

Addendum to Greengauge 21's Evidence to Transport Committee Inquiry on High Speed Rail

Introduction

1. This report is concerned with the question of access arrangements at the London end of HS2. We wish to draw to the attention of the Committee evidence that indicates that the case for HS2 can be greatly strengthened while the alignment is left unchanged from that proposed.
2. Since Greengauge 21's submission to the Transport Committee's inquiry into high-speed rail, Network Rail published the conclusion of their work on the future of the London area rail network at the end of July. It provides evidence that points to how significant cost savings could be achieved in the implementation of HS2, while protecting and enhancing the benefits it will bring. We have made this known to the Department for Transport in Greengauge 21's Supplementary Response¹ to the HS2 consultation.
3. We also provide a short response to evidence that the Committee received on the economic and employment impact of HS2 on Wales, which drew on Greengauge 21 research commissioned from KPMG.

London connections and Old Oak Common interchange

4. The plans for HS2 include two substantial stations in London. A rebuilt Euston station will have 10 platforms for new high-speed services and 14 for existing rail services (reduced from today's 18). This station is already connected into the Underground and bus networks and also provides for ready onward access to central London by taxi or on foot or cycle.
5. There is also proposed to be a very substantial station – with up to 15 platforms – at Old Oak Common in inner West London. Access to/from this station would be restricted to Great Western Main Line services into Paddington which will in future include Crossrail services. There is no connection to any London Underground line or to the bus network and it would also be difficult to provide access for private transport. The Old Oak Common interchange design was developed in response to the remit set HS2 Ltd by the last Government in January 2009.
6. Given the levels of cost involved, it is critical that the station solutions adopted for HS2 both deliver value for money and allow passengers to access HS2 services effectively without overloading London's transport network.
7. The HS2 Ltd reports suggest that Old Oak Common interchange is crucial to HS2 – not to its originally intended purpose, to provide access to Heathrow – but to relocate the access point for a substantial number of HS2 passengers who would otherwise add to pressures on Euston station and the surrounding London Underground network. However, Old Oak Common interchange imposes time penalties on both GWML and HS2 passengers, and costs around £750m excluding property costs and risk. Network Rail's London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy (L&SE RUS)² report, published in July 2011, contains a business case

¹ Greengauge 21, *Greengauge 21 Consultation Supplementary Response*, 28 July 2011. Available at: <http://www.greengauge21.net/publications/hs2-consultation-supplementary-response/>

² Network Rail, *London and South East: Route Utilisation Strategy*, July 28th 2011.

analysis of a quite separate project which we believe would allow the problem of congestion at Euston to be tackled in a better way.

8. The Network Rail proposition is that services that currently use the slow pair of tracks on the West Coast Main Lines into Euston should instead be connected to Crossrail in the Willesden/Old Oak area. These services would then operate over a WCML branch of Crossrail out as far as Milton Keynes. Just as Crossrail has on its eastern side, there would be two balanced Crossrail limbs on the western side – the Great Western Main Line (Heathrow/Reading) and the West Coast Main Line (Milton Keynes). Stations such as Tring and Berkhamsted in the Chilterns would become stations on the (extended) Crossrail network.³
9. Network Rail makes clear that the WCML extension option appears to have a good business case and detailed development is recommended. The option would provide new direct routes from WCML stations to the West End, the City of London and Docklands, with over 75% of existing passengers benefiting from significant time savings. The estimated benefit:cost ratio is between 2.2:1 and 2.6:1.⁴
10. It would substantially reduce the number of trains and passengers at Euston station especially in peak periods. It would also free up capacity on the Northern and Victoria lines. It should allow the redevelopment of Euston to take place on a shorter timescale with less disruption. This proposition both saves cost and adds to the overall value of the HS2 investment. The option requires a new chord to connect the GWML slow lines with the WCML slow lines in the Old Oak Common area. Network Rail estimates the cost of the WCML Crossrail connection at between £436m and £489m, or about half the cost of the Old Oak Common interchange.
11. The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has supported the creation of the Old Oak Common interchange because of its regeneration potential. There is a large tract of railway land at Old Oak Common, much of it now out of use. But this is the site of the planned Crossrail depot on which construction has started. This facility, together with the current HS2 Ltd plans at Old Oak Common, in combination has the effect of removing much of the developable land needed to regenerate the area.
12. A better approach would be to provide a surface station on the Crossrail link to the West Coast Main Line, and this can be done with far less land-take. The loss of developable land that the HS2 interchange station entails would be avoided. In short, Old Oak Common should be considered for a Crossrail station, but it would not be needed for HS2. Access to Canary Wharf from HS2 could be provided via Stratford to which some HS2 services from the Midlands and the North should be extended. Indeed, the combination of a 'decongested' Euston and Stratford would in practice deliver faster access from HS2 to the West End, Westminster, the City and the financial districts in Docklands than a combination of Old Oak Common and Euston. Clearly this depends in part on developing a suitable service plan so that Stratford has a regular set of connections to the Midlands and the North using the new HS2 – HS1 connection.⁵

