



From Lord Berkeley
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15th March 2020

Euston Station and approaches for HS2

I write to follow up my Written Question and the Answer from Baroness Vere (HL1912) about the future of Euston Station. In my Question, I quoted comments by the Prime Minister with reference to HS2 at Euston '*We will also ensure that we take proper control of what is happening at Euston which...has been a shambles*' and comments in the Oakervee Report '*The existing planned construction of the approach has taken the form of a tunnelled dive-under which is expensive and exposes major risks to the existing railway and services during construction*'. In my Question, I asked whether ministers will instruct HS2 to cease all further temporary works in the area to avoid possible unnecessary destruction until the new control method and management are in place with an agreed design and method of construction.

Baroness Vere replied: '*In relation to HS2 works in the area around Euston, in order to avoid further delays to implementation of the HS2 project, HS2 Ltd and its contractors will continue with the current programme of enabling and early works; only where such works will be required regardless of design changes that may arise in response to the outcomes of the Oakervee Review*'.

In addition, word is reaching me that the current development partner for the Euston Station redevelopment, Lendlease, has indicated that it wishes to terminate its development agreement on the grounds of engineering design uncertainty and escalating cost. Perhaps you can clarify Lendlease's position but if my information is correct, there is even greater pressure to cease all temporary works until matters are resolved.

Notwithstanding Lendlease's alleged position, I find it surprising that the reason for continuing with enabling and early works is that Government does not want to avoid further delay, but it is itself actually incurring further delay by removing the Euston station area from the responsibility of HS2 Ltd, proposing greater integration of the projects at Euston with the existing railway and establishing a dedicated delivery vehicle. I fully support such a move but suggest that it would be a very brave minister who authorised the continuation of the current HS2 high risk and unnecessarily expensive scheme when there are good and cheaper alternatives. And why is HS2 continuing such work when responsibility for this part of the HS2 project is to be removed from them?

Old Oak Common as a terminus

You will be aware of the conclusions of my Dissenting Oakervee Report that I considered that the extension to Euston was not needed at all, since all the trains from Phases 1 and 2A could easily be turned round at Old Oak Common, and that there was sufficient capacity on an upgraded Crossrail to take passengers into central London. It is interesting that HS2 is saying that it needs Crossrail 2 to get HS2 passengers away from Euston, and TfL is saying that Crossrail relies on HS2 to improve the business case for Crossrail 2. Many rail experts have confirmed that one can turn at least 10 and possibly 12 trains per hour at six platforms at OOC, and save around £8bn on the tunnels, approaches and station at Euston. Many of these trains will effectively be long distance commuter services which at termini elsewhere turn round very much more quickly than HS2 is planning.

The Euston station design for HS2

In October 2016, I supported Sam Price MA FREng FICE FStructE HonFRIBA, an eminent engineer who lives near Euston, in his petition (HoL-00691) to the Phase 1 Select Committee for an alternative to the HS2 station design, which enabled all the HS2 and Network Rail trains to be accommodated within the existing footprint of Euston station, by making use of the two wider platforms formerly used for parcel traffic. Passenger circulation would be via a deck above all the platforms with escalator access to and from each platform. I attach a paper/ppt which describes it. I have commented before about the high construction risk of both HS2 proposals for the approach tracks; one of which would see complex underground caverns under the six Network Rail approach tracks, and the other put at risk the high retaining walls on the west side; neither of these are necessary if a more normal speed and achievable train frequency had been adopted.

We subsequently offered a range of approach track layouts to offer a simplified layout, much less risk from the construction and an ability to keep the Network Rail part of the station fully operational during the works. One of these was to have the cavern under the Camden carriage sidings area and not under private property or under main running lines, with some degree of integration southwards with the Network Rail lines. It would also be beneficial if there was some reversal for track directions on the Network Rail side, so that trains could travel in similar directions alongside each other and so enable coordination junctions where at least classic compatible trains could swap platforms, and/or reach a terminus in the case of engineering work blocking access to HS platforms e.g. on Sundays.

HS2 rejected our proposal because it did not comply with its high specification of 13m wide platforms, high speed rail approaches and grade separation of the approach tracks to ensure that reliability could be maintained even with trains coming from the classic network at Crewe or wherever which could be late. Many senior Network Rail people thought it was a good idea to have an integrated station, but were prevented by DfT from any discussion with us.

The cost savings of Sam Price's scheme compared to the HS2 scheme was £3.74bn less than the HS2 scheme at 4Q 2015 prices.

Now the situation appears to have changed. Ministers have said that they wish the HS2 and Network Rail stations to be developed together. The Oakervee Report recommends an in-depth study into improving the efficiency of Euston station as a whole, avoiding the complicated HS2 approach to Euston and minimise risk. I support all these recommendations.

Thus, if Government wishes to retain Euston as a terminal station for HS2, then with a reduced specification to 320 kph maximum and not more than 14 trains per hour, a much simpler layout can be achieved; it could enable approach platforms to be shared between Network Rail and HS2 line trains and significantly reduce the construction risk for the HS2 approaches, as well as allowing Network Rail trains to continue to operate during most of the construction period unaffected.

This could be achieved within the existing station box but, following demolition of the adjacent buildings, some extra space would enable an easier and simpler construction phase. It may even be possible to avoid the wholesale reconstruction of that very expensive structure Hampstead Road Bridge.

However, I suggest that, whatever the final HS2 design chosen for Euston, the technical risks of the current HS2 scheme are much too high; the risks of closing the existing Network Rail station are similarly high.

In his 11 February statement, the Prime Minister referring to Phase 1 said '*we will be interrogating the current costs to identify where savings can be made in phase 1.*' Given the other pressures at Euston, and the option of reduced speed and train numbers, it must be evident that there is no need from the point of view of HS2 construction to continue to demolish the buildings, trees, wildlife habitats etc as well as the London Zoo car park..

I would welcome the opportunity to explain to you and colleagues these alternatives at Euston which can now be considered due to the welcome decision to merge the plans for the Network Rail and HS2 station plans.

Tony Berkeley