



BAA - Stansted Generation2 – Rail Schemes Consultation

A response by London TravelWatch

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General

1. London TravelWatch's concern is that on West Anglia routes into London the population and travel demand growth forecasts for the foreseeable future are such that 'do minimum' options will be inadequate. This is the basis on which we responded to the consultation on Network Rail's draft Greater Anglia Route Utilisation Strategy, and a prime example of our concern was the subject of the present BAA consultation.
2. We wrote that: "Our concern to emphasise this point is reinforced by the proposal published in BAA's Stansted Generation2 – Rail Schemes Consultation, to 3-track (rather than 4-track) the Lea Valley line. Even though the BAA scheme would make passive provision for 4 tracks, no more than a moment's thought is needed to see that the total financial and disruption costs of proceeding in this way could be such as to rule out 4 tracks for the foreseeable future. It would not be in the interests of passengers for any growth schemes to be constrained in this way."

Service frequencies and engineering access

3. London TravelWatch policy is for services in and around London to meet the following minimum standards:

Within Travelcard Zones 1-6 a minimum of 6 trains per hour (tph), at regular 10 min. intervals where possible. (6 tph is the minimum standard for a 'turn up and go' metro service, i.e. one where passengers do not need to refer to the timetable when planning their journey.)

At stations beyond the Zones and extending to the London TravelWatch boundaries a minimum of 4 tph, at regular 15 min. intervals where possible. In the Greater Anglia area the boundary stations are Purfleet, Harold Wood, Stansted Airport, Bishops Stortford and Hertford East.

4. These minimum frequencies should apply 7 days per week, between the following first and last train times:

First arrival in London by no later than 0600 (Sundays 0730)
Last departures from London (all days) - 0030 to stations in the Zones and 2400 to other London TravelWatch stations.

These times are based on London Underground (LUL) practice, and will need to be adjusted on Fridays and Saturdays when LUL introduce the Mayor's new policy for weekend services.

Where earlier or later trains operate at present, these should continue. Trains to and from Stansted Airport should reflect flight times.

In the peaks, frequencies should be increased as necessary to carry the traffic within the PIXC guidelines. In the off-peak, frequencies should be increased if necessary to meet the 75% seat utilisation principle.

5. None of the West Anglia routes meet these standards at present. Some sections - Lea Valley, Enfield Town and Southbury – fall drastically short.

Crowding and traffic levels

6. The Network Rail draft RUS makes clear that inner area services are generally more overcrowded than other services, and that the total number of passengers travelling in such conditions is also greatest on these services. It is important that this is well understood by all concerned with transport provision in London, because unless there is corrective action this situation will get worse as former industrial land is brought into residential use and low density housing is gradually replaced by new flats. The scope for such increased traffic from these causes – particularly new housing on former industrial land - is particularly high on the Lea Valley line.
7. The draft RUS is also valuable in its recognition that the conventional measure of rail traffic – ticket sales data - is a poor measure of usage at some inner-suburban stations, and that it uses physical counts to identify the true situation. These show low usage of Stratford trains at Brimsdown and Ponders End, and overall low usage of Angel Road and Northumberland Park. However In all these cases we consider that the usage is a reflection of today's low train service frequencies, and that traffic will improve considerably when services are increased to the levels sought by TfL and London TravelWatch¹. So far as Angel Road and Northumberland Park are concerned, there is also the issue of industrial or vacant land in their immediate catchment areas; this is bound to change for the better within the next 15 years or so.
8. The draft RUS also reports that increase of 15,000 jobs by 2016 in the upper Lea Valley and Tottenham Hale areas is likely to result in increased demand for non-central London and reverse flow commuting. This needs to be taken into account in train service planning.

¹ As has already happened, for example, at Cambridge Heath and London Fields.

Level crossings

9. On the West Anglia route there is a major issue regarding the many level crossings on the Lea Valley section, particularly south of Broxbourne. Existing train service levels (particularly in the peaks) cause some difficulty for road traffic and for the reliable operation of bus services, with reports of gate closures as long as 20 mins. in the peaks. This also causes problems for cyclists and for mobility impaired pedestrians who are unable to use any footbridges which are provided alongside the level crossings.
10. The increased train movements which would result from the proposed three or four-tracking of the line will make matters worse and this would not be acceptable. It will therefore be important to have sufficient grade separated road crossings to eliminate these problems, and to take account of recent and future residential developments east of the railway on what was previously industrial land.

Provision of extra capacity on the Lea Valley route

11. Option 12 of the draft RUS provides our preferred method of addressing all the issues on the Lea Valley route – i.e. Stansted Airport traffic, increased commuting to London from all parts of the route, increased reverse and non-central London commuting, all-day frequency increases on the Lea Valley stopping service and all-day increased frequencies to Stratford.
12. As already indicated, we are very clear that only a 4-track scheme will be sufficient to meet these needs, and one that extends from Clapton in the South to at least Broxbourne Junction in the North.
13. In our response to the draft RUS we said that: “We note that a partial 3-tracking scheme is included within the option, an idea which is also put forward in the BAA consultation We believe this idea should be scotched now. The obvious limitations of such a scheme mean that to adopt it instead of full four-tracking would be penny pinching of the worst order – a judgement which is borne out by the benefit / cost ratios of 2.3 for three tracks and 4.2 for four tracks.
14. We also believe that great care must be taken to ensure that a four-track scheme delivers the maximum possible capacity and operational flexibility, with extension southwards as far as Clapton tunnel and with grade-separation at Coppermill and Clapton junctions. We wrote in detail on this in our response to the recent ATOC paper “Exploring the Potential” and the relevant text is reproduced as an appendix to this response.”
15. This conclusion regarding the unacceptability of the 3-track scheme must also stand as our response to the BAA consultation.

Other considerations

16. We would remind you of our long standing concerns about the lack of step free access to the Liverpool Street bound platform at Tottenham Hale station. Any schemes of development on the Lea Valley route must as a priority include full step free access at this station.
17. We would also draw your attention to the need to upgrade the National Rail platforms and station environment at Seven Sisters station. This station is a very poor relation to Tottenham Hale in terms of quality and environment, yet it is often used by Stansted Express services in times of disruption or engineering possessions on the main Lea Valley route, so that passengers can connect to and from the Victoria Line. We would recommend that with the substantial works required at Tottenham Hale that consideration is made of upgrading this station first in order to accommodate any substantial diversion of traffic during the main construction period at Tottenham Hale and on the Lea Valley.
18. In addition, we would also draw your attention to the need to safeguard the possibility of providing passenger platforms on the Victoria Line at Northumberland Park alongside the existing London Underground depot at that location. Ideally this should link to the National Rail station at this location.

Further consultation

19. Whatever scheme receives permission to proceed, London TravelWatch would expect to be consulted on the detailed proposals for station and level crossing modifications.

Any queries about this response to the BAA consultation should be addressed to:

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Appendix

Extract from London TravelWatch response to ATOC paper “Exploring the Potential”

We are pleased that the industry has recently picked up on London TravelWatch’s long-standing warnings that capacity issues on West Anglia will need to be addressed by four tracking the Lea Valley line. By way of convenient shorthand this has been referred to as Tottenham Hale to Broxbourne, but we consider it is now time to explore in more detail what such a scheme needs to embrace.

To maximise the benefits, and in particular to give the best timetabling flexibility to counteract the constraints between Clapton and Liverpool St., we believe the specification should include:

- At the north end, four tracking should extend at least to Broxbourne Jct.
- Lines to be paired by use with fast lines to the east, so that conflicts between Southbury line to Hertford line trains and fast Stansted / Cambridge trains can be avoided.
- At the south end, four tracking should extend at least to Clapton Jct., and preferably to south of Clapton station².
- Full grade separation at Coppermill and Clapton Jcts., to eliminate all conflicts between Lea Valley, Chingford, Liverpool St. and Stratford trains and to re-configure to pairing by direction for conflict-free reduction to two tracks at Clapton tunnel³.
- All stations to have platforms on both fast and slow lines⁴.

Steps should be taken soon to safeguard all the land which might be needed for such a scheme.

If such a comprehensive scheme is not affordable at first stage, then any lesser scheme should include passive provision for further development as necessary.

So far as the level crossings are concerned, it will be important to have sufficient grade separated road crossings to provide for bus services and taking account of recent and future residential developments east of the railway on what was previously industrial land.

² Inspection on Google Earth indicates that land is available – or could be made available – for four tracks throughout the route. However it might be necessary to relocate the platforms at Clapton to create room for four tracks to reduce to two north of Clapton tunnel.

³ If this sounds rather ambitious, we would suggest it is easy compared with the land-take and environmental issues of the paper’s proposal to grade separate Slade Lane Jct. in Manchester.

⁴ Possibly except Clapton, where space for both four tracking AND four platforms would not seem to be available.

Additional point The full value of four tracking the Lea Valley would only be realised if capacity at Liverpool St. is also increased. We therefore draw attention to:

- work carried out by the London Borough of Hackney and the City Corporation to control developments between Cambridge Heath and Liverpool St. so that space is available for eight tracking inwards from Bethnal Green
- the availability of space for additional platforms between the present platforms 10 and 11.