

# **WEST LONDON LINE GROUP**

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West Coast Main Line RUS Consultation Response  
Network Rail  
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Dear Sir or Madam

## **West Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy**

### Introduction

1. I am writing on behalf of the West London Line Group to give the Group's responses to this welcome document. We would ask that these be read in conjunction with the Group's recent documents, "West London Line Developments – 2008-2015" (May 2008), "Development Proposals for the West London Line 2009-2019" (June 2009), and "Key Concerns regarding the L&SE and WCML RUS's" (February 2011), plus the Group's responses to the Electrification and the London & South East RUS documents.
2. Broadly speaking, the Group agrees with the present and future situation as described in this RUS (particularly in relation to the peak morning Milton Keynes – East Croydon service) and the recommendations proposed.
3. However, the Group would strongly urge that still greater advantage be taken of the opportunities offered by the West London Line (WLL) to future traffics on the WCML. These would appear to be significant, especially in meeting:-
  - a) the forecasted capacity problems in the Euston area;
  - b) the perceived need to provide strong, yet cost-effective, links between the WCML corridor and both (i) Heathrow, and (ii) southern England without putting additional pressure on London termini and the tube network between them; and
  - c) two-way demands arising from new local drivers on the WLL corridor, e.g., links to North Kensington, plus new and planned developments at Kensington Olympia, Earl's Court and Imperial Wharf.
4. The Group believes that now the opportunity should also be taken to accommodate increased demand from the three southern rail networks on the WLL, with these services terminating in the North Pole/Old Oak Common area or extending farther to the north or west. Thus many parts of the rail

network would be set to benefit from minor enhancements on the WLL, with the relatively small-scale costs attributed over a much larger area than would be the case for many other rail infrastructure projects.

5. We would also ask that the final RUS includes a detailed and sensitive assessment of the best use of the WCML throughout the week and not just for Monday – Friday peak flows. For example, we would hope that there would be overall net social benefits of allowing the Friday evening, weekend and Sunday afternoon/evening timetable to incorporate stops at important intermediate points such as Watford Junction, Milton Keynes and Nuneaton, without completely overturning the desire for modal change from air or road to rail between London and Manchester or Glasgow. This appears to be directly in line with the objective stated in Section 3.7 (Second Bullet Point) in this draft RUS.

6. Our detailed comments are below

7. Executive Summary

#### Forecast changes in demand

##### Passenger (page 4)

8. It would be helpful to re-confirm the period to which the growth figures relate. The Group would urge that these figures be regularly and rigorously reviewed, as experience with all the recent rail (re-)openings in South Wales and Scotland has seemed to show that original forecasts have significantly underestimated.

#### Options

##### Network Availability (page 5)

9. The Group can confirm that levels of access are not yet sufficient on the WLL/WCML axis, despite the bi-directional signalling on the WLL. We continue to be concerned that works in the Willesden Junction area often lead to curtailment or withdrawal of the WLL Southern service, as well as the WLL London Overground service, at weekends and other times.

##### Station capacity (page 5)

10. Although outside the WCML RUS area, the Group remains very concerned about the level of present and future overcrowding at WLL stations, especially on those platforms at Clapham Junction to be used by existing and future WLL services. While we welcome the L&SE RUS proposal to lengthen all WLL platforms, we believe that it is right that all these should be 12-cars long so that the longest trains on networks both south and north of the Thames can be accommodated throughout the WLL. We have put our suggestions covering the whole of Clapham Junction station, including showing how we believe they would relate to the WCML RUS, in Appendix 1 to this letter.

## Emerging Strategy

### Infrastructure (page 6)

11. Although only some of the infrastructure improvements we have suggested are on the WCML, we have included all our current suggestions for the WLL, in view of the WLL's possible role in alleviating demand pressures at Euston (see attachment to this letter).

