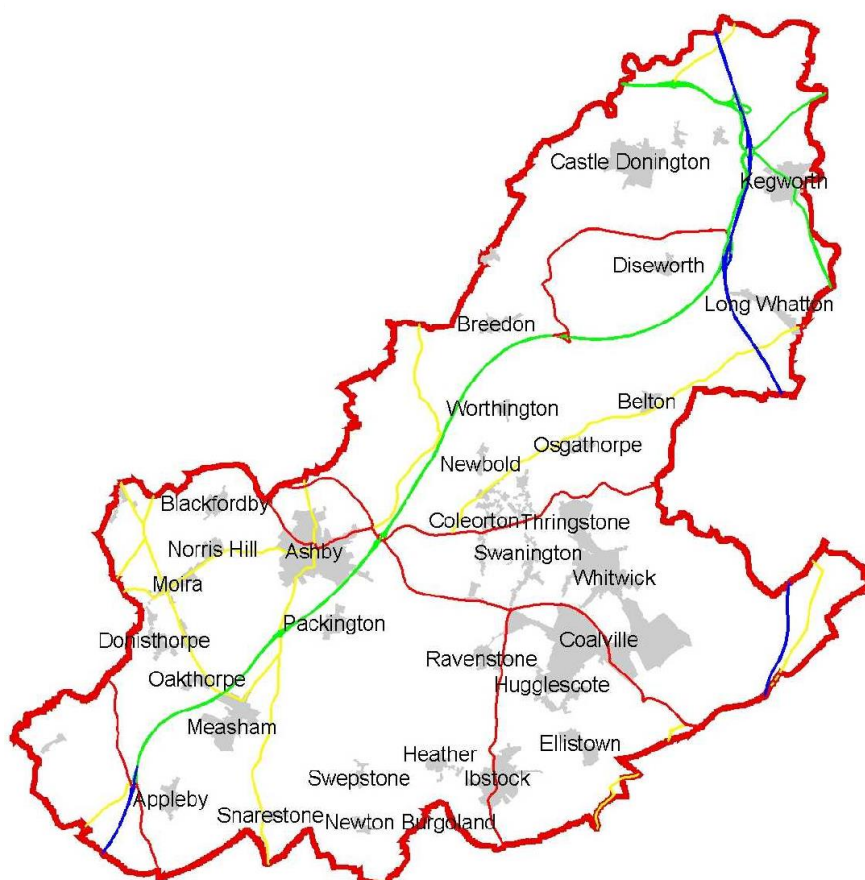




**Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North  
National Infrastructure Commission Call for Evidence**

**Submission by North West Leicestershire District Council**

**27<sup>th</sup> May 2020**



**Notes:**

- This response has been prepared with reference to those by the East Midlands Council, East Midlands HS2 Mitigation Board and Leicestershire County Council/Leicester City Council.
- The District are stakeholders to the work of the East Midlands Council, the Leicester and Leicestershire Rail Strategy and the Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire
- The organisation's stance on the HS2 project has historically been neutral, but mindful that government's overall plan is to construct a high speed line which will run directly through the area.
- The District's strategy has therefore been to ensure that the best possible outcomes can be obtained for residents and businesses. This response is constructed with that spirit in mind. The findings of economic and environmental research into HS2 have therefore been taken into account.
- North West Leicestershire has no rail services which pass directly through the District. However, rail is still of great significance to the area as a means of economic development and the evolution of greener ways to travel.
- This response has been written during the COVID-19 pandemic and we are aware that there could be long-lasting and wide-ranging impacts on travel *and* modes of travel that could be required in a new age of social distancing.

## Executive Summary

Three critical documents have been published for Leicestershire since 2017. These are:

- The Leicester and Leicestershire Joint Rail Strategy, which recognises the role of rail investment in economic growth <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/180873/rail-strategy-march-2017.pdf>
- The Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire, which sets out aspirations for delivering growth across the City and County <https://www.llestrategicgrowthplan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Final-LL-SGP-December-2018-1.pdf>
- The North West Leicestershire Local Plan [https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/files/documents/adopted\\_local\\_plan\\_2011\\_20312/Adopted%20Written%20Statement.pdf](https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/files/documents/adopted_local_plan_2011_20312/Adopted%20Written%20Statement.pdf)

All of these documents highlight the role that rail infrastructure has to play in wider transport connectivity, meeting future demand and enabling growth in the long term. The documents also set out that rail provision is poor, particularly in North West Leicestershire, and that this deficit must be addressed to aid future growth.

This response to the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) “call for evidence” to inform the planned Integrated Rail Plan sets out how rail, and HS2, play an essential role in delivering these plans.

The District Councils response to the National Infrastructure Commission reinforces the need for rail investment that benefits the residents and businesses of North West Leicestershire (and more widely, the City and County) as part of an integrated approach to HS2 and Midlands Connect developments.

This document sets out the key priorities as the District Council sees them, consistent with the responses set out by our partners in Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council, Midlands Connect and Transport for East Midlands (TfEM).

The Council have listed these priorities in a sequential order, recognising that much of this work is interdependent. An item which is lower on the list is not of a lesser priority.

