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## London mayor scuppers plans to terminate HS2 link before Euston

By Mark Odell and James Pickford



The government has insisted Euston will remain the southern terminus of its proposed high-speed rail link between London and the north after Boris Johnson, the capital's mayor, threatened to withdraw support if the line stopped short of the city centre.

Mr Johnson's intervention came after Lord Deighton, the treasury minister leading a task force scrutinising the HS2 project, signalled that he would consider scrapping the most expensive last few kilometres of the proposed route into Euston.

That would leave trains terminating at a new station called Old Oak Common in northwest London, which is currently designed as an interchange between HS2 and the capital's new east-west Crossrail line.

Peter Hendy, the mayor's transport commissioner and head of Transport for London, told the FT: "The mayor will support HS2 but it would be conditional on the line terminating in central London."

Mr Hendy said Crossrail was designed to "cope with London's growing population and support further economic development" and said that would be "stymied by people being dumped off high-speed services in the middle of nowhere in west London".

The latest twist to the HS2 debate comes as ministers fight growing criticism of the scheme following its admission that the cost could top £50bn, including rolling stock.

Cabinet ministers, including David Cameron and George Osborne, have promised to bear down on costs and make a better economic case.

Lord Deighton, a former Goldman Sachs banker and one of the top executives behind the London 2012 Olympic Games, has been put at the forefront of the project. When asked by the FT this week if his mandate included looking at scrapping the expensive stretch into Euston, Lord Deighton said: "Looking at opportunities to do things more efficiently is

something we are prepared to consider.”

On Friday, the Treasury said: “It is absolutely right that Lord Deighton looks at how costs can be controlled and how we manage the project – that is what he was referring to. It remains the case that HS2 will go into Euston and that will be spelt out in [legislation]”.

Mr Johnson officially backs HS2 but predicted in July that the cost would exceed £70bn.

The government does not break out the cost of the last 7km of the route, which is all in tunnel, and the redevelopment of Euston station, but estimates range from £1bn to as much as £5bn.

Mr Johnson has previously warned against terminating the trains at Old Oak Common, dubbing it “the Ryanair solution”, in a reference to the airline’s use of obscure airports at a distance from the passengers’ destination.

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