### Medium-term Strategy (2014 – 2024)

#### Train services (page 6)

12. We note and welcome the recognition in paragraph 5 of this section of the significant peak capacity gap on the Milton Keynes and East Croydon service southbound between Watford Junction and Clapham Junction in the three-hour morning peak, although we would hope that relatively small timetabling changes would alleviate this. We would strongly urge that the option of linking this with Gap RL14 (page 109) be fully explored with the aim of establishing a morning Birmingham (c.0700) – Milton Keynes (c.0750) – Clapham Junction (c.0910) service, as this would simultaneously deal with two issues in this RUS. Moreover, its return at c.0920 would ease demand pressure on the southern end of the WLL at that time and also provide a useful link from SW/W London to the West Midlands (c.1130 arrival in Birmingham).
13. Moreover, we would also ask that the growing demand in the reverse direction in the weekday evening peak also be recognised and addressed. A reverse operation to that in the morning could also provide a useful extra mid/late afternoon train from the West Midlands to West/SW London, whose return would also meet the growing demand from Clapham Junction northwards on to the WCML.
14. Such links could be seen as partial replacement for the WLL Cross-Country service withdrawn in December 2008.
15. We welcome further work being done to produce a viable 2tph Southern WLL service in the peaks and we trust that such trains will run at least to/from Watford Junction. However, we note that it was a recommendation in the Cross London RUS that a 2tph service be provided between Shepherd's Bush and the Croydon area throughout the day. We trust that that will soon be delivered.
16. Moreover, we have suggested below that trains on this service could serve Wembley Central (Platform 7) without impinging on the main WCML tracks, but allowing WLL passengers to reach at least this section of the WCML corridor. We would recommend that work on the issues involved be pursued and be reported on in the final RUS, hopefully with a positive benefit/cost analysis.
17. We would strongly urge that other ways to improve connectivity on the WCML corridor also be pursued. We find it hard to credit that it is impossible to stop even one or two LDHS trains in the peaks or at any time at weekends at either Watford Junction or Milton Keynes, ideally to provide good connections

with the Southern WLL service, without an unbearable cost burden. We would hope that such connections would provide direct travel between as many points as is practicable on the WCML/Birmingham corridors north of Milton Keynes and the WLL. In any case, we would ask that the potential for rail travel in both directions between these corridors and West/SW London is clearly understood and promoted.

#### Long-term (beyond 2024) (page 8)

18. It would be helpful if some indication was given as to the movement (direction and scale) of expected crowding beyond 2024, especially if work on HS2 is delayed or not proceeded with.
19. We would also hope that work would be done under this and the L&SE RUS to assess the physical feasibility, cost implications and benefits from diverting some WCML services to/from the WLL, especially in view of the existing unmet demand for such a link, together with the tube connectivity at Shepherd's Bush and rail connectivity at Clapham Junction, with reference to not just the peaks but other times during the week as well.

#### Chapter 2. Scope and planning context

##### 2.5 Linkage to other RUS's (page 14 - para 4)

20. We note and welcome the comment that both this and the L&SE RUS will consider the increase in demand on the WLL Southern service. We should therefore like to highlight to both the opportunities for improving the service still further by:-
  - a) raising linespeeds between Wembley Central and Willesden Junction (we understand that, in contrast to the wording in the last paragraph on page 19, some stretches have a maximum of only 10mph), and
  - b) re-instituting the old low level platforms on the route of the WLL Southern service at Willesden Junction, so that both may be served by 12-car trains and be linked to the rest of the exit via the High Level platforms

##### 2.7 Linkage to other studies and workstreams

##### New Lines Programme (page 16)

21. We would hope that the proposed HS2 work is pursued. However, if it should not, we would still strongly support direct or connecting services (i) between the WCML and Heathrow, and (ii) between the WLL and Heathrow. It would seem to us that the most cost-effective solution may well be a through WCML/WLL station with 12-car platforms at right angles immediately above similar ones for the GWML/Heathrow Express/Heathrow Connect/Crossrail services at Old Oak Common.
22. Given the potential traffic demands (i) for interchange at this major railway "cross roads" (GWML/Heathrow Express/ Crossrail/ Chiltern/HS2 east-west and WCML/WLL north-south) and (ii) from existing local communities not yet served directly by the rail network, such as North Kensington, that the latter platforms are not built as shown in the HS2 plan HS2-ARP-00-DR-RW-04202.pdf, but more centrally in the gap between the WLL and NLL

overbridges with equal length links to each, as long as this also allowed enough room for our suggested HS2 – HS1 link via Merstham Parkway.

23. Rail passenger demand between the WCML and Heathrow should strengthen the case for (i) raising the linespeeds above and for (ii) other Network Rail improvements on the WLL (see the attachment to this letter) to enhance the operation of WCML trains. These could be diverted to, for example, (a) a re-modelled Kensington Olympia, (b) an extended Clapham Junction (see Appendix 1), (c) Waterloo, and/or (d) Gatwick and Brighton.