- a. Provision of a direct rail link between HS2 and the Midland Main Line at Toton
- b. Restoration of the Ivanhoe Line (Burton-Leicester)
- c. Completing full electrification of the Midland Main Line
- d. Investing in Leicester station to improve both capacity and quality
- e. Improvements to wider rail services as proposed by Midlands Connect

Delivering these infrastructure improvements will greatly assist rail network resilience. They will create opportunities to release capacity on road and rail networks through increased freight movements and improved passenger connections to destinations which are much further afield, including Scotland and mainland Europe. Restoration of the Ivanhoe Line will provide a much-needed rail service across the District which will relieve pressure on highly congested road and reduce local dependency on the car. On the Midland Main Line,

improved connections and capacity on local commuter routes will aid economic growth to towns along the existing Midland Main Line, connecting them cross-country via East West Rail and giving access to the ThamesLink network via Bedford. In addition, these investments create the opportunity to make a modal shift from road to rail, contributing to decarbonisation targets.

Most of these improvements hinge on the need to link HS2 and the Midland Main Line at Toton. The ability to run classic compatible trains on the existing rail network will ensure that the benefits of HS2 are distributed as widely as possible.

The questions asked by the NIC call for evidence are answered on the following pages.

## The Department for Transport's "call for evidence" questions

*Q1. What potential investments should be in scope of the Commission's assessment? In answering this question, please consider the **terms of reference** for the Integrated Rail Plan, particularly that HS2 Phases 1 and 2a are out of scope.*

There is no passenger rail provision within North West Leicestershire. However, rail is seen as a key issue for the future of the district. The Council recommends the following investments within the assessment:

- a classic compatible link at the Toton (HS2 East Midlands Hub)
- restoration works to the Ivanhoe Line in conjunction with the construction of the Ashby Railhead, ideally reopening the line from Burton to Leicester
- investment and improvements to Leicester station and electrification of the Midlands Main Line (viewed as a joint project together with the classic compatible link)
- delivery of Midlands Connect rail hub projects

*Q2. Which set of rail investments do you believe would, together: a. best unlock capacity b. improve connectivity – within the Midlands and the North?*

- a. The development of the eastern leg of HS2 and linkages between the high speed network and the classic compatible network would provide the biggest benefits for passengers. The addition of the classic compatible link would have a marked impact on capacity in the Midlands region, giving greater access to other parts of the UK. The knock-on effects of this would bring increased economic benefits to the area.
- b. Provision of the classic compatible link would greatly improve rail connectivity, linking the East Midlands to the northern cities, the Thameslink network and East-West rail via Bedford. Outside the UK, Europe can be accessed from St Pancras. The classic compatible link would also provide much-needed resilience to the HS2 network.

*Q3. Within the set of investments you identified, which individual investments should be the highest priority? Please explain your rationale for this and how this would affect the phasing and sequencing of the full set of investments you identified.*

The Council considers that the investments should be approached in the following order of priority with restoration of the Ivanhoe Line given high priority as there is currently no passenger rail provision within North West Leicestershire. However, rail is seen as a key issue for the future of the district:

- the classic compatible link at Toton and to make provision for this within the designs for HS2
- restoration works to the Ivanhoe Line
- electrification of the MML } undertaken
- investment and improvements to Leicester station } in tandem
- delivery of Midlands Connect rail hub projects

If Phase 2b is to go ahead as currently planned, Toton station and hub, with the classic compatible connection, must be progressed as soon as possible in order to gain full economic benefits. However, it is recognised that electrification of the MML is a key factor to this link, alongside the improvements to Leicester station. The Midlands Connect hub projects are also important but do not share the same construction dependencies as the classic compatible link, electrification of the MML and investment in Leicester station.

*Q4. What supporting policies need to be in place to deliver the benefits of the investments you identified? If there are any dependencies with other investments/policies, how confident are you that these supporting policies will be put in place?*

The investments stated above are mostly interdependent and the correct sequencing of them will lead to the greatest benefits. Restoration of the Ivanhoe Line will greatly benefit residents in the Ashby and Coalville areas, where a large amount of new housing is proposed. These works will also make a significant impact on carbon reduction in the District. Electrification of the MML will add resilience to the HS2 network in the area. The improvements to Leicester station also contribute to overall resilience.

*Q5. What impact would the investments you identified have on greenhouse gas emissions? In particular, how would they affect the UK's ability to meet its domestic and international targets, including the Paris Agreement and net-zero? In answering this question, it would be helpful if you could consider the expected decarbonisation of road transport, as set out in the Commission's National **Infrastructure Assessment and Freight Study**.*

Linking the MML to HS2 at Toton will provide additional connectivity and flexibility to passengers travelling south to Bedford/St Pancras and north between Leicester and Leeds via HS2. Distribution of passengers will be widened, freeing up capacity and encouraging travellers to use rail over road. HS2 will also create extra capacity on the classic network for passenger and freight trains, leading to a reduction in road travel and associated reduction in carbon footprint. Electric trains on HS2 and the MML will reduce emissions from diesel trains. Use of the Ivanhoe Line would help to reduce cars on local roads and provide greener tourist access to the National Forest. It is worth noting that 92% of journeys to work in North West Leicester are by car, and without major investment in alternatives to the car, this will not decrease.

*Q6. In addition to greenhouse gas emissions, what are the potential environmental effects (positive and negative) of the investments you have identified?*

The construction phase of HS2, electrification of the MML and improvements to Leicester station will all produce a high carbon footprint. With this in mind, the Council urge the Government to set stringent targets for developers to ensure that works are carried out in the most carbon-efficient way.