³ The full list of stations that would be added to the Crossrail network would be: Wembley Central, Harrow & Wealdstone, Bushey, Watford Junction, Kings Langley, Apsley, Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Tring, Cheddington, Leighton Buzzard, Bletchley and Milton Keynes.

⁴ *Ibid* p150

⁵ This was suggested in paragraph 28 of Greengauge 21's initial submission to the Transport Committee and has been detailed further in Greengauge 21's supplementary response to the HS2 consultation.

13. In summary, a connection from the WCML into Crossrail rather than the development of Old Oak Common interchange would:
- improve the business case for HS2
 - add value to Crossrail
 - remove the journey time penalty and disruption to services on the Great Western Main Line
 - increase the scope for regeneration at Old Oak Common
 - mitigate fully the passenger dispersion challenge arising at Euston and simplify the task of rebuilding Euston.
14. While the WCML – Crossrail connection is not yet committed, neither is the work needed to extend the Crossrail proposals (including additional rolling stock) to make the proposed Old Oak Common HS2 interchange work. A sensible and more consistent approach for HS2 might be that the WCML connection to Crossrail is provided in the period between 2017 and 2021, after Crossrail as now authorised is built, and before the main, and potentially scaled-down, works for HS2 at Euston commence.

Impacts of HS2 on Wales

15. In evidence given to the Transport Committee on September 6th, Mark Barry referred to the work that KPMG carried out for Greengauge 21⁶. He pointed out that this work identified not only net gains in employment from high-speed rail, but also significant distributional effects, and he highlighted a 21,000 projected employment loss in Wales (together with a further loss in South West England) in the KPMG analysis.
16. We felt we should draw to the Committee's attention that this projection was made assuming that a full national network of high-speed rail lines was built, with two north-south routes, high-speed rail in Scotland and a new trans-Pennine route too. It was not an appraisal of HS2 (or of the Y-network) both of which are much more limited in scope than the full national network developed by Greengauge 21. It shows an impact that might be expected from much bigger HSR network than HS2.
17. Moreover, the analysis does not suggest that 21,000 current jobs will be lost from Wales, rather that the growth in jobs expected between now and 2040 (the year used for the forecasts) might be lower in Wales than would otherwise be the case without a national HSR network. KPMG forecast that the background increase in jobs between now and 2040 would be 90,000 so that if a national HSR network is built without a line to Wales, the growth will only be 69,000.
18. So it would be wrong for the Committee to conclude that this KPMG estimate represents an assessment of the effects of current Government/HS2 Ltd thinking on high-speed rail.

Greengauge 21

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⁶ Greengauge 21, Consequences for employment and economic growth, February 2010. Available at: <http://www.greengauge21.net/publications/consequences-for-employment-and-economic-growth/>