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Ms M A Freeman
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Submission by County Councillor Mark Watkin of Nascot Park Division.

Dear Inspector

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to address you this morning on the subject of the proposed Croxley Rail Link. As I represent Park Ward within which sits the present Watford Metropolitan Station and which is planned to be closed as part of the new scheme. My submission will concentrate on the proposed closure of the Metropolitan Station. I wish to suggest a number of mitigating factors to offset the harm that will be experienced by the current users of that station or indeed provide a reasons for its continued operation. I must stress that I oppose the closure and fully support the points raised by Councillor Derbyshire.

I want to start by suggesting a scheme which will both reduce the impact of any closure and will also provide a long needed circular bus service around the town centre. This service will link the key destination hubs that incorporate the Cassiobury Estate, West Herts College, Cassiobury Park Avenue, the new Ascot Road Station, the Hospital, the town centre and the Watford Junction station. While addressing other transport and congestion reducing needs of the town centre it would additionally reduce the impact of the station closure and the harm caused particularly to elderly residents living near to Watford Met Station who will have to travel the extra distance to access a station.

When considering such mitigation factors, I would fully endorse the points made in the London Travel Watch report regarding the necessary improvements to the currently poor quality walking and cycling links to the existing and proposed stations. It is essential that these recommendations are fully taken on board by the CRL team and Herts County Council in particular who would have responsibility for their delivery.

Why is there a need to close the Met Station anyway? The London Travelwatch inquiry report clearly feels that there is not. I refer to their paragraph 6.8 which states that there is a business case for retaining the Watford Met station as part of a split service with the Croxley Rail Link and that a period of two years should be allowed following opening of the CRL for a split service to be trialled

The proposed frequency of train services at Watford Junction – 6-8 per hour at peak times – is lower than the existing capacity at Watford Met station which handles up to 10 per hour. The new service will be capacity limited as it will share line and platform space with London Overground services to Euston.

There is clearly capacity to interleave the new service with services from Watford Met. For example, this could be additional to the planned 6-8 per hour or could be a sharing of the two, say 4 per hour from Watford Met and 6 from Watford Junction. The service at the Met station could be provided full time or at peak times only dependent upon network capacity and demand.

There is one point I would like to bring to your attention. The Croxley Rail report alternatives review wrongly attributes **additional** costs to this option finishing stating that it would need the provision of a junction to the north of Croxley Station. In fact this will be required in any event as the Met Station lines are planned to be retained for stabling purposes.

The provision of the Croxley Rail Link should be treated as part of the wider improvement of East West links through Hertfordshire. This is something which the current plans for the Croxley Rail Link fails to address. I suggest that the solution to this would be establishing a new East West Met line service between Watford Met and Amersham.

This service could operate at anything up to the current peak of 6-8 per hour of the existing service at the Met, interleaving with the CRL services at Croxley. There would be no additional load on services South of Croxley but passengers on either service would have the option of changing trains (without a platform change) at Croxley giving them great flexibility in terms of destination choice.

This new service would fully mitigate the problems arising from the CRL and would open up all of the new developments planned for Watford for residents of West Hertfordshire who are of course customers of facilities such as the planned new Hospital.

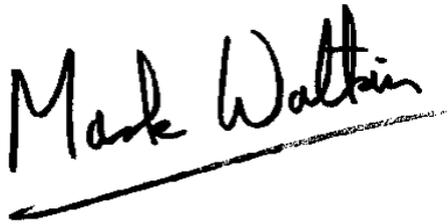
In summary I would urge you to support the retention of the Watford Met Station operational using any one of the three options I have described. Apart from improving the overall service, it will give London Transport the opportunity to test the water in terms of demand and opportunities for new services while retaining a valued service..

Ultimately if the service is not sufficiently used this will be evidenced by experience and the rationale for closure will be self evident.

However if you are moved to agree to the station closure I would urge you to recommend the implementation of the circular bus service I described at the start and your endorsement of the need to improve the pedestrian and cycle access routes from the Cassiobury Triangle area to the new Ascot Road station

I thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Watkin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Mark Watkin
Watford Borough Councillor - Nascot Ward
Hertfordshire County Councillor – Nascot Park Division.