossing major roads via a large viaduct. This would mean many households suffering blight and probably demolition. It would also I believe have a damaging effect on the area and change its character forever. This is something I and no doubt, many others in the area would resist vigorously.

(Consultation question on how the capacity that would be freed up on the existing rail network by the introduction of the proposed Phase Two route could be used as described)

As I previously touched upon above the additional capacity that a new high speed line will bring is I believe an opportunity to re-configure existing capacity. This is especially the case in South Yorkshire and the North Midlands. There is also a strong case for improving cross Pennine connections, to connect both legs of HS2, especially between Manchester and Sheffield. The HS2 Ltd consultation document correctly predicts high future demand for Sheffield / Manchester services, with a predicted 98% increase over the next 20 years or so. I believe it is important we meet that demand with improved links between the cities. While construction of HS2 will no doubt increase capacity and cut travelling times north/south, without improvements in cross Pennine routes we could miss the possible agglomeration benefits that bringing the two branches of HS2 closer together and therefore the two city regions would bring.

With regards to the Midland Mainline, this line is due for electrification from 2019. This will allow for the introduction of modern units better able to serve the city region area and beyond. I think it is vital that these improvements are co-ordinated with the construction of HS2 to maximise the potential to improve connectivity both within the city region and with HS2.

Of course, a further advantage of increased capacity is the possibility of using local/regional and intercity lines for increased freight capacity. As many know junction 28 to junction 36 of the M1 is the busiest part of that motorway with a large part of that traffic being freight. I believe a modal shift of this traffic should be encouraged as much as possible and increased rail capacity should help that move. Not only could this give rise to improved economic activity but a reduction in carbon and other emissions.

WORKING FOR PENISTONE AND STOCKSBRIDGE

0114 2831855 fax 0114283185 e:angela.smith.mp@parliament.uk w: angelasmith-mp.org.uk



A further advantage of increased capacity and one that in my opinion should be fully utilised is the possibility of better intercity connections between and to areas not covered by HS2 network. Again, this could help in a modal shift and the reduction of emissions. Therefore, I believe as much as possible a fully integrated approach should be taken for the increased capacity a new high-speed rail network will create.

Yours sincerely

Angela Smith

Angela Smith MP, Penistone and Stocksbridge
Constituency MP of the Year 2011-12

WORKING FOR PENISTONE AND STOCKSBRIDGE

0114 2831855 fax 0114283185 e: angela.smith.mp@parliament.uk w: angelasmith-mp.org.uk