

TRANSITION TOWN LETCHWORTH RESPONSE TO HERTFORDSHIRE RAIL STRATEGY (2019 REVISION)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hertfordshire Rail Strategy. Transition Town Letchworth have reviewed the strategy in terms of how it will support users and potential users of Letchworth rail service.

Pricing and Service Levels

We are supportive of the strategy with regard to its aspirations for service levels and fares and ticketing. [We would encourage the earliest possible spread of Pay-As-You-Go ticketing across the county to help ensure people have the best access to tickets and lowest cost fares.](#)

Effective demand management can only occur if public transport fares are competitive with car journey costs. [The Rail Strategy needs to include, for popular routes, periodic analysis comparing public transport prices to car journey costs, with action being taken to ensure that public transport is a cost competitive option.](#)

Overcrowding

In the strategy it is identified that:

- Great Northern is one of the poorest performing TOCs.
- There is peak time overcrowding on services between London and Welwyn Garden City.
- A number of rail lines are forecast to be overcapacity by 2031.

Local plans to build additional housing is expected to increase the number of passengers on already overcrowded commuter services. [Has any modelling been undertaken to understanding how overcrowding issues will be affected by the housing growth planned for Baldock, Letchworth and Hitchin?](#)

Train services to London are currently restricted at Welwyn, where there are only two tracks across the Welwyn Viaduct. TTL recognise that Network Rail plan to try to address the Welwyn Bottleneck through improved signalling, however, if this proves inadequate we believe [HCC should either push for new infrastructure to increase the capacity of the line at Welwyn or use their influence to limit plans for new homes in towns which are within commuting distance of London but located beyond the Welwyn viaduct. For example, if North Herts Local Plan sought to provide homes with access to the Cambridge Business Area, rather than planning for homes which are within the London commuting zone, this could mitigate risks of further overcrowding on the Great Northern Line.](#)

Better Connecting of Train Services

Great Northern and East Coast Main Line - TTL support the aspirations to improve the intercity services from Stevenage. To get maximum benefit from any additional East Coast mainline stopping services, [the HCC Rail Strategy should encourage service providers to provide connecting trains services from stations on the Cambridge Line, including Letchworth, to allow North Herts residents to connect effectively with the East Coast mainline at Stevenage.](#)

North Herts to Luton Airport - TTL support the proposal for a rail link between Stevenage to Luton and would like to better understand this proposal.

East Coast Mainline and Oxford-Cambridge Line - A regular Sandy connection between stations on the East Coast Mainline and the Oxford – Cambridge Line (Section 5.2) is important and we hope HCCs lobbying will lead to a good service connection. There should be a quick passenger interchange at Sandy and we would like to see this issue addressed in HCC’s Rail Strategy.

Passenger Interchange at Stations and Parking

We support the approach to station parking outlined in:

- Section 3.6 - “opportunities to replace parking spaces by bus interchanges or other sustainable transport provision should be allowed and encouraged where this will not have a negative impact on the overall numbers of passengers accessing the station”
- Section 3.8 - “The County Council actively seeks to enhance interchange facilities at railway stations to provide better connections with other transport (principally buses), to improve the environment for passengers waiting to transfer to other modes, and to ensure that the station is attractive for in-bound passengers. This can include facilities such as secure cycle parking, taxi ranks and timetable co-ordination

We note that electric charging points are planned for Hatfield station car park. TTL would like the Rail Strategy to include a review of ALL station parking with proposals included to **incentivise car sharing and electric cars. Provision of electric charging, parking permits and different pricing schemes based on car types and or car occupancy should all be considered.**

TTL support the provision of additional cycle parking at the station.

Letchworth Public Transport Interchange

Letchworth station forecourt area would benefit from something more than a redesign of the drop-off and pick-up area and staff parking as is proposed. There is scope for improving Letchworth’s public transport connections. Bus stops are located at various locations round the town centre, with limited cover and seating for passengers waiting for a bus. **TTL would like the the Rail Strategy to include the redesign of the area outside the train station into a comprehensive public transport interchange with a bus station outside the train station main entrance (relocating the war memorial to Broadway Gardens where it would be much more visible and accessible).** This would bring considerable benefit, reducing interchange times and making it easier for people to find the right service.

Currently the station can only be accessed from South of the train line, and train passengers from the north of the town either have to cross over Neville’s Bridge on Bridge Road or pass under the railway on Norton Way and then reach the station via Station Road. Provision of a north side entrance to the station would reduce the time it takes to reach the station providing a daily benefit to commuters from the north side of the town. This time saving could help encourage people to switch to sustainable transport as they would have a shorter walk / cycle ride to the station.

A flyover for walkers / cyclists from Station Place to Neville’s road, which would provide improved access to the town centre and to the station, would be the optimum addition to the town. However, we recognise this would involve a significant spend. There is though, a lower cost option that could be explored. A rear entrance and exit to the station could be provided from the north side platform (trains to Cambridge) by providing a path from the west end of the platform to link with the existing footpath that runs from Bridge Road to Spring Road along the side of the railway. The stairs from

Bridge Road could be changed to an accessible ramp. There appears to be sufficient land for provision of ticket gates and possibly some bike parking¹.

Community Partnership Schemes

The Community Rail Partnership schemes are exciting, in particular the planters and book exchanges, and could be promoted across the county.

Intalink

We support the Intalink partnership work. Providing alternatives to the car to access stations is critical and for towns and villages we would like the strategy to include ideas on introducing the technology to facilitate taxi-shares or on-demand bus services to get commuters to and from stations.

Carriage of Bicycles

The Rail Strategy needs to address carriage of bikes on trains. For example, the ability to allow more bikes on trains to Cambridge and Stevenage may make a sustainable journey feasible.

Improving Bridges over Railway

In Letchworth the railway divides the town and this results in extended journeys. There are currently three pedestrian bridges over the railway where it would be beneficial to convert the bridges into a shared pedestrian / cycling crossing. These crossings are:

- Connecting Works Road to Icknield Way by Dunham's lane
- Highover Road – linking the Wilbury and Westbury estates (part of the Letchworth Greenway)
- Connecting Blackhorse Road/Knap Close and the end of Works Road (part of the Letchworth Greenway)

1 This idea was submitted to the 'Passenger Benefit Fund' and money from this fund has been allocated for a feasibility study of Letchworth station entrance area.