

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA
Switchboard: 020 7983 4000
Web: www.london.gov.uk

**The Rt Hon Philip Hammond
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR**

**Our ref: LG
Date: July 2011**

Dear Philip,

High Speed Rail Consultation Response

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Government's consultation on high speed rail. I am responding to the plans as a whole on behalf of the London Assembly Liberal Democrat Group as our Transport Spokesperson.

Case for High Speed Rail

We are supportive of the development of high speed rail infrastructure in the UK. We believe high speed rail could address serious capacity issues on our rail network, especially on the West Coast Main Line, along with meeting demand for rail travel, which is set to increase.

Building a high speed line instead of a conventional one would open up many opportunities to encourage a modal shift from road users onto rail and cut down on the number of domestic flights, especially if the line is expanded north to Scotland. We believe combined, these would help to reduce carbon emissions significantly.

We also believe that a high speed line will bring real benefits to the country's economy by opening up opportunities for faster business travel, creating easier access to London for regional businesses and generating more rail freight capacity.

The Consultation

We were disappointed in the lack of dialogue and engagement from High Speed Two Limited. Despite letters from the Chief Executive to myself stating *"I am more than happy to meet with you and the London Assembly Transport Committee to discuss our recommendations"* and *"as an organisation we are committed to engaging as fully as possible,"* we found them to be awkward and elusive when asked for meetings both for the London Assembly Transport Committee and for myself in my capacity as a Londonwide Assembly Member. We also had a similar experience with the Department for Transport, who refused to send anybody to the London Assembly Transport Committee to discuss High Speed Two.

Direct telephone: 020 7983 4362 **Fax:** 020 7983 4417 **Email:** caroline.pidgeon@london.gov.uk

We believe that this was a missed opportunity for the DfT and HS2 Ltd to engage with stakeholders and elected representatives, and to make the case for High Speed Rail, especially in light of the many organised groups lobbying against the scheme.

We were also disappointed by the lack of route options and stations contained in the consultation, and feel that it would have been better to have presented a wider range of worked up options for consultation and debate.

Many constituents who live on the preferred route have also contacted my colleagues and I about the lack of information that has been issued to them. We hope that the DfT and HS2 Ltd are trying to rectify this problem. One local resident only found out about the proposed scheme and route by a local estate agent putting a letter through the door offering to buy his property at a reduced rate due to its imminent blighting.

London-Specific Issues

- **Demolition of homes around Euston**

We note with concern that the current proposals would require the demolition and replacement of hundreds of homes around Euston Station, mainly in four local authority owned blocks. We urge the DfT and HS2 Ltd to build and maintain a positive dialogue with these residents and local representatives who no doubt will be anxious about these plans. It is also imperative for the DfT and HS2 Ltd to be transparent and forthcoming with their alternative plans to re-house these residents as quickly as possible.

- **Redevelopment of Euston**

Having visited the site and looked at the plans, we are concerned with the proposals at Euston and believe a double deck solution, similar to other European stations, should be considered. This would reduce the need to compulsory purchase order land and buildings and minimise disruption in the area.

- **Capacity at Euston**

The consultation document contained no information regarding the possible impact of the increased number of passengers at Euston on London's public transport system. We do not believe the existing network can cope with the predicted rise in passengers and believe a new tube line is needed alongside HS2 to maximise its potential. There will also be a need to fund the bus interchange at Euston.

- **Alternative London terminals**

It would be helpful to see how much work has been carried out considering other London terminals such as Waterloo, as there is little about any other stations in the consultation document. For instance, the consultation fails to consider if any of the disused platforms at Waterloo could be used for the scheme.

- **Depth of Tunnelling**

One issue we have already taken up with you is that of the tunnelling under London. Whilst we welcomed your announcement in December 2010 regarding amending the route in the Primrose Hill area, we remain concerned about the distance of the tunnels beneath homes in London. Many houses, for example, have one or sometimes two floors beneath the ground level, and do not sit on traditional foundations but directly on London Clay. We therefore feel it is important that the depth of tunnels is expertly and rigorously considered before any work commences.

- **Old Oak Common**

We welcome the proposed interchange station at Old Oak Common and believe it is important to create this link with Crossrail and also Heathrow Airport. It would also be a fantastic opportunity to redevelop and regenerate this part of West London.

We trust you will take on board our views and suggestions, as you consider your consultation responses.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Pidgeon AM
London Assembly Liberal Democrat Group Leader