The construction and completion of HS2 will sever key habitats and in some cases, destroy them. However, together with the County Council, the District are working closely with HS2

to ensure that the best possible mitigation is secured for North West Leicestershire's natural environment. We urge the Government to replace HS2's "no net loss" policy with a "net gain" one and feel that this is achievable.

*Q7. Aside from those delivered by improved connectivity and greater capacity, what broader impacts on people's quality of life could the investments you identified here?*

The rail investments listed above would bring economic investment to the area through increased capacity, particularly for freight/logistics which is a major source of employment in the District. Better connections will also encourage more businesses to invest in and around the District. It will also open up the employment market outside the county and enable residents commute to other locations for work.

*Q8. How would the costs and benefits of the investments you identified be distributed economically, socially and geographically?*

The additional connectivity provided by the investments listed above will allow jobs and employment to spread up the country from the south-east, and will contribute to the rebalancing of the economy which is one of the Government's stated aims. It will also allow more people better access to rail services.

*Q9. Which set of investments would be improve rail connectivity to Scotland? If these are different to the investments you identified above, please explain why.*

Provision of the classic connection at Toton will help to open access to the north of England and Scotland from the East Midlands, as northbound trains will be able to run on both networks, creating more efficient onwards connections to Scotland.

*Q10. What would be the impact of the investments you identified on connectivity between the Midlands and the north, and other parts of the UK? Please explain where and how impacts would occur.*

The investments described above would greatly improve connectivity between the Midlands, north of England and other parts of the UK. The positive impact of integrating HS2 and the classic network will give passengers more travel options, increased capacity for passengers and freight, and therefore opening greater employment options to a wider market. The economic benefits of improving connections between London, the East Midlands and the North will assist the rebalancing of the economy.

*What would be the impact of the investments you identified on international connectivity across the Midlands and the north?*

These investments will provide direct connections between the East Midlands (via Toton/Leicester) to the Eurostar services at London St Pancras, giving greater access to mainland Europe. Additionally, the classic connection at Toton will provide better connections to regional airports, e.g. East Midlands, Manchester and Leeds, relieving pressure on the London airports.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 HS2 will pass directly through North West Leicestershire along the M42/A42 corridor. Although no stations are proposed along this route, it is hoped that its construction and operation will support some significant connectivity improvements for our residents.
- 1.2 The policy has been to remain neutral about HS2, but at the same time to accept that there is a need to have a pragmatic attitude to a critical infrastructure project which will have profound impacts on the District. The stance therefore has been to ensure that we engage appropriately with HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport to ensure the best mitigation is obtained for residents and businesses.
- 1.3 The elected members have voted on consultation responses and officers of the Council work with HS2 Ltd, the Department for Transport and other local and regional stakeholders. An Officers Mitigation Group has been set up, assisted by consultants. The District engages fully with Parish Councils, local action groups and businesses.
- 1.4 The decision to approve this response was taken Councillor Robert Ashman (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning & Infrastructure) on Friday 29 May 2020 under delegation of executive powers as set out on the Council's website.
- 1.5 The key areas where these benefits can be realised are:
  - A classic compatible link between HS2 and the Midlands Main Line (MML) at Toton. This link is vital to achieving the best outcomes for the District as it will greatly increase connectivity
  - Enabling improvements to the Ivanhoe Line to take advantage of use of the line by HS2 for the Ashby Railhead
  - Jointly – improving Leicester station and electrifying the MML
  - Enacting the Midlands Connect proposals to improve the connectivity of the East Midlands
- 1.6 The Council recognises that rail transport has a strong influence on economic growth, is vital to improve connectivity and boosts social inclusion. Improved rail connectivity (and therefore greater capacity for rail freight) will help to reduce road and carbon footprint.

## **2. Policy**

### **East Midlands**

- 2.1 The Council are a stakeholder to the East Midlands Growth Strategy (published 2017) and within this there are proposals to use HS2 connectivity to drive the long term



economic growth rate. The projected number of jobs associated with HS2 in the East Midlands is 74,000, more than other English regions; economic growth is projected to be £4m GVA by 2043.

2.2 A comprehensive Economic Opportunities Assessment was also undertaken, focussing on the D2N2 and Leicester and Leicestershire LEP areas which already comprise 3.15m people, over 100,000 businesses and £65bn GVA. It was recognised that the development at Toton will be crucial, but a large proportion of the economic benefits of HS2 will be realised in surrounding localities; pertinent to North West Leicestershire are:

- Ratcliffe-on-Soar – redevelopment of the power station site due to be decommissioned in 2025
- East Midlands Airport and Freight Interchange – the biggest freight airport outside London and home to DHL. The new Freight Interchange includes a direct rail connection in 2020 and is already generating thousands of new jobs

2.3 The Council fully endorses the comments made by East Midlands Councils on the proposed Locally Led Urban Development Corporation. The area adjacent to Toton is destined to become a high-quality Innovation Campus, and has been incorporated into statutory planning policy via the Broxtowe Local Plan, and North West Leicestershire are a stakeholder in the detailed masterplan to bring this proposal into being. The Campus will link into other sites including the area around East Midlands Airport, and the establishment of a Locally Led Development Corporation is being explored, which is supported by North West Leicestershire District Council. One of the key objectives will be to improve connectivity across the three sites indicated below. However, the Council is of the view that the East Midlands Airport connectivity works are dealt with more urgently than currently proposed in the East Midlands Gateway Connectivity Study and Access to Toton Report (Phase 3) and should be carried out simultaneously with the works at Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station.



