

# National Infrastructure Commission Call for Evidence: Connecting Northern Cities

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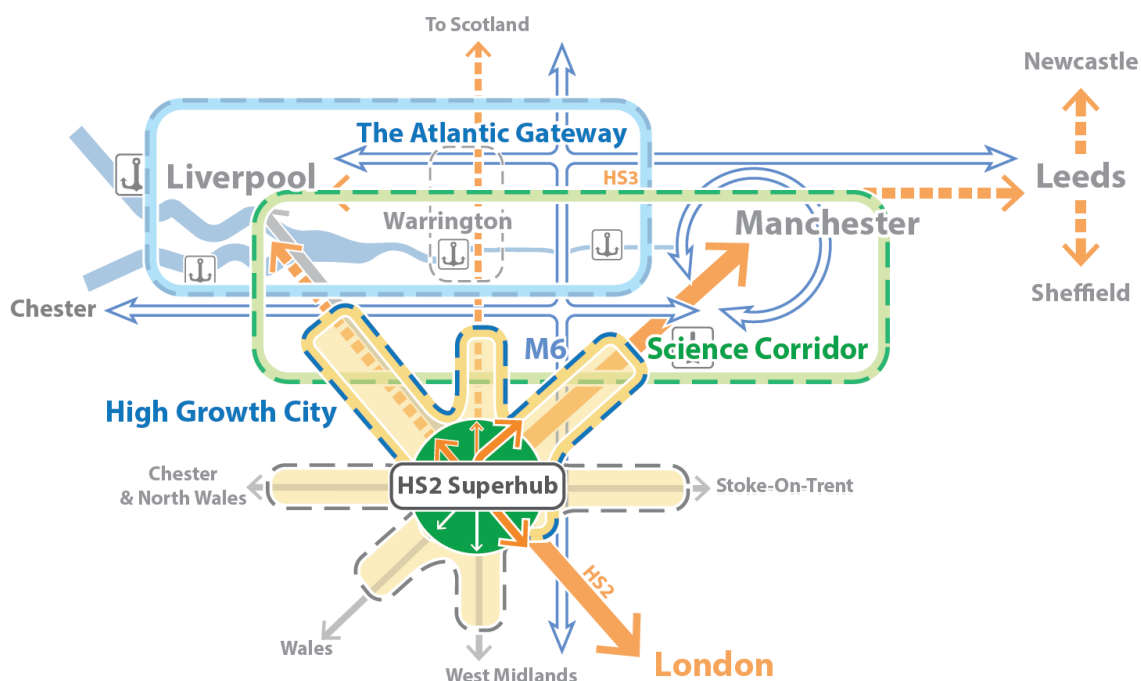
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## Cheshire East Council Response

Cheshire East lies south of the major cities of the Northern Powerhouse located between Liverpool and Manchester with good links to Staffordshire and through to the Midlands Engine. Crewe is a principal town of Cheshire East and lies at the south of the borough takes a pivotal position as a key transport node on the rail network offering 360o rail connectivity from its existing rail station. Crewe also benefits from easy access to the M6.

- In 2014, Sir David Higgins recommended that HS2 serve a north-west hub station at Crewe. In his reports, 'HS2 plus' (March 2014) and 'Rebalancing Britain' (October 2014) he also recommended that the section of the route to Crewe was completed 6 years earlier than phase 2 to deliver further benefits to the north sooner. The benefits of a hub station at Crewe and the opportunity it would bring for nationally significant growth has resulted in the town being selected as the preferred location of the Northwest HS2 hub station by the Secretary of State for Transport in November 2015 and cements its position as the "gateway to the Northern Powerhouse".



**Figure 1: Crewe HS2 station as the "gateway to the Northern Powerhouse"**

### Summary

When considering investments in transport infrastructure in the north the importance of the links between major conurbations of the north and midlands should not be underestimated. Therefore, for Cheshire East, our submission highlights the importance of having strong transport connections both east-west and north-south not only from city to city but also from city to transport node and node to node. Only this breadth of thinking when planning infrastructure investments will maximise the connectivity, productivity and both economic and housing growth across the north and finally take strides towards rebalancing the UK.

