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16 January 2014

Dear Sirs

### **Comments of Leeds Civic Trust on HS2 Phase Two**

The Leeds Civic Trust (LCT) is a community and amenity organisation based in Leeds City Centre and a remit to cover heritage, design and amenity matters, including transport issues, throughout the Metropolitan District. Independently funded by individuals and Leeds businesses, it has a 40 year track record of working with stakeholders around the city to promote its development in such a way as to ensure the prosperity and well-being of its citizens and visitors, while ensuring that we retain the best of the past and demand the best from future development.

Transport is a particular issue with many of the Trust's members, both individual and corporate, and the views expressed here have been gathered through requests for comments in the LCT Newsletter, discussions within our Planning Committee and governing Council, attendance at exhibitions and presentations mounted by HS2 and being involved in various working parties or initiatives with partners such as Leeds City Council, Leeds City Region, the local Chamber of Commerce, etc.

As you will appreciate, we do not wish to comment upon questions 1, 2 and 3 relating to the Western arm between the West Midlands and Manchester. However, please find below our response to the questions relating to the Eastern leg and more general matters.

#### **Q4: View on route from West Midlands to Leeds.**

We have no specific view on the route of HS2 from the West Midlands to the vicinity of Wakefield other than to comment that the parameters used to determine the route appear to be appropriate and have led to the selection of an alignment which causes least damage possible to the wider environment by utilising existing transport corridors. We agree with your selection of station locations at East Midlands (where otherwise one of the two cities would 'miss out' and there is potential for an intensive shuttle service which will still significantly reduce journey times from Leeds) and Sheffield Meadowhall – in this case, a Sheffield centre location would be very disruptive to the environment and the location selected will have good public transport links to the whole of South Yorkshire. We have no views on the locations of depots, etc but the potential link to the East Coast Main Line is discussed below.

We do have significant concerns with the impact of the HS2 route as it enters Leeds and, specifically, with its impact on the Lower Aire Valley in the area of Woodlesford. The proposed viaduct in this location will have a severe adverse effect on the amenity of both local residents and those who currently enjoy the relatively quiet and 'natural' appearance of the area. The historic canal (line of the Transpennine Trail), the river and the landscape restored after coal mining will be degraded by the construction of the viaduct – we also question the economic feasibility of such a structure given the issues with water tables, deep mines and opencasting in the area.

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We also feel that the HS2 plans should allow for a northward link from Leeds New Lane towards York in the hope that, maybe in the longer term, the route to Newcastle and Edinburgh might also be enhanced – it may be that such provision would have to be passive at the moment but the design should allow for that eventuality. Such a line would be very difficult to provide given the present alignment of the HS2 route into Leeds (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Northbound Chord in Aire Valley



We feel this northward chord should be provided for two reasons:

- there is already an issue with capacity on the line eastbound from Leeds City Station and this now prevents the provision of additional stopping trains at key development locations such as Crossgates and Garforth, or the provision of a station at Quarry Hill
- connectivity between Midland and Northern cities would be transformed by high speed trains running from Birmingham via East Midlands, Sheffield, Leeds, York, Newcastle to Edinburgh – without a northern link, Leeds would not be served by such services and a potential link to Manchester (by changing at Leeds to existing routes which are to be improved) would be lost.

We understand that discussions have taken place with residents' groups in the area and a number of alternative alignments have been suggested (and, we understand, are being reviewed by the HS2 team) – our views on these are discussed below.

Figure 2 shows an alternative route (Option One) which follows existing transport corridors along the M62 and M621 into Leeds. We appreciate that while this removes the junction and viaducts from the Aire Valley, its adoption could lead to other problems:

- weaving the new line under the motorways and their complex junctions
- arriving on the 'wrong side' of the line towards New Lane, requiring additional works in this area to swap over the existing and HS2 lines without impacting on the freight depots in the area – this could be achieved by a dive-under on the local lines where the high speed lines rise up towards the station
- impact on the Aire Valley at the confluence of the Aire and Calder, on the northern side of Castleford and on the nature reserves at Fairburn Ings
- the impact on Sherburn in Elmet and Church Fenton – however, if the line were to follow the existing rail corridor this would be limited as much is already four track, on a straight/long curve alignment and with space to widen on one side or the other if required.

Such a route would enable the provision of a Leeds to northeast chord (shown dashed on Figure 2) although this would have significant visual impact on the lower Calder Valley.

Figure 2: Option One – alternative route following Transport Corridors

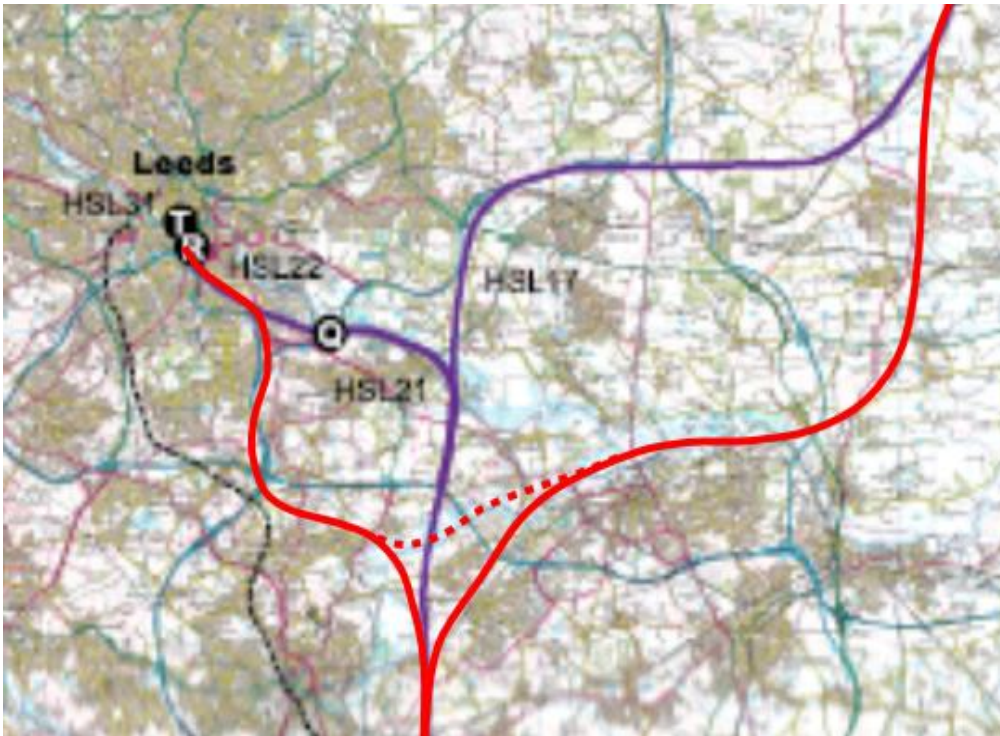
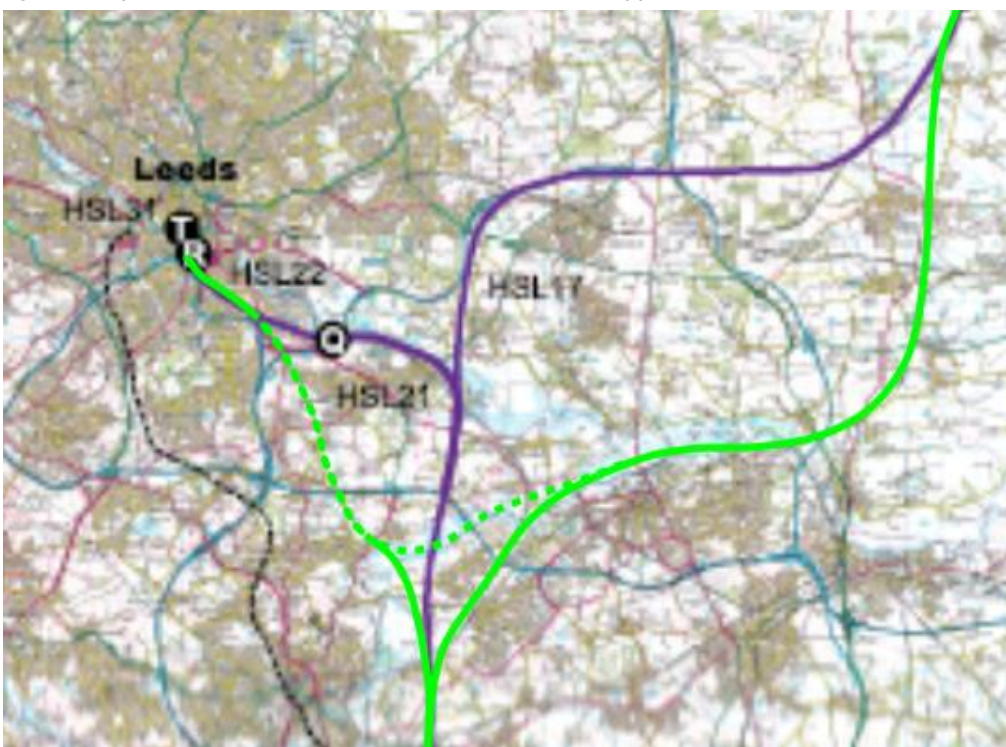