#### 2.8 Time horizon (page 16)

24. While we note that this RUS concentrates on the period 2014 – 2024, we would hope that the case for the items that we are raising here are considered in enough detail by this RUS over the period of the covered by the L&SE RUS, i.e., to 2031.

### Chapter 3. Current capacity, demand and delivery

#### 3.5 Route capacity

##### London Euston to Carstairs Junction (page 31)

25. London Euston and the station throat – We would hope that running more WCML services to/from the WLL would ease the situation. We believe that the vast majority of WCML passengers do not want to go to/start from Euston per se – most want the Underground to/from the West End or City. There should be a significant number who would either be prepared to join or leave the Underground at Shepherd's Bush or journey to/from Clapham Junction or Waterloo. By about 2020 there should also be sizeable increases in residential and business populations in the WLL corridor (Earl's Court and West Kensington Opportunity Area, NW Warwick Road sites and Imperial Wharf).

26. Willesden Junction (Low Level – Southern service)

We also feel that the costs and benefits of the construction of new platforms and their use by the WLL Southern service alongside their current running tracks in both directions at Willesden Junction should be undertaken. This would further strengthen services between Clapham Junction and Willesden Junction.

27. Wembley Central (Platform 7)

We trust that the costs and benefits of the option that we understand has been put forward by LB Brent for the restoration of Platform 7 at Wembley Central that we hope might allow 4-car and longer Southern trains to reach there in service without impinging on the WCML is also being investigated.

28. Watford Junction bay platform – There would probably be gain in reviewing whether this platform may be extended to 12-cars.

### 3.7 Network availability (page 32)

29. First Bullet Point – We would ask that every effort be made to operate as strong a set of WLL Southern and London Overground services, particularly to keep services running between Shepherd's Bush and Willesden Junction High Level, using single-line working. In particular, we would ask that works in the Willesden Junction High Level area on London Overground tracks should, as far as possible, still allow the WLL Southern service to operate. Good liaison over details on WLL engineering work must be maintained between Network Rail, the TOCs, London Underground (operators of West Brompton station) and passengers.
30. Second Bullet Point – Please our paragraph 5 above.

### 3.10 Passenger market profile

#### London services

31. Fig 3.11 (page 40) should also show the Southern service stops at Berkhamsted, Tring, Leighton Buzzard and Bletchley

#### Short distance markets

32. Fig 3.19 (page 51) would almost certainly benefit from being revised to show the current state of cross-Clapham demand and its growth following the May 2010 timetable change with new through trains from East Croydon in the morning peak. Moreover, trains in both the mornings and evenings should be shown. These improvements would be key to informing the joint work on the WLL by both the L&SE and WCML RUS teams.

### 3.12 Freight market profile (page 53)

33. We would ask, in view of the increasing passenger demand on the WLL/WCML corridor, that freight that does not need to use the corridor be routed elsewhere.

## Chapter 4. Anticipated changes in supply and demand

### 4.1 Committed schemes

#### Seven day railway (page 58)

34. We sincerely hope that single line working can be adopted on the WLL/WCML corridor to ensure maintenance of the Southern WLL service during engineering works.

#### Bletchley remodelling (page 60)

35. We trust that extending Bedford – Bletchley services to/from Milton Keynes will not jeopardise operation of the current Southern WLL/WCML service.

National Stations Improvement Programme (page 60) and Access for All (page 61)

36. We welcome and support improvement of the stations listed.

4.2 Other committed enhancement schemes

Resignalling programme (page 61)

37. We welcome and support the schemes listed.

4.3 Uncommitted schemes

38. We welcome and support all the schemes mentioned here.

High speed line (page 63)

39. To our comments above re “2.7 Linkage to other studies and workstreams” (our paragraphs 21 – 23 above), we would add that we would earnestly hope that our aspirations for a daily half-hourly service between Birmingham, Gatwick and Brighton via the WCML/WLL will finally be realised upon completion of the first stage of HS2 (London to the West Midlands).

4.4 Future demand

4.4.2 Future passenger train loadings

40. Fig 4.10 (page 75) Again, trains in both the mornings and evenings should be shown. This would be key to informing the joint work on the WLL by both the L&SE and WCML RUS teams.

4.4.3 Forecast freight demand (page 78)

41. There is no mention of how Channel Tunnel freight is to grow and what impact this would have, if not re-routed, on the WCML/WLL corridor. We would hope that this would inform decisions on the Redhill flyover and other infrastructure elsewhere.