Figure 1 Project Alchemy Priority Areas

## Leicester and Leicestershire

2.4 The Council are also a stakeholder in the Leicester and Leicestershire Joint Rail Strategy which was published in March 2017. The document's five key priorities are:

- To maximise benefits from MML services
- To maximise benefits of HS2
- To improve connectivity to major economic centres
- To ensure rail access and economic development are planned together
- To support modal shift from road to rail.

2.5 The Rail Strategy document supports the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan, to which the Council is also a stakeholder. The Plan sets out the following:

- how expected population and economic growth will be accommodated and supported
- how existing problems can be resolved
- what type of development is needed, and by when
- the most appropriate locations for developments
- which environmental assets must be protected and enhanced
- what investment in services and infrastructure is needed, and by when.

2.6 The Plan forecasts a need for 96,600 additional homes in the County by 2031 and a potential need for 187,100 by 2050. Large scale increases in land allocated for business use is also projected. The need for investment in infrastructure is stated on page 6:

*“We are very clear that significant new development cannot be accommodated within Leicester and Leicestershire without significant investment in infrastructure and services. We welcome government’s recognition of this problem at a national and regional level...”*

- 2.7 The Council have also produced their own Local Plan to 2031. In this, the housing need is estimated at 9,620, 66 hectares of land for employment purposes and 7,300sqm for shopping purposes. The locations deemed most suitable for housing development (worked out under the district’s settlement hierarchy are Ashby, Castle Donington, Coalville, Ibstock, Kegworth and Measham. This growth is just the beginning of what will need to be a sustained period of growth if North West Leicestershire is to play its part in delivering the Growth Plan’s growth ambitions. Beyond 2031 significant additional growth will need to be planned for. Improving accessibility by rail will be a key issue to ensure that such growth represents truly sustainable development.
- 2.8 The Rail Strategy document states that Leicester and Leicestershire, despite their location in the centre of the UK, are poorly connected to many other key economic centres, especially compared to economies of similar size in the Midlands. Leicester has no direct services to Manchester, Leeds, the north east, Coventry, the Thames Valley or the south west. The service between Leicester and Birmingham takes 48-56 minutes for a journey of just 40 miles. Connectivity to the East is also poor.
- 2.9 The strategy defines targets for improved services in the medium and longer term. Local services, especially those between Leicester and Birmingham are already crowded at peak times, and in the future, MML services between Leicester and London face the same fate, particularly if HS2 is not delivered through the East Midlands. Furthermore, there are local fears that HS2 could impact upon the quality of services on the MML in the longer term

### Passengers leaving Leicester on a London Service (Source: SLC using HS2/NR forecast)

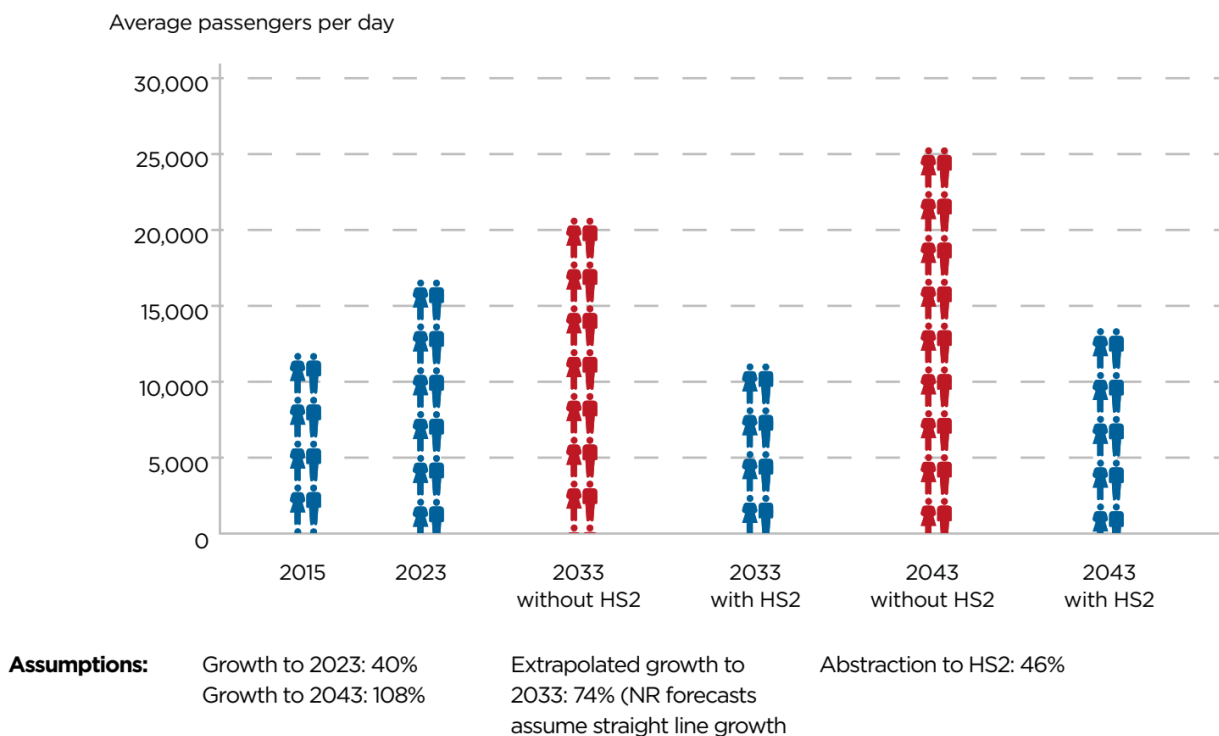


Figure 2 Passenger projections

### Rail services and spending

2.10 Treasury statistics have consistently shown that the East Midlands has a lower level of transport spending per head of any UK region or nation.

