



Maria Eagle MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

31 October 2011

Don Maria

HS2

I am writing to you in your capacity as Shadow Transport Secretary.

I understand from press reports (Sunday Times, 30.10.11, p.14) that the Labour Party has decided to support a route for HS2 that runs parallel to the M40 and the existing Chiltern Railway line through Bicester and Banbury.

I don't know whether on deciding to advocate a new route you made any attempt to "walk the route". If you had done so I think it would have become fairly evident fairly quickly just how impractical is this suggestion.

Under your proposal the HS2 would emerge into the Chilterns from a long deep tunnel. It would not in fact be possible to run parallel to the M40 because the M40 does not run in a straight line.

For example, as a consequence of representations by Douglas Hurd and myself back in the mid-1980s, there is a significant kink in the M40 to avoid Otmoor.

But the ludicrous nature of the Labour Party's proposed route becomes apparent in relation to Bicester and Banbury.

Bicester and Banbury are two of the faster growing towns in England.

The Chiltern Railway line of course runs straight through both towns.

I imagine that you're not suggesting that HS2 should run through the centre of two of the fastest growing towns in England?

However, but nor is there any spare land between the motorway and either of these towns. Indeed so far as Banbury is concerned all the land on the Oxfordshire side of the motorway is already committed. So what your new route would mean is HS2 still



going through Northamptonshire but simply affecting a different group of Northamptonshire villages.

So this is a route that is impractical and simply, I would suggest, undeliverable.

It is unclear to me what is the motivation of the Labour Party of putting forward this proposed route which if it went ahead would have a dramatically negative impact on people living in both Banbury and Bicester and in a number of villages around and about.

I have to say I was generally confused as to Labour's position on HS2.

You took the opportunity of the recent debate on HS2 to announce that the Labour Party was committed regardless to the construction of HS2 – would it not have been more sensible to have waited until the Transport Select Committee had published their report into HS2 as clearly one of the issues that they are going to have to be considering is whether the business case for HS2 makes sense.

If the Labour Party really is serious in putting forward the proposal of HS2 running alongside Banbury and Bicester, I would very much like to invite you to come to my constituency so we can walk the ground together to enable me to show you just how impractical is your proposal.