

APPENDIX D

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Our Ref:
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Anglia Route Study Consultation
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Dear Sir or Madam,

Suffolk County Council Consultation Response to the Draft Anglia Route Study Consultation

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to Network Rail's consultation on the Draft Anglia Route Study.

Suffolk is part of a region that has one of the highest numbers of passenger and freight miles in the UK; both of which are expected to grow significantly over the next five years. It is therefore imperative that Network Rail's short and long-term investment plans supports the county's current and future rail needs.

Ipswich to Peterborough

This is nowhere more evident than on the line between Ipswich and Peterborough, where there is a critical need for a direct hourly passenger rail service between the two areas.

Suffolk County Council, alongside its business and local authority partners, remain concerned about proposals for rail services between Ipswich and Peterborough. The Anglia Route Study consultation document states that the current two-hourly Ipswich to Peterborough passenger rail service could be replaced by an hourly service between Ipswich and Ely, with a split and join passenger service connecting to other trains travelling to or via Peterborough. The county council and its partners have long been campaigning for a direct hourly service between Ipswich and Peterborough to be included in the new long-term franchise. This issue was raised by officers at the Anglia Route Study Workshops, held by Network Rail, and in our responses to the Market Studies.

The Anglia Route Study does not fully commit to an hourly Ipswich to Peterborough passenger service. The document mentions a 'split and join' service at Ely, which raises concerns about passengers having to depart from one train to another at Ely, which is unacceptable. The concept of a 'split and join' service also raises issues if the connecting train is delayed or cancelled. Network Rail's Improving Connectivity consultation document already claims that '...good connections are the exception rather than the norm at Ely'. The document then proposes a solution for reducing congestion at Ely station – the development of an interchange hub in the vicinity of Ely North Junction to allow cross-platform services to connect. The document contains no timescales for developing the hub or information about funding to undertake such a scheme.

From our studies, we know that an hourly Ipswich to Peterborough passenger service will deliver over **£60m** in economic benefits for the Suffolk economy. It will support housing and jobs growth, as well as greatly benefit business and enable more access across Suffolk to Stansted (via Ely), the Midlands, the North East, North West and Scotland. This will make it easier for the business community from all over the UK to visit, and invest in, the growing economies of Ipswich, Stowmarket and Bury St Edmunds

Infrastructure constraints at Ely do not only affect rail services between Ipswich and Peterborough, but also the Great Eastern Mainline (as identified by the Anglia Route Study). There is a desperate need to improve infrastructure at Ely to accommodate the 48 freight trains per day by 2019 that will travel from the expanding Port of Felixstowe (increasing to 60 trains per day by 2024). We are pleased that the Government has committed to upgrade the freight route between Felixstowe and Birmingham, using the Strategic Freight Network fund. However, we understand that work at Ely is in danger of slipping into CP6. Improvements to Ely North Junction are due to be delivered by May 2017, yet no date has been given for providing additional track capacity between Ely and Soham and there is a need to upgrade level crossings, which are presently entirely unfunded. It is important that infrastructure being delivered at Ely does not favour one service over another, and is mutually beneficial to all services.

Great Eastern Mainline

The route study contains a number of options for funders for improving capacity on the Great Eastern Mainline (GEML). We feel that early doubling of the Felixstowe Branch Line and making improvements on cross-country routes will significantly enhance track capacity and line speeds on the Great Eastern Mainline. Improvements should include additional track capacity between Ely and Soham (as previously mentioned) and Haughley Junction, and enabling headway reductions on the Bury St Edmunds Line, all of which will hold high value for money. The infrastructure improvements have the added bonus of improving line speeds and reliability of a number of passenger and freight services, as opposed to simply providing for the needs of the GEML service.

We entirely endorse the findings of the GEML Taskforce (appointed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer), which will help to shape short-term infrastructure plans for the mainline. Commitment to remodel Bow Junction (as identified in Network Rail's CP5 Delivery Plan); address level crossing issues; replace overhead power lines between Norwich and Chelmsford; improve signals, and provide additional track capacity between Chelmsford and Witham will do much to increase line speeds and service frequencies. We know that such improvements (predicted to cost £476m), alongside new rolling stock, will deliver £4.5bn in economic benefits for the East Anglia region. It is essential that commitment to improve infrastructure is timed to happen within the new East Anglia Rail Franchise.

