



Transport Committee

Rt Hon Mark Harper MP
Secretary of State
Department for Transport

By email

22 January 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

HS2 and Handsacre Junction

Thank you for your letter of [9 January](#) following up on the oral evidence you gave to the Committee on 17 November.

We took oral evidence on [10 January](#) from the Executive Chair of HS2 Ltd. Sir Jon referred to a request from your Department to HS2 Ltd for detailed analysis, subsequent to the Network North announcement, of six specific areas which included Handsacre junction and connections to the West Coast Main Line. Sir Jon said [at Q395]:

On Handsacre Junction, we came to the conclusion that that was not the rate-limiting step that people initially thought that it might be, and that very little work was required on the junction to facilitate connection back to the West Coast Main Line.

He added later in the session [at Q453]:

Under the previous plan, if we had constructed the 2a link from Birmingham to Crewe, we would not have used Handsacre Junction.

Sir Jon also said that he had understood that you would be writing to us on this topic. Your letter said only that :

Work has begun on assessing the train service options [...]. This analysis will include options to upgrade infrastructure in the Handsacre area of Staffordshire, where HS2 will join the West Coast Mainline, using £500m of funding set aside in Network North.

This was in addition to your statement in our evidence session [at Q35], when you said “the plan is now to connect to the fast lines of the West Coast Main Line” at Handsacre.

I would be grateful if you could now provide the Committee with more detail about the changes that are likely to be required to the design of Handsacre Junction to provide sufficient connecting capacity to the West Coast Main Line in the absence of HS2 Phase 2a. I appreciate much detailed work is still to be done, but it would be helpful to know your Department’s headline assumptions and the rationale underlying those about how the junction will be used and configured in the future.

At Q457 of our 10 January session, Jack Brereton asked Sir Jon why the original proposal for connecting the HS2 line at Handsacre to the West Coast Main Line was changed, and I would be grateful also for your response on that point.

Kind regards,



Transport Committee

Iain Stewart

**Iain Stewart MP
Chair of the Transport Select Committee**