

The
BOW
GROUP

Target Paper



Winning the consensus on High Speed Rail

Why all parties can now support the best route for HS2

A REPORT BY THE BOW GROUP TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

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The Bow Group was founded in February 1951 as an association of Conservative graduates, set up by a number of students who wanted to carry on discussing policy and ideas after they had left university. They were also concerned by the monopoly which socialist ideas had in intellectual university circles. It originally met at Bow, East London, from which it takes its name.

Geoffrey Howe, William Rees-Mogg and Norman St John Stevas were among those attending the first meeting. From the start, the Group attracted top-flight graduates and quickly drew the attention of a number of government ministers, notably Harold Macmillan. In the intervening time former Cabinet Ministers and a former Party Leader, Michael Howard, Norman Lamont and Peter Lilley have all held the Bow Group chairmanship. Christopher Bland, the Chairman of BT (2001 – 07) was Bow Group chairman in 1969. In the May 2010 General Election five recent members of the Bow Group Council were elected to Parliament.

Since its foundation the Bow Group has been a great source of policy ideas, and many of its papers have had a direct influence on government policy and the life of the nation. Although it has no corporate view, it has at times been associated with views both of Left and Right – but always within the broad beliefs of the Conservative Party.

The Bow Group (BG) has four clear objectives:

- To contribute to the formation of Conservative Party policy
- To publish members' work and policy committee research
- To arrange meetings, debates and conferences
- To stimulate and promote fresh thinking in the Conservative Party

Bow Group Transport Committee

The Bow Group Transport Committee is committed to researching and analysing the implications and challenges facing this sector as a result of Government policies. The Committee regularly meets to discuss new research projects and how it can support viable, sustainable and effective policies in this vital area.

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December 2011



Winning the consensus on High Speed Rail (HSR)

Why all parties can now support the best route for HS2

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Key Quotes – what have the parties said?

“Good connections to major airports could significantly enhance the benefits of high speed rail. A Conservative Government will support proposals for a new Heathrow rail hub. This would link Heathrow terminals directly into the main rail network and the lines to Reading, Oxford, Bristol, Plymouth, Cardiff, Swansea, Cheltenham and Southampton, greatly improving public transport links to the airport”

Conservative Party Rail Review – ‘Getting the best for Passengers’ 2009

“Our goal is to make Heathrow Airport better, not bigger. We will stop a third runway and instead link Heathrow directly to our high speed rail network”

The Conservative Manifesto, May 2010

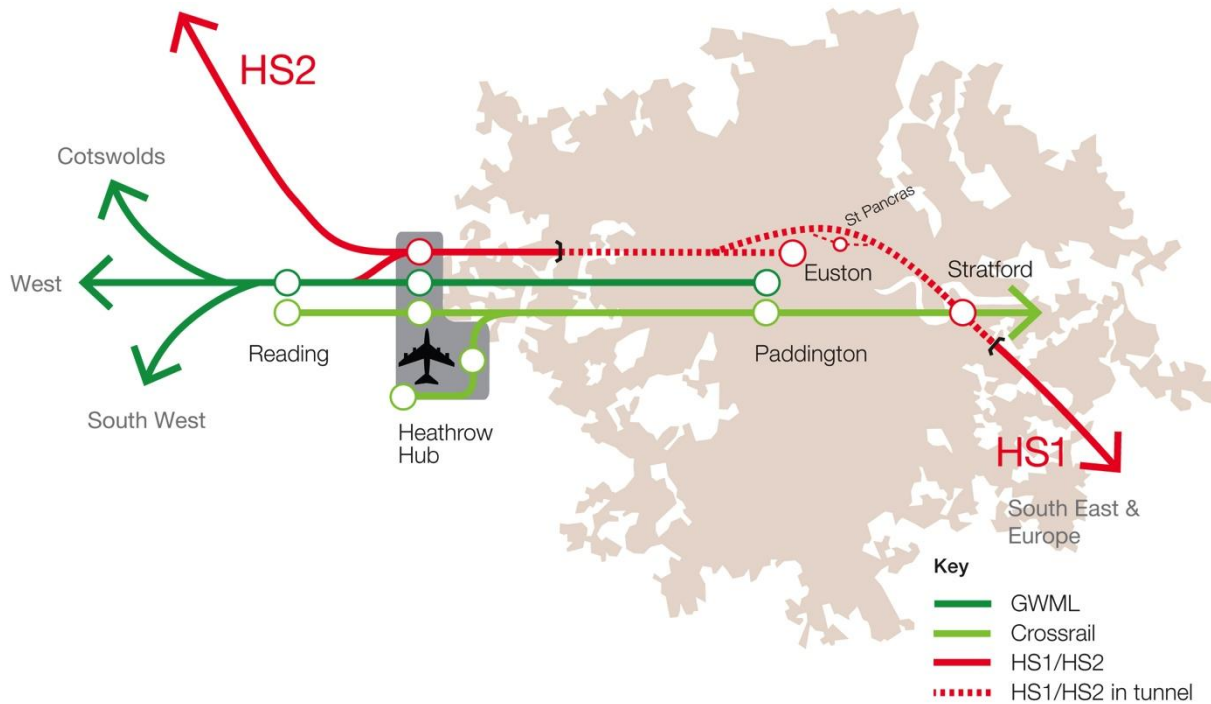
“I am convinced it is a huge mistake not to connect direct to Heathrow from the start. Taking the line via our major hub airport would remove the need to build an expensive spur later. It would lead to a new route that makes better use of existing transport corridors and avoids an area of outstanding natural beauty where residents were wrongly insulted as 'NIMBYs' by Tory Ministers. It also opens up the opportunity to connect to the Great Western mainline, bringing the benefits of the high speed line to the South West and Wales”

Shadow Transport Secretary, Maria Eagle MP, October 2011

“We are concerned that a Heathrow spur or loop, in addition to a main HS2 line, may prove more costly than a single line via Heathrow and that the proposed two trains per hour would not provide Heathrow with a sufficiently frequent service.”

House of Commons Transport Select Committee, November 2011

How HSR can become integral to a new transport model for Britain

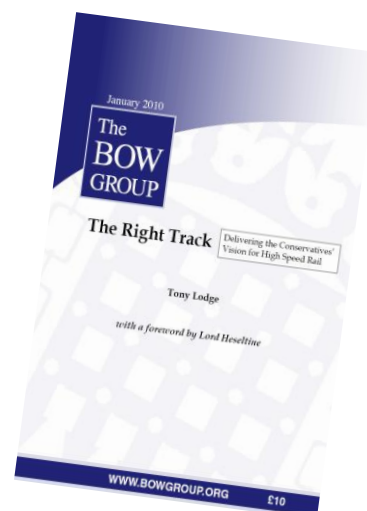


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Government risks choosing the wrong route for Britain's second high speed railway when it announces its decision on whether to proceed with HS2 in its current form early in 2012
- To be successful, the UK requires a nationally planned high speed rail (HSR) network, integrated with the classic railway and directly connecting the country's major airports and city centres. France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and other major economies all demonstrate the success of this intermodal approach
- Heathrow Airport should be served by the direct HSR route as stated in the 2010 Conservative Manifesto.¹ An integrated rail, road and airport interchange, bringing together HSR, Great Western Main Line and Crossrail services, follows global best practice and provides greater benefits at less cost than the current preferred Government proposal
- Without direct HSR and classic rail connections, traffic will continue to increase around Heathrow, on what are already the most congested roads in Europe, resulting in further worsening of local air quality which already fails to comply with legally binding limits

¹ 'Invitation to Join the Government of Britain' – The Conservative Manifesto, 2010, page 23

