

1. Before we start I want to say a couple of things. Firstly, we had a long session on compensation. I have heard today from the Under Secretary of State for Transport, Mr Goodwill. He is going to supply the Committee with the Need to Sell draft guidance but it will be in confidence before Christmas because it is not yet a public document. The Committee will be briefed by department officials early in the New Year. The plan at the moment is for the launch of the scheme sometime in the middle to end of January on both the Need to Sell and the Voluntary Purchase Scheme. At least that should give us an opportunity to look at it and to have some input before final decisions are taken.

2. I shall also give a Committee decision on Washwood Heath. On Washwood Heath we were impressed by the submission from AXA and our colleague, Liam Byrne. We sympathise with the need to address high unemployment in and around his constituency. We do not believe there is enough evidence to support a move of the rolling stock maintenance depot from Washwood Heath. We impress on HS2 the need to adjust the scheme so that there is minimum land take and for the shortest time with sensible placing of balancing ponds and a hand-back configuration that after construction will attract maximum business use of the residual site. We expect to hear from HS2 on that and on whether they can reach agreement taking account of the more recent AXA proposals which are dated 12 December. We reiterate our general view, which applies to rural areas but also elsewhere that land take should be the minimum as far as possible. In particular, where there are investors who have an interest in a site and may want, basically, to put their money where their mouth is, we should not be detracting from that. Mr Mould, you also wanted to say something as well?

3. MR MOULD QC (DfT): I did. Thank you very much. I just wanted to tell the Committee that the Draft Register of Undertakings and Assurances will be made public today. It will go on the HS2 website, www.gov.uk/hs2, before the end of the day. It details all undertakings and assurances offered to petitioners up to 13 November of this year. We would welcome petitioners viewing the register in order to check that what is shown matches their understanding of what they have been assured or what undertakings have been offered to them as the case may be. We intend to issue regular updates of the register to keep the public informed. Presently, the next update is due to be made public before this Committee rises for the forthcoming general election.