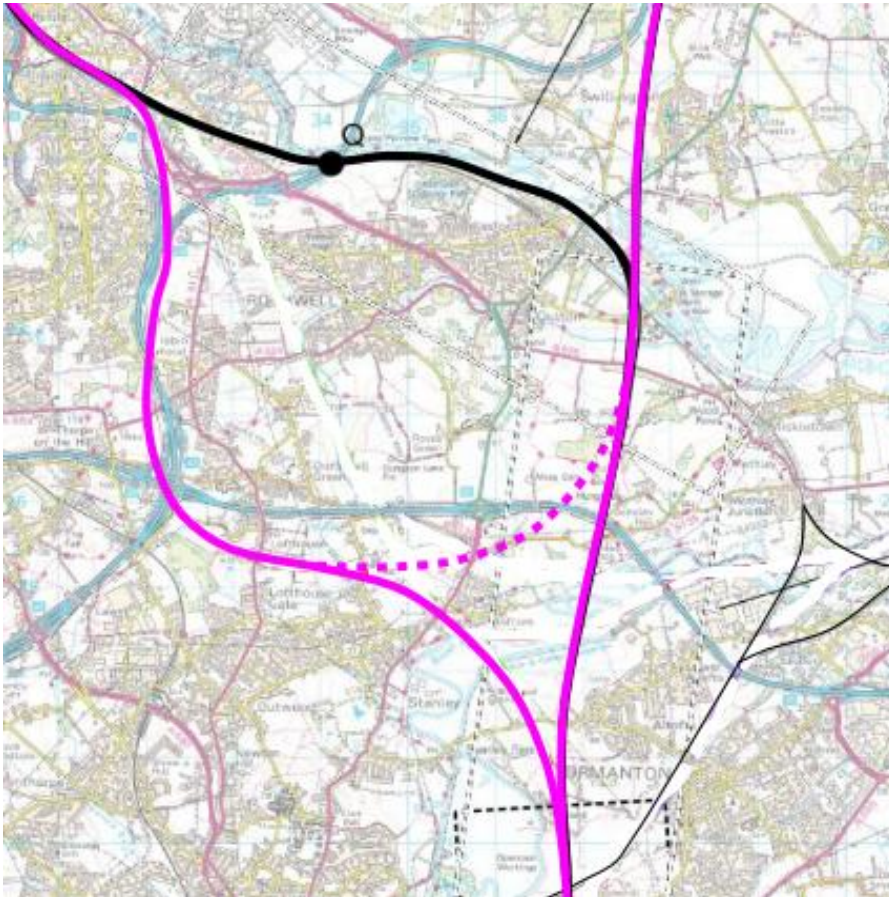
Figure 3 shows a further alternative (Option Two) which would resolve some of the issues with regard to impact on the motorways and their junctions by running in tunnel beneath the hill at Rothwell. We understand that such an option may not be significantly more expensive given the fact that there will be less interference with existing roads, dwellings and land uses. However, the issues to the north of Castleford would still remain. A chord to the Northeast could also be accommodated.