- The Government must not just listen to the rail industry and should overcome Department for Transport's (DfT) 'silo' thinking when deciding the right route for HSR
- British Rail was wrong in its choice of route in the 1980's for the UK's first high speed railway between London and the Channel Tunnel. A better route, developed by Ove Arup and Partners, promoted by Lord Heseltine and which attracted cross party support, was chosen. The result, High Speed 1 (HS1), is recognised as successfully balancing transport and environmental objectives
- Failing to directly connect to Heathrow in the first phase of HSR, and relying instead on the possibility of a spur in a future phase, would represent folly in Britain's ambition to develop a truly integrated transport policy. This, the Bow Group's conclusion in, "*The Right Track*" published in 2010, remains valid today²
- The Conservative Party was right to support a direct HSR link with Heathrow in Opposition, and this is now the policy of the Labour Party
- It would be most regrettable if the Coalition sacrificed the cross party consensus which Labour have offered (and which is traditionally necessary to ensure delivery of such major infrastructure projects which span many Parliaments), by continuing to support the route that Labour originally conceived and has now abandoned
- A consensus would be electorally popular as part of Government's wider long term strategy of ensuring the UK's global economic competitiveness in a challenging economic landscape
- The Bow Group hopes that the Secretary of State, in her sensible decision to delay her announcement on HS2, will carefully consider the Bow Group's conclusions from January 2010, and which are now updated in this *Target Paper, Winning the consensus on high speed rail*³



² www.bowgroup.org/files/bowgroup/The_Right_Track_PDF.pdf

³ Written Ministerial Statement 6th December 2011, www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/greening-20111206

Introduction – Why Conservatives can win the consensus on HSR

This ‘Target’ Paper is designed to achieve one thing; cement a cross-party consensus to help save the project to build the second section of Britain’s high speed railway and ensure that the best and most cost effective option is chosen. It highlights that Conservatives again have the opportunity to deliver vital transport infrastructure for the UK (as they did with HS1, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link) provided Government is prepared to ditch its support for the scheme and route developed by the Labour Party in Government and now opposed by them in Opposition.

The Conservatives in 2010 were right to oppose the HS2 proposal which slices through west London and the Chilterns and fails to connect with existing railway lines or airports. (See Figure 1) So why is the Conservative Party in Government now supporting it?

‘All Aboard’ the Whitehall farce

The ghost of the Whitehall farce is beginning to shroud HS2 policy. For those of us who have followed the evolution of different routes, proposed branch lines, spurs and no end of theories on how best to create the best business case, the announcement at the end of October 2011 by the Shadow Transport Secretary, Maria Eagle was significant.⁴

“I am convinced it is a huge mistake not to connect direct to Heathrow from the start. Taking the line via our major hub airport would remove the need to build an expensive spur later”

Shadow Transport Secretary, Maria Eagle MP, October 2011

Ironically, Maria Eagle is now supporting a policy first developed and promoted by the Conservative Party in 2009 and which featured in the May 2010 Conservative Party manifesto:

“Good connections to major airports could significantly enhance the benefits of high speed rail. A Conservative Government will support proposals for a new Heathrow rail hub. This would link Heathrow terminals directly into the main rail network and the lines to Reading, Oxford, Bristol, Plymouth, Cardiff, Swansea, Cheltenham and Southampton, greatly improving public transport links to the airport”

Conservative Party Rail Review 2009⁵

⁴ Maria Eagle MP speech to the Airport Operators’ Association, October 31st 2011

⁵ ‘Conservative Rail Review – Getting the Best for Passengers’, 2009

Conservatives therefore supported the same route as that now backed by Maria Eagle, providing connectivity between HSR, the classic railway and Heathrow, improving HSR's business case, and minimising its environmental impact by following existing motorways and transport corridors (the approach successfully adopted by HS1 which parallels the M20 in Kent – photo right).



Importantly, a route via Heathrow would also allow HSR to cross the narrowest part of the Chilterns' Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), unlike Labour's then chosen route for HS2 which passes through its widest part.

Lord Adonis prioritised speed over capacity

Lord Adonis, as the last Labour Transport Secretary, supported a route which was largely dictated by the need to allow the incredibly high speed of 400kph (kilometres per hour) a speed not achieved by any other railway in the world. This meant that the line had to be as straight as possible; the route shamelessly carves through the AONB. Claims that HS2 follows an existing transport corridor are self evidently incorrect when the route through the tranquil Misbourne Valley is seen on the ground.

Whilst the Chilterns have attracted the most attention, HS2 would also have very severe impacts on London's western suburbs, where the proposed line would be on the surface. This is one of the key aspects of HS2 that concerns Mayor Boris Johnson.⁶ Lord Adonis's vision was for a point to point railway, not an integrated transport network. Heathrow, the world's busiest international airport and UK's only hub, was treated as an afterthought, relegated to reliance on passengers changing trains at Old Oak Common, in west London, to reach the airport.

Ignoring ways in which rail could reduce aviation's impacts, and demanding an ultra high speed railway, with its disproportionate energy demands, makes any environmental claims for the Government's preferred route for HS2 highly debatable.

⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-14006514>

Experts from HS1, Chilterns campaigners, the aviation sector and high speed rail operators from across the world supported the pre-election Conservative route for HS2. So what happened?

Role Reversal

As a result of Maria Eagle's policy change there is a strange political situation. Following the Coalition Government taking office in May 2010, the new Transport Secretary, Philip Hammond, abandoned the Conservatives' proposals and instead consulted, in 2011, on Labour's unpopular and flawed route, with branch lines retrofitted between HS2, Heathrow and HS1. Far from improving the original flawed proposal, these afterthoughts make the scheme even more expensive, environmentally more damaging and less financially justifiable.

The plans put forward in the Department for Transport's consultation have attracted increasingly vocal and well informed opposition from business groups, the aviation industry, Conservative MPs in the Chilterns, and MPs in the West and South Wales as well as the influential Conservative Transport Group.⁷

The result is that, as things stand today, Labour is now supporting the original, widely supported Conservative route and the Conservatives the now friendless Labour route.

The current HS2 proposals are not only wrong for the national interest but risk inflicting serious political damage on the Conservative Party. This is already evident as constituency associations begin withholding financial contributions⁸ and anti-HS2 groups start to organise their own candidates.⁹ In the first test of local opinion, an independent candidate, standing on an anti-HS2 platform won the hitherto safe Conservative seat of Great Missenden in May's local district council elections.¹⁰

Conservatives can again deliver the consensus

The recent House of Commons Library Paper on HS2 rightly highlights the need for a cross party consensus to guarantee its progress through future

⁷ <http://www.conservativetransportgroup.org.uk/papers/CTG-HS2consultationresponse.pdf>

⁸ <http://conservativehome.blogs.com/thetorydiary/2011/06/another-buckinghamshire-conservative-association-put-its-money-where-its-mouth-is-on-high-speed-rail.html>

⁹ Stop HS2 October 2011- <http://stophs2.org/news/3370-stop-hs2-plans-independent-slate-general-election>

¹⁰ <http://chesham.buckinghamshireadvertiser.co.uk/2011/05/lib-dems-lose-five-seats-at-ch.html>

Parliaments.¹¹ The history of HS1 shows how such consensus can help ensure delivery of, and democratic legitimacy for major transport projects.

In the early 1990s, then Shadow Transport Secretary, John Prescott, agreed with Environment Secretary, Michael Heseltine, that the visionary route via the Thames Gateway was clearly better than the destructive alignment proposed by British Rail which carved its way through south London. The result is the successful redevelopment of Stratford and the spectacle of St Pancras; perhaps the finest high speed railway terminal in the world.