**Table 1: Identifiable expenditure on Transport**  
(2013-14 to 2017-18, £ per head, in descending order - excludes inflation)

Transport Spending per head					
	2013-14 Outturn £	2014-15 Outturn £	2015-16 Outturn £	2016-17 Outturn £	2017-18 Outturn £
London	652	677	859	944	1,019
North West	246	264	382	370	528
UK	319	332	417	435	483
England	297	316	409	425	475
West Midlands	213	251	329	314	412
East	237	256	333	333	402
South East	250	255	329	370	370
North East	213	236	280	291	320
Yorks & Humber	284	279	371	335	315
South West	177	203	263	305	290
East Midlands	200	222	255	220	245

- 2.11 Viewing this graphically, the position of the East Midlands relative to the UK average spend per head over the last 20 years shows a decline.

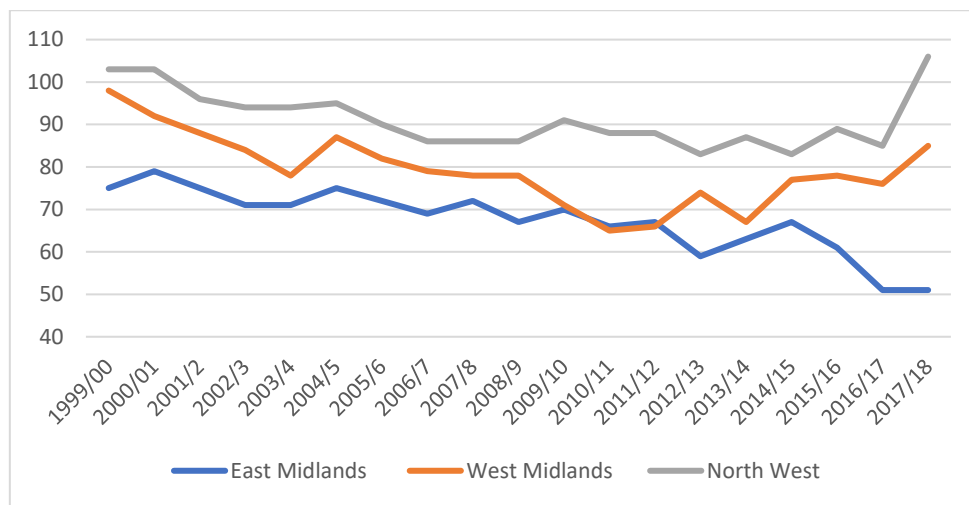


Figure 3 Transport spend per head compared to UK average time series (UK = 100). Source: PESA

- 2.12 The analysis suggests that there has been a trend towards rebalancing (or levelling up) transport investment within some regions over recent years – but not in the East Midlands. It is essential that this is redressed.
- 2.13 Leicestershire's rail connections are sparse, as can be seen from the map below.

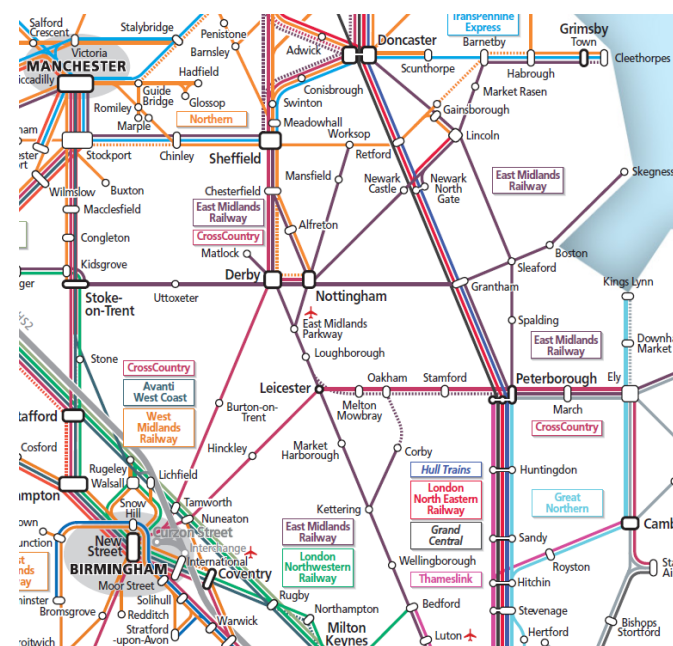


Figure 4 Midlands/East England rail services

- 2.14 The MML links Sheffield and London from north to south, but it is only electrified as far as Kettering. The available east-west connection are limited and generally slow. As a result of this, rail travel is not an attractive option in North West Leicestershire. This lack of connectivity impacts upon labour markets and reduces business efficiency, leading to over-reliance on the private car. Assessments conducted by Network Rail have concluded that despite recent investment, many of the routes serving the East Midlands will become increasingly overcrowded and congested in the 2020s without the provision of new capacity.
- 2.15 The addition of HS2 to the infrastructure fabric will change connectivity in a way that cannot be achieved by the existing rail network alone, even with enhancements. HS2 will also release capacity from existing lines and ease overcrowding. It will also provide vital slots for rail freight.
- 2.16 Connecting HS2 to the classic network at Toton (see section 3 below) will greatly enhance connectivity and provide much-needed resilience.

### **Environment and sustainability**

- 2.17 Leicestershire County Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and a detailed Environment Strategy has been produced. Similarly, North West Leicestershire declared a climate emergency on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Targets have been set to reduce carbon emissions for Leicestershire to zero by 2050.
- 2.18 In addition, the Council's Local Plan clearly sets out that North West Leicestershire is largely a rural district and the areas separating our towns and villages is mostly undeveloped countryside. It is therefore vital that infrastructure improvements are carried out in a sensitive manner with appropriate environmental mitigation.
- 2.19 The Council are aware of the Government's Decarbonising Transport document (March 2020) and consider that all of the six strategic policies for transport can be supported by improved rail connectivity and capacity through a less carbon intensive (electrified) rail network. Both passenger and rail freight are identified as less carbon sensitive and producing less greenhouse gas emissions than road or air travel.
- 2.20 A better integrated rail transport system with increased opportunities for local and wider travel by rail will reduce reliance on roads and flights as a mode of transport and support the modal shift which climate change policies are advocating.

## **3. Classic connection at Toton**

**Note: the Council are aware that the classic connection is not a standalone project and is dependent upon electrification of the MML and necessary infrastructure works at improvements at Leicester station.**

- 3.1 If the eastern leg of HS2 goes ahead, the Council acknowledge that there will be a range of economic benefits which arise from the construction and operation of the project. It is likely that the MML will still be the most attractive route to London from North West Leicestershire. For this reason, it is vital that MML services do not substantially erode after HS2 services commence.
- 3.2 It is our view that a connection between HS2 and the MML is critical to connectivity and maximising the benefits of the rail network. It is acknowledged that this would only be possible if the MML were electrified, but this link must be included in the designs of HS2 as early as possible. The addition of the junction into the developing design would then enable the MML link to be added when the electrification project is in a position to progress. This would then remove the dependency on HS2 timelines for delivery.
- 3.3 The addition of the junction would enable the following:
- increased connectivity between the East Midlands and Manchester
  - increased connectivity between the Thames Valley/Bedford area to the East Midlands and beyond
  - seamless travel for passengers, who would not need to change train between networks
  - improved resilience for the HS2 network
- 3.4 If the classic connection is not included in the scope of HS2 then many of the projected connectivity gains (and their economic benefits) would be lost.
- 3.5 One of the connectivity gaps is between Leicester and Manchester. The revised service pattern for the MML after the eastern leg of HS2 has opened is likely to be the reduction of one train per hour between London St Pancras and Sheffield, because HS2 will provide the London-Sheffield link. With the integrated approach provided by the classic connection, this service could be extended to Manchester, delivering the direct connectivity that is currently lacking.
- 3.6 If the HS2 eastern leg is to go ahead, we believe that this needs to be progressed quickly to give more certainty to residents and businesses, and so that the economic benefits can be realised. The Council would not be averse to the principles of a phased construction, with the following provisos:
- a phased approach is used in the context of building the eastern leg in entirety
  - construction delays must be minimised
  - the overall delivery of the eastern leg can be phased with other major infrastructure projects
  - phasing does not adversely affect the delivery of growth and economic strategies which are dependent on the construction of the eastern leg

- 3.7 We wish to see an end to the uncertainty and planning blight along the proposed route, which residents and businesses have lived with since 2013. We therefore urge Government to resolve the questions of the route and the legislative process and give a firm commitment to construction.

#### **4. The Ivanhoe Line**

- 4.1 The North West Leicestershire Local Plan has a clear policy on the Ivanhoe Line:
- the Council will support the provision of public transport services on the Leicester to Burton rail line
  - new development will not be permitted which would prejudice the route of the Leicester to Burton rail line
  - the provision of stations, together with ancillary car parking and facilities such as platforms and shelters, at appropriate location, including Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch, will be supported.
- 4.2 As stated above, some 9,620 houses are going to be required in the District in the period to 2031. Ashby and Coalville are two of the towns earmarked for housing expansion and both could benefit greatly from the restoration of the Ivanhoe Line.
- 4.3 The Local Plan is being reviewed to cover the period to 2039. It will need to make provision for significant new growth, especially housing. It is likely that some of the additional growth will be directed towards Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch, as the two largest settlements in the district, both of which have the potential to be served by the Ivanhoe Line. Currently access to a passenger rail service from these settlements involves a road journey of about 15 miles from Coalville to Leicester or Burton and at least 10 miles from Ashby (to Burton).
- 4.4 The district is already very heavily reliant upon cars for commuting, with both Leicester and Burton important destinations for employment. The A511, A50 and A444 are all heavily congested during rush hour periods; a bus journey from Leicester to Burton takes two hours whereas a train journey between the two locations would take around 40 minutes. Additional growth will, without the provision of a sustainable alternative, such as the reopening of the Leicester-Burton line to passenger traffic, exacerbate existing problems on the local road network and make it difficult for the Council to achieve its target of being Zero Carbon by 2050.