Figure 3: Option Two – alternative route with tunnelled approach



A further alternative which we felt would be worthy of consideration is shown as Option 3 in Figure 4. This retains the Government's route across the Aire Valley but, by diverting the Leeds trains to the south of Rothwell, it can now be a far simpler and potentially more attractive and simple single viaduct from one side of the valley to the other. We do acknowledge that this option may make it more difficult to provide a link from Leeds to the Northeast although there are a number of potential routes – the issue will be the construction of appropriate grade-separated junctions although radii on this link could be tighter than elsewhere as this element is more about relieving capacity issues than speed.

Figure 4: Option Three – combined route



To summarise, we feel there should be further consideration of the route by which HS2 approaches Leeds and that provision should be made for a link from West to North to enable fast trains from Leeds to head to the Northeast.

**Q5a: View on proposals for a new station at Leeds New Lane.**

Throughout the gestation period of HS2, the Leeds Civic Trust has supported other local organisations (including Leeds City Council, Metro and adjoining authorities) in pressing for any new station to be located as close as possible to the existing Leeds City Station in order to provide easy onward connections for passengers travelling to neighbouring towns on local trains. It is only by this means that the economic benefits of HS2 can be spread throughout the region as, if people have to spend significant time walking from one train to the other, the savings on the principal leg of the journey will be lost as against taking a slower direct train. Although a 'bridge' link is proposed above the river, we feel that this is still too far even if fitted with moving walkway – it would have significant impact on the amenity of residents on either side of the river and the ambience of this historic part of Leeds.

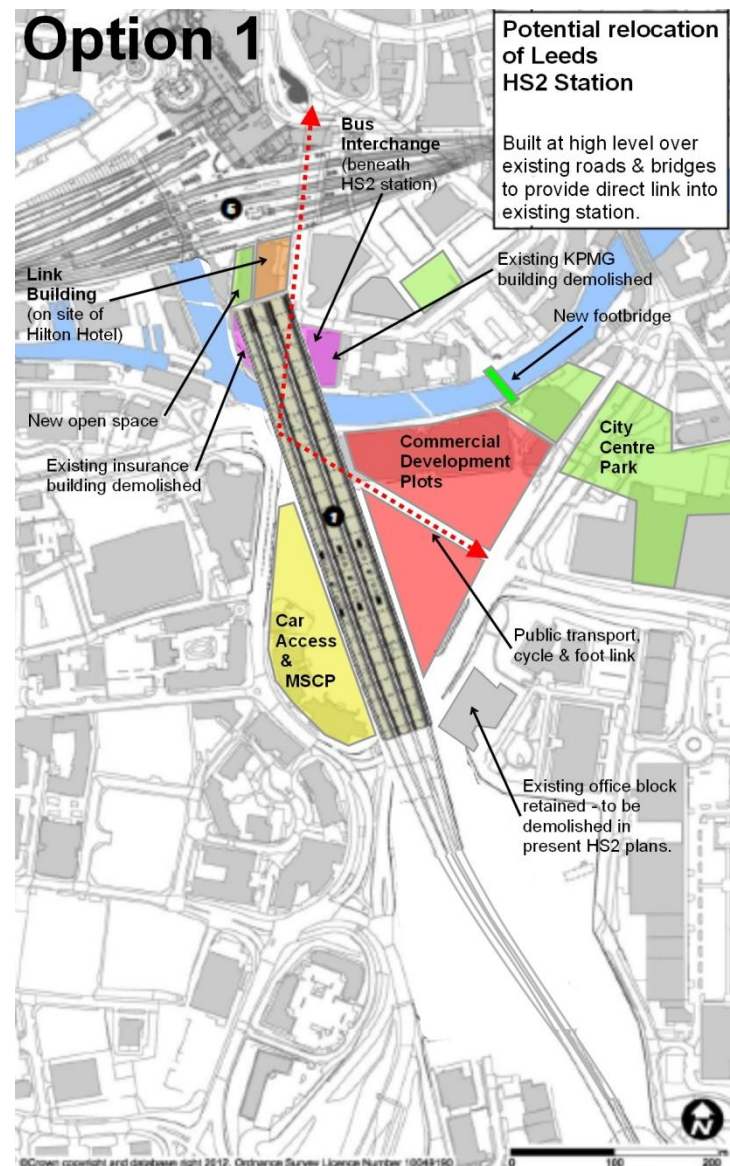
Having reviewed the initial options reports, we acknowledge that HS2 has looked at a large number of alternative locations and that that selected is probably the most easily achievable in the short to medium term.