We understand from the Improving Connectivity consultation document that a new focus by Network Rail will see connectivity being prioritised before line speed. Although we agree that connectivity is important, reducing journey times will provide better access between areas and encourage train travel. With further regards to connectivity, we are strongly opposed to suggestions that Norwich in 90 could be achieved by skipping some Suffolk stations, as indicated on page 79. It is essential that stopping patterns, fast services and decent rolling stock benefit all counties on the GEML. Improving Connectivity includes a proposal for a fast direct service between Norwich and London being routed via Ely and Cambridge, however, this raises issues about the costs of infrastructure improvements (such as line electrification and improvements to level crossings at Brandon) to enable the service. Such investment would surely have better value for money on the GEML, serving three counties.

No infrastructure plans are included in the Anglia Route Study for improving services between Sudbury and London. Passengers currently have to change trains at Marks Tey to connect with mainline services. Additional capacity on the Great Eastern Mainline would allow for a direct rail

service between Sudbury and London. Early electrification of the branch line with perhaps a new junction later will provide a direct rail link between Sudbury and the GEML.

East Suffolk Line

We agree with the route study's recommendations that the implementation of a passing place is needed between Woodbridge and Saxmundham, but care must be taken with its location to minimise disruption to residents nearby the station. The opportunity for investment in additional tracking between Woodbridge and Saxmundham could be delivered as part of the proposed Sizewell C development; however the delivery of the loop should not be solely dependent on the development of Sizewell C.

We also believe that Wickham Market Station is incorrectly named. The station is located in Campsea Ashe (two miles away from Wickham Market). This causes a number of issues for passengers wanting to access Wickham Market, only to discover when they arrive at the railway station that it is located far away from the village. No taxis wait at the station, so the only access is by foot along narrow country roads that are devoid of adequate footpaths. It is essential that the station is renamed to better reflect its location. Commitment should be made to do this before the start of the new franchise in October 2016.

Additional loops or double tracking is required along other sections of single track on the East Suffolk Line, especially between Halesworth and Brampton, and between Oulton Broad and Lowestoft. In addition to the loop, there are capacity issues at Westerfield Junction that should be addressed. If more capacity is not provided, it will become even more constrained by the additional 5 tpd servicing the new Sizewell C power station. Westerfield Station should also be relocated to better serve the Ipswich Northern Fringe development of around 3,000 homes. The station relocation would also provide a more suitable crossing (a bridge) over the railway line.

We are pleased that the potential for electrification of the Felixstowe Branch Line is being explored by Network Rail's Electrification Strategy as a potential scheme to be funded in CP6. Electrification is desperately needed on the Felixstowe Branch Line to improve the punctuality and reliability of passenger rail services, which are currently marred by cancellations and delays. It will also help to provide the track capacity needed to support the additional freight trains. The Port of Felixstowe, together with the Haven Gateway, provides over 30,000 jobs to the county's workforce; contributes an annual £780 million to the economy; and over £1 billion a year in wages.

A long-term aspiration should also be for full electrification on the East Suffolk Line between Lowestoft and Ipswich. This will help to generate faster line speeds.

Ipswich to Cambridge

We are pleased that the Anglia Route Study contains proposals for a half-hourly Ipswich to Cambridge service by Control Period 7. However, we are concerned by the detail contained within Improving Connectivity for a second service commencing at Stowmarket, and the route study suggestions that it may be impractical to provide direct trains. Passengers would be deterred from using services if they are required to change trains or wait for services to join. Such proposals would encourage more car use, as well as provide a disruptive journey for passengers using the new East West rail service. Suffolk County Council expects electrification of the line between Ipswich and Cambridge, which would tie in with the electrification work between Felixstowe and Birmingham. The Anglia Route Study claims that a line speed increase to 75mph would be necessary for passing provision at Dullingham without triggering the need for additional infrastructure. A direct rail service between Ipswich and the South West via the new East West Rail Link would require faster line speeds and greater capacity, especially if the route is used for freight. Electrification of the route and additional track is required between Chippenham Junction and Cambridge.

