By email to route2b@dialoguebydesign.co.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

HS2 Phase 2b Route Refinement Consultation

In principle, Rotherham Council welcomes the Government’s confirmation of its commitment to Phase 2b and fully supports the aims of HS2, which is set to re-balance the economic geography of the UK and bring transformational improvements in journey times, capacity and connectivity, as an integrated part of the rail network.

While Rotherham Council remain supportive of the previous proposal, which broadly followed the M1 Motorway corridor northwards and included a high speed rail station at Meadowhall, this consultation feedback is in line with the Council’s resolution of 7th September 2016 which states:

“This council resolves to:
• Oppose the intent to re-route HS2.
• Work with our MPs and other likeminded councils to identify the most beneficial transport infrastructure.”

The Council’s response is based on the committed and funded elements of the proposals announced in the Command Paper published on 15th November 2016, i.e., a high speed rail line on the M18 Eastern Corridor, a spur to the existing Midland Mainline at Clay Cross to allow Classic compatible trains to travel to Sheffield Midland station, and a junction between the existing Sheffield to Leeds/York railway line and the high speed line at Clayton.

The feedback is framed around the five factors that Sir David Higgins used in consideration of his recommendations of July 2016, as follows:

• Demand;
• Needs of the City Region;
• Connectivity;
• Environmental Impacts;
• Cost.
The Council has taken the opportunity to comment upon the Command Paper's suggestions for enhancements to the proposal. These include a junction at Clayton to form the Northern Loop, a parkway station, and the possible extension of services from Sheffield Midland station to Barnsley, Meadowhall and Rotherham. These comments are set in the context of the Council's opposition to the Preferred Route alignment, and its call to the Secretary of State to confirm the Sheffield Meadowhall route as the Government's proposal for high speed rail in South Yorkshire.

Response to Consultation Questions

Question 7 – Do you support the proposal to amend the route to serve South and West Yorkshire?

No, the Council does not support the proposal to amend the route. We have a number of concerns about the methodology behind the latest proposal and the impact that such a development would have.

DEMAND

The Sheffield Midland spur option gives 71% fewer high speed train seats serving Sheffield City Region than the Sheffield Meadowhall option.

HS2 Limited's forecasts for demand for HS2 services in the City Region estimate that the majority of demand will arise from south west Sheffield. We believe that this is based on mistaken assumptions. Demand is dependent upon level of service which is currently poor in South Yorkshire, so current demand is suppressed as a result. The flawed HS2 logic is illustrated by the existing demand for 4 trains per hour to London from Doncaster, while HS2 Limited's forecast demand for HS2 services from Sheffield Midland to London is a maximum of 2 trains per hour, which would be 200m length trains. Sheffield Meadowhall, however, would be served by 5 trains per hour on the high speed line, 2 of which would be 400m length trains.

The Sheffield City Region Growth Areas are predominantly located from Sheffield city centre to the north and east, with the top two priority areas located between Sheffield and Rotherham (Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District or AMID) and at Doncaster Sheffield Airport. Both of these locations are better supported by Sheffield Meadowhall.

NEEDS OF SHEFFIELD CITY REGION

Work undertaken by Mott MacDonald for the Council suggests that the Sheffield Meadowhall option would deliver significantly more economic benefit for the City Region compared to the classic compatible spur to Sheffield Midland (£900m versus £550m in GVA and 1200 more jobs).

The economic case for high speed rail is based on transformational reductions in journey times and providing city to city connectivity to provide the agglomeration benefits. The journey times from Sheffield Midland to London are up to 25% longer than on the high speed line from Sheffield Meadowhall with the consequential
reduction in economic benefit to the City Region. For the Sheffield Meadowhall option this means more jobs created, better quality jobs, higher productivity and closer interaction between businesses arising from better connectivity.

The Sheffield Midland spur option does not balance conflicting demands within the City Region. Rotherham is not served at all by the proposals, but suffers the devastating impact of the line, particularly at Bramley, Aston and Wales. The new route alignment has a significant impact on existing high quality housing on the Broadlands estate at Bramley. The Council rejects Sir David Higgins’ assertion that Rotherham “would benefit from the overall proposition”.

The wider city region is best served by the Sheffield Meadowhall option, which has long standing support of the majority of local authorities in South Yorkshire. It is the optimal solution for the City Region.

