

## **Appendix 'A'**

### **GTR 2018 Timetable Consultation – Consultation Question Responses on behalf of East Herts Council**

***Question 14:***

***Do you support proposals to approach engineering works differently?***

***Please select all options you support.***

***Reduced frequency on some routes after 2300 on Weekdays and Saturdays***

***Earlier last trains on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays on some routes***

***Later first trains on Sunday mornings on some routes***

***I don't support proposals to change the current engineering works hours***

***Any further comments on this proposal?***

East Herts Council has an in-principle objection to any changes of approach in respect of overnight engineering works where these would negatively impact on train services at any time on the Great Northern Line and/or the Great Northern Metro. The Council is committed to encouraging modal shift from private motor-borne traffic to sustainable transport modes and any diminution in rail services would run counter to such aims. Given the levels of increased growth predicted in the district (circa 16,400 new homes plus additional employment provision by 2033), it is of key importance that rail services should rather be extended in the early and late off-peak periods, including weekends, to facilitate changing work patterns and leisure activities.

***Question 16:***

***Do you support the proposal for Thameslink services on the North Kent line serving Greenwich, Abbey Wood, Dartford and Medway Towns?***

While not directly affecting East Herts residents, the new service would provide additional journey options and, as such, the proposals are welcomed.

**Question 20:**

***Any other comments in relation to the expanded Thameslink network from 2018?***

East Herts Council particularly supports the introduction of Thameslink services stopping at Stevenage to central London, East Croydon, Redhill, Gatwick Airport, Horsham, Brighton, Swanley and Maidstone East as a means of providing sustainable travel options (via connections utilising the Great Northern Metro) to these destinations for its residents. In this respect, it is of extreme importance that rail connections between Hertford North/Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage are maintained from the outset of the new 2018 timetable.

***Specific comments can be made on individual services within each sub route in the survey***

**Question 25:**

***Thameslink Mainline Route TL5: Peterborough – Stevenage – Central London (via London Bridge) – East Croydon – Redhill – Gatwick Airport – Horsham***

East Herts Council particularly supports the introduction of this Thameslink service being routed through Stevenage because of the increased journey opportunities that this provides (via connections utilising the Great Northern Metro), particularly in respect of central London destinations, Gatwick Airport, Horsham and the connections to Crossrail. This will ensure that sustainable travel options to these destinations are available for East Herts residents and, in this respect, it is of extreme importance that rail connections between Hertford North/Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage are maintained from the outset of the new 2018 timetable.

**Question 26:**

***Thameslink Mainline Route TL6: Cambridge (semi-fast) – Stevenage – Central London (via London Bridge) – East Croydon – Gatwick Airport – Brighton***

East Herts Council particularly supports the introduction of this Thameslink service being routed through Stevenage because of the increased journey opportunities that this provides (via connections utilising the Great Northern Metro), particularly in respect of central London destinations, Gatwick Airport, Brighton and the connections to Crossrail. This will ensure that sustainable travel options to these destinations are available for East Herts residents and, in this respect, it is of extreme importance that rail connections between Hertford North/Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage are maintained from the outset of the new 2018 timetable.

**Question 27:**

***Thameslink Mainline Route TL7: Cambridge (stopping) – Stevenage – Central London (via London Bridge) – Swanley – Maidstone East – (Ashford International)***

East Herts Council particularly supports the introduction of this Thameslink service being routed through Stevenage because of the increased journey opportunities that this provides (via connections utilising the Great Northern Metro), particularly in respect of central London destinations, Maidstone East and the connections to Crossrail. This will ensure that sustainable travel options to these destinations are available for East Herts residents and, in this respect, it is of extreme importance that rail connections between Hertford North/Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage are maintained from the outset of the new 2018 timetable.

**Question 76:**

***Do you support the proposed frequency improvements throughout the Great Northern Metro routes?***

**Yes**

**No**

***Any further comments on this proposal?***

East Herts Council supports the proposed frequency improvements in principle. However, in the absence of specific information regarding the potential implications of this on the pattern of semi-fast and stopping services at individual stations, it reserves the right to comment further when such detail is known. In this respect it is considered important that journey times for direct services, for trains both into and out of central London, should not be increased.

