

## Statement of Case Croxley Rail Link

I object to the proposed rail link on the following grounds

### Financial

- The cost of the project has never been clearly and convincingly stated and the proposed budget is not convincing. How can a scheme whose cost has variously been set at £95m in 2008, later in the same year at £150m, be deliverable in 2011 at £117m? So many significant cost items have been under budgeted e.g. the cost of strengthening/widening road/rail bridges previously denied as necessary and now included in the budget; the number of new trains needed to deliver the stated frequency of service set at 1 in the budget but likely to be more.
- All big capital projects overrun so the likely end cost of the project, even allowing for inflation, will be greater than the current funding available and yet it has not been clearly stated who will underwrite any cost overruns.
- It is stated that some of the costs of the development advanced by HCC (£26m) will be re-couped from ticket sales but the likely income from the line once completed is far from certain. This will increase the cost of the project to HCC and one assumes the Council charge payers
- Some third party funds are assumed including Section 106 funds. The regulations state that Section 106 money should be used for work *directly related to the proposed development and should be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development*. Which projects in Watford and Three Rivers have previously generated the Section 106 money which it is now proposed should be diverted to CRL as part of third party contributions? To what value is this contribution? The CRL scheme's proposer should provide a convincing and clear case that the proposed use of Section 106 money for CRL is more appropriate than other uses to which it could be put which relate to the original projects which generated it.
- At a time of economic downturn, shouldn't money be spent on more basic infrastructure projects that demonstrably improve the quality of life for residents of the town? E.g. better bus services and bus lanes? Cycles lanes? Enhancement of green spaces? Cleared drains so roads and pavements don't flood when it rains? Mend the poor road surfaces?
- Much is claimed for the business benefits of the line for Watford, especially in relation to the Hospital Campus but these are not definite or clearly stated whereas the permanent harm to existing successful business activities and the temporary harm to businesses during construction, are clearer. The scheme's proposer should clearly state and quantify the proposed business benefits. Let's not forget that the Rickmansworth Watford line was supposed to draw business to Rickmansworth but had the opposite effect.

### Demand for the new line

- There is no convincing evidence that the line is needed or wanted by numbers of people sufficient to justify the expense and temporary and permanent

impact it will have on local business, the community and the environment. The consultation exercises undertaken have not been convincing in themselves nor produced convincing results. The extension of the Bakerloo line to Watford Junction was after all not well used probably because people who want to do business or work in Watford from London and vice versa already have a fast and reliable link through Watford Junction and until it is taken away, a cheaper if slower, but for many more convenient alternative, in Watford Met and let's not forget that the original Croxley rail link closed for lack of use.

- A main argument is that CRL will relieve traffic congestion and improve quality of life and environment by providing alternatives to private car for trips made within and to/from the area, reducing the adverse effect of road congestion. Where is the evidence that car-drivers will abandon their vehicles and use the line when all around they choose to park if they can? Football fans use the existing stations or park in local school playgrounds and the Holywell housing estate. Staff working in the Business Parks already have ample free parking and are unlikely to opt to walk what would be a considerable distance from the proposed Ascot Road station. Many people may choose to drive and park at Ascot Road to go into London once the Met is closed which will not reduce traffic. Shoppers who are used to parking in multi-storey car parks in the centre of Watford are unlikely to suddenly abandon their cars. The proposer of this scheme talks about a modal shift in people's behaviour in favour of public transport and hopes that making public transport modes more attractive will change behaviour. Why should it? There is no evidence to support this pious statement and the London example shows that a stick is required as well as a carrot. Watford would need a congestion charge or the equivalent to achieve a significant shift in behaviour.
- A second main argument is that CRL will benefit hospital access but these benefits are not supported by evidence and I believe have been overstated. Were the proposed station on the hospital campus which it could be, this would be a strong argument. However as a new access road is planned, and a significant level of car parking already exists and is included even in the new hospital plans, this does not suggest a lot of faith in people's willingness to leave cars at home and use public transport. Where is the evidence that existing hospital staff/visitors will leave cars at home? As for ambulant staff and visitors to the hospital, they will at least be able to access the hospital on foot from the proposed new station without difficulty but older and mobility impaired people will still have a daunting walk from the station which will probably involve taxi pick ups and put downs at a station designed without such facilities.

#### Unnecessary proposed closure of Watford Met

- No convincing evidence has been produced that the proposed Ascot Road station can fulfil as well as Watford Met, the transport needs of commuters, Boys' Grammar School scholars and the many visitors to Watford who want the top of the town, the park, the Collisseum, the college, library or sports centre which are put at a greater distance by the CRL proposal and therefore likely to increase traffic.

## Unsuitability of location of proposed hospital station

- The proposed location for the new hospital station may not have parking or even drop-off area but this will not stop the general public dropping off and picking up outside. This proposed location is doubly unfortunate because it is on a narrow road already congested, especially in the peak hours, by school traffic, with single lane working over the narrow hump back railway bridge and with a significant record of traffic accidents.

## Environmental cost of the line

- The temporary noise, traffic and air pollution problems associated with the construction of this line will be enormous as will be the impact on wildlife in the track corridor. Had the case been made that the line was an essential, well costed and thought out development these would not be so bad.
- More serious however is the permanent noise which will stem from a service which starts at 5am and finishes at 1am operating at intervals of 10 minutes during peak time and 15 minutes during the rest of the day. In other words a train in either direction every 5 minutes peak-time and every 7.5 minutes off peak. All the houses currently lining the route the line will take will suffer from this and from the vibrations which will also result yet at no point in the consultations am I aware has there been talk of noise abatement measures. These are not costed in the budget nor is compensation for the damage to property, especially older Victorian property, that may result from repeated vibration.
- The proposed line will also pass very close to two primary schools. The noise of the line will harm the education of children in both schools as it will interrupt the teachers and distract the children. In the case of Laurence Haines it will provide a significant visual distraction also. At no point in the consultations have impact mitigation measures been suggested and nor do they seem to be included in the budget.
- The proposed line will run alongside the Holywell allotments and more importantly the proposed hospital station will reduce the area of allotment land and extend the full length of the allotment site. At no point in the consultations were noise impact mitigation measures suggested and nor do they seem to be included in the budget. A parcel of replacement land has been proposed but its location and suitability for cultivation is unclear. There is little enough green space in West Watford without reducing it still further.
- The proposed line is likely to ratchet up the over-development of every available plot in the area that becomes available as developers cash in on the proximity of the line. This will further harm the quality of life in the area by making an area which is significantly more densely populated than other areas of the town, district and county, even more congested.

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