

From: Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport

Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director for Growth, Enterprise and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee -17 November

Subject: Kent County Council response to Govia Thameslink Railway 2018 Timetable Consultation

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This report sets out the proposed KCC response to the consultation on proposed changes to the 2018 timetable for Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR).

The proposed response to the timetable consultation is set out in **Appendix A** to this report, and is based on the extensive questionnaire prepared by GTR for this purpose. The response reflects the Council's primary concerns for the existing and proposed rail services operated in Kent by Southern and Thameslink, and also for the retention of good connectivity between Kent and Gatwick Airport.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport on the proposed decision to approve the response to the Govia Thameslink Railway 2018 timetable consultation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) operates rail services under the brand names of Gatwick Express, Great Northern, Southern and Thameslink. GTR have recently launched a public consultation on the timetable for 2018.

1.2 This report sets out the key points for KCC, and a proposed draft response to the consultation.

2. The Proposed Response

2.1 Kent County Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) consultation on the changes proposed for the 2018 timetable.

- 2.2 The changes proposed in the consultation will represent the most significant step-change in the railway network in south-east England for a generation, with the introduction of new through services between destinations north and south of the River Thames.
- 2.3 The Council recognises that the principal driver of these changes is the wider Thameslink Programme, which will deliver greatly improved connectivity across south-east England and which will especially benefit the county town of Maidstone. The Council's primary concerns are therefore with the new Thameslink services proposed for Kent, and also with the cross-border Southern services which link Kent with destinations in Surrey and East Sussex.
- 2.4 The Council also highlights the importance of maintaining good connectivity between Kent and Gatwick Airport. These issues have all been set out in detail in our response to the consultation.
- 2.5 The detailed proposed response to GTR, based on their public consultation questionnaire, is set out at **Appendix A**.
- 2.6 The questions relating to GTR rail services operating in Kent have all been answered in detail. The questions relating to rail services operating entirely outside Kent have been omitted.

3. Policy Framework

- 3.1 The Council approved the 'Rail Action Plan for Kent' in April 2011. This plan set out the Council's rail policy, and was designed to inform the new Southeastern and Thameslink franchises which were then due to be awarded. Since 2011, the timetable for franchise renewal has been delayed, and in particular the GTR franchise has been re-designed to reflect the infrastructure benefits arising from the Thameslink Programme, most notably the re-building of London Bridge Station.
- 3.2 The Rail Action Plan for Kent acknowledged the important role of the GTR services in Kent:

“...The scope of this Plan encompasses all the national passenger rail services in Kent, including those operated by Southern and First Capital Connect (Thameslink)... “.

[Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, Executive Summary, KCC, April 2011]

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. Equalities Implications

6.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

7. Conclusions

7.1 GTR welcomes a broad and detailed response from stakeholders, which will inform the final decision-making process for the 2018 timetable change.

7.2 The attached Appendix A is the proposed response by Kent County Council to the GTR 2018 timetable consultation. The response highlights the importance of the existing and proposed Thameslink services which are planned for Kent from 2018, as well as the existing Southern services on the three routes which serve the county.

7.3 The proposed GTR timetable represents a significant enhancement to the county's rail network, and members are asked to agree the recommendation to approve the response to the consultation.

8. Recommendation

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport on the proposed decision to approve the response to the Govia Thameslink Railway 2018 timetable consultation.

9. Background Documents

9.1 The GTR timetable consultation is available at:
www.thameslinkrailway.com/2018consultation

10. Appendix A

10.1 Kent County Council response to the consultation on proposals by Govia Thameslink Railway for the December 2018 timetable.

11. Contact details

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APPENDIX A

Kent County Council response to the consultation on proposals by Govia Thameslink Railway for the December 2018 timetable



INTRODUCTION

Kent County Council (KCC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) consultation on the changes proposed for the 2018 timetable.

KCC recognises that the principal driver of these changes is the wider Thameslink Programme, which will deliver greatly improved connectivity across south-east England and which will especially benefit our county town of Maidstone. Our Council's primary concerns are therefore with the new Thameslink services proposed for Kent, and also with the cross-border Southern services which link Kent with destinations in Surrey and East Sussex.