Without consensus, there is a point at which Governments' seeming determination to push ahead with HS2 at any cost becomes simply unsupportable. The latest suggestion, of another half a billion pounds for yet another retrofit¹² – a sum that would electrify the whole of South Wales's rail network¹³ – suggests that this point has now very firmly been reached.

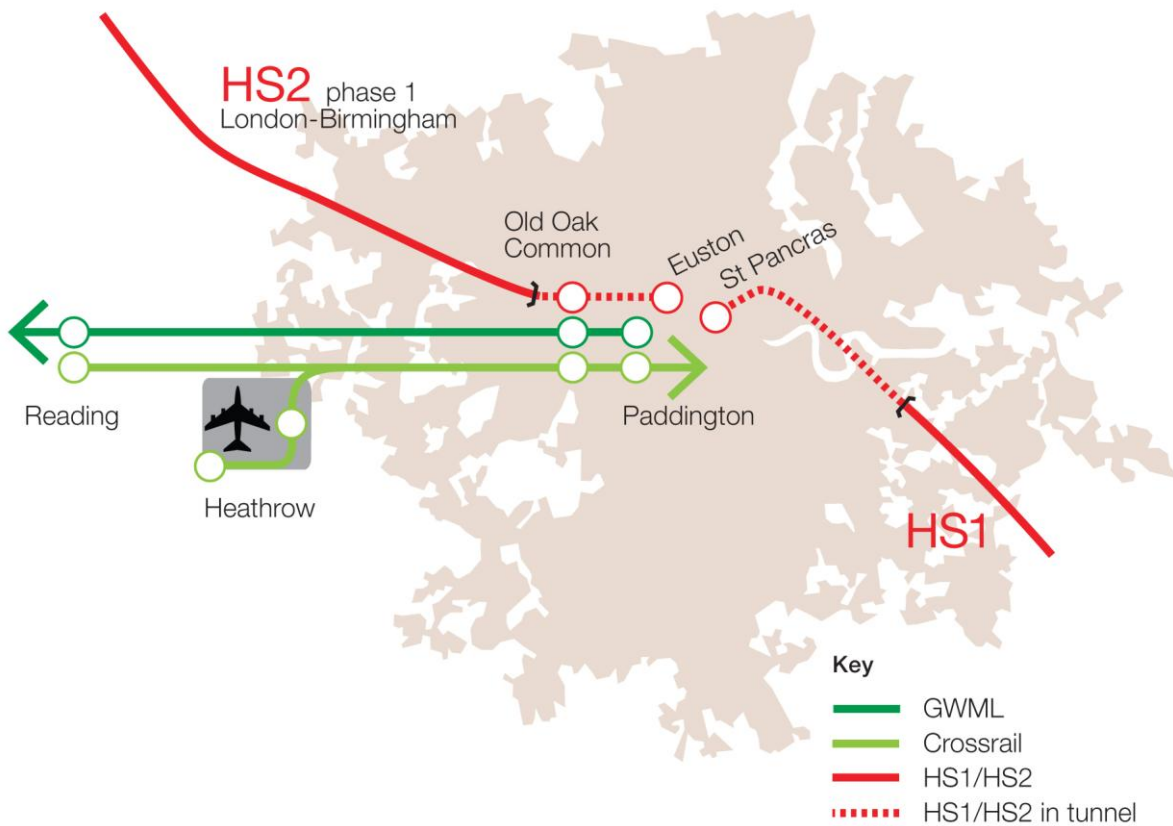
Conservatives first proposed the best route for HSR and they should now form a consensus with Labour to secure the best, lowest cost and least environmentally damaging route in the national interest. Credit is due to Labour for accepting that the Conservatives' 2009 route was right. The Government must now seize this opportunity to achieve the right solution for the UK.

¹¹*"Large infrastructure projects that span the course of more than one Parliament – and possibly more than one Government – require all-party consensus if they are to be legislated for, and delivered efficiently, promptly and to budget"* – para. 7.2, House of Commons Library Research Paper 11/75, 17th November 2011
www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/RP11-75.pdf

¹²Daily Telegraph, 2nd December 2011 - <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/road-and-rail-transport/8932224/Extra-500m-for-high-speed-rail-tunnel-to-protect-Chilterns.html>

¹³Professor Stuart Cole, Professor Emeritus in Transport, Wales Transport Research Centre, University of Glamorgan Business School - <http://www.clickonwales.org/2011/09/fourth-term-special-3-priorities-on-the-railways/>

Figure 1: The original ‘Labour’ scheme and route for HS2



To satisfy an obsession with ultra high speeds, HS2 was planned to follow practically a straight line between West London and Birmingham.

The route therefore bypassed Heathrow. Frustrated HS2 passengers would look out of their train windows and see aircraft taking off, without any convenient way of actually reaching the airport. Instead, they would be forced to change trains at an Old Oak Common interchange in west London. UK research and European experience shows that airport passengers are particularly deterred from using rail if such an interchange is required in their journey.

This fact was ignored by HS2 Ltd, (the company set up to plan the new railway) who assumed that there was little or no demand for access to Heathrow from the UK’s regions – hence justifying their decision for the UK’s single most expensive transport investment to bypass the world’s busiest international airport. Yet surveys consistently show that improving access to Heathrow would be one of the single biggest benefits to UK regional competitiveness.¹⁴ In the Chilterns, HS2 Ltd failed to understand the

¹⁴ “UK regions are at a major disadvantage in terms of access from major world markets. This hampers the ability to attract inward investment and regional economic growth” - *Economic Impacts of Hub Airports*, British Chambers of Commerce, July 2009

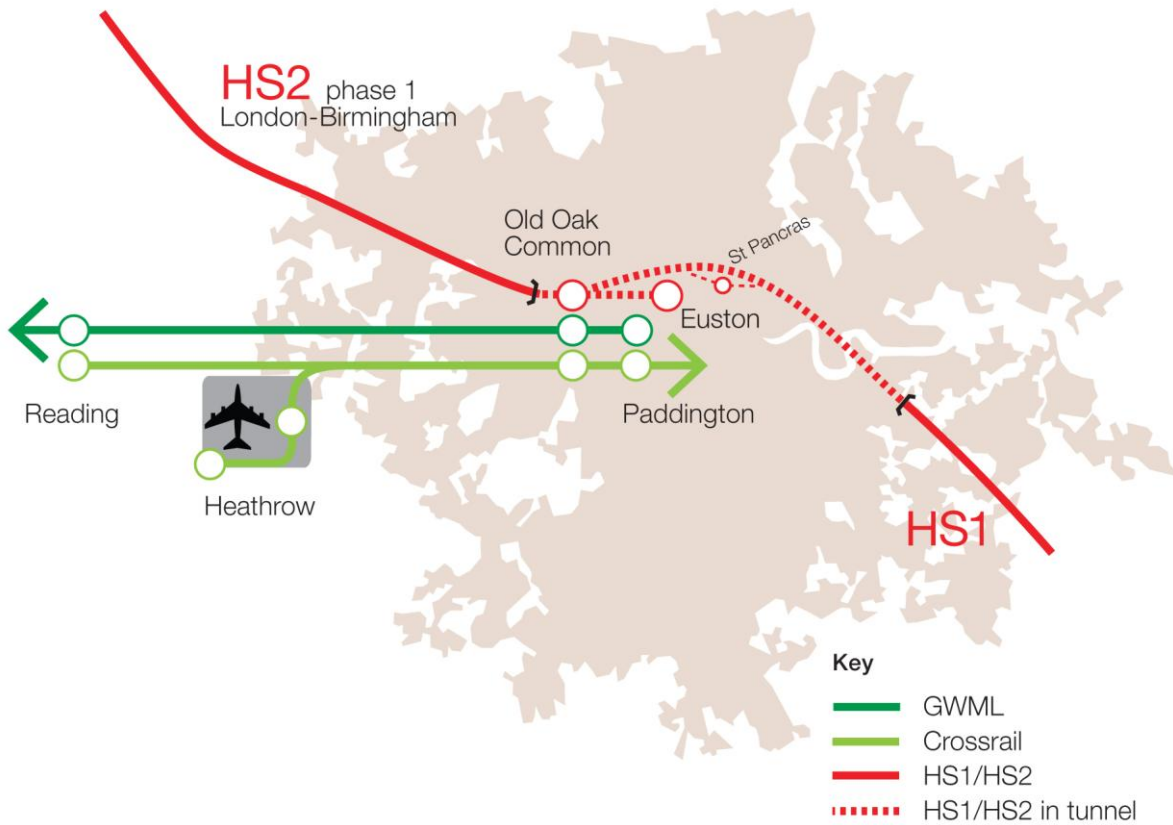
statutory protection that Parliament intended in conferring AONB status, equivalent to a National Park.

