



WEST MALLING PARISH COUNCIL

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Kent County Council
County Hall
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8th February 2021

FAO the Scrutiny Committee.

Dear Sir,

We refer to the publication of Kent County Council's *Kent Rail Strategy 2021*.

Following a meeting of the Parish Council on Monday 1 February 2021, we write to express disappointment that the strategy does not push more strongly for the introduction of the services to St Pancras and beyond as originally promised. The failure to include this in the *Summary of Recommended Actions* on page 61 is unacceptable.

It is, however, our fervent hope that the comments made in paragraphs 4.14 and 4.15, and the service patterns set out in table 11 on page 42, are vigorously lobbied for as an *absolute minimum*. It is imperative that West Malling is included in the completion of the whole Thameslink service programme – many residents have moved to the area to avail themselves of the promised services and the continued delay will only put more pressure on existing services, and may ultimately lead to residents moving away. Although members would prefer to see services extended to St Pancras and beyond, as originally promised, at the very least all-day services *must* be introduced to Blackfriars once normal service levels are restored post-lockdown, and no later than the December 2021 timetable introduction. This is even more essential with the suspension of Eurostar services from Ebbsfleet and Ashford until at least 2022, where residents have to travel to St Pancras first.

We welcome the acknowledgement in paragraph 7.3 that West Malling is a high-growth area, and thus the failure of the *Strategy* to not push more forcefully for the full introduction of Thameslink services through central London is both puzzling and disappointing.

Although we welcome much in the report, the continued failure to introduce the promised Maidstone East to Cambridge services does much to diminish any benefit to the residents of West Malling and surrounding towns and villages, and urge the Council to reconsider its strategy to push more vigorously for the introduction of the originally promised services.

Finally we look forward to receiving more information regarding the Maidstone East Line CRP as set out in paragraph 9.15 since communication and interaction with the communities it is supposed to represent appears to have been lacking to date.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Claire Christmas
Clerk to West Malling Parish Council