

Flaws in HS2 plan

Sir, Allan Cook writes that HS2 is the best solution to overcrowding and poor connectivity on our railways, but Paul Salverson rightly identifies that this is most needed for upgrades of local east-west lines and for freight, for which HS2 does little (letters, Oct 3). In spite of 15 years' development and a tenfold increase in the cost estimate to more than £136 billion (Integrated Rail Plan, November 2021), HS2 still fails to provide affordable and deliverable designs for Euston or Old Oak Common stations, or forecasts of future demand for such a vanity project to London.

Scrapping most of HS2 and putting even half the budget to east-west upgrades would bring real benefit to the economies of the north. The HS2 rail works around Birmingham and Warwickshire could be integrated into Network Rail's network, and other land taken under compulsory purchase could be offered to original owners under the Crichton Down principles, meaning that the net cost of cancelling HS2 would be only £8 billion.

Lord Berkeley

Former vice-chairman, Oakervee
Review of HS2