

## Bradford Chamber of Commerce High Speed 2 – consultation response – July 2011

**Q1 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?**

A1 Yes, we agree that there is a very strong case for enhancing the capacity and performance of Britain’s inter-city rail network to support economic growth over the coming decades. There is an urgent need for additional capacity to meet projected demands for rail travel in the years ahead, especially in view of the anticipated capacity shortfalls of the West and East Coast mainlines early in the 2020s. This extra capacity will be vital to the economic development of the UK and will ensure that our rail infrastructure is fit-for-purpose for future generations and at least the equal of the transport networks which are being developed around the world particularly in those countries with which we compete in international markets.

**Q2 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?**

A2 We cannot say whether or not the “Y” network (the full “Y” network linking the North of England and Scotland) would provide the best balance of costs and benefits for enhancing rail capacity and performance. However, if it is to go ahead, then we stress that the full “Y” network and onward HS2 on both the West and East coasts will be necessary to realise full economic benefits and value for money. Only this will enable the UK to catch up with the many other industrialised nations which are already well ahead of the UK in their HSR infrastructure development. The full network may well help to close the UK’s ‘North South Divide’ - and the east and west coast routings will be critically important to avoiding the possibility of a new ‘East West Divide’ in the UK.

We understand that a strong economic case has been made for ensuring that the Eastern line goes ahead in parallel, chronologically, with the Western line, and we do not doubt that argument. We have reservations, though, on the benefits that Bradford and other parts of West Yorkshire could receive from the proposed scheme. See A3 for further comment.

**Q3 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?**

A3 Yes - provided there is binding cross-party political agreement that the whole project will go ahead, and that the project will link to the North of England and to Scotland in the “Y” formation as currently planned. This is essential if full economic benefits (estimated at £44billion) are to be achieved.

While we do want to see more frequent direct rail services between Bradford and London, we are not totally convinced either of the direct benefits to the Bradford District, or of the country’s ability to afford this scheme at this time. Also, while HS2 could be an important element of the UK’s future transport and communications strategy, it is not a panacea. It is important that continuous upgrades and enhancements are made to our existing rail links – particularly across Yorkshire and on trans-Pennine links between West Yorkshire and the north-west. Electrification of these services and new rolling stock with expanded capacity must be developed on these important regional connections - including the full integration of services, stations which are fit-for-purpose, and the introduction of strategic park-and-ride initiatives. Serious upgrades to the East Coast mainline are also essential in order to provide the best possible interim services until the HSR network is complete, and to satisfy long-term capacity requirements.

So, the most benefits would be accrued to the cities directly ‘touched’ by HS2, while there appears to be an assumption that nearby towns and cities will automatically ‘support the cause’ – this is not necessarily the case. Local businesses here in Bradford appear split – some saying ‘do it now’, others saying the country cannot afford it, and a third group saying, in any case, the benefits do not outweigh the costs.

However, we recognise the long-term need to free up capacity from the East Coast Main Line. We would welcome greater connections and linkages within West Yorkshire in general, and Bradford in particular.

**Q4 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?**

A4 Yes – we are in full agreement that the impacts on the environment should be kept to an absolute minimum (within the bounds of affordability), that wherever possible every effort should be made to follow existing rail or road transport corridors, that the latest design technology should be used to construct deep cuttings and tunnels, and that route planning should seek to avoid sensitive sites whenever and wherever possible. Strenuous efforts should be made to minimise visual impairment of the countryside, and to reduce noise levels to an absolute minimum. We agree with route design being focused primarily on city centre station locations with high quality onward transport links, (but please see A2 above – it is absolutely essential that the onward transport links are of the highest quality – and this means full commitment from Government to provide funding for continuous upgrades and enhancements to our existing rail links).

**Q5 Do you agree that the Government's proposed route, including the approach proposed for mitigating its impacts, is the best option for a new high speed rail line between London and the West Midlands?**

A5 Within the bounds of affordability, we consider that the route for HS2 between London and the West Midlands should cause the least possible disruption to the population, landscape, and environment. Please see A4 above which outlines our support of using the latest design and construction techniques to achieve the objective. The Government's proposed route, we are assured, has been determined on the basis of impact mitigation as described above.

**Q6 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?**

A6 It is essential that Sustainability issues are carefully analysed and embraced within the proposals for the route. We understand that the Government has addressed the Sustainability issues in considerable detail through an Appraisal of Sustainability covering the four principles of sustainable development: a) Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating climate change; b) Protecting natural and cultural resources and enhancing the environment; c) Creating sustainable communities (including noise); and d) Achieving sustainable consumption and production.

We consider it entirely appropriate that the Government should have taken all these sustainability issues into account in making the proposals.

**Q7 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?**

A7 HS2 is considered by many as a project of national importance that, if it goes ahead, may adversely affect many people. It is appropriate that everybody concerned should be fully and fairly compensated. We are in agreement that the Government is considering additional appropriate measures to help those whose properties would be unlikely to need to be compulsorily purchased in order to build the new line, but who may still experience a significant loss in the value of their property as a result of its proximity. It is essential that fairness and understanding is exhibited in handling the claims and reasonable complaints of those affected and it is entirely appropriate that the Government should have identified a range of approaches and options which will need to be applied to any additional discretionary arrangements which may need to be made. We are fully in agreement that compensation should be paid in full, and handled sensitively by Government. This is not a time for petty bureaucracy. The whole purpose of HS2 is to enhance living standards for the whole of the population, and it would be a sad indictment on our society if we were to allow relatively small numbers of people directly affected by the project to have to pay a price any greater than anyone else in the UK.