Therefore for Cheshire East to be a key driver in the ambitions of the Northern Powerhouse and deliver economic growth both in its own right and also as a contributor to the economic growth of the northern cities and city regions. Moreover, an HS2 hub station that offers direct, regular high

speed services to London, Manchester, Birmingham and beyond will see Crewe become one of the best connected places in the UK and the vital link between the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands, fuelling both agendas. This level of connectivity will bring the opportunity for significant economic growth, both jobs and housing, that, given efficient and reliable local and sub-regional transport connections, that will extend beyond Crewe and into wider Cheshire, North Staffordshire and beyond – the Northern Gateway. The Northern Gateway, a collaboration of 7 local authorities and 2 Local Enterprise Partnerships across Cheshire and North Staffordshire will deliver, by 2040, over 120,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes across the Northern Gateway area underpinned by a well connected HS2 hub station at Crewe and improvements to local and sub-regional transport connections. Therefore Cheshire East believe the National Infrastructure Commission should put a focus on:

- Recognising the Northwest HS2 hub station at Crewe as a key node of nationally significant importance to feed into the Northern Powerhouse rail strategy and the ensuring that the preferred option being developed by Network Rail on behalf of the Department for Transport is capable of delivering both new and enhanced connectivity options into the Northern Powerhouse and has the capacity to handle a minimum of 7 high speed trains per hour linking with Manchester Piccadilly, Manchester Airport and Birmingham as well as London to maximise its economic growth impact for the Northern Powerhouse;
- Investment for rail freight expansion including the utilisation of the freed up capacity on the West Coast Main Line for additional freight routes, investments to support the Atlantic Gateway and the importance of the need for reliable freight paths from the Port of Liverpool to Basford Hall and the relocation of the Basford Hall freight yard to an alternative location that both improves freight movement and maximises the economic benefits of the Crewe HS2 hub station;
- Improving connectivity between Crewe and Leeds and beyond by maximising the investments in the TransNorth network with a link to HS2 at Manchester.
- Integrating planning for investments in HS2 and TransNorth around Manchester Airport to maximise the economic benefits through delivery of SEMMMS2 ensuring that all strategic partners develop a fresh multi-modal local strategic connectivity strategy to boost access to the major economic and transport node of Crewe.

## Call for Evidence Question:

**To what extent are weaknesses in transport connectivity holding back northern city regions (specifically in terms of jobs, enterprise creation and growth, and housing)?**

A well connected location will drive enterprise and economic and housing growth and the investment in a new transport infrastructure to unlock sites and destinations can see deprived and poor populated areas transformed into thriving and prosperous business and residential districts. The HS2 hub station at Crewe will decrease journey times to London reduced to 55 minutes. However, it is only a hub station at Crewe that offers a minimum 7 high speed trains an hour connecting to London, Manchester and Birmingham that will deliver the step-change in connectivity that will generate nationally significant economic and housing growth around Crewe and a major contributor to the Northern Powerhouse agenda.

This growth needn't be constrained by the geography of Crewe and Cheshire East but spread southwards to North Staffordshire and support the importance of Crewe as a transport node and, lying between the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine, the role it plays in rebalancing the UK economy.

The Northern Gateway Partnership of 7 local authorities and 2 LEPs has been established to maximise the economic impacts of the HS2 hub station at Crewe across the wider Cheshire and Staffordshire sub-region and, supported by improved local and sub-regional transport connectivity, deliver, by 2040, over 120,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes. This type of collaboration and partnership aimed at maximising enterprise, economic growth and regeneration could be replicated elsewhere across the north to unlock growth and regeneration. However, like the Northern Gateway, the growth strategy would be underpinned by good local, regional and national connectivity that, for the north, not only looks at east-west connections but also recognises the importance of north-south connections.

