



CREWE HUB CONSULTATION COMMENTS OF CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL

Introduction

Campaign for Rail is an organisation based in the Midlands that advocates both general railway development and the best interests of all rail passengers and groups, including Rail User Groups. We are particularly interested in the development of passenger services, facilities for passengers at stations and on trains, freight development, new stations and, where appropriate, the re-opening of lines for new passenger services.

We welcome the opportunity to submit comments on the department's proposals to develop Crewe as a rail hub, accommodating services to the north using HS2 and the classic network.

We only became aware of this consultation exercise quite late in the consultation period, following an article in issue 836 of the magazine RAIL. These comments have been considered by our managing group via E-Mail and also at our October meeting.

Responses to Questions

Do you support the vision for a hub station at Crewe as suggested by Sir David Higgins, as set out at paragraphs 3.3 -3.7?

Yes we do support the vision. Crewe is already a major rail hub, both for InterCity and regional passenger services and for freight (as several terminals and facilities are based in the area). Crewe also acts as a railhead for users in Cheshire, as well as parts of North Staffordshire and the northern parts of Shropshire that do not have local stations (e.g. Cheadle, Market Drayton). Increasing capacity at Crewe station and making it part of the HS2 network will improve rail services for users across a wide area of the Northern Midlands.

Do you support the concept of splitting and joining HS2 trains at Crewe, which could provide more seats from Crewe - London and also allow a HS2 service to Stoke-on-Trent as set out at paragraph 5.8 - 5.14?

We give a strong welcome to the decision to opt for 400m platforms to be provided at the existing Crewe station, rather than at Basford Hall as had been previously suggested. Had a new HS2 station been built at Basford Hall then it would have been a disincentive for using the classic network services into Crewe to connect with HS2.

The concept would provide more capacity for the growing market for InterCity travel between the North Midlands and London, which is suppressed with the current service. It would also be a boon to economic growth. Stoke-on-Trent's economy has suffered over the last few decades from the decline in mining, the ceramic industry and other manufacturing. Improving rail links will help revitalise the economy and will hopefully encourage new businesses in different sectors (such as the technology and finance sectors) to locate in and invest in North Staffordshire. For the city to thrive and prosper, Stoke-on-Trent **has** to be served by HS2.

Splitting and joining trains at Crewe, into separate portions for Liverpool and Preston, also allows optimum use to be made of the paths on the HS2 line from Euston to Crewe. Operationally it makes sense. We therefore support the proposed extension of the platforms at Crewe to accommodate 400m HS2 services.

Which additional destinations north of Crewe might be served through splitting and joining trains at Crewe, as set out at paragraph 5.15 - 5.18?

This will depend on whether the trains being used for services north of Crewe will be to the European loading gauge or to the standard UK loading gauge. Naturally if 400m HS2 trains to UK loading gauge are to operate on the classic West Coast Main Line after leaving Crewe then infrastructure interventions and platform extensions would need to be made to accommodate them, for example junction modifications and platform extensions at Wigan North Western and Preston, together with re-configuring signalling on the WCML to accommodate 400m trains north of Crewe.

Additional destinations could include Chester (if electrification could take place on the line between Crewe and Chester) which would provide connectivity for HS2 with North Wales, and Blackpool, taking full advantage of the current electrification scheme between Preston and Blackpool. Indeed, we would support the extension of all HS2 trains terminating at Preston onwards to Blackpool.

The key northern destination though must be Scotland. The market northwards from Cheshire, North Staffordshire and North Shropshire is just as important as that southward to London.

Do you support the principle of a junction north of Crewe station which could allow HS2 services from Crewe to Manchester, Birmingham and Scotland, as set out at paragraph 5.19 -5.28?

In principle yes, although we note from the consultation document that as yet not much detailed examination of this suggestion has taken place, plus it is not within the remit of the current HS2 programme.

We also note that Scenario 3 (Fig. 10 p34 of the consultation document) has the Macclesfield's as 200m HS2 trains using a precious path to/from Euston. One option that should be considered in maximising the use of this path is joining this service to one going to the North East (for example Sheffield) and joining and detaching the Macclesfield portion at Birmingham Interchange.

What are your views on the level of freight growth that should be considered in planning a Crewe Hub?

Network Rail's Freight Market Studies have given a steer as to the future direction of the freight market. While the traditional freight markets of coal and steel are now in decline, inter-modal and container traffic is booming and Crewe is a centre for that traffic, being a hub for the rail network and having good connectivity into the motorway network.

The planning should consider continued growth in multi-modal and container traffic, coupled with high speed freight – which could be operated on HS2 during the evening when passenger traffic may not be as heavy. It is vital the existing facilities in the Crewe area to accommodate multi-modal traffic are maintained and there is land provided to allow growth.

What are your views on the relative future priorities of types of freight movements?

The current layout at Crewe does include avoiding lines, which do prove useful for through freight traffic not needing to stop at Crewe (e.g. food and drink traffic from Daventry to Mossend, Grangemouth and Inverness). The remodelled layout should continue to include avoiding lines, to stop through freight traffic having to stop in Crewe station when it does not need to.

What are your views on future local and regional passenger services that should be considered in planning a Crewe Hub?

As well as accommodating HS2 services the Crewe Hub should be able to handle a regional network, building on that which exists at present. The infrastructure should be able to allow the gaps that have been identified over the years to be addressed. For example, there is a need for a direct service from Birmingham to Manchester Airport via Stoke-on-Trent. The current offering does not cater for this market meaning most journeys from the Midlands to a key airport with long-haul routes are being made by road. A Birmingham – Stoke – Manchester Airport service does not need to be a HS2 service and could be operated as a regional service with conventional stock.

Remodelling the track layout at Crewe to accommodate growth and more through as opposed to terminating services could allow the North Staffordshire Line service from Derby to Crewe to be extended onwards to Chester, which is an important destination for tourism.

We would also support the provision of a platform on the “independent lines” for the use of trains serving the Marches line between Cardiff, Hereford, Shrewsbury, Crewe and Manchester.

If there are any additional areas that you think it is important for us to consider, that have not already been addressed in this consultation, please explain them here.

One of the key issues that needs to be addressed urgently is funding. There is no funding at present available for works at Crewe in Network Rail’s programme for CP5 or CP6. Nor, at present is there any funding in the HS2 programme for specific works at Crewe. As the last major work was done at the station in 1985 during a different era for the railways of decline and a reduction in traffic volumes it is right the layout and infrastructure should be revisited to meet future demands. But the cash to do this, building on the work done by the department for this consultation, needs to be made available.

Also as a railhead the infrastructure around the station needs to be enhanced to accommodate the predicted growth. It is clear that car parking is inadequate and additional spaces will be required. Connectivity into the bus network serving the local area will also have to be enhanced and made seamless.

The 2 trains per hour service between Stoke on Trent and London should be maintained.

Finally, there was no mention at all in this consultation of passenger amenities to be provided at a remodelled Crewe station. There needs to be a combination of a booking office able to sell tickets on the day with windows for advanced travel and the ubiquitous ticket machines. (Not everyone can use a machine or will have a card valid for use on them – for example passengers from abroad). There should be electronic information displays and toilets (including ones suitable for the disabled) on each platform, together with waiting rooms for standard and first class passengers. While it is perhaps inevitable that any redevelopment of Crewe will in part be funded by new retail opportunities they should be secondary to getting passenger amenities right. It was disappointing that there was no consultation with passenger representatives during the planning phases of the Birmingham New Street project. The Crewe Hub scheme should welcome input from interested stakeholders such as Rail User Groups from an early stage.