

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 6 DECEMBER 2016

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

GOVIA THAMESLINK RAILWAY (GTR) 2018 TIMETABLE
CONSULTATION, SEPTEMBER 2016

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

The purpose of this report is:

- To detail the public consultation by Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) on its proposed 2018 Timetable and to agree the Council's response to it.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: That:

(A)	Govia Thameslink Railway be informed that, in respect of its 2018 Timetable Consultation, East Herts Council submits comments at Essential Reference Paper 'B' to this report as its response in respect of the questions within the consultation and other specific matters which it wishes to raise.
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1.0 Background

1.1 Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) has issued a consultation on a proposed new timetable to take effect in 2018. The consultation covers the Great Northern (including Metro), Gatwick Express, Southern and Thameslink lines, and which would come into force following completion of the Thameslink Programme. The document is available to view at:
<http://www.thameslinkrailway.com/your-journey/timetable-consultation>

1.2 The consultation on the proposed 2018 Timetable closes on 8th December 2016.

1.3 This report details the main aspects of the consultation with the most pertinence to East Herts and discusses a proposed response to it.

2.0 Report

2.1 As detailed above, the consultation details proposed timetable changes to the network operated by GTR. These result from the completion of the Thameslink Programme, which will achieve the connection of the Great Northern line to the Thameslink tunnel via St Pancras; the introduction of a new train fleet; and the full re-opening of London Bridge station. New services from Kent will also be introduced to provide an expanded cross-London network.

2.2 While changes to train services will happen throughout 2018, which will deliver the final service in December, the vast majority of changes will commence from the timetable change on Sunday 13 May 2018. It is to be noted that this does not simply imply changes to frequency, but rather that some services may also be subject to alteration (to include calling patterns, in some cases).

2.3 It should be noted that the current consultation covers the main principles of the new timetable, for example service frequency and destinations served by the network. A further round of public consultation is due to be held in Spring 2017, and this is intended to set out the actual timetable proposed.

2.4 In respect of the current consultation, the 71 page document details the proposals for the entire network. A series of 81 questions are posed to which GTR is seeking responses. As only a small number of questions would have specific relevance to East Herts, it is proposed that no response be made in respect of other issues. Suggested responses to the consultation are included at Appendix 'A' to this report at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

2.5 With regard to the proposed measures that would have a direct impact on East Herts, these largely concern:

1. Great Northern Metro – this route covers services into Moorgate. The stations in East Herts served by this route include Bayford, Hertford North and Watton at Stone with onward destinations beyond the district currently available northwards to Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth.

The key changes for this route are:

- An increase in service frequency;
- The withdrawal of services between Letchworth and Stevenage (these stations will continue to be served by the Great Northern Mainline route); and
- The introduction of an entirely new fleet of 150 carriages to be provided (Class 717 trains which will be in fixed 6-car formations).

2. Great Northern Mainline – this route covers the services from Peterborough and Cambridge to London via Stevenage. While there are no stations in East Herts directly served by this route, onward connections to services are made through changing at Stevenage.

The key changes for this route are:

- An increase in service frequency;
- An increase in the number of directly-served destinations by diverting most services via the Thameslink tunnel rather than terminating at London Kings Cross;
- The introduction of the new Class 700 trains for services via the Thameslink tunnel and the cascade of 2014-built trains for the other services.

- 2.6 Apart from the service specification proposals, one of the major implications for East Herts of the introduction of the new timetabling is that the consultation proposes that, due to the provision of other services on the East Coast Main Line coupled with the postponement of delivery of a fifth platform at Stevenage to provide a turn-back facility for the Hertford Loop service, from May 2018 there will be a cessation of rail services between Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage during all peak and most off-peak times.

- 2.7 While previous work on the timetabling prior to this consultation had assumed the provision of the fifth platform (a Network Rail project), the Hendy Report last year resulted in funding for this key infrastructure being withdrawn from the current control period (CP5 2015-2019) and therefore this would not be provided until at least CP6 (2019-2024). The corollary of this is that it is now proposed by GTR that a 'temporary' replacement bus service will be provided until such time as the fifth platform can be delivered.

The consultation document notes that (whilst 104,000 passengers will benefit from the proposed new timetable provisions) some 1,100 passengers a day will be adversely affected by the proposals.

- 2.8 As this arrangement would have a significant effect on East Herts residents wishing to travel to and from Stevenage either as a specific destination or to connect with other rail services, the suggested response in respect of this proposal is of significantly greater length than for other matters.
- 2.9 Outside of the set consultation questions, two other issues have been identified on which it is considered appropriate that representation be made. These concern the timetabling inter-relationship with the East Coast Main Line, and maximising service provision between Stevenage and Peterborough to enable onward intercity connections.
- 2.10 For information, Hertfordshire County Council has set up an online UK Government and Parliament petition entitled 'Keep trains running between Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage after 2018'. This calls on the Government to take action to accelerate the infrastructure works at Stevenage station, to enable Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) to run trains between Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage after 2018 and can be accessed at:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/172054>

3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) 2018 Timetable Consultation,
September 2016

<http://www.thameslinkrailway.com/your-journey/timetable-consultation>

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