Thank you for your email of 12 September on the timing of AP2, following your meeting with Oliver Bayne of HS2 Ltd. I welcome the excellent progress the Select Committee is making and appreciate your desire for this stage of the Phase 2a Bill to be completed at the earliest possible opportunity.

As I know you understand, preparing an additional provision is a project of significant volume and complexity. For the six previous APs for HS2, it typically took at least eight months from the finalisation of their content (e.g. with publication of the Select Committee report) to prepare all the information needed by standing orders to deposit them. I understand that HS2 Ltd have made significant efforts to reduce this period to approximately six months for AP2, starting from when your Committee published its Second Special Report in July. I have reluctantly accepted advice that attempting deposit earlier increases the risk of error including possible non-compliance with Standing Orders (which happened on Phase One).

It is also not clear to me that even if deposit was achieved at the end of January, the Committee could then complete its report before Easter recess. Standing Orders require that deposit be followed by the publication of newspaper notices. At the end of the first week of notices, the petition period can start, which would normally last about four weeks, subject to the views of the Chairman of Ways and Means. That would take us to early March, at which point HS2 Ltd would start responding to petitioners. Nonetheless, we would expect to start proceedings as early as possible, including, for example, hearing any remaining deferred petitioners in advance of new AP2 petitions.

Although sittings of the Committee in the period after both 29 March 2019 and the Easter recess are likely to be interrupted by prorogation for the end of the session and the usual recess in May, I believe that there will be enough time to
hear the remaining petitions, and for the Committee to write its final report, before the end of May. A carry over motion has already passed to maintain the Bill into the next session.

I would urge you and the Committee to keep up the good work and look forward to the conclusion of your petition hearings as soon as possible, given the above constraints. I have also asked HS2 Ltd to take note of the approach your Committee has helpfully taken of encouraging settlement with petitioners in advance of hearings where possible; and to ensure that best use is made of the Committee’s sittings times by seeking to avoid late withdrawals where possible. Ultimately, of course, both of these are decisions for individual petitioners.

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT