



Department for Transport

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Dear Tony,

Thank you for your letter of 11 July about High Speed Two (HS2) and for your congratulations about my appointment.

While my ministerial colleagues and I are currently reviewing the position we inherited from the previous Government and considering options on rail infrastructure, I have tried to address each of your questions with as much detail as I can give at this time.

Travelling to central London from Old Oak Common

I understand that the previous Government wrote to you on journey times from Old Oak Common to central London and, after a correction, provided you with the below response for travel to Bond Street.

Old Oak Common to Bond Street	In vehicle time (mins)	Walk time (mins)	Wait time (mins)	Total (mins)
Via HS2 to Euston and London Underground	12.6	16.7	1.3	30.6
Via Elizabeth Line	9.8	13.8	1.2	24.8

The estimated 'in vehicle' and 'walk' times quoted are outputs from the Station Choice Model. This forms part of the Planet Framework Model, which is used to assess the impacts of HS2.

The breakdown of in-vehicle time for passengers travelling to Bond Street via HS2 to Euston is as follows: 6 minutes between Old Oak Common and Euston on HS2 and 6.6 minutes on the London Underground. It is not possible to further break down the walk time in the journey without commissioning further work.

While journey times to Tottenham Court Road could be modelled, the Department does not currently hold estimates of these journey times developed on a consistent and assured basis.

As Tottenham Court Road is slightly further away from Old Oak Common than Bond Street, the available evidence suggests that passenger journey times to Tottenham Court Road would be similar using either the Elizabeth Line, or HS2 to Euston and then the London Underground.

Old Oak Common station

Following the previous Government's cancellation of Phase 2 and the consequential scope changes to Phase 1, HS2 cost estimates are currently being revised. Within the Target Cost for Phase 1, the budget allocated by HS2 Ltd for Old Oak Common station, including contingency for risk, is £1.67bn (2019 prices). As Old Oak Common is being designed and delivered within an integrated programme, I cannot provide you with a breakdown of costs into individual elements.

Since the previous Government's decision to cancel Phase 2 of HS2, the design of Old Oak Common has been reviewed, including the number of platforms and the planned train service and operational requirements. The conclusion was that considering programme, cost, and railway impacts as well as required operational flexibility, the best and only viable option is to continue with the existing design. Work to optimise the train service and stopping patterns once the new infrastructure is built continues to be developed.

The construction of the conventional rail station at Old Oak Common requires significant and necessary Great Western Main Line access to deliver the required works. These necessary access requirements will impact existing passengers and we are working with industry to identify the optimum and required mitigations that can be put in place to reduce the construction impacts of building the new station.

Old Oak Common station is expected to become one of the busiest railway stations in the country. The 8 platforms within the conventional station will be used for Great Western Railway and Elizabeth Line passengers. The station is designed to meet forecast passenger demands and future growth from regeneration around the station. Detailed modelling and analysis are ongoing to determine the optimum service pattern under different scenarios, and to inform decisions on calling patterns and frequencies at Old Oak Common.

Old Oak Common will act as the temporary London terminus for HS2 until the Euston HS2 station is delivered and operational. Many jobs and apprenticeships have already been created to support construction of the station.

The improved connectivity between London and the West Midlands – with significant additional seat capacity and journey times cut by approximately 30 minutes – will bring two of our biggest cities closer together, increase business agglomeration and investment, and boost economic growth. The eventual connection of HS2 services to the West Coast Main Line through Handsacre Junction will help spread these benefits northwards, and wider connectivity to the West of England will increase access to jobs in the Old Oak Common area, London, and the West Midlands.

Following the cancellation of Phase 2, detailed modelling and analysis is currently being undertaken for a number of different scenarios, with the aim to provide the best overall service provision for passengers across the rail system as a whole.

Euston station

As a key part of the transport network, we need a plan for Euston. The Government is working at pace to review the position it has inherited, including options for Euston. We will set out a clear plan in due course.

Rolling stock and cost control

HS2 Ltd wrote to the Hitachi/Alstom joint venture in January 2024, confirming the order for 54 Phase 1 HS2 trains had not changed. That remains the case today, even if there are commercial negotiations ongoing between HS2 Ltd and the joint venture on some technical changes. My ministerial colleagues and I will have the opportunity to set out our wider rail position in due course.


We also recognise action must be taken to ensure HS2 Ltd is delivered in a much more controlled and efficient way, with a greater focus on controlling costs. The Secretary of State and I met with Sir Jon Thompson, current Executive Chair of HS2 Ltd, and the Secretary of State followed this up by writing to him to set out clearly that HS2 Ltd's primary objective, after safety, is to deliver the remaining HS2 Phase 1 scope as close as possible to the current funding envelope.

HS2 Ltd will be introducing more rigorous processes to deliver better cost estimates, with improved data and reporting on schedules and costs. Work also continues to renegotiate the main works civils contracts to create better incentives and improve cost certainty.

Work is already underway to reinforce the leadership of HS2 Ltd with the forthcoming arrival of new Chief Executive Mark Wild, who will be joining HS2 Ltd to lead them through the critical next stage of the project.

In the meantime, I am working with my officials to identify what further actions can be taken to further strengthen governance and controls and ensure we deliver the remainder of the programme efficiently.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Hendy', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Peter, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill

MINISTER OF STATE FOR RAIL