The Rt Hon. the Lord Forsyth of Drumlean  
Chair of the Lords Economic Affairs Committee  
House of Lords,  
London,  
SW1A 0PW

Dear Michael,

I promised to write to you setting out the rationale for terminating the HS2 Phase 1 route at Euston instead of Old Oak Common (OOC). As I noted during my appearance in front of the Committee I considered a variety of options for reducing the cost of the project during my time as Transport Secretary, which included this proposal. HS2 Ltd’s analysis in 2010 assessed the impact of terminating at OOC and found it would reduce Phase One benefits by over 15% and revenues by 10% with fewer people using HS2 as a result. On this basis, the proposal was rejected. It was however reconsidered in detail as part of the Phase One Act Parliamentary Select Committee process, but again rejected.

Terminating at Euston is the right strategic option, allowing onward connectivity to the Northern, Victoria and Hammersmith & City Lines. We know that around two-thirds of passengers will want to go on to Euston, so terminating HS2 at OOC would place a huge strain on onward travel connections. In particular, as the vast majority of passengers coming into London want to travel onto other parts of the capital, Crossrail would not have the capacity to cope with this additional demand.

As I noted during my appearance in front of the committee, there is also a technical reason why the construction of Euston can not be delayed beyond that of OOC. The plan is to launch the Tunnel Boring Machines towards Euston from the OOC station compound. This is so the tunnel excavation spoil can be extracted at OOC, where the construction compound is set-up and sized appropriately to enable most of the spoil to be taken away by rail for disposal (this would be very difficult at Euston, which is a very constrained site).

As a result, the TBMs can only be launched and the tunnel spoil processed while OOC is a construction site. This is because the space for the tunnelling and spoil processing facilities won’t be available once the OOC station has been completed and opened. Building Euston station later would require a new location for a tunnelling and spoil processing facility to be found at additional cost.
Finally, the OOC station design is currently for a through station so would need to be re-designed to make it a terminus station. This would be costly. Terminating HS2 at OOC would also increase journey times for most passengers, reducing the economic benefits of the scheme.

PHILIP HAMMOND