## Leicester – Burton railway

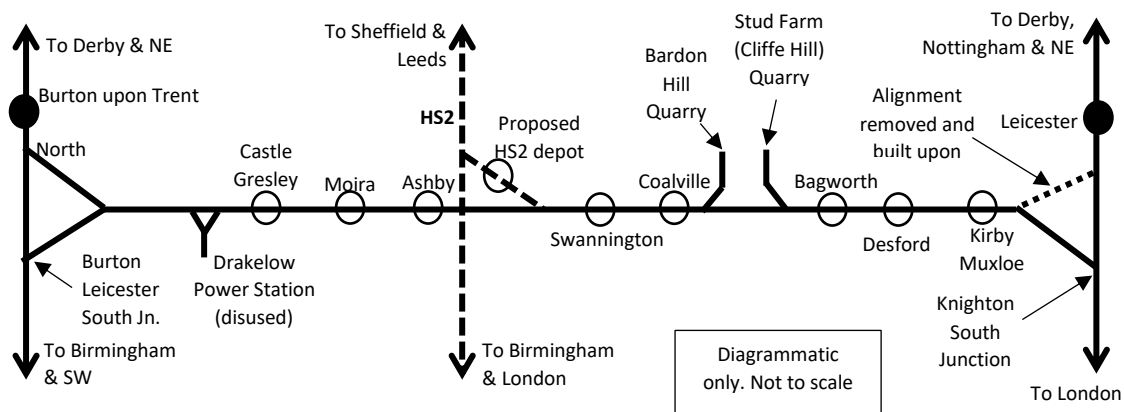


Figure 5: route map of the Leicester-Burton railway

- 4.5 HS2 have published outline plans only of the Ashby Railhead site, and no details of how much, if any work will be carried out to restore the line itself to make it fit for use by increased freight traffic. The track is currently in a poor condition and it is reasonable to expect that at least some infrastructure work will need to be carried out.
- 4.6 To make the line usable in North West Leicestershire, it is estimated that the following minimum works would need to be carried out:
- Upgrade the track to raise the passenger line speed to 60mph
  - Install one passing loop in single track section of the line
  - Reinststate the North Curve junction at Knighton to give access to Leicester Station
  - Upgrade the signalling to current passenger line standards
  - Build a minimum of 6 intermedia stations in the most appropriate locations to serve 21<sup>st</sup> century traffic demands (ie not necessarily at the “historic” station sites)
  - Rebuild the out of use cattle dock to provide a third platform at Burton Station served by existing adjacent track. This new platform could also be used to host the West Midlands Combined Authority’s proposed Burton to Lichfield service (giving scope for shared costs)
  - Safety improvements to level crossings where indicated by Network Rail following risk assessments
- 4.7 Economic projections from 2016 demonstrated a BCR of 0.8, too low for restoration of the line to be a viable option. However, this has probably changed in the intervening period and in the light of a more pressing need to make carbon reductions.
- 4.8 Additionally, the government promised £500m towards the restoration of historic railway lines in January 2020. Importantly, the proposed restoration scheme of this

line is one of the first round winners of the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund.. Works could be carried out in conjunction with those to enable the Ashby Railhead.

- 4.9 The line is currently used for freight and Ashby has been selected as the site for a temporary (7-year) railhead. The Councils view is that additional restoration to the line would be a significant legacy contribution to the area as it would provide commuting and leisure options to populations near the line, and more sustainable access to the National Forest.

## **5 Midland Main Line electrification**

- 5.1 We are aware that Leicester may see conventional services suffer from a dilution of service after HS2 begins operations. This will impact upon residents and businesses in the District and is therefore pertinent to our comments.
- 5.2 Services are likely to be biased more towards commuters, with more intermediate stops and resultant longer journey times. Modelling undertaken by Systra in 2016 for SLC Rail suggested that for each additional stop between Leicester and London St Pancras, Leicester's economy would be affected by some £4m GVA, equating to about £1 per minute.
- 5.3 The proposal for electrification has a BCR of over 2:1, which is sufficient to support the relevant works. It would bring together many HS2 and classic network related benefits:
- journey time reductions from towns and cities at the southern end of the MML to Leeds
  - Greatly improved connectivity between Leicester and West Yorkshire
  - Connectivity between the proposed Oxford-Cambridge route, the East Midlands and West Yorkshire via Bedford
  - Improved connectivity to mainland Europe via Leicester to St Pancras and Eurostar services.
- 5.4 Electrification is a key carbon-reducing activity and efficiencies in operating costs under electric power is estimated to save around 50% in vehicle services and will improve the costs compared to those from running bi-mode trains.
- 5.5 The electrification programme has moved as far north as Kettering. We support Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council's proposal to carry out this work in phases. Full completion of electrification would ensure that both HS2 and MML users and operators, as both projects gain from the same investment. Full electrification of the MML would enable the bi-mode trains to be converted to all-electric, which would:
- facilitate the operation of classic compatible HS2 service
  - reduce carbon emissions
  - provide resilience to the wider network, as discussed in the section on the classic connection above

- make journey improvement times possible on the MML which are not achievable by bi-mode trains
- reduce operating and maintenance costs

