



## Department for Transport

Councillor Tom Walsh  
Chair, Wendover Parish Council

c/o Murray Stewart  
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From the Minister of State  
**Andrew Stephenson MP**

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Dear Councillor Walsh,

Thank you for your further letter of 28 September, regarding the Wendover mined tunnel proposal.

The notion of a mined tunnel at Wendover, as you will know better than I, has been debated for many years now, through the HS2 Select Committees and continued dialogue with my officials and HS2 Ltd. Throughout this whole process, no proposal for a mined tunnel has been deemed a viable proposition when compared to the scheme that has been ratified by both Houses of Parliament.

You are right that the current OTB scheme has not been considered by any HS2 Select Committee, with it only coming to my Department's attention in 2019. However, once the Phase One Select Committees had concluded their work, and crucially, after the HS2 Phase One: High Speed Rail (London to West Midlands) Bill received Royal Assent in 2017, my officials appraised the January 2019 OTB report submitted to them in spring 2019. As my predecessor Nusrat Ghani informed Sir David Lidington on 10 April 2019, a DfT official met with HS2 Ltd and engineers from EKFB (formerly Eiffage Kier) on 1 April 2019 where the OTB report was reviewed and appraised. In this letter, a summarisation of their findings were detailed.

I understand your frustration that the IPA and KPMG reports have not been shared with you in full and am aware that many questions on this matter have been asked in Parliament. However, I support the position of previous ministers in that the Department will not be placing copies of the reports referred to in the Libraries of either House. These reports were, and remain, internal to the Department for Transport and are not intended for publication.

I can assure you that there is nothing in these reports that my Department wishes to hide, but I am mindful of the need for there to be a safe space for policy proposals to be examined without fear or favour, as has happened in your case. In any event, I am satisfied that a considerable amount of information and the key conclusions from these reports have already been released to you and into the wider public domain through correspondence over the last few years.

As I set out in my previous letter, the reports show firstly that a mined tunnel is not a viable proposition, and that the alternatives have been appraised fairly, honestly, and with appropriate levels of internal and external scrutiny. In order to complete the type of comparison that you have requested take place, the OTB proposal would need to be brought up to the design level of the consented HS2 scheme by EKFB. At the time, this was estimated to cost c.£500,000. Subsequent detailed HS2 design work since then will only have increased this estimate, and given the evidence that I have seen thus far, I do not believe this to be an effective use of taxpayer money.

I will move on to points raised regarding the RMM suite. As you may be aware, Lord Berkeley raised a similar question to me a few weeks ago, where I detailed that HS2 Ltd adopts several internationally recognised methods of measurement strategies to ensure cost estimates are robust, integrated, consistent, clear, appropriate and auditable. Furthermore, these principles are put in place to enable benchmarking and demonstrate value for money. The following methods of measurement strategies utilised by HS2 include (but are not limited to), New Rules of Measurement (NRM), Rail Method of Measurement (RMM) and Civil Engineering Standard Method of Measurement. Using only one of these methodologies would not provide an accurate comparison. I hope this clears up any confusion over the matter.

You then refer to the Court of Appeal judgment of 31 July 2020, regarding a legal challenge brought by the London Borough of Hillingdon. That case related to the interpretation of a specific part of the High Speed Rail (London to West Midlands) Act 2017 - Schedule 17 - which establishes a bespoke local planning system to give a degree of local influence over certain elements of the railway (but within the confines of the scheme already authorised by Parliament). The judgment concerned the operation of that Schedule 17 system, and therefore bears no relation whatsoever to the issues you are raising at Wendover, which relate to the earlier stage of route selection. In passing the Act, and following detailed Select Committee scrutiny of the route through Wendover, it is Parliament – not HS2 Ltd – that has specifically approved the HS2 works in that area, absent a mined tunnel.

I trust this letter will answer the points you set out. Proposals for a mined tunnel at Wendover have been scrutinised for many years, and while we cannot now take the matter any further, we will continue to work closely with HS2 Ltd, Wendover Parish Council and Wendover residents to ensure that appropriate mitigations are made to minimise any noise pollution and disturbance to the area you represent.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Stephenson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**ANDREW STEPHENSON MP**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**