

## SEVENOAKS RAIL TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATION ([www.srta.org.uk](http://www.srta.org.uk))

### Maidstone East – Does the DfT’s Proposal deliver for Kent? An Assessment for KCC.

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#### **What is the basis for assessment?**

The purpose of this note is to provide a basis to assess the forthcoming DfT proposal to deliver the Thameslink service from Maidstone East via Otford and Swanley to the City and beyond. There are currently two fast trains each day from Maidstone East to Blackfriars (leaving at 06.01 and 06.54). These demonstrate timings that are successfully delivered daily.

The new service promised for 2018, via London Bridge and Thameslink, offered much more than this. It created a service running twice an hour throughout the day, to make travel to work fast and convenient. It provided good connections at Otford and Swanley to make access to London fast and easy from Bat & Ball in north Sevenoaks, and to give good connections from and to Eynsford and Shoreham, both for commuters and for tourism development. Perhaps most important was the rapid access it gave to the Jubilee Line (at London Bridge), to Crossrail (at Farringdon) and to mainline services from St Pancras International .

Taken together these elements of the new service were to connect Maidstone and West Kent to London in ways which cater for the needs of new developments at Borough Green and Kings Hill, reducing the need to drive to Sevenoaks, and giving much better connectivity across London’s labour market. In addition, it delivered the only option identified in Network Rail’s Kent Route Study for additional capacity from West Kent to London in the next decade.

Our test in this assessment is how far DfT’s proposal delivers the promise.

#### **What is DfT likely to be offering?**

We do not have details of DfT’s proposed new service. What we do know is that it will use the Catford Loop, which is mainly occupied by slow trains through the day, and so is unlikely to run fast. Also, trains entering Blackfriars from the Catford Loop go to the terminal platforms in the station. They cannot run through the Thameslink core to Farringdon and St Pancras International.

This routing means that the service cannot pass through London Bridge to link up with the Jubilee Line for Docklands. Neither can it make the very valuable links to Crossrail, or to mainline services heading north from London.

We also understand that the trains which were originally expected to deliver the fast Maidstone East service - built to take both third rail and overhead electric supply - have been diverted to the slow all stations service from Rainham, Dartford and Greenwich into London Bridge, Blackfriars and the Thameslink core. It is not clear that the trains available to DfT for their current proposal will have the necessary power supply capability to run from Kent through the Thameslink core

#### **Assessment of what is likely to be offered**

The table compares actual, offered and potential timings. Then we summarise the benefits offered to the community by the original proposal as a checklist to assess any new proposal.

The table below shows the May 2018 service (col 1), the two current services (col 2), possible DfT proposal (col 3) and a “worst case” service calling at all stations (col 4). The journey time for each option is given in the bottom row of the table.

	1	2		3	4
	Original Thameslink Fast Proposal	<b>Timings of the CURRENT two fast services</b> (Maidstone East – London)		Possible DfT proposal	All stations stopping timings
	Proposed May 2018 Timetable <sup>1</sup>	<b>Fastest current service<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Current AM peak service<sup>3</sup></b>	Estimate <sup>4</sup>	Existing slow service timings <sup>5</sup>
Maidstone East	xx.00	<b>xx.00</b>	<b>xx.00</b>	xx.00	xx.00
Barming			<b>xx.05</b>		xx.05
East Malling			<b>xx.08</b>		xx.08
West Malling	xx.07	<b>xx.07</b>	<b>xx.11</b>	xx.07	xx.11
Borough Green	xx.14	<b>xx.14</b>	<b>xx.18</b>	xx.14	xx.18
Kemsing			<b>xx.22</b>		xx.22
Otford	xx.22	<b>xx.22</b>	<b>xx.28</b>	xx.22	xx.28
Swanley	xx.31	<b>xx.31</b>	<b>xx.38</b>	xx.31	xx.40
London Bridge	xx.55				
Bromley South		<b>xx.42</b>	<b>xx.49</b>	xx.42	xx.52
Blackfriars	xx.01 (+1)	<b>xx.07 (+1)</b>	<b>xx.13 (+1)</b>	xx.18 (+1)	xx.28 (+1)
Farringdon	xx.06 (+1)				
St Pancras International	xx.10 (+1)				
<b>Time – MDE-BFR</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>1.28</b>

Notes:

1. Timing in the May 2018 Thameslink timetable published in June 2017
- 2.
3. 06.01 service from Maidstone East – Blackfriars
4. 06.54 service from Maidstone East – Blackfriars
5. Timings assume semi-fast to Bromley South and all stations thereafter
6. Timings for an all stations service based on existing timetables 06.22 from MDE, 08.52 from SEV changing at Otford

**Does the DfT proposal deliver real gains to rail travellers?**

1. Does the service offer a start to close of business service every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday?
2. Is the service fast enough to attract commuters away from the SE mainline and hence fulfil Network Rail's objective of exploiting the only opportunity to increase peak capacity across west and mid Kent?
3. Are timings fast enough to deter environmentally damaging railheading along country roads to reach the SE mainline and other services?
4. Will the new service provide fast access to London from Bat & Ball and for Darent Valley line stations via well timed same platform changes at Swanley?
5. Does it provide access to Heathrow and Docklands with just one change (by changing to Crossrail at Farringdon)?

**Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association believe that the indicative DfT proposal fails on all criteria except the first.**

KCC should not accept this as an interim service, except on the conditions that there are clear commitments: 1) to order the trains needed for the fast service; 2) to complete any outstanding infrastructure work; 3) that paths through Thameslink Core must be protected until this is done.