In London, as Mayor Boris Johnson has pointed out, there are equally serious concerns about the impact of HS2 as it would pass through densely populated suburbs on the surface.¹⁵

HS2 also surprisingly failed to connect to HS1. Passengers, having made fast and seamless journeys across Europe's high speed rail network, would be required to disembark at St Pancras to enjoy a gentle stroll along Euston Road, or perhaps change to some form of transit, to connect with HS2 for onward travel to the UK's regions and Heathrow.

¹⁵"It is perverse that a section of the route through Greater London, clearly affecting large numbers of people, has been subject to so little environmental mitigation. I am seeking substantial changes in design of the route to ensure these impacts are properly addressed, preferably by tunnelling the whole route through London. Without such changes I cannot support the current proposal." - Daily Telegraph, 2nd July 2011
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/borisjohnson/8613088/Boris-derails-Camersons-perverse-34billion-high-speed-link.html>

Figure 2: The Coalition Government’s revised scheme for connecting the UK and Europe



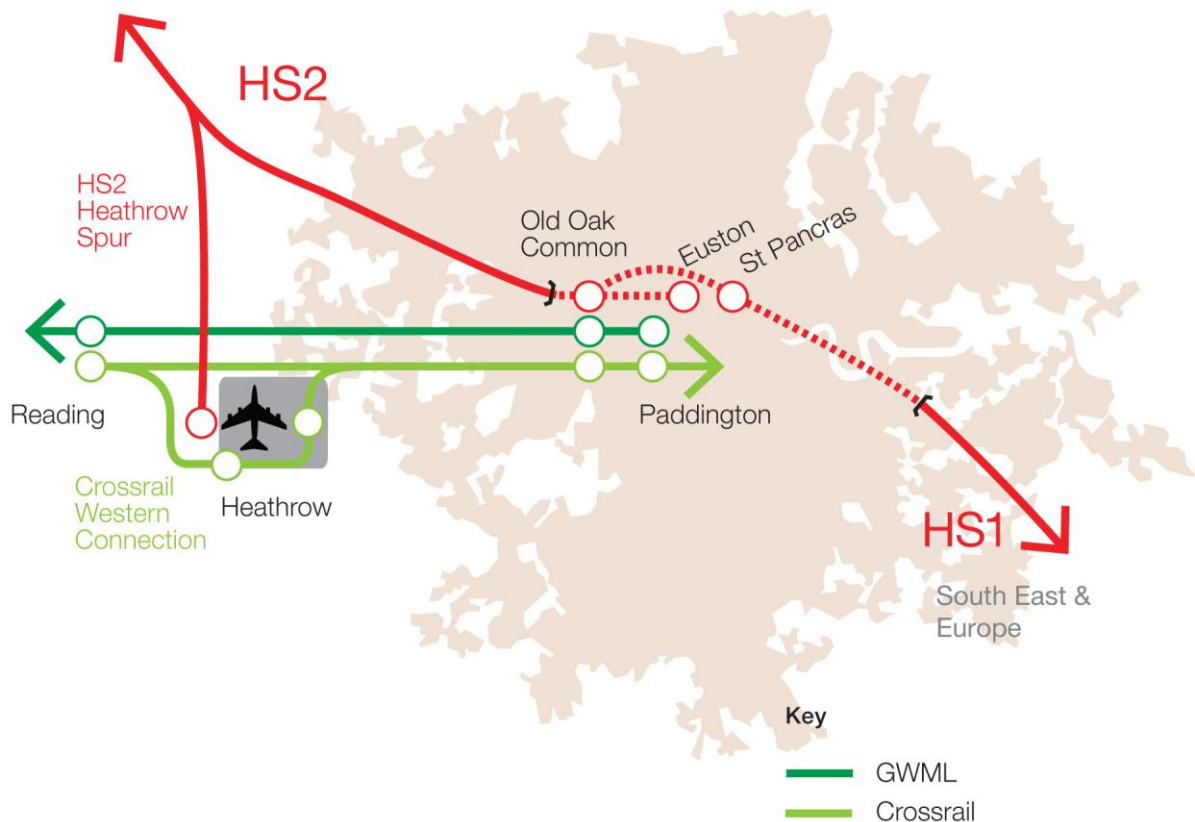
On taking office in May 2010, the new Coalition Government appeared to recognise the flaws in Labour’s scheme and issued a new remit to HS2 Ltd, in June 2010, requiring a connection between HS2 and HS1.¹⁶ A fundamental reassessment might reasonably have been expected to reflect the Conservatives’ policy prior to the election.

Instead, however, a retrofit was proposed and accepted by Government - a single track, limited capacity link, which would require high speed trains, (which would necessarily become slow speed trains at this point), to share capacity on already congested London Overground and freight lines through London.

¹⁶ Letter from Philip Hammond, Secretary of State to HS2 Ltd, 11th June 2010

<http://www.hs2.org.uk/publications/HS2-Ltds-remit-of-11-June-2010-56111>

Figure 3: The Coalition Government’s revised scheme for connecting Heathrow



Philip Hammond, on becoming Secretary of State for Transport in May 2010, specifically recognised the inadequacies of an Old Oak Common interchange¹⁷ and referred to the importance of connecting Heathrow to the whole of the UK.¹⁸

Government’s revised remit therefore also required HS2 to provide a direct connection with Heathrow. Again, a fundamental reappraisal might have been expected. Instead, yet another bolt-on was proposed, in the form of a branch line, or spur between Heathrow and an otherwise unchanged HS2 route.

Despite Government’s own recognition of the importance of a direct connection between aviation and high speed rail, a spur would carry only a restricted service,

¹⁷The connection between HS2 and Heathrow “cannot be lug your heavy bags down a couple of escalators, along 600 metres of corridor and then change trains at a wet, suburban station somewhere in north west London. That is not an option” – Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Transport, Oral Evidence to Transport Select Committee, 26th July 2010
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmtran/uc359/uc35901.htm>

¹⁸“It is clear to me that faster and simpler connectivity to a location is vital, particularly for inward investors. In places like Manchester and Leeds it may not be the way you like to think about it, but the reality is that for most people outside the UK they think about the UK through the prism of Heathrow. That is how they arrive. The question is not, “Where is it?” The question is, “How long does it take for me to get there from Heathrow?” - Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Transport, Oral Evidence to Transport Select Committee, 13th September 2011

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmtran/1185/11091301.htm>

perhaps two trains an hour, and would not be constructed until phase 2 of HS2, sometime after 2033 – and most likely not at all unless Heathrow’s users made a significant financial contribution to its enormous cost.

British Airways point out that the consequence of this strategy is that European airports would have a direct rail connection to the UK’s regions in phase 1 of HS2, but Heathrow would not.¹⁹ This risks placing a significant UK company at a serious competitive disadvantage.