Suffolk County Council also has aspirations to provide better rail connectivity between East Suffolk and the strong Cambridge economy. We have considered the benefits of a direct hourly passenger rail service connecting Felixstowe with Cambridge (via Ipswich), which could act as the additional hourly service (creating a half-hourly service on the line between Ipswich and Cambridge). A recent study commissioned by the county council shows a direct hourly service between Felixstowe and Cambridge would generate a combined economic and revenue benefit of over £140m over a 60-year period. It therefore presents good value for money.

Level Crossings

The Anglia Route Study indicates that further information about level crossings will be included in the final document. However, it is important that all information is shared within the consultation phase to ensure that all points of view can be raised.

In Suffolk there is a desire for faster line speeds and more frequent services, but this has to be balanced with demands for access. Efforts must be made to consult and work with local communities when considering options for making changes to level crossings.

Two road level crossings in Suffolk require desperate attention. The level crossings in Brandon and in Oulton Broad North cause serious traffic congestion at most times of the working day, which can result in drivers taking risks. In the case of Oulton Broad North, the barrier waiting time is affected by the location of the signal box. This issue will be addressed under the resignalling work being undertaken by Network Rail; however this work will not begin until 2016, despite the urgent need to address the barrier waiting time. At Brandon, the currently hourly Norwich to Cambridge train already causes issues of congestion. Norfolk County Council's aspiration for a half-hourly Norwich to Cambridge service would cause further issues for the highways. The county council would like to see the issues for both level crossings resolved as early as possible.

Stations

The county council welcomes the £200m Station Improvement Fund (SIF), as allocated in CP5. Suffolk, alongside other neighbouring counties in the region, is in the unique position where the franchise holder has responsibility for maintaining and renewing its stations. Maintenance and renewals lists are therefore determined by the franchisee and Network Rail.

We would like to see the Station Improvement Fund continued within new control period funding rounds. A key challenge in leveraging the station infrastructure improvement fund is the requirement to secure third party funding. This presents a problem in the current climate where public sector funds are stretched and where third party funding is scarce. It results in the abandonment of much needed schemes. Newmarket station is an example of where improvement is required, but third party funding is not possible. As highlighted in a recently published Prince's Trust report, the station is the gateway to the horse racing industry and the town. However, the single platform and lack of station facilities gives a poor impression of Newmarket to tourists. It also does little to assist the large numbers of passengers using the station daily to commute to work or attend educational establishments. Therefore, Suffolk County Council believes that Network Rail must invest in developing Newmarket station and providing rail infrastructure to achieve faster journey times and more service frequency between Ipswich and Cambridge. Our rail infrastructure requirements particularly apply to doubling part or all of the single track line between Chippenham Junction and Cambridge (the only single section along the route).

Lowestoft Station is another example of where investment is greatly needed to improve the station building and facilities.

No measures are contained within the Anglia Route Study to address the facilities at stations in Sudbury, Stowmarket and Marks Tey, or for the development of a new station at Great Blakenham or Soham.

Marks Tey station is in desperate need of a new or improved footbridge with lifts or an underpass to enable disabled passengers, cyclists and passengers with children or heavy bags to cross between platforms to catch connecting trains to Sudbury. Stowmarket similarly needs better DDA access between platforms. A steep stepped bridge provides access between the two platforms, meaning that cyclists, disabled people, people with pushchairs or heavy luggage must walk along the main road to access the other platform.

A new local station at Great Blakenham would help to serve the village's population increase of approximately 5,000 residents, bringing the total number of residents in Great Blakenham and the adjoining Claydon and Barham villages to over 13,000.

Rolling stock

In addition to infrastructure we are calling for new, high quality trains on all services with air conditioning, automatic doors, Wi-Fi and plug sockets and, as a minimum, a major refurbishment of all passenger trains on all the services to provide a better on-train environment. Network Rail should explore further the merits of new rolling stock in its infrastructure plans.

I hope that Network Rail incorporates the issues raised within this response in the final draft of the Anglia Route Study. All of these priorities are essential for future proofing the county's railways, supporting demand and enabling economic growth.

Yours faithfully

Graham L. Newman (Cllr)
Member for Felixstowe Coastal Division
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