The Council also highlights the importance of maintaining good connectivity between Kent and Gatwick Airport. These issues have all been set out in detail in our response to the consultation.

The responses relate to the numbered questions asked in the GTR consultation document. We note that the consultation refers to the changes planned for the whole of 2018, of which the majority will commence with the timetable change on Sunday 13 May 2018, with the remainder due with the timetable change on Sunday 9 December 2018.

GTR APPROACH TO 2018

Q14

Do you support proposals to approach engineering works differently? Please select all options you support.

KCC supports the following options to facilitate access to the rail network for engineering works:

- Reduced frequency on some routes after 2300 on Weekdays and Saturdays

- Earlier last trains on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays on some routes, but balanced by later last trains on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays
- Later first trains on Sunday mornings on some routes.

THAMESLINK SERVICES

Q15

N/A to Kent

Q16

Do you support the proposal for Thameslink services on the North Kent line serving Greenwich, Abbey Wood, Dartford and Medway Towns?

Yes. This new service, which will replace the existing 2 trains per hour (tph) Southeastern semi-fast service between Charing Cross and Gillingham, will deliver a wider range of connectivity between stations in North Kent and those in the central Thameslink core (Blackfriars, City Thameslink, Farringdon, St Pancras) and further north to/from Luton.

KCC is however concerned that the present proposal would involve the loss of the existing semi-fast stopping pattern, to be replaced with effectively an all stations service between Gravesend and London that omits only Belvedere and Erith. Given the importance of good connectivity between North Kent and Abbey Wood (for Crossrail) from December 2018, and the importance of a direct and fast link between Gravesend, Dartford, Abbey Wood, London Bridge and the central Thameslink core stations, KCC's preference would be for the following stopping pattern for this new Thameslink service:

Rainham – Gillingham – Chatham – Rochester – Strood – Higham – Gravesend - Greenhithe (for Bluewater) – Dartford - Abbey Wood - Woolwich Arsenal – Charlton - Greenwich (for DLR) – London Bridge – Blackfriars - City Thameslink – Farringdon - St Pancras and north to Luton.

Q17

Do you support the proposed increase in frequency of Thameslink services on the Catford Loop line?

Yes. The Catford Loop line, serving stations between Elephant & Castle and Bromley South via Denmark Hill and Catford, is currently served only by a 2tph service. The addition of this new service will increase the overall level of service on this route to 4tph which it requires. In doing so, the need for some of Kent's Mainline services to additionally call at stations such as Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye will be removed.

Q18

Do you support the proposal for Thameslink Maidstone East services to operate via London Bridge instead of Elephant & Castle restoring train services previously withdrawn in 2009?

Yes. KCC strongly supports the new Thameslink service to Maidstone East. The county town has long suffered from poor rail links, and while the addition of High Speed services at Maidstone West in the peaks by Southeastern are a welcome relief, there remains a significant gap in service provision between Maidstone and the City.

The question correctly identifies the loss of the former service, which operated to London Bridge and Cannon Street, in December 2009. Since then, the principal route via Tonbridge and Sevenoaks has suffered from increased demand from rail-heading by passengers from the Maidstone East route, whose preference is to drive to a station with a Cannon Street service rather than use the slow route from Maidstone East to Victoria.

The new proposal to route the Thameslink service via London Bridge rather than Elephant & Castle is therefore especially welcome, as this not only restores the lost link to this station but also adds the four central Thameslink core stations for Maidstone East line passengers. Also welcome is the new proposal to operate this service all day on Mondays to Saturdays, with additional journeys in the peak periods and during the evening to and from Bearsted and Ashford International.

As well as Maidstone East, the new Thameslink service will call at West Malling (for Kings Hill), Borough Green & Wrotham, Otford and Swanley before running non-stop to London Bridge, thus providing a valuable new rail service to the City and beyond for a wide area of mid-Kent.

The routing of the service to and from Cambridge rather than Luton is also welcome, providing as it does a direct connection to East Anglia as well as to many other destinations north of London by a single change at any of the four central Thameslink core stations.