A spur also has potentially significant environmental impacts, requiring yet more railway through London’s Green Belt and a very large, visually intrusive grade separated junction where it joins the main HS2 route. The scale of these impacts cannot be determined however, since Government do not intend to consult on these proposals until 2014.²⁰

The lack of information on a spur does not only affect environmental concerns. A spur is also certain to damage HS2’s already weak business case since the proposed 18 trains per hour (tph) service between London and Birmingham, on which the benefits have been assessed, will inevitably be reduced if the spur is to have any trains.

It is also difficult to see how a spur could ever be financially justified. A frequent service would be required in order to attract time sensitive airport passengers, but this must be balanced against the need to achieve high load factors on very high capacity trains in order to justify the very high capital cost of a spur and the operating cost of high speed trains. The consensus is that major airports require through train services via an interchange located on the direct high speed line.

This is exactly the approach taken by HS2 Ltd at Birmingham where the airport will be served by an air, high speed rail, classic rail and road interchange located on the through high speed line.

There must therefore be real doubt that a spur would ever be built. In that case, Heathrow would be permanently relegated to relying on connecting trains to an Old Oak Common interchange in west London – a connection that the Coalition Government’s previous Secretary of State, Philip Hammond, believed to be, “*not an option.*”²¹

¹⁹British Airways evidence to the Transport Select Committee’s Inquiry into the Strategic Case for High Speed Rail, May 2011

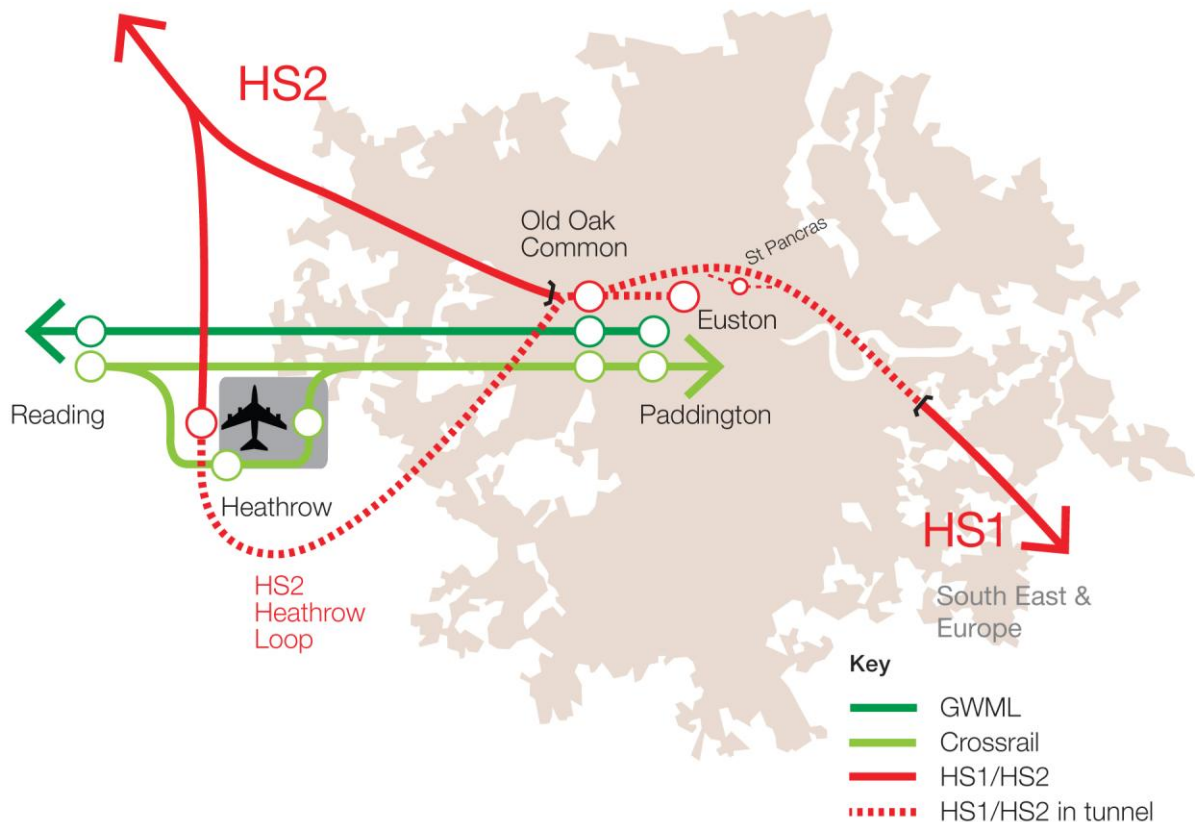
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmtran/1185/1185vw147.htm>

²⁰Note of Secretary of State’s meeting with MPs 21st November 2011

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/high-speed-rail-meeting/high-speed-rail-meeting.pdf>

²¹ Response to Q48, Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Transport, Oral Evidence to House of Commons Transport Committee 26th July 2010

Figure 4: A Loop for Heathrow – will this ever be built?



If the case for a spur is doubtful, the case for a loop is almost certainly non-existent. Involving vast amounts of additional tunnelling beneath west London, and an underground grade separated junction at or near Old Oak Common, Government does not indicate any suggested completion date.

Like a spur, decisions would need to be taken on the frequency of trains via a loop. In looking at other countries' experience, Lord Mawhinney's review noted that "A loop of high speed railway had been built to serve Cologne/Bonn airport but this had added 15 minutes to the rail journey time and as a result the loop was little used."²²

The Conservatives' position today

It is bizarre that the Coalition Government has backed a flawed HS2 scheme that does not properly connect HS2, HS1 or Heathrow, in sharp contrast to the Conservatives' 2010 policy.

It is also deeply ironic that Labour now sees the benefits of the Conservatives' 2009 proposals and has consequently abandoned its support for their old HS2 route, as proposed by Lord Adonis.

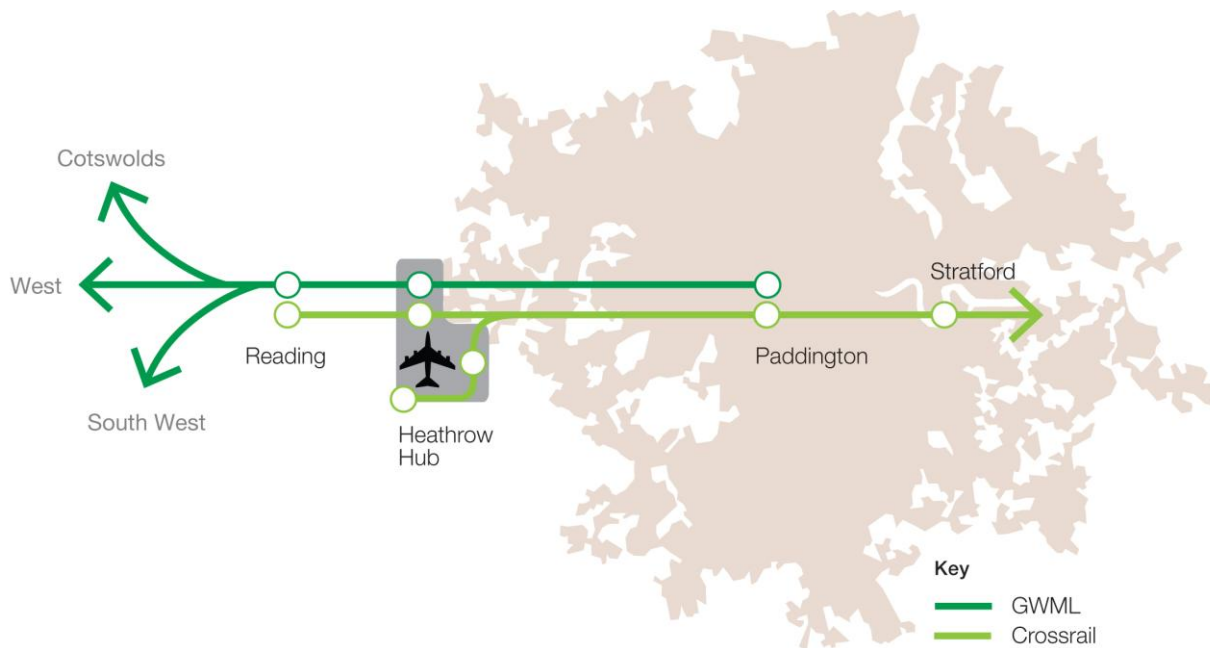
²² High Speed Rail Access to Heathrow, a report by the Rt Hon Lord Mawhinney July 2010
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/pi/highspeedrail/1ordmawhinneyreport/pdf/highspeedrailaccessheathrow.pdf>

