

Report Title: High Speed 2 (HS2)

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8

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform members of the Spatial Planning & Infrastructure Partnership of the proposed HS2 rail link between London and Birmingham. Concentrating on the route through Oxfordshire, and setting out the consultation processes and timescales.

2. BACKGROUND

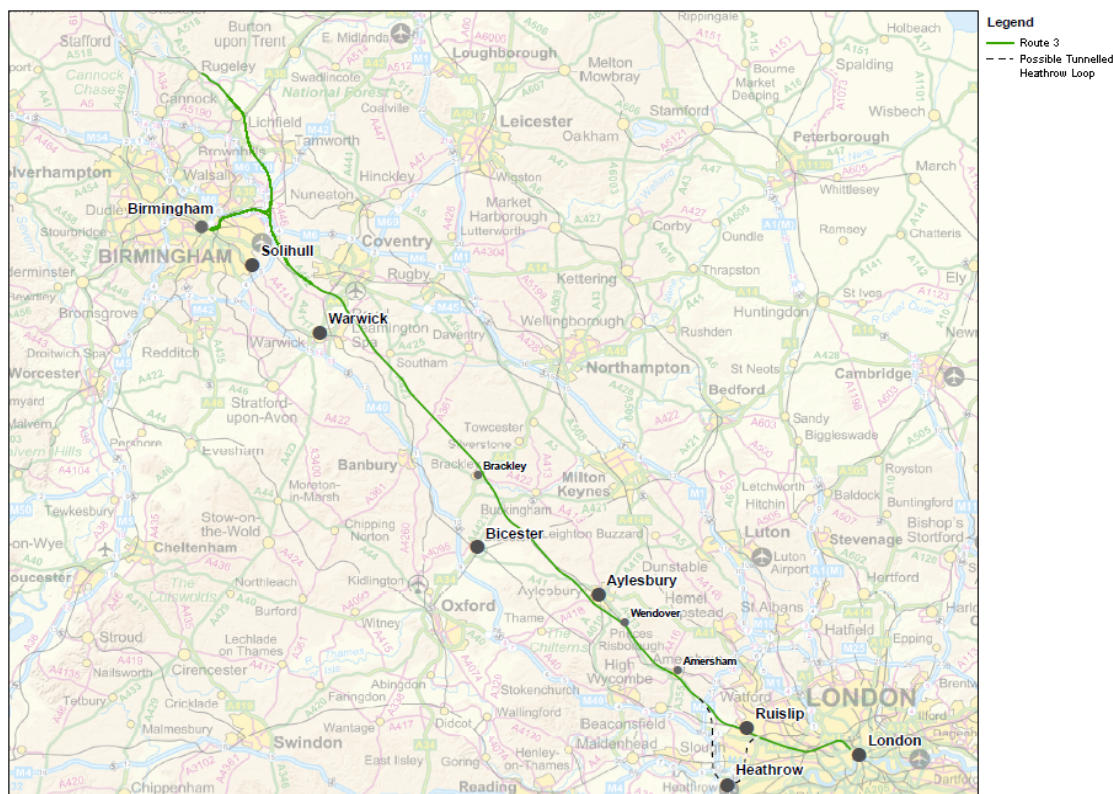
The Government has published proposals for high speed rail in Britain, with a detailed recommended route option for the first part between London and Birmingham.

The recommended route is on the map embedded within the report. High speed trains would go from London Euston, through a Crossrail Interchange station at Old Oak Common in West London, to an interchange station near Birmingham Airport and the NEC, and on to a new Birmingham station. A section of the recommended route crosses Oxfordshire, to the East of Bicester.

It is important to note that the Government has not committed to building any route yet. No final decision will be taken on the route before members of the public have a chance to offer their views in a formal public consultation, starting this Autumn.

The overall aim of the project is to increase national rail capacity. Without this line, by 2033 the average long distance West Coast Mainline train would be 80% full – meaning very severe overcrowding at peak times. Apart from delivering much faster journeys, HS2 would release capacity on the West Coast Mainline, enhancing commuter, suburban and freight services.

3. THE RECOMMENDED ROUTE AND KEY INFORMATION



The recommended route includes four stations, three new (Birmingham Curzon Street, Birmingham Interchange/Airport and Cross Rail Interchange Old Oak Common London) and a refurbishment/expansion of London Euston. As proposed there are no plans for an intermediate stop. The HS2 rolling stock maintenance depot is being proposed at Washwood Heath Birmingham, with the infrastructure depot at Claydon (alongside Oxford/Bletchley line). There is no link to the existing HS1 route, with Euston sitting alongside St Pancras and the prohibitive cost of tunnelling £3.5billion; this has been left for further examination.

Detailed plans of the route through Oxfordshire will be distributed prior to the meeting. The route largely follows the former Great Central mainline, skirting Newton Purcell and Mixbury before leaving Oxfordshire and sweeping east around Brackley. The line skirts North Oxfordshire, to the north east of Banbury although wholly contained within Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

The recommended route has been designed to minimise both gradients and curves, this is essential to maintain high line speeds projected to be 225mph, with a London to Birmingham journey time of 49 minutes. This will allow up to 14 trains per hour in each direction.

4. THE PROPOSED PROJECT TIMETABLE AND MILESTONES

March 2010 – Government published proposals for high speed rail and issued Exceptional Hardship Scheme consultation. The scheme proposed is a voluntary purchase scheme to protect the interests of residential owner-occupiers whose properties may be affected by the recommended high speed rail link between London and the West Midlands. This consultation process is underway and ends on the 20th May 2010.

Before Autumn 2010 – further engagement work and consultation preparation -

Autumn 2010 – formal public consultation

- The government will carry out a full public consultation starting in Autumn 2010. The consultation will cover the detailed route from London to the West Midlands, the strategic case for high speed rail in the UK and the Government's strategy for a core high speed rail network.
- Everyone with an interest will be encouraged to send their views during the consultation period. The government will hold consultation events in the local areas most affected by the route and stations.

2011 – Government decides whether to proceed and proposed route for London to Birmingham

2011-2013 – further detailed design and assessment of the route

2013 – further public consultation

2014 – Hybrid Bill laid in House of Commons

2019 – construction could start

2026 – line between London and Birmingham could open

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that

- a. The exceptional hardship scheme consultation is completed and returned, also that proposed responses are shared between members of SPIP and neighbouring counties and districts and parishes at least two weeks prior to the 20 May deadline.
- b. That HS2 Ltd is invited to present to the first post general election SPIP and prior to the public consultation exercise commencing in autumn 2010.