

## **Written evidence submitted by the Urban Growth Company (IRP0107)**

1. The Urban Growth Company (UGC) is a special purpose delivery vehicle created by Solihull Council, and supported by the West Midlands Combined Authority, to maximise the benefits associated with the arrival of HS2 at the Interchange Station, located in an area of significant economic opportunity, called the UK Central Hub (The Hub).
2. The UGC is taking forward ambitious proposals relating to development associated with the HS2 Interchange Station on Phase One of the high-speed route near Birmingham Airport and the NEC (National Exhibition Centre) in Solihull. It is also working on a transformative project centred around Birmingham International Station on the West Coast Mainline.
3. The UGC's interest in the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) is, therefore, significant and the organisation welcomes this opportunity to comment on the implications of the IRP for the economy, rail capacity and connectivity in our area and more widely.
4. We were pleased that the long-awaited IRP provided reassurance and certainty around the immediate future of major rail projects that affect The Hub in Solihull, namely the commitment to build HS2 from the West Midlands to East Midlands Parkway, along with the reconfirmation of the HS2 route to Manchester.
5. The commitment to the Midlands Rail Hub, along with additional passengers resulting from HS2's arrival and the anticipated growth in this region, serves to highlight the critical importance of Birmingham International Station on the West Coast Mainline.
6. The UGC has a medium-term ambition to transform this station into a multi-modal transport facility, supporting a modal shift away from private vehicle use to public transport. A crucial element of this transformation is

the direct connectivity to the nearby HS2 Interchange Station, via an automated people mover which is being delivered by HS2 Ltd.

7. The full benefits of HS2, as part of an integrated, nationwide rail network, will only be realised if affected stations on the existing network are sufficiently upgraded to supply the additional capacity needed to cope with the anticipated increase in passenger demand. As such, a clear commitment to support the upgrade of Birmingham International Station is required to ensure this project becomes a reality.
8. Likewise, future commitments that support the wider areas surrounding rail stations are also of paramount importance. At The Hub, this extends to infrastructure investment relating to the HS2 Interchange Station where the area immediately surrounding the station – Arden Cross – has the potential to become a new, mixed-use destination capable of supporting 27,000 jobs and boosting the economy by more than £1bn every year.
9. We consider that the overall HS2 package will contribute to economic and productivity gains nationwide and support this investment in rail connectivity.
10. However, to maximise these gains and to generate the full benefits assumed in the HS2 business case, then funding and resources need to be made available to generate connectivity such as integration with public transport networks and support for new economic development opportunities such as that promoted by the UGC.
11. We welcome the IRP's endorsement of the Midlands Rail Hub's proposals to deliver improved services to stations in Worcestershire and Herefordshire and beyond, although the IRP puts back the scheduled completion to 2035 if it is "agreed to proceed".
12. However, from a non-HS2 perspective, a short-coming of the IRP proposals is that no support is given to the eastern section of Midlands Rail Hub scheme. The rationale for the Midlands Rail Hub scheme is to address

existing rail network capacity constraints around the West Midlands and deliver ten additional train paths per hour in and out of central Birmingham.

13.If Midlands Rail Hub eastern section does not proceed then there will be:

- significantly less passenger capacity for rail service expansion and future passenger growth into Birmingham
- no improved connectivity between Birmingham and Leicester for either local or inter urban passenger markets.

14.Prior to the publication of the IRP, Midlands Connect had built a strong case for Midlands Rail Hub based primarily around improving cross-regional connectivity between economic centres and we consider that the case for the full Midlands Rail Hub remains to build the rail network in the region.

15.In summary, future emphasis and commitments must focus on the ‘I’ of ‘IRP’ because without genuine integration, opportunities to increase passenger numbers and improved travelling experiences will not be realised. Likewise, the associated growth plans to realise wider economic benefits, such as those at The Hub, will be significantly compromised or permanently lost.

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