Bolting more and more elements on to a fundamentally flawed scheme, (the proposed Western Connection between Reading and Heathrow and additional tunnelling in the Chilterns being the latest), at ever increasing cost is highly unlikely to result in an efficient, cost effective and deliverable project.

It also hints at an alarming disregard for democratic scrutiny, the Transport Select Committee remarking that, “it is unacceptable for debate on such major decisions to be conducted through a series of nods and winks in the press.”²³

²³ Para. 18, Conclusions and Recommendations, Volume 1, Transport Select Committee Report on High Speed Rail, November 2011

Figure 5: Connecting aviation, rail and road – the Conservatives’ original vision of 2009



The Bow Group supported the Conservatives’ proposals for HSR in 2009 and their benefits are now even clearer, since full details of the Lord Adonis alternative have emerged.

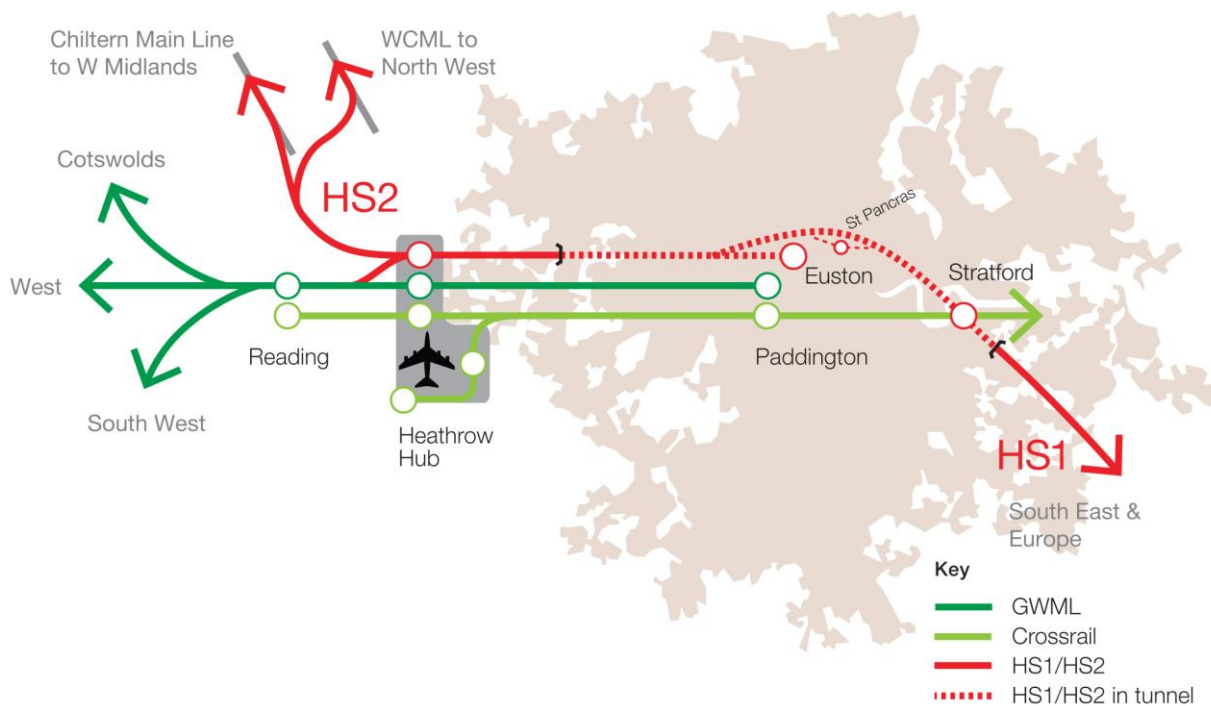
Crucially, the Conservative scheme can be phased, bringing earlier benefits, and spreading these far more widely through the UK.

A first phase could provide a multimodal transport interchange north of Heathrow’s Terminal 5. This would be served by long distance and regional Great Western trains and Crossrail services, with direct bus, coach, car and taxi access from the UK’s motorway network.

A processor (airport terminal), within the interchange would allow airport passengers to check-in, drop bags, pass through security and board an airside transit to take them straight to satellites on the existing airfield to board the aircraft. Placing these facilities outside the existing congested Heathrow site would free up space for more efficient aircraft movements, and more pier served stands to improve the passenger experience.

Providing a “one seat ride” by rail to Heathrow from much of the UK would take passengers out of cars and put them into trains, reducing road congestion and improving local air quality. Making aircraft operations more efficient, by providing more space for aircraft and reducing taxiing distances, would also reduce Heathrow’s environmental impacts.

Figure 6: Connecting High Speed 2, aviation, classic rail and road



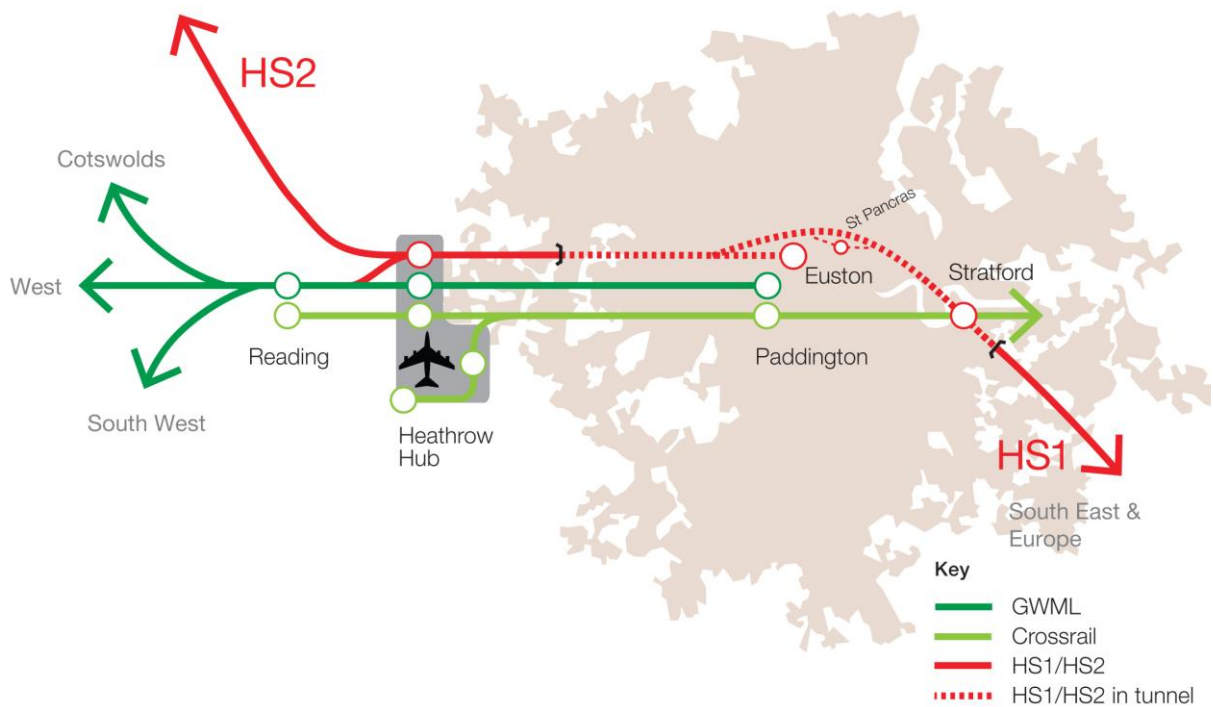
A second phase could connect Heathrow to HS1 by a new high speed railway tunnelled beneath the existing Great Western Main Line, following the successful precedent of HS1 below the North London Line, which avoided any adverse impacts on local communities, either in construction or operation.

