

Response of the London Forum to the Draft Rail Strategy published by Hertfordshire County Council on January 6th.

1. The London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies is an umbrella group for over a hundred such societies across Greater London. We take a keen interest in planning environment and transport issues and we were the biggest single contributor to the Examination in Public of the Mayor's London Plan on behalf of residents.
2. The Forum strongly supports infrastructure improvements that achieve modal shift towards more sustainable means of transport and which reduce the distances needed to travel. We are particularly supportive of orbital routes which obviate the need to make unnecessary journeys into and out of Central London as the best means of public transport. All too often it results in a choice of private transport instead.
3. We therefore strongly favour the scheme for the Metropolitan Line to take over the route of the Croyley Green heavy rail line. The strategy as currently written gives an incomplete picture in suggesting it was cancelled by Transport *for* London. For various reasons, but principally the delay to Crossrail and the withdrawal of central government subsidy, TfL is in no position to meet the revised cost of this scheme, but questions should be asked as to why the cost of a relatively modest scheme has escalated to such an extent.
4. Were the scheme to proceed, it would place further strain on Watford Junction station and we therefore strongly support your bid to Network Rail for major enhancements to this station. There are two further reasons why we support this bid. We are confident that, were the Croyley link scheme implemented, there would be additional demand for services on the Abbey Line. We are anxious that the Abbey Line should continue as a heavy rail service, and indeed be enhanced by the removal of some sections of single track to allow increased frequency. If the line is downgraded car use would increase, and some of that increase would extend into north London.
5. The second reason for supporting an upgrade of Watford Junction is linked to our support for your strategy for improved inter-City services. Many of our societies would be adversely affected by a third runway at Heathrow. Birmingham International is barely an hour from Watford Junction. If there is a need for increased air travel from north London, greater use of Birmingham Airport would be more appropriate and would be in line with current government policy of "levelling up."
6. We also support the strategy for an increase in inter-city stops at Stevenage and Luton (or St. Albans). These plans would facilitate long distance journeys from parts of North London to be made without the need to travel into central London first. Like Birmingham, Luton has capacity for air travel and if it can be justified it would be better made using existing infrastructure at Luton than by expanding Heathrow.
7. We do not support your aspirations for Crossrail2. The original Hackney-Chelsea scheme, later referred to as Hainault-Wimbledon, was designed to address existing gross overcrowding on the tube and the Great Northern railway. Nowhere is overcrowding more severe than in the north-east and we believe it is wrong to focus Crossrail2 on the north: there is already a sound north-south scheme in Thameslink. The north-east route for Crossrail2 included an interchange at Essex Road, relieving overcrowding on the section south to Moorgate and offering an improved link from Hertfordshire and north London to the west end. Relieving overcrowding on trains out of Moorgate would be particularly beneficial to Hertfordshire residents in the evening peak.
8. We also take issue with the statement that construction of HS2 began in 2017. Destruction of swathes of countryside, and of much needed social housing has begun, but the Notice to

Proceed has not been issued and in the aftermath of the Coronavirus crisis it may never be, as it may prove that transport patterns will be changed for all time as a result of the pandemic. If HS2 were to be constructed to Old Oak Common, the best hope of a suitable link to Watford Junction would seem to be a stop on the Southern railway service to Clapham Junction. The financial difficulties faced by the OODC and the need to reconfigure Old Oak Common to serve as a terminus (even if only temporary) make this an opportune time for your Council to set out its case for this link.

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London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies