

## **HS2 Phase 2 - Briefing Note for Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

The purpose of this note is to inform members of

- the announcement by the Secretary of State of the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013
- a meeting with the Secretary of State
- the next steps
- meetings that have been organised to date by the County Council for councillors of the affected wards
- the recent deliberations of the Working Party established by the Committee

### **The announcement by the Secretary of State on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

The Transport Secretary, Patrick McLoughlin announced the Government's initial preferred route for phase 2 of HS2. Phase 2 takes the line north of Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds. In Staffordshire the proposed West Midlands to Manchester route continues from phase 1 in Lichfield and passes through the Boroughs of Stafford and Newcastle. In the Borough the route starts with an embankment opposite Stableford on the eastern side of the West Coast Main Line (WCML) before passing under the A53 near Whitmore and then goes into a 710 m tunnel at Whitmore Heath. It passes over the West Coast Main Line in between Madeley and Whitmore, travels to the west of Madeley where it goes into a 720m tunnel at Bar Hill, before leaving the Borough on an embankment over the Checkley Brook, on its way north to pass under Crewe. The published route plan and profile maps will be available for inspection at the meeting (they are available to view on the internet and a set has been made available for public inspection at the Guildhall).

At the same time as announcing the initial preferred route the proposed stations on the HS2 route have been indicated. There would be a link on the south side of Crewe to the West Coast main line and to Crewe Station. Also announced are details of the expected indicative service patterns for both high speed and released capacity. The expectation is that some HS2 northbound trains using 'classic' rail infrastructure – the so-called high speed classic compatible service - will run onto Crewe and beyond to Runcorn and Liverpool with connections to the North West, whilst the southbound HS2 classic compatible service starting in Liverpool would run southwards through Crewe and Stafford before joining the High Speed line north of Lichfield. No station on the HS2 line is proposed within North Staffordshire. It is anticipated that Stoke will be served by the classic rail services from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Manchester using the WMCL; and the classic rail services from Manchester to Southampton and Bristol.

### **Meeting with Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin at the Department of Transport HQ, London - Thursday 7 February 2013**

The City Council arranged to meet with the Secretary of State to make representations about the published preferred route for the HS2 rail and invited colleagues from the North Staffs Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the County Council and Borough Council to accompany them.

In particular the City Council expressed a wish for the Secretary of State to consider the potential scope for a station on the HS2 route that would reinforce and future-proof the plans for growth in North Staffordshire (with specific reference to the

ambitions set out in the City Deal dialogue with Government). The Borough Council officer confirmed the stance of this Council (as resolved last July).

In summary the Secretary of State:

- Seemed happy to hear about any proposed variations or modifications that would improve the HS2 plans;
- Was receptive to the notion of supporting growth of the North Staffordshire economy;
- Clarified that the HS2 investment is about not only achieving quicker journey times but aimed to increase rail capacity;
- Was receptive, in principle, to any pragmatic proposal for the location of a station where demonstrable economic benefit might be achieved;
- Instructed the HS2 representative to work with representatives of North Staffordshire to assess the technical feasibility and economic benefit of a station serving the area. (The HS2 representative confirmed that any economic business case to be undertaken in accordance with Treasury guidance).

### **Next steps**

The announcement does not mark the commencement of a formal consultation process – rather it marks the commencement of engagement with “stakeholders” in order to identify significant issues in the expectation that these might be addressed before undertaking a more comprehensive and formal public consultation exercise later in 2013. No announcement has yet been made of when this consultation exercise will commence. Following this consultation the Government is expected to announce the chosen route by the end of 2014.

A separate consultation is currently ongoing concerning the Exceptional Hardship Scheme for HS2 Phase 2. This consultation will finish at the end of April.

### **Meetings that have been organised to date by the County Council for councillors of the affected wards**

The County Council organised, on the 12<sup>th</sup> February, a meeting to which the councillors of the affected wards were invited as well as the Council Leader. At this meeting presentations were given by Professor McNaughton (HS2 Chief Engineer) and colleagues, followed by question and answer sessions. The County Council have now arranged for an officer group to meet with representatives of HS2 Limited on the 13<sup>th</sup> March, and for an HS2 Summit for affected elected members including borough councillors and parish councillors, and action group members on the 19<sup>th</sup> March. The purpose of the summit is to hold a workshop to help communities have a more informed engagement with HS2 Ltd on the technical aspects of the proposals including:

- tunnels, bridges and viaducts
- noise
- ecology, archaeology and landscape
- cuttings and embankments

### **The recent deliberations of the Working Party established by the Committee**

Since the 28<sup>th</sup> January announcement the Council's Scrutiny Working Party has met once (on the 20<sup>th</sup> February) and a further meeting is planned for the 14<sup>th</sup> March. The membership of the Working Party consists of Councillors Becket, Loades and Cairns.

At its meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> February the Working Party:

- agreed to defer the election of a Chair until after the Council meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> February, at which a motion moved by Councillor Loades was to be considered. (The motion was subsequently lost – the Council's position accordingly remains as agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2012)
- received a briefing note from the Head of Planning
- was notified of HS2 Ltd's March 2012 Options Report which had now been released – an optioneering report which considers how Lichfield and Manchester can be connected
- were informed of the information received at the meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> February
- agreed to hold a further meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> February to consider in particular whether representations should be made on the Exceptional Hardship Scheme consultation, and any further updates that could be provided by officers, including on the meeting officers were holding with representatives of HS2 Ltd on 13<sup>th</sup> March