Also, from December 2019 a single change of train at Farringdon will provide direct access to the new Crossrail service, offering for example Maidstone to Bond Street or Heathrow with just a single change of train.

Thameslink to Maidstone East therefore represents a dramatic and much needed enhancement in the provision of rail services for mid-Kent. It will deliver a wider range of destinations for commuters and leisure travellers alike, and will be complimented by a re-build of the main station building and frontage at the centre of Kent's county town.

As such, the new Thameslink service to Maidstone East has the strongest unqualified support from KCC.

Q19

On balance do you support the retention of Caterham and Tattenham Corner services as part of Southern South London Metro?

Yes. The transfer of capacity for new Thameslink services from the South Central sector (which was to have included these services) to the South Eastern sector of the rail network enables the provision of the new proposed Thameslink services to North Kent via Woolwich, and to Orpington via the Catford Loop, both of which will be beneficial for Kent.

Q20

Any other comments in relation to the expanded Thameslink network from 2018?

The new proposed Thameslink network appears to be well balanced, offering a range of routes north and south of the Thames which have been designed to make best use of available resources to deliver the required capacity to meet the differing demands for each route. KCC welcomes especially the two new routes proposed for the county, to Maidstone and Rainham, along with retention of the existing route via Bat & Ball to Sevenoaks.

The challenge will be to ensure that delays incurred by one operator, Thameslink, are not imported to services of another, Southeastern, or vice versa. This will be critical at the interface of both operators' services at London Bridge, where Thameslink services from the North Kent line will need to change between the Cannon Street lines approaching platforms 1, 2 and 3, and the Thameslink lines approaching platforms 4 and 5. Good operational management and control will be essential to maintaining reliability on both networks.

PROPOSED SERVICE FREQUENCIES (tph / minutes)

Thameslink Mainline Route TL7

Cambridge (stopping) – Stevenage – Central Thameslink Core – London Bridge – Swanley – Maidstone East – (Ashford International)

	Mon-Fri Peak	Mon-Fri High Peak	Mon-Sat Daytimes	Mon-Sat Evenings	Sundays
Cambridge to/from Maidstone East	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins
Cambridge to/from Ashford Int	2 trains AM peak 1 train PM peak	2 trains AM peak 1 train PM peak		3 trains (not Sat evenings)	

Q28

The proposed Thameslink service between Cambridge and Maidstone East is only able to serve either St Mary Cray or Swanley due to insufficient time to enable the train to arrive in time to start its return journey from Maidstone East. Please select [at] which station you would prefer the train to call.

Swanley. This station serves a significant population in West Kent, and also provides interchange with services to and from stations on the route via the Medway Towns. The new Thameslink service would also strengthen the link between Swanley and Maidstone.

St Mary Cray is a relatively minor station in Greater London and is more suitably served by the existing 2tph Thameslink service to and from Sevenoaks via Bat & Ball.

Thameslink Metro Route TL8

(Welwyn Garden City) – Central London (via Elephant & Castle) – Catford – Bromley South – Swanley – Otford - Sevenoaks

	Mon-Fri Peak	Mon-Fri High Peak	Mon-Sat Daytimes	Mon-Sat Evenings	Sundays
Welwyn GC to/from Sevenoaks	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins			
London Blackfriars to/from Sevenoaks			2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins

Thameslink Metro Route TL10

Luton – Central London (via London Bridge) – Greenwich – Abbey Wood – Dartford – Rochester - Rainham

	Mon-Fri Peak	Mon-Fri High Peak	Mon-Sat Daytimes	Mon-Sat Evenings	Sundays
Luton to/from Rainham	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins

SOUTHERN SERVICES

Q34 to Q38 - N/A to Kent

Q39 and Q40

REDHILL – EDENBRIDGE – TONBRIDGE SERVICES

PROPOSED SERVICE FREQUENCIES (tph / minutes)