However, our view is that HS2 is an opportunity to revitalise the gateway to Leeds and the wider South Bank district. The Trust is a part of the Leeds Sustainable Development Group which has aspirations to develop a ‘new town’ providing sustainable housing, employment and community amenities (a free school is already being delivered) in the area to the south of the River Aire – proposals can be seen on the group’s website at [www.leeds-sdg.com](http://www.leeds-sdg.com). HS2 could be a focus for development in this area so we feel some further consideration could be given to the location of the station and its links to City Station. We should be bolder in our ambition.

There are a number of factors which could be taken into account when seeking a ‘better’ location for the HS2 station:

- the existing Hilton Hotel on Neville Street is not likely to be there in the long term – its design is outdated and a new Hilton is being built elsewhere in the city
- the UKI building on Neville Street is a simple office building and the occupiers could easily relocate to alternative premises in the city centre
- KPMG is moving out of its existing building at No 1 The Embankment so this will be vacant shortly
- while ASDA House is fully occupied, it is too small to house all the company’s operations – its dated design occupies a significant area of land for its capacity so a new head office would be far more efficient in terms of land use, energy consumption, etc
- as assumed by HS2, it is expected that buildings within the New Lane gyratory will be redeveloped in the near future (with or without the railway).

Figure 5: New Station – Option One



Removing all these buildings from the site could lead to the development of a new station very close to the present facility, as shown in Figure 5. This places the city-bound and interchanging passenger concourse on the site of the Hilton Hotel, with potential for locating an enhanced bus interchange on a lower level (taking this out of New Station Street) – as with the preferred HS2 design, an exit for drivers to a multi-storey car park and kiss-&-ride facilities could be provided at

the south end of the platforms. The ‘Hilton’ link building could feed into the existing station via a new footbridge (reducing the load on the present bridge which we feel would not have the capacity to accommodate HS2 flows in addition to day-to-day traffic as it is packed now) or into the undercroft of the station with escalators up onto the platforms. New open space would protect the amenity of residents in Blue.

The wider South Bank area would need to be the subject of a comprehensive development framework but the ASDA site could accommodate significant commercial development focussed on the new station and the City Park. The office block on Meadow Lane which would need to be demolished to accommodate the Government’s preferred station location could be retained.

The major issue with this option is its impact upon Victoria Bridge and the historic riverside – this would disappear beneath a wide railway viaduct which, however well designed and lit, will further cut off the area from the city centre – to that end, we do not favour this approach.

For our second option, we relocated the new station so as to avoid over-sailing Victoria Bridge. However, it still puts the head of the station on the north bank of the river on the site of 1 and 2 The Embankment. Figure 6 shows how this could be accommodated, using the Hilton and UKI sites for a link building, with some parkland to protect the amenity of the residents and the Canal Conservation Area. Subject to detailed design, it may be that the UKI building could be retained by sending a bridge direct across the Sovereign Street/Neville street junction.

While this layout has some advantages over Option One, it still creates a potentially dark area over a significant section of the river, although this would only emulate what Victorians did when building City Station! We were not quite happy with this so looked at a further alternative.

