

Ahead of the Meeting of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure on 29 May 2020, Councillor Sean Sheahan, Leader of the Labour Group, submitted the following questions on 28 May 2020:

1. On page 4, paragraph 1.3 of the report, it is stated that “The District engages fully with Parish Councils, local action groups and businesses.” Yet the report documents no such engagement in the preparation of this submission. Why is that?
2. Given the difficulty of bringing this submission through the normal decision making structures, did the Administration consider accepting the invitation to apply for an extension to the deadline, as set out here? <https://www.nic.org.uk/publications/rail-needs-assessment-hs2-call-for-evidence/>
3. What consideration has the Administration given to the terms of reference for the Integrated Rail Plan, as it is requested to do, at page 11, question 1, most particularly, “How best to reduce cost, including opportunities to reconsider HS2 Phase 2b scope and design standards to prevent over-specification, improve efficiency and reduce costs” page 4, paragraph 1.2
4. Why does the submission not take the opportunity to make representations on reducing the specification of the HS2 phase 2b, lowering speeds, reducing costs and potentially enabling the line to be rerouted as far away as possible from any settlements, despite acknowledging that the project “will have profound impacts on the District” page 4, paragraph 1.2 and “it is therefore vital that infrastructure improvements are carried out in a sensitive manner with appropriate environmental mitigation.” Page 20, paragraph 2.18

In response to these questions, the Head of Planning and Infrastructure on behalf of the Portfolio Holder gave the following answers:

1. This is a District Council response to this call for evidence to the Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and North and not a consultation on HS2 but we continue to engage with Parish Councils in terms of the mitigation proposals that would be expected to be included in the HS2 project and to advise and support them on how to prepare and make submissions to HS2 and Government when it comes to the Hybrid Bill process next year.

This is a call for evidence and not a consultation - i.e. existing evidence (ie transport policy and studies) to date. It's about looking at HS2 phase 2b eastern leg (as currently proposed), and has drawn on existing evidence that we have on how HS2 would best integrate with existing transport plans. The response is very much at a strategic level, based on studies and work already completed. We have pulled this existing information together into one place, and reflected on how it relates to HS2.

2. As this was not a formal consultation seeking views on HS2 but was more of a technical exercise in considering the existing evidence around how HS2 is connected to the wider network, it was not considered necessary to seek apply for an extension

3. You will see from the call for evidence response, the Council recommends the following investments within the assessment:

-A classic compatible link at the Toton (HS2 East Midlands Hub) – to link

-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

NWL has no existing evidence on reducing specification, so cannot comment on this technical aspect. This is not a consultation for general comments, but a call for existing evidence

4. As stated in my previous answer, NWL has no existing evidence on reducing specification, so cannot comment on this technical aspect. As mentioned previously, this is not a consultation for general comments, but a call for existing evidence.

However, it is agreed that it is vital that infrastructure improvements are carried out in a sensitive manner with appropriate environmental mitigation and officers continue to work with partners, to ensure that we get the best mitigation possible to be included in the project when the Council makes submissions to HS2 and Government in the Hybrid Process next year.

I should emphasise that the position of NWLDC remains that we are neutral on this issue of HS2. The call for evidence is not a request to revisit the routing of the line but, as stated in the response to question 1, the Council is working with the Parishes and other Agencies to ensure the best possible mitigation for the communities affected by HS2.

I would also like to add that East Midlands Councils have done a response that is supported by Councils across the Region and our submission is to add more local detail and emphasise the importance of evidence submitted to projects that will have a direct impact on NWL.