



AGENDA ITEM: 5(h)

CABINET: 12 November 2013

Report of: Assistant Director Planning

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor M Forshaw

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SUBJECT: HIGH SPEED RAIL (HS2) CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Cabinet of the Government proposal's regarding phase two of the High Speed Rail route (HS2) and their impact on West Lancashire and to seek support to endorse the Liverpool City Region request for a direct high speed link between Liverpool and London.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the proposed consultation response provided at Appendix 2 be submitted to Government in response to its High Speed Rail consultation exercise.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 On 17 July the Government launched their consultation exercise on phase two of the proposed High Speed Rail route. The consultation runs between the 17 July to the 31 January 2014.

3.2 Proposals include construction of this new high speed network in two phases. Phase one will see a new train line run between London Euston to new stations at Birmingham city centre and a new interchange at Birmingham airport. The second phase of the route will see trains run between the West Midlands through to Manchester, Leeds and beyond. This new route will be integrated within the

existing rail lines, potentially allowing high speed rail lines to serve destinations including Liverpool, Preston Wigan and Crewe.

- 3.3 On 7 June officers were invited to attend a HS2 pre-consultation event hosted by Merseytravel. Attending speakers included the Merseyside authorities (who for the purposes of this report shall be known as the Liverpool City Region (LCR) partnership), Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), HS2 team and a member of the Government's Transport Select Committee. During this event the benefits of HS2 were explained and the LCR partnership requested support to endorse their request for a direct HS2 rail link to Liverpool serving the LCR. The current plans involve HS2 trains serving Liverpool but these trains will only operate at lower speeds between Liverpool and Crewe on classic compatible lines.
- 3.4 The project's first phase would see 225mph trains running between London and the Midlands by 2026 and the second phase would see the line extended further with branches to Leeds and Manchester by 2033. Under the proposals, journey times from Manchester to London will reduce from 2h.8mins to 1h 8mins and journey times from Liverpool will reduce from 2h 8mins to 1h 36 mins. Clearly, if the link to Liverpool were to be upgraded to allow HS2 trains to travel at their usual speeds, this journey time would reduce significantly.
- 3.5 The decision on the route for phase 2 is expected by the end of 2014, followed by a bill seeking powers to construct phase 2 in the next parliament, following the May 2015 general election.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The main Government aims of HS2 are:

- To support wider regeneration
- To support economic growth
- To increase capacity
- To change the geography of the Country

4.2 In the Government's consultation document, 'High Speed Rail Investing in Britain's Future', the Government say that there are a number of reasons why we should invest in High Speed 2. These reasons include:

- That by 2025 the West Coast main line will be full. Under the proposals 18 trains an hour will be run by HS2 doubling capacity between London & Birmingham;
- Eight of the largest cities in England will be better connected;
- HS2 will help secure future investment with £2 being generated for every £1 invested;
- HS2 will free up capacity on the existing network and to allow for greater freight capacity helping to reduce the number of lorries on UK roads;
- Phase 2 of HS2 is forecast to support the creation of approximately 48,700-70,300 jobs, as well as 5,200-7,600 houses.
- The project should rebalance the economy, helping to link up cities in the Midland and North of England; and

- It will be possible to alter HS2 services to run on the existing HS1 route and provide a direct rail link between cities in the North and Midlands and the continent.
- 4.3 One of the main benefits of the proposed HS2 will be to free up capacity on the existing network. Without a new rail network there is a risk that existing services on the network will become slow and congested and there is a possibility services may be lost.
 - 4.4 The proposed trains for phase two of HS2 will include 18 trains per hour with 1100 seats per train and there will be two different types of trains: High Speed only trains which will only run on high speed rail lines and classic compatible trains which will run on high speed track and the existing network.
 - 4.5 The estimated cost of the plan has risen in the past few months with the overall cost predicted to be approximately £50 billion. This has caused some groups to question if the benefits of the project are still cost effective. There have also been further questions as to whether the proposed scheme will deliver the predicted benefits, with some questioning if the scheme will actually draw business away from the North.

5.0 THE POSSIBLE IMPACT FOR WEST LANCASHIRE

- 5.1 Phase 2 includes details of the route from the West Midlands to the North West, East Midlands and West Yorkshire. The proposed link will go to Manchester and Manchester airport and there will be a link to Liverpool via Crewe. However, after Crew the link will follow the existing rail line and will not be high speed. Phase 2 also includes direct links to Preston and Wigan in which HS2 trains will also use the existing West Coast mainline. This means that there will be direct links from West Lancashire to the HS2 network via the Ormskirk to Liverpool train service, the Ormskirk to Preston service, the Southport to Manchester service and the Kirkby to Wigan/Manchester service. This should provide an improvement in service between West Lancashire and some of the major cities in England, including London, helping to increase the accessibility of the Borough.
- 5.2 The Government states that the budget for HS2 will not draw from existing transport budgets and so there should be no risk that services in West Lancashire will suffer as a result of HS2 going forward. However, it will be important to ensure that this assurance is maintained so that existing services are not altered detrimentally and that we continue to push for improvements on existing lines which will connect West Lancashire to the High Speed network.
- 5.3 Despite the fact that at this moment in time there appears to be some debate over whether HS2 does actually represent value for money and can deliver the predicted benefits, the available evidence supports the case for investment in the scheme. This indicates that HS2 will deliver economic benefits to the north west as a whole, and as such, it is my view that we should support the project.
- 5.4 The Liverpool City Region (LCR) partnership have requested that we support their request for a new high speed line between Liverpool and Crewe allowing a full direct high speed link into Liverpool. As a part of the wider LCR,

improvements to rail services serving Liverpool should help provide improvements and support the economy in West Lancashire, particularly as the most frequent rail service in West Lancashire serves Liverpool and the fact that the Council are championing a number of rail improvement schemes to extend links to Liverpool. As part of the wider LCR, it is important for West Lancashire to ensure that the LCR does not become less competitive than its neighbours.

- 5.5 Members may be aware that the Council are championing the case for a direct rail line from Skelmersdale to Liverpool, as well as investigating the possibility of extending Merseyrail to serve Burscough and link to the former Burscough Curves. Officers are currently working with partners including Merseytravel, Merseyrail and Lancashire County Council to finalise a brief before appointing Network Rail to conduct further Governance for Rail Investment Projects (GRIP) work to develop the business case for the proposed Skelmersdale to Liverpool rail link. Officers have also identified a need to conduct further work to investigate the possibility of extending the Merseyrail Network to Burscough and are continuing to work with Merseytravel to investigate this option.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 The proposed extension of HS2 will not be built in West Lancashire, although the Borough will be well served by connections. The proposed benefits of the scheme meet many of the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy including assisting in getting people back into work and reducing dependency on the car helping to reduce the amount of carbon emitted. As such, the proposal will have economic, environmental and social benefits.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no significant financial or resource implications arising from this report.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 There is a risk that the proposed HS2 may not go ahead and as such the West Coast mainline may reach capacity potentially resulting in a lack of accessibility for residents to the West Coast Mainline and a detrimental impact on economic regeneration.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Article.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a significant direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the

results of which have been taken into account when undertaking the actions detailed within this article.

Appendices

Appendix 1- Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2-Proposed Consultation Response