Southern Mainline Route SN5.2

London Victoria – East Croydon – Purley – Coulsdon South – Redhill - Tonbridge

	Mon-Fri Peak	Mon-Fri High Peak	Mon-Sat Daytimes	Mon-Sat Evenings	Sundays
London Victoria to/from Tonbridge via Redhill	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins

A 2tph service would continue to be provided to London Victoria originating from Reigate and Tonbridge (during off-peak periods). It is proposed that these trains would call at Merstham, Coulsdon South, Purley, East Croydon, Clapham Junction and London Victoria. Under these proposals passengers travelling from [Tonbridge and] Redhill to London Victoria will see the journey time increased from 30 to 39 minutes during off-peak periods when compared with a similar journey today due to the additional stops.

Do you support this proposal?

Yes. The most important attribute of the Tonbridge – Edenbridge – Redhill – London service is that it provides a through service on every day of the week between the stations on the Tonbridge – Redhill route and London Victoria. The additional running time is a marginal disbenefit, as this is a convenient, rather than a fast, route to London.

The additional stops which extend the running time are necessary to serve these stations, as this permits the Thameslink services to provide a fast and direct service between Redhill, London Bridge and the central core Thameslink stations.

Q41 and Q42 - N/A to Kent

Q43

There are no significant changes proposed to the frequency of trains on the route [between London and Tonbridge via Redhill] throughout the week.

In future, it is proposed that most trains on this route will serve Clapham Junction and London Victoria on all days of the week. Monday to Friday peak trains will continue to be provided as either through London trains or shuttle trains between Redhill and Tonbridge as currently.

Do you have any specific comments in relation to services between Redhill and Tonbridge?

KCC welcomes the proposal to retain the through service on the majority of journeys between Tonbridge and London Victoria via Redhill. This route provides an essential link between Kent and Surrey, as well as a through service from Tonbridge, Leigh, Penshurst and Edenbridge to London. It is also used extensively

by entitled school pupils who travel from Edenbridge and other stations to schools in either Tonbridge or Oxted.

SPECIAL NOTE CONCERNING KENT – GATWICK RAIL SERVICES

Connections at both Tonbridge and Redhill are important for rail passengers from Kent, especially those needing to travel to/from Gatwick Airport. KCC welcomes the proposed timetable for the standard off-peak hour, and requests that the greatly improved connections at Tonbridge which were introduced with the December 2015 timetable are continued.

The following tables demonstrate this improved connectivity during the standard off-peak hour between some of the principal towns in Kent and Gatwick Airport by changing at Tonbridge and Redhill:

KENT – GATWICK AIRPORT: EXISTING RAIL CONNECTIONS TO BE RETAINED

STANDARD OFF-PEAK HOUR

Ashford Int			10:32	
Maidstone West	10:28			
Tunbridge Wells		10:51		
Tonbridge	10:55	11:00	11:08	
Tonbridge				11:19
Redhill				11:50
Redhill				11:54
Gatwick Airport				12:01

Gatwick Airport	09:52			
Redhill	10:06			
Redhill	10:09			
Tonbridge	10:39			
Tonbridge		10:47	10:53	11:04
Tunbridge Wells		10:58		
Maidstone West				11:32
Ashford Int			11:30	

KCC would want to keep open the option of a through rail service between Kent and Gatwick Airport in the future. This would however be dependent on a satisfactory revised business case which demonstrated a positive benefit : cost ratio for a through service.

Q44 to Q46 – N/A to Kent

Q47

Which option do you support [for evening and Sunday services between Tonbridge and Redhill]?

KCC supports the proposal for revised evening and Sunday services which are consistent with the daytime frequency, and which would include direct trains between London Victoria, Redhill and Tonbridge.

This will be especially welcome by users of this route on Sundays, whose service currently terminates at London Bridge rather than Victoria. There has been a consistent view among members of the Tonbridge – Redhill Community Rail Partnership that Victoria should be the London terminus on every day of the week, with the London Bridge service retained only for Monday to Friday peak periods.

For these reasons the main proposals for this route are supported by KCC.

Q48 to Q51 – N/A to Kent

BRIGHTON – EASTBOURNE – HASTINGS – RYE – ASHFORD SERVICES

Q52

Which option [to address overcrowding issues on trains between Brighton and Ashford International] do you support?