Figure 6: New Station – Option Two

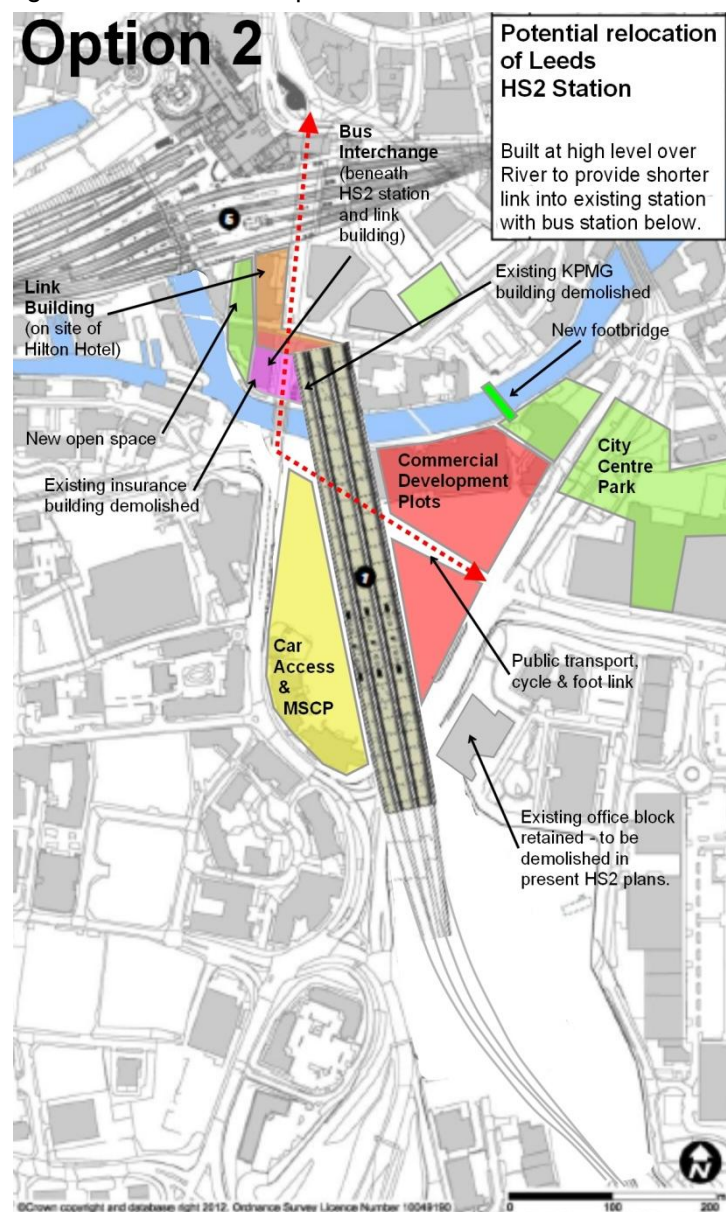


Figure 7 shows our Option Three which pulls the HS2 station back to the South Bank of the river but provides better linkages to the existing station through developing a link building to house bus interchanges and support facilities on the site of the Hilton Hotel, UKI building and KPMG.

This has the advantage of minimising construction over the river and limiting impact upon the historic canal lock and weirs. We are certain that this scheme could be developed further to create a true gateway building on this site – this could potentially avoid inclusion of the UKI building but its retention might prevent the comprehensive development of the site.

The key to all three of our options, and the key difference from the Government's proposals, is that all see the redevelopment of the ASDA site. We do not feel that retention of the present building will allow the re-planning of the area to build upon the arrival of HS2 in Leeds – it will also help get the two stations closer together to encourage easy interchange between High Speed and local trains.

We would like to see a comprehensive review of all highways in the area as these are now not required to serve the major industrial traffic flows of the past – those working in the proposed commercial developments should be using the excellent public transport links or park & ride (or park & walk) on the edge of the city centre. However, we do acknowledge that the HS2 station will require good vehicular access to serve those people in the city region who are not able to use public transport. The road layout should be adapted to link the HS2 car park direct to the M621, and thence the Inner Ring Road, in order to prevent traffic from north cutting through the city centre – this is a key objective of the Leeds Sustainable Development Group and options are being explored by Leeds City Council.

We do not wish to make detailed comments on plans for the stations at Meadowhall and Toton.