Here links between HS2 and the TransNorth network will be critical to delivering the east-west and north-south connectivity that will allow the cities and conurbations of the north to work more closely together, fuel growth, and through key transport nodes such as Crewe open up and improve markets to the South and beyond

Good freight networks are essential to transport goods and raw materials across the UK. Current freight paths are already struggling to meet existing demand and, with freight movement by rail expected to increase, it is likely to limit growth in the north without investments to improve freight movements. The majority of rail freight movement in the UK is along the West Coast Main Line much of which is, at some point, destined for the Basford Hall in Crewe. In order to allow more goods to be transported along rail freight paths in the UK and reduce the movement of freight on the UK's roads capacity on the West Coast Main Line needs to be released for additional freight paths. For Cheshire East the use of freed up capacity on the WCML from HS2 for additional freight paths coupled with the relocation of Basford Hall freight yard north of Crewe would allow for greater freight movement to/from the ports of the north and potential expansion of the freight storage facilities of Basford Hall.

## Call for Evidence Question:

**What cost-effective infrastructure investments in city-to-city connectivity could address these weaknesses? We are interested in all modes of transport.**

Generally transport infrastructure projects are large, lengthy and costly to deliver. Key to minimising the cost of infrastructure investments is through coordinated planning over long investment periods. By taking a forward thinking approach to infrastructure planning allows for major investments to be coordinated, timed and sequence to minimise disruption and prevent duplication of works. It may be necessary that initial infrastructure investments are “future-proofed” allowing for the lower cost delivery of further investments including new homes, retail and commercial sites. This type of forward thinking approach by Cheshire East and its Northern Gateway partners to collectively plan transport infrastructure across the wider sub-region to maximise the benefits of the connectivity of the Crewe HS2 hub station will allow for the investments that will generate the most economic benefits to be delivered first.

A similar approach of integrated planning for investments in HS2 and TransNorth around Manchester Airport along with the proposed “SEMMMS2” investments will open up Manchester Airport as an international gateway to the north benefiting from multi modal access from both the cities of the north and the transport node of Crewe in the South

Working in partnership and collaboration with other stakeholders will reduce the costs of delivering infrastructure investments in particular those cross-border projects and maximise the economic benefits. This collaborative approach allows for better planning of sub-regional infrastructure, manage interfaces and reduce time and cost of planning and delivery.

## Call for Evidence Question:

### Which city-to-city corridor(s) should be the priority for early phases of investment?

Although the plans of Trans North will support economic growth across the northern cities in order to maximise the economic impact, investment priorities in the north should not be solely focussed on east-west connections. In order to rebalance the UK consideration should be given to improving north-south connections and just as important as connecting the cities of the north is the need for the connection between these “Northern Powerhouse” cities and the “Midlands Engine”. Therefore quick, reliable and sustainable transport connections between Birmingham and the cities of the north are essential to support economic and social growth and prosperity in these city regions and the wider suburban and rural areas which surround them.

With the arrival of HS2 Crewe will become a key national transport node and will provide the vital link between the two economic regions of the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine, fuelling the two economies and allowing them to work closely together to maximise economic benefits both regionally and nationally. The Northern Gateway partnership to provide 120,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes by 2040 is underpinned by the vital role that a well connected HS2 hub station at Crewe will play in supporting these two economic initiatives. The Northern Gateway partnership will complement Trans North to not only contribute to the economic benefits of the cities linked by Trans North but will also see additional economic benefits and growth delivered across Cheshire and North Staffordshire taking additional steps to rebalance the UK.

Underpinning the Northern Gateway and its role to rebalance the UK economy is the need for an HS2 hub station at Crewe with direct and frequent high speed services not only to London but also to Manchester and Birmingham. Therefore passengers can board a train in Crewe and arrive in London in 55 minutes, Manchester in 20 minutes and Birmingham in around 25 minutes as well as direct high speed connections to two international airports (Manchester and Birmingham). This level of connectivity of Crewe and the Northern Gateway region would be on par with the UK's core cities and unrivalled amongst the UK's sub-regional areas. Therefore a Crewe HS2 hub station capable of handling at least 7 high speed stopping trains per hour, each way, is a necessity.

The Trans North network, particularly between Manchester and Leeds will provide a new corridor opportunity providing direct connections from Crewe to Leeds and beyond will open up opportunities for collaboration, trade and enterprise. Moreover, it will unlock areas around the Crewe hub station for local economic and housing growth delivered on the back this 360° connectivity it would offer.

A major national infrastructure investment such as HS2 needs to be supported by high quality and fit for purpose local and regional infrastructure. For Cheshire East and the Crewe hub station this means building an underpass at Junction 16 of the M6 to improve traffic flows and provide better access to the Crewe hub station by road. This is a major interchange between the M6 and A500 which is already struggling to meet existing demand particularly at peak times. The arrival of HS2 to Crewe will undoubtedly put further pressures on the existing infrastructure which would be alleviated by a new underpass at the junction. Building this in advance of a hub station at Crewe in 2027 would prevent the current problems escalating when HS2 arrives.

## Call for Evidence Question:

**What are the key international connectivity needs likely to be in the next 20-30 years in the north of England (with a focus on ports and airports)? What is the most effective way to meet these needs, and what constraints on delivery are anticipated?**

The economies of the north rely on good international connections as well as local, regional and national connections. Therefore investments in fast, efficient and reliable access to airports and ports are needed for the movement of goods and raw materials to support these businesses and promote growth and international trade.

Cheshire East and the wider Northern Gateway region is at the centre of the UK and, although landlocked, is well located for international connections by air (via Manchester and Birmingham airports) and sea (via the Atlantic Gateway and Liverpool Port). However, in order to benefit from these international gateways, investment is needed to facilitate the transportation of goods between these gateways and the businesses of the north.

Allowing freed up capacity on the WCML to be used for additional freight paths facilitate greater international trade from the major conurbations of the north in particular the path from the Port of Liverpool to Basford Hall.

Good multi modal connections to the UK airports are needed to open up global markets. For the North West this includes having good transport connections to Manchester Airport and Liverpool Airport. Cheshire East supports the road and rail investments around Manchester Airport (HS2 and SEMMMS2). By improving access to the airport from Crewe in the south as well as the from the cities of the north it will shorten journey times to the airport and be more attractive as gateway for business as well as leisure.

## Call for Evidence Question:

### **What form of governance would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, how should this be funded and by whom, including appropriate local contributions?**

As the UK sees more and more powers devolved to local governments it would be reasonable to assume that local authorities should have some control over the delivery of transport infrastructure, particularly at a local level. This should not be restricted to metropolitan areas but should also consider non-metropolitan areas and economic zones. In general, the local authority is best placed to understand the strengths, weaknesses, aspirations and challenges in their local economies and what transport interventions would support the economic growth and prosperity of local businesses and communities. This would require far greater funding flexibilities devolved to the local authorities/accountable bodies with greater retention of local taxes and business rates or the ability to capture local land value uplifts.

Any major transport infrastructure will need to be supported by local investments and therefore a collaborative approach would help to better manage interfaces, minimise disruption, reduce costs and prevent duplication of works. Furthermore collaboration should not just be bi-lateral between a local authority and central government but should be embrative of several local authorities collaborating with central government and other stakeholders to deliver economic growth and prosperity. Partnership approaches enable partners to come together under a single vision to deliver far more benefits that, collectively, each could deliver in isolation. The Northern Gateway partnership is a real life example of such a collaborate, cross-boundary partnership between the local authorities across Cheshire and North Staffordshire to deliver, on the back of the stimulus of HS2 to Crewe, over 120,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes across this new economic zone and transform some of the most deprived areas into vibrant and sustainable communities. This approach could be replicated elsewhere across the north to maximise the economic benefits of a series of transport interventions.

Flexibility over the type, structure and powers of delivery models to deliver transformative infrastructure in the north will be required to deliver the outputs needed to drive economic growth in the north and rebalance the UK. Again, a collaborative approach is likely to have the most impact with delivery models, in most parts, being locally led but with support and/or guidance from central government.

The argument for a local contribution towards the funding of transport infrastructure where funding flexibilities are devolved to the local authority could be supported. However, central government funding would still need to play an important role for example where the project would be of significant national importance or to provide up-front funding to kick start projects.