**Question 78:**

***Do you support the proposed frequency improvements throughout the Great Northern Metro routes and proposed changes to some calling patterns?***

***Any further comments on this proposal?***

East Herts supports a higher frequency service on this route. However, it would seek to ensure that existing skip-stop peak services will be retained when the timetable provisions are finalised next year.

**Question 81:**

***In light of these developments, on balance do you agree that curtailing the Moorgate to Stevenage services at Watton-at-Stone from May 2018 until further notice to protect proposed frequency increases on the Hertford North, Cambridge and Peterborough routes is the right approach?***

East Herts Council objects to such proposals in the strongest possible terms.

The consultation document notes that 1,100 passengers a day will be adversely affected by the proposals, whilst 104,000 passengers will benefit. However, it is considered that the dis-benefits for those passengers experiencing a loss in a current service would be

disproportionately large. This is compounded by the fact that, even though it is notionally scheduled for inclusion in the as yet unconfirmed CP6 programme of works for delivery between 2019-2024, there is no committed date for the provision of the turn-back platform at Stevenage, which would leave this 'temporary' measure open-ended.

In terms of the effects of the proposed cessation of rail services beyond Watton-at-Stone for the majority of the time, these are manifold. Not only would the key benefits of Thameslink, where services stopping at Stevenage would allow direct access to places such as St Pancras International, Gatwick and Brighton, be lost for 1,100 passengers per day, including East Herts residents, as they will be unable to make the connection by rail from Bayford, Hertford North or Watton-at-Stone without first transferring to the replacement bus service, more importantly, they would also lose the ability to access any of the existing local or inter-city type services provided at Stevenage by rail. To achieve their desired destination, residents would either need to travel into Finsbury Park or central London and transfer to services there (which is one of the issues that Thameslink is being introduced to reduce), which would considerably lengthen north-bound journeys or, which we consider the more likely scenario, would use their cars to travel to Stevenage.

This would not only add further congestion to the A602, which already experiences significant delays at peak periods, but would also be timed to occur just as major upgrade works on that route were being undertaken by Hertfordshire County Council, as part of LEP supported infrastructure provision. Furthermore, anticipated localised upgrades to the A1M, to be implemented prior to the availability of platform 5, would also be likely to displace traffic onto this route. The combination of delays caused by road upgrades would be most unsatisfactory, and would mean that those passengers who did choose to utilise the replacement bus service would be likely to experience significant delays above existing levels, which would be avoidable if the rail link were to be maintained.

Those passengers choosing to drive to Stevenage to achieve connections, instead of using the bus replacement service, would add to pressures for parking provision at Stevenage station. As the two car parks at the station already experience capacity issues at certain times, this would add further to that pressure.

Furthermore, the effects of the cessation of services between Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage that would be experienced by current passengers

will undoubtedly be compounded by increased demand from the occupants of new dwellings in the district; where 750 additional homes in Hertford alone are projected to be delivered in the first five year period of the emerging District Plan, i.e. by 2022. The edge of the site where 550 of these dwellings would be provided is located within 900m walking distance of Hertford North Station, where it is expected that a proportion of new residents will increase demand for services in both directions on the Hertford Loop.

Moreover, while the consultation states that various unsuccessful investigations have taken place aimed at retaining the service between Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage, no evidence has been provided to substantiate that position. Questions remain over whether the provision of additional rolling stock; utilisation of some of the stock that is due for replacement; additional financial input; or further negotiations with Network Rail could make the retention of the service (with potential turnback at Letchworth) feasible.

East Herts Council therefore strongly urges GTR to undertake further investigations, which should involve Network Rail and the Department for Transport, to identify alternative interim arrangements that would maintain the train service between Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage to obviate the need for a replacement bus service.

### Other Issues

In addition to responding to the specific consultation questions, East Herts Council considers that the following issues should be taken into account:

1. The current consultation discusses proposed timetable arrangements in isolation; however, it is important that this be considered alongside the East Coast Main Line (ECML) proposed timetable provisions to ensure that these correlate to deliver acceptable connections between services. The forthcoming 2017 timetable consultation should therefore provide information on service connection intervals.
2. As only 2 out of the 8 ECML (Virgin) tph are currently proposed to stop at Stevenage, East Herts Council considers that it is crucial that as many GTR services as possible between Stevenage and

Peterborough are delivered to ensure that onward connections to other intercity services can be made available for residents to make north-bound journeys achievable without the need for additional journeys into London and associated increased travel time.