CONNECTIVITY

The Command Paper proposal of a spur into Sheffield Midland station provides no connectivity from Sheffield City Region to Birmingham, Leeds, York and the North East. Significant additional investment, over and above that allowed for in the Secretary of State’s figures, is required to provide connectivity to these locations. This would involve upgrading and electrifying the Northern Loop (as well as the new junction from the Dearne Valley Line onto the high speed line at Clayton being provided), the cost of which has not been built into HS2 Limited's figures.

The Council is sympathetic to the Government’s Northern Powerhouse Rail [NPR] ambitions. These are more closely met by the Sheffield Meadowhall option, which offers 4 high speed trains per hour to Leeds, than the Sheffield Midland spur option, which has no connectivity to Leeds unless the significant additional investment mentioned above is made. Yet, NPR ambitions are cited as a reason for changing the Government’s recommendations.

The proposal creates an estimated journey time to London from Sheffield Midland of 87 minutes including a stop at Chesterfield (85 minutes without). The journey time from Sheffield Meadowhall to London would be just 69 minutes - or 79 minutes from Sheffield Midland including a 10 minute journey and interchange time. This 25% faster journey time to Meadowhall will significantly increase the economic benefits to the City Region. The journey time to Birmingham from Sheffield Meadowhall would be 37 minutes and to Leeds 15 minutes.

ENVIRONMENT

HS2 Limited has identified that the location of Sheffield Meadowhall station is in a flood zone but then so too is Sheffield Midland station. Issues of poor air quality and road congestion have also been cited. Sheffield Midland station sits at the heart of Sheffield’s Air Quality Management Area, and as a city centre location, suffers from chronic congestion at peak times. Meadowhall, by contrast, sits adjacent to the M1 motorway.

The route has a significant impact on an existing residential development at Bramley.
Whilst the railway is in a retained cutting at this point and will not involve any demolition of property the houses near to the railway are likely to suffer from vibration as a result of the 18 trains per hour (~3 minute intervals) travelling at 360kph passing close by.

**COST**

The claimed £1bn saving provided by the M18 eastern route and Sheffield Midland spur option, quickly dissolves away when the full cost of delivering the proposal is exposed as outlined below. Using HS2’s own figures, the reality is that the Sheffield Meadowhall high speed station option is no more expensive to build than the spur option, and will be considerably cheaper to operate.

HS2 Limited claims that the M18 eastern route and Sheffield Midland spur option provides a £1bn cost saving to the HS2 project. However, the proposal assumes that the Midland Main Line will have been electrified to Sheffield Midland station before high speed train services commence. Whilst the previous Government had made a commitment to the electrification of the Midland Main Line, this work has been delayed and deferred and currently there is no commitment from the Secretary of State. If the HS2 proposal is predicated upon the electrification being in place, then the cost must be included. The cost of electrification is estimated to be £0.5bn.

The construction of the Northern Loop is fundamental to the Sheffield Midland spur option providing high speed connectivity from Sheffield to Birmingham, Leeds, and to cities north of Leeds. However, the Command Paper lays claim to the journey time benefits to Birmingham and to Leeds of upgrading the Northern Loop without a commitment to providing the infrastructure to give the connectivity. The Command Paper says that funding for this will be considered as part of Transport for the North’s [TfN] work. However, if TfN becomes a statutory body and has a budget, it will be considering priorities for funding across the whole of the north of England and there is currently no indication that they would consider this work to be a priority. The upgrade and electrification of the Northern Loop is estimated to cost £0.3bn. If the journey time benefits of upgrading and electrifying the Northern Loop are to be claimed as part of the HS2 proposal, then there has to be a commitment by the Government to fund the improvements to form the Northern Loop, in addition to the junction.

The Command Paper makes reference to a parkway station study being undertaken by HS2 Limited. Again, there is no commitment to a parkway station being provided, but Sir David Higgins has said in Parliament that a parkway station would be ‘very attractive’. The cost of a parkway station is estimated by HS2 Limited to be between £0.2bn and £0.3bn.

The Command Paper also makes reference to the possibility of extending services to Barnsley or Rotherham. Both of these destinations would require the existing railway lines to be upgraded and electrified in order for classic compatible trains to service them. These improvements are uncosted and are not taken into account in the estimated £1bn saving.
The cost of remodelling Sheffield Midland station to accommodate classic compatible trains has not been included in HS2 Limited's projected £1bn cost saving. The challenge, and therefore the cost, of remodelling the station is considerable and will need to take into account not only the remodelling of the station itself but removing the bottleneck at the north end of the station where there is a highly constrained two track approach. According to the Command Paper proposals will need to accommodate not only terminating HS2 compatible services, but also Northern Powerhouse Rail's conditional outputs.