Chapter 5. Gaps and options

Generic Gaps

1. OC: On-train capacity (page 82)

Gap OC1 (paragraphs 6 and 9 on page 83)

42. We would suggest considering using WLL and its terminal capacity at Kensington Olympia, Clapham Junction and/or Waterloo to meet capacity problems at Euston (see 3.5 above).

Gap OC2 (page 85)

43. The Group very much welcomes the option to lengthen these trains and the relevant WLL platforms. However, in order to keep pace with developments

elsewhere on the network, such as the actual utilisation of 12-car trains into Euston and the similar planned extensions of the South London Metro trains, the WLL platforms should be extended to 12-cars.

44. Standing arising from some of those joining either of the two Monday-Friday morning peak Southern trains from Milton Keynes before Shepherd's Bush and not leaving until there or a point farther south would also appear to breach the DfT "20-minute" guideline.
45. Moreover, while it appears that the greater focus of this RUS is the London-bound morning peak overcrowding and, as much as that happens southbound in the morning peak on this service and northbound in the evening peak, there is also crowding in the reverse direction at those times, principally between Clapham Junction and Shepherd's Bush. While this crowding may not be breach of the "20-minute" DfT guideline, it is nevertheless very severe in terms of volume.
46. We would also recommend that, in the final RUS, the words "at least" be inserted between the words, "service frequency to", and the words, "two trains in the peaks" (paragraph 2).

### 3. JT: Journey time (page 88)

#### Assessments of Options JT1.1 – JT2.1 (pages 90-93); and Gap JT5 (page 101)

47. We remain sceptical of the net overall social benefits of providing a train service that majors on reducing a journey time of four-and-a-half hours by just 17 minutes and increasing the number of seats between London and Manchester by a third, yet, through the resultant impossibility of stopping at intermediate stations, encourages car use between London, the West Midlands and the North West. We would suggest that this is revisited with some flexibility or pragmatism being exercised in favour rail, with some trains at least during some periods during the week stopping intermediately. The RUS period ends in 2024; the HS2 Consultation Document confirms that it is not proposed to be open between London and Birmingham until 2026 – and this assumes that all goes well, i.e., Government is not dissuaded or discouraged by public opposition and/or there are no legal, financial, construction or related complications.
48. We welcome and support the additional services noted under "Concept" in the Assessments for Options JT1.1 and JT1.2 (pages 90-93). We trust that they will offer good connections in both directions with the Southern WLL service at Milton Keynes or Watford Junction. Only if – and heaven forbid – the Southern WLL service in the future does not run north of Watford Junction, then we would want each train on these proposed services to call there, rather than just Milton Keynes, again to provide good connections with the Southern WLL service.
49. As we stated in our Introduction above, we would hope that there would be overall net social benefits of allowing the Friday evening, weekend and Sunday afternoon/evening timetable to incorporate stops at important intermediate points such as Watford Junction, Milton Keynes and Nuneaton, without completely overturning the desire for modal change from air or road to rail between London and Manchester or Glasgow. This appears to be directly

in line with the objective stated in Section 3.7 (Second Bullet Point) in this draft RUS.

#### 4. RL: Regional links (page 101)

50. We would also say that there is an important regional gap not among those listed, i.e., between the main WCML corridor – West London – Southern England, and we would ask that this also be appraised. Up until as recently as December 2008 there were two services on different routes between Sussex and the West Midlands (Cross-Country and Southern) and the potential of forthcoming developments in the WLL corridor alongside general growth in rail demand on the extended WLL corridor should not be overlooked.
51. Another gap is that between the main WCML corridor and Heathrow. Presumably demand parameters are already known and proved satisfactory between Heathrow and Birmingham/Manchester for HS2 to have progressed to the point it has. However, such WCML corridor demand for Heathrow would not include that from south of these two points, although presumably this much exist. As Crossrail will be built within the RUS period, an appraisal should now be made of the Regional Link between the WCML/WLL southern corridor and Heathrow via its interchange with Crossrail in the Old Oak Common area.
52. This would further provide benefits for rail growth on the links between the Coventry/Crewe/Stoke to Wembley Central corridors and the Acton to Reading axis, while also having the potential to relieve stress on (i) the NW quadrant of the M25, (ii) other roads in this sector of the Home Counties, (iii) Euston and Paddington stations, and (iv) the tube network between them.

