

Nigel Smith

From: Daniel Washington
Sent: 30 March 2020 12:03
To: LTP@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Subject: Hertfordshire County Council Rail Strategy Consultation

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of NHDC (North Hertfordshire District Council), thank you for this opportunity to respond to HCC's (Hertfordshire County Council's) Rail Strategy Consultation. ***Please note that this an updated response from the previous one I submitted earlier and as such should replace it – thanks.***

NHDC supports both the role and purpose of the Rail Strategy, providing a means for HCC, both directly and on behalf of the ten Boroughs and Districts in Hertfordshire to engage Government, rail industry and stakeholders to promote rail services and future investment in Hertfordshire for the benefit of residents, visitors and the wider economic development across the county.

In response to the consultation, NHDC would like to highlight the following points for your consideration in the final version of the Rail Strategy:

Introduction

1.4 Hertfordshire County Council's Role:

- NHDC both recognises and fully supports the list of activities that HCC currently undertakes to support rail growth in Hertfordshire, as such we would argue in the strongest terms that these continue to be maintained and where opportunities are available, seek to build on these further. As such, NHDC will always welcome opportunities to collaborate with HCC, the rail industry and stakeholders to this end.

Overall Aspirations

3.2 Service Levels:

- NHDC fully supports HCC's wishes for future train service levels, both with regards to minimum frequencies and first/last trains, to/from London, especially from stations in North Hertfordshire.
- NHDC also strongly supports Stevenage continuing as an InterCity rail head, which benefits local residents in North Hertfordshire as for those travelling to/from destinations on the East Coast Mainline as this serves to avoid having to travel into and back out of Central London.

3.4 Access to Stations:

- NHDC fully supports the aspirations of HCC to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes for the 'last mile' journey to access stations, as part of station travel plans. As such NHDC would welcome opportunities to work with HCC, train and bus operators, local stakeholders and communities on projects and schemes to promote these opportunities at all five stations in North Hertfordshire, (Knebworth, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Royston). In addition, recognising that many residents in the District regularly

use Ashwell & Morden Station, which although is just within Cambridgeshire, NHDC would also welcome opportunities to incorporate a similar approach for this station, with the above partners and Cambridgeshire County Council.

3.8 Interchanges:

- NHDC welcomes HCC's ongoing commitment to enhance interchange facilities at stations, to encourage the use of sustainable modes, including buses and/or public transport and taxis for first/last journeys to/from stations. Whilst recognising that there can be limitations for a variety of reasons, including accessibility, land ownership, etc. NHDC, working in partnership with relevant borough and district councils will welcome all opportunities to see interchange improvements at all five stations in the District, as well as Ashwell & Morden Station.

East Coast Main Line

- NHDC supports most of the aspirations that HCC have listed for the East Coast Main Line, seeing each of them having benefits for residents, businesses and visitors to North Hertfordshire, with the following provisos:
 - We would like to see Hitchin Station Eastern Access prioritised. Currently access to/from the station is on the western side only exacerbates the bottleneck as pedestrians and vehicles on the eastern side of the railway have to funnel under the existing narrow bridge on the A505. With the planned new housing development, including the strategic site at Highover Farm, plus the existing North Hertfordshire College campus, there is an urgent need to identify ways to open up the eastern access to Hitchin Station to release some of this pressure, that is expected to become more severe in the future if not mitigated.
 - We would welcome more details on the proposal for a new rail link between Stevenage and Luton, especially as the route would presumably be across North Hertfordshire between the two towns. Whilst NHDC welcomes investment in existing and new rail services that will benefit the District, it is difficult to give a view, either in support or against a proposed scheme when so little information has been provided. There will be considerable planning constraints that would need to be addressed and carefully considered before such a proposal could proceed.
- NHDC supports all the detailed station improvements needed that have been identified by HCC, we would add the following additional aspirations:
 - Knebworth – disabled access.
 - Letchworth Garden City – the introduction of a new interchange at the station, similar to Hitchin and/or Hatfield Station's to improve integration between sustainable transport modes as has been mentioned above.
 - Royston – improved bus/rail integration; currently the nearest bus stops are located away from the station acting as a disincentive to encourage bus use to/from the station. As such, we would welcome the opportunity to work with HCC, the rail industry, bus operators and local stakeholders to understand and identify ways to improve this.
 - We would welcome reference to Ashwell & Morden Station, given its usage by residents in the District and its very close proximity to Hertfordshire. Accepting that this may be considered an unusual proposal, should HCC be willing to do this then NHDC would be happy to offer our support.
 - NHDC is aware of the recent Cambridge Corridor Study (2019) study published by Network Rail which considers future rail capacity in the Cambridge area and the public consultation on the proposal for a new Cambridge South Station (2019). Whilst welcoming future investment in the rail network in Cambridge and

new Station for the wider benefits these will bring for commuters and other rail users in North Hertfordshire, we would strongly encourage HCC to be fully engaged in all future meetings and consultations in regards to these developments, to ensure that these don't inadvertently lead to any detrimental outcomes to the existing Cambridge line service between Hitchin and Cambridge.

Strategic Projects

5.2 East West Rail:

- NHDC fully supports the East West Rail project recognising the benefits it is expected to generate when it fully opens, providing new travel opportunities and contributing to the wider economic development both locally and across the wider region, as part of the Government's wider vision for the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge arc. Whilst the route of the new line itself won't pass through Hertfordshire, NHDC would encourage HCC to lobby in the strongest terms to champion improvements to both existing and future transport links, between the stations along the route and towns in North Hertfordshire, where appropriate, to ensure that local residents, businesses and visitors can still benefit from the new line when it opens.

Other Projects

8.1 Community Rail:

- NHDC fully supports the concept of Community Rail Partnerships and welcomes the recognition and ongoing commitment HCC gives towards Community Rail in Hertfordshire. NHDC currently has aspirations to see a Community Rail Partnership established along the Cambridge line that serves the stations in the District, including Knebworth and Ashwell & Morden Station's. As such, looking to the future, NHDC would welcome support from HCC to assist with the creation of a new CRP to this end in the District as and when the opportunity becomes available.

We hope that these comments and suggestions are helpful, being taken into consideration for the final version of the updated Rail Strategy; our thanks again for inviting NHDC to be able to provide comments and feedback.

Kind regards,

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