There is considerable doubt over the ability of Sheffield Midland station to accommodate the additional HS2 services as well as the NPR aspirations. Sir David Higgins points to the lack of space in the station for existing services, high speed through services and NPR ambitions. The site is extremely constrained, and significant investment will be required to accommodate HS2 Limited's proposals, if indeed it is possible. Yet none of this work has been factored into HS2 Limited's figures.

Even if the capacity at Sheffield Midland station is found, there will be no ability thereafter to provide additional HS2 services to meet growing demand. This is hugely important given the suppressed demand figures used by HS2 Limited. In contrast, Sheffield Meadowhall station, being on the high speed line, has the ability to respond to a future increase in demand in the region.

The additional operating costs for the Sheffield Midland spur option are £1.7bn over the life of the scheme. This is an ongoing cost to the taxpayer.

**Question 8 – Do you support the potential development of a northern junction to enable high speed services stopping at Sheffield to continue further north?**

The construction of the Northern Loop is fundamental to the Sheffield Midland spur option providing high speed connectivity from Sheffield to Birmingham, Leeds, and to cities north of Leeds. However, while the development of a northern junction to enable high speed services stopping at Sheffield to continue further north is a committed and funded element of the proposals announced in the Command Paper, there is no commitment to upgrading and electrifying the Northern Loop between Sheffield Midland and the northern junction. The Command Paper says that funding for this will be considered as part of Transport for the North's [TfN] work. However, if TfN becomes a statutory body and has a budget, it will be considering priorities for funding across the whole of the north of England and there is currently no indication that they would consider this work to be a priority. The upgrade and electrification of the Northern Loop is estimated to cost £0.3bn. If the journey time benefits of upgrading and electrifying the Northern Loop are to be claimed as part of the HS2 proposal, then there has to be a commitment by the Government to fund the improvements to form the Northern Loop, in addition to the junction.
Question 9 – Do you support the proposed location of the northern junction in the vicinity of Clayton?

The proposed junction at Clayton is somewhat confusing due to the fact the proposal from HS2 does not include a full loop north from Sheffield. Therefore, what purpose does it fulfill under the current proposals? If a full loop is proposed then the provision of a junction at Clayton, and the upgrading and electrification of the Dearne Valley line, offers opportunities for improved connectivity and journey times between Sheffield and Leeds. As Clayton is the point where the two lines would cross, and there are minimal property impacts in this location, this would appear to be an appropriate location for the junction.

Conclusion

The Council considers that the Sheffield Midland spur option:

- will mean fewer, slower and smaller trains for the city region resulting in 71 per cent less seats per hour for the City Region and journey times 25% slower than the Meadowhall option;
- offers vastly inferior connectivity with trains only connecting Sheffield with East Midlands Hub and London. There will be no connectivity to Birmingham, Leeds, York and the North East as there would be from Meadowhall;
- brings significantly fewer direct economic benefits. 30% fewer jobs will be created than with the Meadowhall option;
- constrains economic growth opportunities. The economic benefit to the Sheffield City Region is nearly 40% lower than for the Meadowhall option;
- costs more. The claimed £1bn saving provided by the Sheffield Midland spur option, quickly dissolves away when the full cost of delivering the proposal is exposed. Using HS2’s own figures, the reality is that the Sheffield Meadowhall high speed station option is no more expensive to build than the Sheffield Midland spur option, and will be considerably cheaper to operate.

These issues are summarised in the table below:

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<tr>
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<th>Sheffield Midland</th>
<th>Meadowhall</th>
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<tr>
<td>Trains per hour</td>
<td>2 x 200m trains</td>
<td>2 x400m trains &amp; 3 x 200m trains</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journey time to London</td>
<td>85 minutes (87 minutes with a stop at Chesterfield)</td>
<td>69 minutes</td>
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<td>Jobs created</td>
<td>2740</td>
<td>3930</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic growth (GVA)</td>
<td>£550m</td>
<td>£900m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>The cost of both options is similar when the full cost of delivering the Midland option is revealed, while the Meadowhall option is considerably cheaper to operate.</td>
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The Council believe these impacts may remain true even if the Northern Loop and a Parkway Station are delivered. However, these developments, whilst cited, are not included in the costs of the HS2 project. The Council therefore calls on the Secretary of State to confirm the Sheffield Meadowhall route as the Government's proposal for high speed rail in South Yorkshire.

Yours faithfully

Councillor Chris Read
Leader of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council