

Chesham Town Council's response to the HS2 proposals

Question 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?

Response: NO

There is no real evidence that super-fast trains support economic growth. Government claims that HS2 will address the North South divide conflict with their own figures, which show that 73% of jobs created by HS2 will be in London. Most would not be genuinely new jobs but transfers from other parts of the country.

HS2 would be just part of Britain's intercity network. The Government admits that services to other cities such as Coventry, Northampton, Peterborough, Stoke and Doncaster would worsen. Up to 750 trains a day too would be likely to be scrapped or slowed down. HS2 would slow down the journeys of more rail users than it speeded up.

When surveyed most people would prefer improvements to their existing services.

Where there is a case for increased capacity, this could be achieved more quickly and cheaply through alternative means.

Other infrastructure improvements would be likely to prove a better way of supporting economic growth and could be achieved sooner.

Question 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?

Response: NO

At a time when huge cuts in public sector spending are being forced upon the Government, so as to reduce the enormous budget deficit, there appears to be no commercial case for spending over £30 billion on HS2 or justification for the subsidy that would be required to support it. Expenditure would be spread over quite a long period. However past experience shows that most Government sponsored projects end up costing vastly more than initial estimates. HS1 was sold for half of its build cost.

Other schemes, such as the Government's own Rail Package (an upgrade of the West Coast Line) and other improvements to track and signalling, could improve capacity and performance at a fraction of the cost of HS2 and could be phased in much more quickly.

Question 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?

Response: NO

The case for a high speed network is unproven and the proposed phased roll out is too slow to address current peak capacity problems.

Transport for London has warned that proposals for the link to HS1 via the North London Line are not feasible and would adversely impact existing London passenger and freight services.

Hs2 would not reduce dependency on aviation. Airlines have stated that any domestic flight slots freed by HS2 in Manchester or beyond would be filled by international flights.

Question 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?

Response: NO

Britain is a small country and improved performance does not require speeds of 220 – 250 mph. These are more relevant to larger countries like France, where cities are further apart.

At 250 mph, operational safety and reliability systems are unproven. Comparison with HS1 is inappropriate since the trains travel 70mph slower than HS2.

The seemingly heroic assumptions about benefits in terms of value for money, economic growth and carbon emissions are unproven.

The choice of route through the Chilterns, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty would appear to be in breach of the Government's own Guidelines.

Question 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 new high speed rail line between London and the West Midlands?

Response: NO

HS2 makes neither economic nor environmental sense. Discussing mitigating the impact of something that is unnecessary is therefore pointless.

Question 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?

Response: This appraisal is not the detailed environmental impact assessment that people have been calling for. It is perceived as an inadequate document. Thus no source is quoted for the benefits claimed.

HS2 is not a low carbon economy project. Trains travelling at 360km/h use 23% more energy of those travelling at 300km/h. (Source – Imperial College). HS2 Ltd, which concluded that HS2 would not be a major factor in managing carbon in the transport sector has not allowed for the impact (embedded carbon) of the line's construction.

HS2 is not a Green Project. Its supporters may not care about the destruction of listed buildings and ancient woodlands and the damage to national trails, rights of way, the loss of farm land and the risks to rare species. They

should however be made aware that tunnelling over or through the Chilterns aquifers would present major risks of pollution and could cause long-term damage to water supplies.

Question 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?

Response: NO

The principles are too restrictive. They do not compensate the great majority of individuals suffering loss in property value as a direct result of HS2.

The rules on eligibility are unfair (on property type, hardship, proximity, HS2 evidence, no prior HS2 knowledge).

The blighting of property values in the locality of HS2 is a direct consequence of the project and should be a cost to HS2 and not to the unfortunates who happen to be in the locality.