PROPOSED SERVICE FREQUENCIES (tph / minutes)

Southern Mainline Route SN9.4 (Coastway East)

Brighton – Lewes – Eastbourne – Hastings – Rye – Ashford International

	Mon-Fri Peak	Mon-Fri High Peak	Mon-Sat Daytimes	Mon-Sat Evenings	Sundays
Brighton to and from Eastbourne (4-carriage electric)	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins
Eastbourne to and from Ashford International (2-carriage diesel)	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins

Rye to and from Ashford International (2-carriage diesel)	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins	Included in above	Included in above	Included in above
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Trains between Brighton and Ashford International were introduced in 2005 and are operated by 2-carriage diesel trains, taking into account the line is not electrified between Ore and Ashford International. These trains form a fast inter-urban service between Brighton and Ashford International serving principal stations.

Research undertaken by GTR Southern indicates that the majority of passengers boarding at Ashford or Brighton travel only as far as Eastbourne. By operating a revised service between Ashford, Rye, Hastings and Eastbourne, GTR Southern would be able to provide the additional electric 4-carriage capacity trains required between Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings to address the very high levels of overcrowding on that section of the route.

Furthermore, the timings of the Marshlink service between Ashford and Eastbourne would no longer be constrained by the requirements of terminating at Brighton. For example, the whole service could, if required, operate a few minutes later throughout in both directions (passing at Rye at the same times) which would enhance connectivity between High Speed, Mainline and Marshlink services at Ashford International.

For these reasons, and given the ease of interchange at Eastbourne into the 4-carriage electric services for passengers travelling to/from Brighton, KCC supports the following option, which would retain all of the existing level of service between Ashford, Rye, Hastings and Eastbourne including the additional 'Rye shuttles' in the peak periods:

Operate longer electric trains between Brighton and Eastbourne with connections to and from a 2-carriage diesel train between Eastbourne and Ashford International.

Q53

OXTED – EDENBRIDGE TOWN – UCKFIELD SERVICES

PROPOSED SERVICE FREQUENCIES (tph / minutes)

Southern Mainline Route SN4.2

London Bridge – East Croydon – Oxted – Edenbridge Town – Uckfield

	Mon-Fri Peak	Mon-Fri High Peak	Mon-Sat Daytimes	Mon-Sat Evenings	Sundays
London Bridge to/from Uckfield	2tph 30 mins	2tph 30 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph 60 mins	1tph* 60 mins

**On Sundays the service connects at Oxted with the London Victoria service*

Do you have any specific comments in relation to services on Oxted routes?

The GTR Southern service which operates between London Bridge and Uckfield via Oxted serves three stations in Kent (Edenbridge Town, Hever and Cowden): Stations on this route have recently benefitted from the extension of most of their platforms to accommodate 10-carriage trains, and the subsequent delivery of additional diesel trains has provided a welcome increase in passenger capacity, especially in the peak periods.

KCC welcomes this improvement to the service level on this route, which is also used by a considerable number of commuters from locations in West Kent who prefer to railhead to one of the Uckfield line stations. The Council would expect GTR Southern to continue to monitor passenger demand on this route, to ensure that the maximum level of service within the available resources continues to be provided.

Q54 to Q64 – N/A to Kent

Q65 to Q73 – Proposed Service Patterns

KCC's preferences for the proposed service patterns on each of the GTR routes operating in Kent have been included in the relevant sections of the consultation response.

GATWICK EXPRESS

Q74

Do you have any other specific comments in relation to the Gatwick Express services?

KCC welcomes the new Class 387 rolling-stock which now operates the Gatwick Express service between London Victoria and Gatwick Airport. This service is frequently used by Kent residents who prefer to travel via London to access Gatwick using this service, rather than by changing trains at Tonbridge and Redhill.

The proposed retention of the existing frequency of 4tph throughout is welcome, as this service will continue to provide the primary rail link between Gatwick and the capital.

Q75 to Q86 – N/A to Kent

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