

High Speed 2 Consultation - Suggested key points for responses

Q.1 This question is about strategy and the wider context: **Do you agree that there is a strong case for enhancing the capacity and performance of British intercity rail network to support economic growth over the coming decade?**

SAAG believes the answer is No - in the context of HS2 being the only solution being presented for consideration

- Rational increases in demand can be met by developing the West Coast Main Line under Rail Package 2 proposals which will cost less than 1/10 the cost of HS2, create minimal environmental impact and provide a scalable solution for the foreseeable future.
- Alternative scenarios have not been developed to evaluate the benefits of this investment, for example versus improvements in commuter services or road transport
- Despite Government claims, there is no real evidence that HS2 will be in the public interest or improve the North/South divide - most of the economic advantage accrues to London and the South East, using HS2's own published data.
- We believe that large scale enhancement to the rail network should only be done in a way that ensures the rail network will cause significantly lower carbon emissions after the enhancement takes place - HS2 is carbon neutral.

Q.2 This question is about the case for High Speed Rail: **Do you agree that a national high speed rail network from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester (the Y network) would provide best value for money?**

SAAG believes the answer is No

- Rail Package 2 offers a cheaper alternative to addressing reasonable estimates of future demand, therefore this high speed rail network does not provide the best value for money.
- As the Consultation does not provide sufficient details of alternative solutions and different scenarios for future demand growth - simply taking an extreme growth case, by definition it is not possible to determine whether this is the best value for money.
- Overall domestic travel shows signs of saturation for both short and long distance journeys, the DfT's rail demand forecasts are excessive and take no account of impacts from high speed internet connectivity on future travel trends.

Q.3 This question is about how to deliver the Government's proposed network: **Do you agree with the Government's proposals for the phased roll-out of a national high speed network, and for links to Heathrow Airport and the High Speed 1 line to the Channel Tunnel?**

SAAG believes the answer is No

- A valid case for investment in a high speed rail network has not been made by the Government.
- The current business case is for the London to Birmingham phase only. That business case is flawed. There should be a business case for the entire HS2 programme before decisions to commit £bns are made.
- Alternative improvements to the rail system, such as Rail Package 2 (RP2), would not involve phasing because they cost significantly less money than the £33bn which the Government proposes spending on HS2 to Leeds and Manchester.
- There is no expert evidence that a modal shift from domestic air travel to rail will occur if HS2 is connected to Heathrow or HS1.

Q.4 This question is about the specification for the line between London and the West Midlands: **Do you agree with the principles and specification used by HS2 Ltd to underpin its proposals for new high speed rail lines and the route selection process HS2 Ltd undertook?**

SAAG believes the answer is No

- International experts agree that for high speed trains to be really worth building, the distance between stations should be at least 150km. Britain is a small island compared to other European countries with high speed rail and its major cities are closer together. By the time the proposed route has got out of London to an area where trains can run at maximum speed, the distance will be far less than 150km. Hence the speed chosen by the DfT and HS2 Ltd is not suitable for Britain.
- The 1st phase HS2 would not be delivered till 2026, whereas alternatives can deliver needed capacity much more quickly.

Q.5 This question is about the route for the line between London and West Midlands: **Do you agree that the Government's proposed route, including the approach for mitigating its impacts, is the best option for a new high speed rail line between London and the West Midlands?**

SAAG believes the answer is No

- If there was a sound business or environmental case for building a high speed railway at all (this question being the subject of a Transport Select Committee Inquiry), there may be some justification for the question - as it stands, there is not. Therefore, as the principles upon which the entire project are invalid, any question concerning route selection is invalid.

Q.6 This question is about the appraisal of Sustainability: **Do you wish to comment on the Appraisal of Sustainability of the Government's proposed route between London and West Midlands?**

SAAG's comments:

- Chapter 5 of the Consultation has a short summary of the Appraisal of Sustainability: the actual document is extensive. However, despite the length of that document the Environmental Impact Assessment has not yet been published. It is therefore inappropriate to ask this question, and potentially proceed with a major infrastructure project without such detailed assessment, particularly as it is already known that HS2 threatens 160 wildlife sites: there will also be loss of 21 ancient woods, in existence since 1600 AD, and huge swathes of agricultural land. Vibration will impact on a further 27 woodlands. The HS2 route goes through 4 Wildlife Trust reserves and 10 Sites of Scientific Interest. There will be irreparable damage to the Chiltern aquifer which supplies water to millions of homes in London and the South East.
- There are no proven savings in CO2 emissions because of the speed and resultant power consumption of the trains, and despite the rhetoric, as accepted by HS2's Sustainability Report, there will be no significant modal shift from air or car travel to trains.
- The construction period and its aftermath will have a significant, detrimental and permanent impact on the leisure and tourism industry along the entire route.

Q.7 This question is about blight and compensation: **Do you agree with the options set out to assist those whose properties lose a significant amount of value as a result of any new high speed line?**

SAAG believes the answer is No.

- This is the second time the Government has consulted the public on blight associated with HS2. It has indicated that a further consultation will take place in 2012. Further consultations will take place for the second phase to Manchester and Leeds.
- The Consultation suggests there may be a different compensation scheme for areas affected by the second phase. The idea that people in different parts of the country will receive different compensation packages is unfair.
- Vibration and noise will blight homes. There is no compensation in place for the many homes/businesses which will be blighted by noise and vibration