Such a connection would allow through trains from Europe, enabling air/rail substitution and releasing valuable airport capacity at Heathrow. Recent research suggests that increasing Heathrow airport’s capacity by roughly 18% could provide the vital new routes to emerging economies that the UK requires. This is approximately the same capacity as would be achieved by switching short haul flights to high speed rail. Making full use of Great Western Main Line electrification, it would also allow Javelin services to cross London, calling at Heathrow and going on to, say, Reading, Oxford and Basingstoke, transforming the economic geography of the South East and relieving congestion on the classic network.

By avoiding the need for a surface high speed route through London’s western suburbs, it can also overcome one of Mayor Boris Johnson’s principal objections to HS2.

The opportunity also exists to connect HSR to the classic network on the Chiltern and West Coast Main Lines, relieving the most congested southern sections of these lines, bringing earlier benefits, allowing more flexibility in service patterns and reducing the negative impacts of HSR on those towns and cities not directly served by the new line.

Figure 7: Completing the network

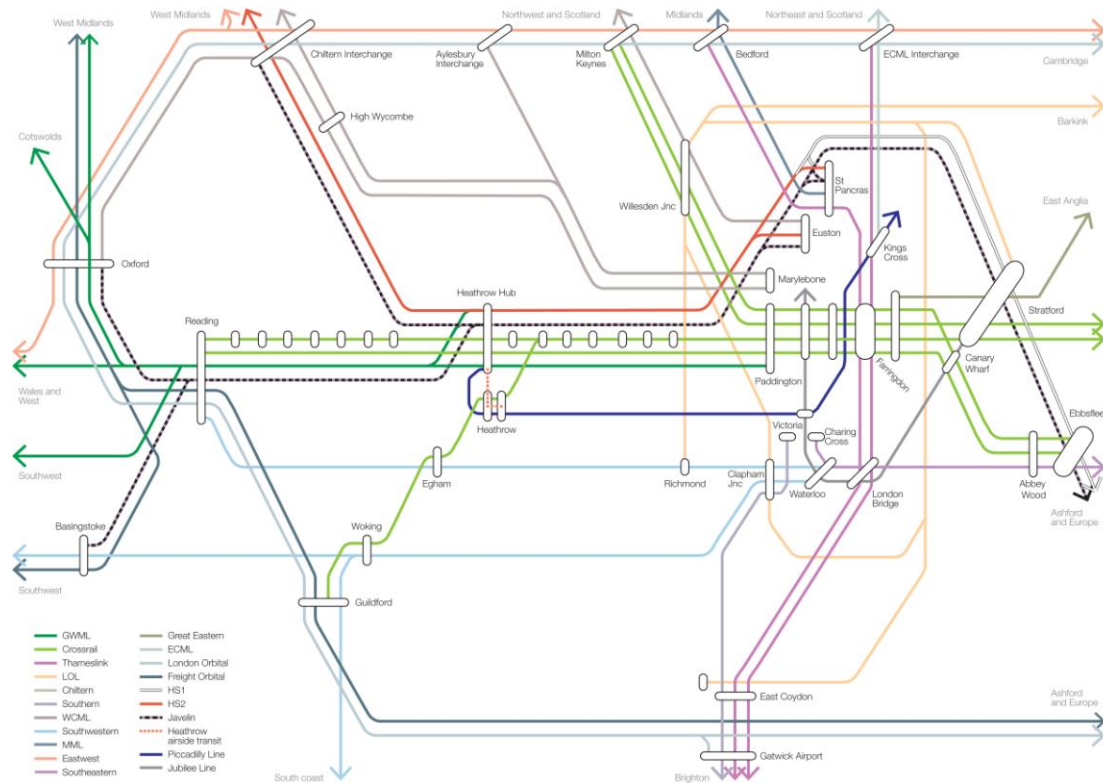


As and when demand requires HSR could then be extended north, following existing road and rail transport corridors, such as the M40, to minimise environmental impacts.



Making full use of Great Western Main Line electrification, it would also allow Javelin services (above) to cross London from HS1, calling at Heathrow and going on to, say, Reading, Oxford and Basingstoke, transforming the economic geography of the South East and relieving congestion on the classic network.

Figure 8: A co-ordinated strategy to maximise the benefits of investment



Following the Government’s welcome go-ahead for East/West rail (Oxford to Bedford) announced in the National Infrastructure Plan in the Autumn Budget Statement²⁴, there is an increasingly urgent need for HS2 and other transport projects to be properly co-ordinated.²⁵

One such opportunity is to provide an interchange between HSR and East/West rail, with the latter potentially connecting the first phase of HSR to the Chiltern and West Coast Main Lines. This would also dramatically improve connectivity for local communities along the route of HSR, bringing benefits to the areas affected by new line construction in the same way as HS1.

A similar integrated approach to planning HSR, Crossrail and Great Western

²⁴ National Infrastructure Plan 2011, HM Treasury, pages 8, 20, 28 and 46

²⁵ “Concern relates to the interconnectivity of transport infrastructurebeneath the government’s focus on ‘big ticket’ transport projects such as Crossrail and the new High-Speed Two rail line (HS2), there is a concern among businesses about how major projects join together” – Making the Right Connections, CBI/KPMG Infrastructure Survey September 2011

<http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1052324/2011.09-cbi-kpmg-infrastructure-report.pdf>

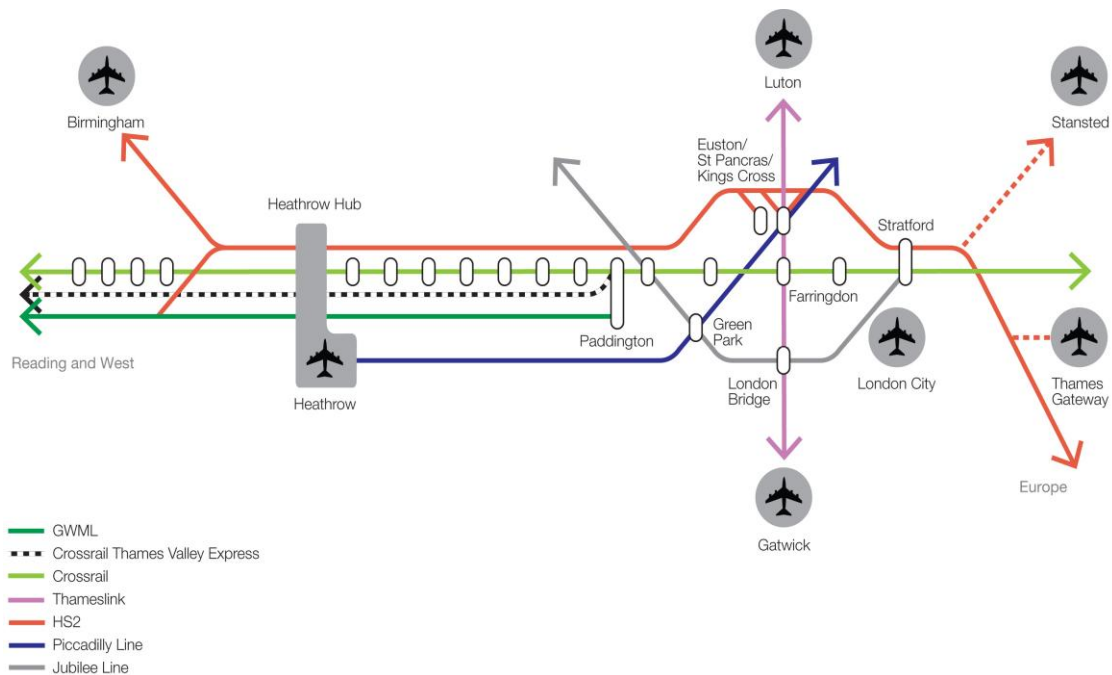
“To ensure a modal shift from air and road to high speed rail, HS2 must be fully integrated into the wider transport network, including classic rail, tube, trams, buses and roads” – Connecting Opportunities, Making the most of HS2 - London Chamber of Commerce and Industry July 2011

<http://www.londonchamber.co.uk/docimages/9111.pdf>

electrification could allow Great Western Main Line paths, (released on expiry of Heathrow Express's access agreement), to be used for fast services between Reading, Heathrow and Crossrail central London stations, providing additional commuter capacity and some HS2 dispersal at a Heathrow interchange.

A connection between Crossrail and the West Coast Main Line in the Old Oak Common area would also allow Crossrail to provide West Coast suburban services, improving Crossrail's business case and taking the majority of passengers closer to their ultimate destinations. This would relieve pressure on London Underground.

Figure 9: Integrating London’s airports and high speed/classic rail networks



A debate around a new South East airport to provide additional capacity is once again underway, forty years since the Roskill Commission was tasked with similar objectives.²⁶ It is difficult to anticipate what might emerge in today’s very different environmental, economic and commercial landscape. However, it is clear that Heathrow, and the UK, urgently requires better connectivity and additional capacity in the short term, well in advance of the very long time horizons of an entirely new airport.

Continuing the current policy vacuum, or relying on a very long-term and high risk option, carries enormous risk for the UK.

Connecting Heathrow directly with HSR provides the necessary additional capacity, and reduces environmental impacts, to allow a breathing space for long term policy decisions. An integrated transport planning strategy can also ensure compatibility with any future new airport capacity.

Comparing costs

The integrated approach consistently promoted by the Bow Group brings one further benefit for the UK. Using Government’s own cost estimates, it reduces the call on the public purse by billions of pounds.

²⁶ The 1971 Roskill Commission reported on potential sites for a third London airport

Phase 1 of HS2 as currently proposed between London and Birmingham, is estimated at £16.0 – 17.7bn. To this must be added the cost of a Heathrow spur, (£2.5 – 3.9bn) and a Western Connection between Heathrow and the Great Western Main Line relief lines, (estimated by various promoters at ca. £0.7bn), bringing the total to £19.2 – 22.3bn. This increases to £20.7bn – 23.9bn if the proposed spur is extended to form a loop to allow through running via Heathrow.

For comparison, Government estimates an additional cost of £2.9bn for a direct HS2 route via a Heathrow interchange. Adding this to the cost of the current route, (£16.0 – 17.7bn), gives a total of £18.9 – 20.6bn.

A better solution therefore costs billions less– even using Government’s costs, which appear to be overstated for a Heathrow route, and without including the potential for private sector funding of a Heathrow interchange, (which Oxford University Transport Studies Unit suggest would be the UK’s biggest station).²⁷ Private funding could therefore be very significant indeed.

Providing a Heathrow interchange also allows omission of a very expensive HS2 Old Oak Common interchange. This could also reduce costs, perhaps by as much as £1 billion. HS2’s passengers could instead be dispersed at Heathrow via limited stop Crossrail services between Reading, Heathrow and thence all central London stations.

²⁷ Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport – Response to the DfT Consultation, Dr Moshe Givoni and Professor David Banister, Transport Studies Unit, University of Oxford, Working Paper 1035 February 2008 <http://www.tsu.ox.ac.uk/pubs/1035-givoni-banister.pdf>

Conclusion

We have been here before; learning the lessons from High Speed One

Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it.

Twenty years ago, a Conservative Government found itself in exactly the same position as today. An unsatisfactory and destructive route for a new high speed railway had been developed by railwaymen, unable to see the strength of the environmental and economic objections ranged against it.

Like today, an alternative, better proposal existed which attracted increasing support. To Government and Opposition's credit, a cross-party consensus emerged in support of the alignment of what became HS1.

The success of HS1, which passes through areas as sensitive as those crossed by HS2, results from adoption of what became known as the "Kent Principles," which required the route to:

- **follow existing, noisy transport corridors (motorways and major rail lines)**
- **follow the shortest route through any AONB**
- **be tunnelled through the most sensitive areas**
- **provide benefits for local communities affected by the route (eg; access to regional train services linking into the high speed network)**

It is a matter of regret that the designers of HS2 ignored such clear precedent, and an even greater concern that the Conservatives in Government forgot their support in Opposition for these same principles.

Being the last of the major European nations to look to a high speed rail network strategy, the UK can also observe that high speed rail should directly serve major airports.

There is an overwhelming consensus that the current HS2 proposals are flawed. The recommendations of the Transport Select Committee are clear in the potential benefits of an alternative approach. There is a deafening silence where support for the current route might be expected.

If there were any lingering doubts, the subsequent retrofits to the original scheme simply emphasise the inherent shortcomings of the current HS2 proposals. Adding a HS1 connection, Heathrow spur, Western Connection to the Great Western Main Line

and, most recently, more tunnelling through the Chilterns are hugely expensive additions in an attempt to overcome deeper flaws in the project.

It is impossible to think of any major project where adding ever increasing numbers of ‘bolt-ons’ has ever resulted in a successful, cost effective and efficient project.

The Institute of Economic Affairs study of Government project disasters²⁸ proves the opposite - the very first decisions have to be sound if a project is to succeed. Government’s continued tinkering with a scheme now abandoned by its own creators is not a credible basis for committing the public purse to an investment of at least £32bn.

A new line may of course generate financial return. Equally, however, it may prove to be a ‘Concorde of the Rails’ as market-driven operators take advantage of open access rules to put ageing trainsets to use on intensive, competitive services on the classic network, undercutting HS2’s fares. That at least would prove whether HS2’s limited assumptions on the monetary value of journey time savings have any basis in reality.

The Conservative Party got transport strategy right in 2009, by taking an intelligent, integrated approach to classic rail, high speed rail and aviation. The Labour Party’s recognition of this in late 2011 should be commended. Government should now seize the opportunity to secure the long term consensus needed to deliver a better integrated, phased, environmentally sensitive and far cheaper transport network to benefit the whole of the UK.

Bow Group Transport Committee, December 2011

²⁸ They Meant Well, Government Project Disasters - D.R. Myddelton, Institute of Economic Affairs, September 2007 <http://www.iea.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/files/upldbook419pdf.pdf>

Abbreviations

AONB Area of outstanding natural beauty

DfT Department for Transport

GWML Great Western Main Line

HSR High speed rail

HS1 High Speed 1

HS2 High Speed 2

NIMBY ‘Not in my back yard’



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