#### Assessment of Option RL3.1 (page 104)

53. If the link between the Potteries and Manchester Airport has been appraised, then so should that between the West and South Midlands and the UK's premier international airports at Gatwick and Heathrow. The former would appear to have an end-to-end journey time of about 1hr 50min to traverse 74 miles, with only two large conurbations, Derby (237,000) and Stoke (259,000), benefitting from a direct link to Manchester Airport. The Assessment's BCR is 1.0 and its Conclusion is a recommendation for further development.
54. In direct comparison, it also takes about 1hr 55min to travel distance between Milton Keynes and Gatwick Airport, which is also 74 miles, but has a catchment population of 816,000 north of the Thames. We would hope that the BCR would at least match that above and that further work on improving this link is taken forward.
55. A decision to build the interchange at Old Oak Common between the WCML/WLL and Crossrail corridors has yet to be taken. However, the numbers of potential users are very significant indeed. In the Coventry/Crewe/Stoke to Wembley Central corridors is a total catchment of 1.625 million and that on the Acton to Reading axis is 614,000.

56. Although strictly outside the WCML area, further regard needs to be taken of this opportunity by the WCML RUS team in conjunction with their colleagues working on the London & SE RUS, on Crossrail and on HS2.

Gaps RL4 – RL7 (page 105)

57. We would urge that as many stops at Milton Keynes or Watford Junction as possible are included in these options, especially at the times of the week suggested in paragraph 5 of our Introduction above.

Gap RL14 (page 109)

58. We would strongly urge that the option of linking this item with the that in the fifth paragraph under “Train services” on page 6 of this draft RUS be fully explored with the aim of establishing a morning Birmingham (c.0700) – Milton Keynes (c.0750) – Clapham Junction (c.0910) service, as this would simultaneously deal with two issues in this RUS. Moreover, its return at c.0920 would ease demand pressure on the southern end of the WLL at that time and also provide a useful link from SW/W London to the West Midlands (c.1130 arrival in Birmingham).

59. A reverse operation to that in the morning could also provide a useful extra mid/late afternoon train from the West Midlands to West/SW London, whose return would also meet the growing demand from Clapham Junction northwards on to the WCML.

60. Such links could be seen as partial replacement for the WLL Cross-Country service withdrawn in December 2008.

7.SC: Station passenger handling capacity (page 111)

61. Again, the RUS should recognise the opportunity for relieving overcrowding at Euston by use of the interchange and terminal facilities on the WLL.

Please let me know if you or your colleagues would like any further background information on any of the above. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Mark Balaam  
Chairman

*WLLG SUGGESTIONS FOR ALTERATIONS AT CLAPHAM JUNCTION*

If Platform 1 is not restored for use by LO WLL trains before ELLX2 arrives at Clapham Junction and Platform 2 is reconfigured as planned for both LO's WLL and SLL trains, this will result in:-

- a) neither part of the reconfigured Platform 2 being able to cope with trains longer than 4-cars, when this strategy calls for 8-car trains on the WLL
- b) dangerous levels of crowding on the reconfigured Platform 2 given the variety of conflicting passenger movements (i) between the different parts of Platform 2 and the two already-inadequate platform exits and (ii) interchanging between WLL and SLL trains. Such dangers would be augmented by the location of the refreshment facility in the building on this platform and would be further increased during any disruption of either service at this station.
- c) Platform 16 (extended if necessary to accommodate the lengthening of the Southern and other WLL trains) and both its approaches need to be bi-directionally signalled. This improvement would then allow these longer trains to terminate, or stop in either direction, at Clapham Junction.
- d) Beyond this we believe that two new terminating platforms (A and B) should be constructed parallel and to the north of Platforms 1 and 2 to accommodate WCML, GWML, Chiltern and/or other services that cannot be accommodated in their traditional London terminals. We believe that the interchanges at Shepherd's Bush, West Brompton and Clapham Junction would be attractive enough for sizeable numbers of passengers, especially given general growth in rail travel generally, to use these links instead of traditional termini and connecting tube lines to warrant investment in these two new platforms.
- e) Furthermore, on the south side of the station, we believe that Platform 17 should become an island platform with the two faces separated by two south-facing bay platforms to accommodate the proposed London Overground service from Crystal Palace via Balham.
- f) Finally, all these 22 platforms should be crossed at high level by Platforms Y and Z on our proposed HS2 – HS1 link via Merstham Parkway