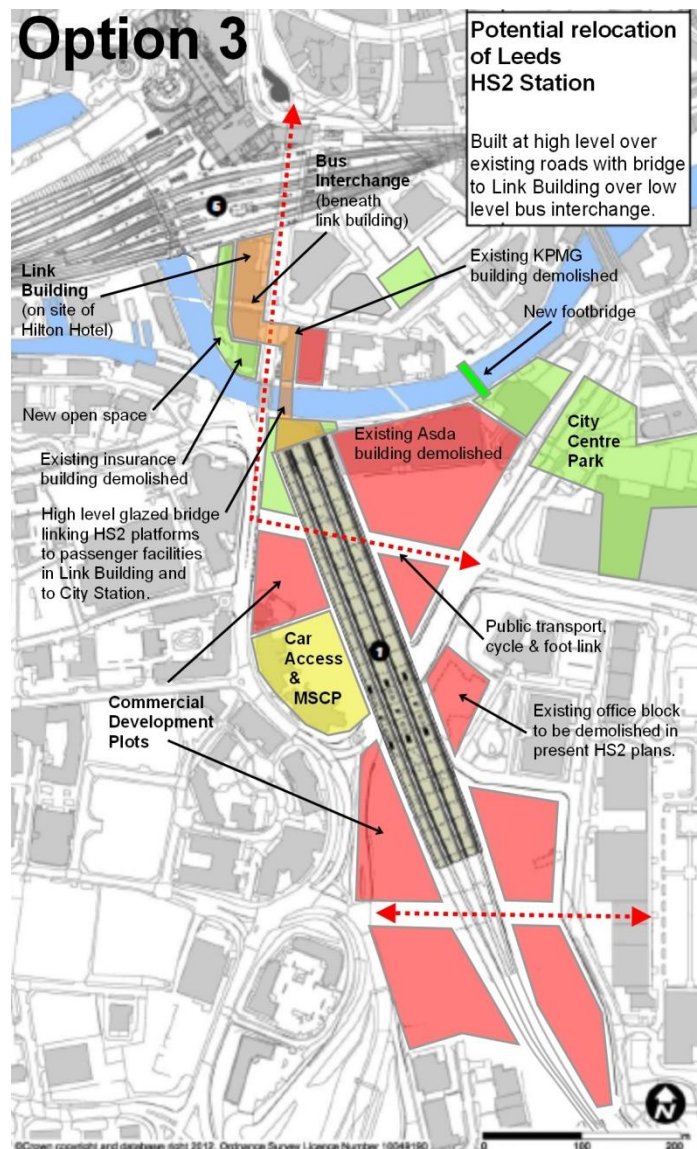
**Q6: Additional stations between West Midlands and Leeds.**

We do not see the need for additional stations on this leg if adequate links onto local services are provided at Toton, Meadowhall and Leeds.

**Q7: Comments on Appraisal of Sustainability, etc.**

We have discussed alternatives to the proposed route in our response above.

Figure 7: New Station – Option Three



**Q8: How can capacity on existing routes be utilised?**

As more, faster trains have run from Leeds to London, we have lost some of our connections to intermediate stations such as Retford, Newark and Peterborough – these are important for onward travel to towns in Lincolnshire and East Anglia but the less frequent service can mean long waits for connections. Such services could be reintroduced along the East Coast Main Line and, potentially, other stations could be reintroduced to serve major development areas eg Huntingdon and Biggleswade.

On lines such as Leeds to Doncaster, there will be potential for more stopping services at existing and additional stations.

There will also be more potential for direct services to ‘off-line’ towns such as Hull, Grimsby, Lincoln, Harrogate, etc although these could connect into HS2 services at locations such as York, Meadowhall or East Midlands for onward travel.

Additional paths can also be provided for freight traffic.

**Q9: View on introduction of other utilities along the line of route?**

We feel that as much use as possible should be made of the proposed route as a line for other utilities – should a ‘utilities corridor’ be established alongside the tracks so that service providers can access their pipelines or cables for maintenance in the long term?

It is also important to ensure that routes such as public footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes are not diverted so far from their present alignment as to make them unattractive to existing users – at all times the objective should be to enhance provision of such sustainable transport routes.

There has been discussion of a cycle route alongside the first phase of HS2 but any such proposal needs to be carefully considered alongside other provision in the area to create a comprehensive and attractive route network – cycling all the way from Birmingham to Leeds (or from London to Birmingham) alongside HS2 would not be particularly exciting!

**Summary**

We trust that you will give due consideration to our comments in reviewing the current plans for the Leeds arm of High Speed 2.

Yours Sincerely



Kevin Grady  
Director

cc Tom Riordan (Leeds CC)  
Phil Crabtree (Leeds CC)