



Department
for Transport

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill
Minister of State for Rail

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

17 July 2025

Dear John,

I am writing with regard to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR's) continuing consideration of access applications for Temple Mills International (TMI) under section 17 of the Railways Act 1993. This letter supplements the written representations your team has received from my officials.

As my officials have made clear, the Government welcomes the prospect of new entrants and is committed to supporting a thriving and competitive international rail passenger service market. We have seen substantial growth in demand for international rail in recent years, reflecting the increasing demand for more sustainable international connections to Europe. However, at the same time we have seen service provision contract – with fewer departing and intermediate stations and destinations now served than prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As you have rightly noted in your communications with applicants, access to depot capacity is a critical issue that needs to be addressed to enable competition. The Government agrees that, in reaching a decision, several of the ORR's statutory duties – including those normally used to determine network capacity – are relevant here, albeit I recognise these require careful weighing to reach a decision. The Government notes the following duties of particular importance to this decision:

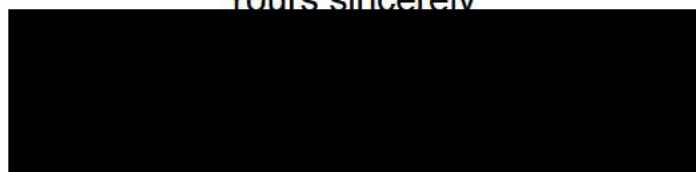
- to protect the interests of users of railway services;
- to promote the use of the railway network in Great Britain for the carriage of passengers and goods, and the development of that railway network, to the greatest extent that [ORR] consider economically practicable; and
- to promote competition in the provision of railway services for the benefit of rail users.

The Government firmly believes that the arrival of competition will benefit users of international rail services by expanding the number of stations served (including new markets), encouraging greater differentiation in service

provision and promoting competitive prices. For example, the Government strongly welcomes the fact that several new entrants are exploring the possibility of serving (variously) the currently unused Stratford, Ebbsfleet and Ashford International stations. The Government believes these are important considerations for ORR in determining the various access applications, noting the interplay with the relevant duties outlined above.

My officials are continuing work to further support the growth of international rail services and address the barriers to entry, including addressing capacity challenges, where we are actively engaging with relevant industry partners. I welcome the continued engagement with your team as our work progresses.

Yours sincerely



Peter, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill

MINISTER OF STATE FOR RAIL