

High Speed Rail (West Midlands to Crewe): Written Statement – Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Executive Summary to the Written Statement has been prepared by Stone Town and Chebsey Parish Councils to rebut the evidence that was given by Mr Tim Smart, on behalf of HS2 Ltd, at the Select Committee hearing on Wednesday 25 April 2018. It also addresses the comments contained in '*R56 Summary of Promoter's response to Stone Town Council and Chebsey Parish Council*', regarding alleged false assumptions, which was published on Friday 27th April. The issues raised essentially fall under four key headings. The full Written Summary accompanies this document.

Advantages of the Stone Railhead/IMB-R?

- 1.1.2 HS2 Ltd considers there to be three key advantages of using Stone as the location of a temporary construction railhead for Phase 2a and permanent maintenance facility for Phases 2a and 2b.
- 1.1.3 These claimed advantages essentially amount to being located close to the M6 motorway and the existing rail network. However, the Parish Councils have been able to demonstrate that Aldersey's Rough is much better located to both, with easier and immediate access to the M6, and with minimal disruption to the existing local road network, together with more straightforward access to the West Coast Mainline, without the need for complicated track connections and convoluted internal shunting movements. The Parish Councils have also disproved the widely touted myth that the Stone IMB-R was more centrally located to carry out future maintenance of the Phase 2a and 2b railways.
- 1.1.4 Aldersey's Rough also offers numerous other benefits that cannot be matched by Stone. Whilst being well connected by road and rail, it is remotely located meaning that few people will be affected by its construction and operation compared to Stone. The fact that construction of key elements can be undertaken discretely in separate geographical locations reduces the construction risk associated with the multiple interdependent structures that need to be built in sequence at Stone, a situation complicated by the conflicting operations of its internal north to south aligned internal transport needs, which is constrained by the physical barrier of the Norton Bridge to Stone railway until March 2023 and the east to west external HGV movements, which is constrained by a lack of access to the northbound M6 until at least March 2022.

Option 9.5 is the only feasible option

- 1.1.5 In order to try and undermine the clear engineering, environmental and economic benefits of developing Aldersey's Rough, HS2 Ltd's Chief Engineer has claimed that its highly sub-optimal design (Option 9.5) cannot be improved upon. However, this is not correct and says more about HS2 Ltd's design team's refusal to release the Option 9.5 design information, together with its detailed comparative costings and transport logistics profiles, for scrutiny.

Number of maintenance supply trains required

- 1.1.6 To justify its constraining of the Norton Bridge to Stone Railway following the opening of HS2, the Promoters have sought to sow confusion over the number of supply trains it will require to install the railway systems between January 2025 and June 2026. It has done this by claiming that the railheads would need to accommodate ballast trains at this time, which is incorrect. Instead ballast trains would only be required for the maintenance of Phase 2b from 2033. Only Aldersey's Rough can accommodate receipt of those 800m long trains, whereas Stone would require them to be delivered in two 400m sections, to be reassembled in the loop adjacent to the HS2 mainline.

- 1.1.7 Mr Smart also claimed that HS2 would need minimal maintenance because it was new, and based his evidence on the HS1 railway, which is only 15-years old and takes less than a quarter of the loading proposed for HS2. He also failed to deal with the longer-term maintenance needs and side-stepped Mr Gould's evidence in this respect and his reference to the views of HS2 Ltd's own Head of Track Engineering.
- 1.1.8 HS2 Ltd therefore appears prepared to take a gamble on its future materials supply needs by choosing the highly constrained Stone site as a maintenance base, rather than admitting its selection process was flawed and opting to future-proof its future maintenance requirements for the long term by adopting the high capacity option of Aldersey's Rough.

Road Traffic Impacts

- 1.1.9 With respect to its use of local roads, and the assessment of the effects on the people that will need to share them with its construction HGV traffic, HS2 Ltd remains in denial about the significant impacts that it will have on Yarnfield Lane. It has persistently avoided admitting that it needs to place very large numbers of HGVs on the 900m long central section of Yarnfield Lane, which it needs to use to access the M6 northbound carriageway, and seems oblivious to the associated safety risks it seems prepared to subject local road users to.
- 1.1.10 In addition, HS2 Ltd has demonstrated that it is incapable of undertaking robust assessments of the key road junctions that will be affected by its project; having used out of date and inaccurate baseline data, as well as optimistic junction modelling. The situation is compounded by assessing junctions in isolation; a problem that has been completely exposed by the evidence of Gordon Wilkinson, especially in the context of the A34 Walton Island and the three key junctions located in the immediate vicinity of Junction 15 of the M6.

Staffordshire County Council

- 1.1.11 HS2 Ltd's justification for adopting such a sub-standard approach to design and road transportation assessment is to claim that the Highway Authority has not raised concerns via its petition. However, this claim is completely false, with Staffordshire County Council having expressed multiple concerns via both its petition and September 2017 consultation response in respect of HS2 Ltd's Phase 2a Environmental Statement.

Conclusion

- 1.1.12 The Stone Railhead is an ill-conceived and poorly designed engineering facility that will be difficult and expensive to construct and operate. During its construction it will have a very detrimental adverse effect on the environment, especially in terms of road traffic, but also in relation to topics such as the water environment because of the construction of multiple major structures in the floodplain of the Filly Brook.
- 1.1.13 By contrast, Aldersey's Rough would be easier and cheaper to construct and operate and will have far less impact on the environment. It is also more centrally located than Stone to operate as a maintenance base and its easier access from the existing railway network and its greater capacity to accommodate trains, including 800m long ballast trains for maintaining Phase 2b, will mean that it will be a greater engineering asset to the successor to HS2 Ltd. Add to this its potential to provide greater connectivity to the existing rail network, and provide a much needed economic stimulus to Staffordshire, and it's clear that Aldersey's Rough is the best location to build a Railhead/IMB-R and therefore it should be taken forward via Additional Provisioning.

**Stone Town Council and Chebsey Parish Council
30 April 2018**