- 5.6 It is worth noting that the Government has committed to electrifying the MML between Clay Cross in Derbyshire and Sheffield to enable classic compatible trains to serve Sheffield by 2033. It therefore makes sense to also electrify these midsections of the line. Additionally, the cost of operating bi-mode trains is around 50% less per mile in electric mode than in diesel mode (lower fuel costs and reduced engine/track maintenance costs).
- 5.7 Fully electrifying the MML would enable bi-mode trains to be converted to all-electric, or to be redeployed elsewhere on the network and replaced with purpose-built electric trains. All-electric rolling stock have cost benefits attached and also make additional line speed improvements which are not feasible with heavier bi-mode trains. However, it is accepted that electrifying tunnels and stations is more difficult, and an alternative solution may be to replace the diesel units with battery technology.
- 5.8 Electrification would allow classic compatible trains to make direct passenger journeys, with no changes, from Leeds/north east England/Scotland to Bedford, and from there joining Thameslink services and giving access to Gatwick and Luton airports, and to London St Pancras to connect with Eurostar services. However, there is an acceptance that at the moment, Leeds station would not be able to accommodate the Leeds-Bedford service and this would need to be incorporated into Northern Powerhouse Rail as an early delivery item.

## **6 Improvements to Leicester station**

- 6.1 The Council endorses East Midlands Council's and the County and City Councils' views on improvement to Leicester station, which in summary are:
- Leicester station has received no significant investment for over 30 years. It is not adequate in terms of capacity or quality to support the forecasted demands
  - All of the Midlands Connect project and the proposed shuttle services between Leicester and Toton will put additional pressure on the operation of Leicester station
  - A masterplan has already been developed, supported by Leicester City Council, East Midlands Railway and Network Rail which recommends significant works to the station and improved car parking
  - The timing of the improvements at Leicester station is critical to the other suggested works, including the electrification of the MML. Infrastructure works at the station must be completed first, or electric trains may have to

be retrofitted and works could significantly affect day to day operation of the station.

## **7 Wider rail improvements**

7.1 The Council supports the aspirations of Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and the East Midlands HS2 Executive Board/Midlands Connect on wider rail improvements. In summary, these are:

- Support for the Midlands Rail Hub project, which will deliver two additional fast services per hour between Leicester and Birmingham
- A rail connection between Leicester and Coventry, to provide direct fast services between both cities. These are the only large cities at a similar distances not connected by direct trains in the country.
- Classic compatible Bedford-Leeds, utilising the connection between Leicester and Toton as discussed above

7.2 All of these projects would help to address the deficiencies in rail provision to Leicestershire, which are detailed above. The current situation does not support modal shift or reducing carbon footprint and we consider that it is time that Leicestershire caught up with other comparable areas of the country.

- a. There is a critical need to accommodate future rail freight traffic. The District houses quarries and logistics businesses and it is important to the local economy. East Midlands Airport is the largest cargo airport outside London and Leicester is a hub where long distance freight from East Anglian ports such as Immingham crosses the MML to reach logistics terminals in the West Midlands. The recent development of the East Midlands Gateway inland port at J24 of the M1 also critically relies on the smooth passage of rail freight out of the District to Leicester.
- b. Improved connectivity in and around the District will also increase rail freight capacity in the Midlands generally. The new East Midlands Gateway Rail Freight terminal greatly increases the opportunity to move more goods by rail and reduce reliance on road haulage. To put this into a statistical context, in 2013/14 the rail freight sector delivered £0.5bn of benefits to the UK in terms of congestion reduction, environment and safety. Rail freight produces 76% less carbon dioxide per tonne of cargo relative to road haulage, and each freight train removes up to 76 lorries from the road (Network Rail, 2013; Value and Importance of Rail Freight).

## **8 Other transport options**

8.1 The Council would like to put forward two additional proposals for consideration.

- While the Council would have preferred an HS2 station at East Midlands Parkway, it accepts that a decision has been made that the HS2 Hub Station

will be at Toton. However, it is important that there is full network integration so that East Midlands Airport and East Midlands Parkway are connected to the Toton hub and the decision to integrate the delivery of Phase 2b of HS2 with investment on the conventional rail network is fully supported.

- The Council would support the provision of tram-train connectivity to the East Midlands Airport/Freight Interchange from the Hub station and from Nottingham to East Midlands Parkway, Radcliffe on Soar Power Station and East Midlands Airport. See comments above about the Development Hub, with the emphasis on providing the links to EMA/EMP before Phase 3 of the East Midlands Connectivity Study works.

## 9 Conclusions

- 9.1 This response has set out the requirements that the Council believe are essential for achieving a much-needed improvement in rail services. One of the most poorly served parts of the country needs to be able to catch up, opening up opportunities to grow the local economy and drive down carbon emissions. The Council also feel that the Development Corporation scheme is vital for economic growth, and particularly recovery in the face of the coronavirus pandemic
- 9.2 The projects listed above are all interdependent on each other, but together represent an integrated rail plan that would be of great benefit to our community.
- 9.3 In summary, our priorities are:
- Certainty on the eastern leg of HS2, with a clear timetable for legislation and delivery
  - Restoration of the Ivanhoe Line in conjunction with the construction of the Ashby Railhead
  - A direct rail connection between HS2 and the MML at Toton
  - Investment in Leicester station and the necessary electrification of the MML to enable the classic connection
  - Delivery of the Midlands Rail Hub projects, phased in a way which will deliver benefits at the earliest opportunity
- 9.4 It is important that these projects are viewed as a whole, as together they can deliver the most benefits for connectivity and capacity for our rail users; to enable modal shift and carbon reduction and for great efficiency across the rail network in the East Midlands.

**May 2020**

**North West Leicestershire District Council**

**Attachments:** see links to strategy documents in the Executive Summary