



Network Rail - Planning,  
1 Puddle Dock, London,  
EC4V 3DS

Policy and Communications,  
Canterbury City Council,  
By email only

11/01/2023

Dear Canterbury City Council,

**Network Rail Consultation Response: Draft Canterbury District Local Plan To 2045**

Thank you for consulting Network Rail of the draft Canterbury District Local Plan.

Network Rail is the statutory undertaker for maintaining and operating railway infrastructure of England, Scotland, and Wales. As statutory undertaker, Network Rail is under license from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport Scotland (TS) and regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to maintain and enhance the operational railway and its assets, ensuring the provision of a safe operational railway.

As a matter of course, proponents of sites which are close to the railway boundary or sites which could affect the railway asset directly are required to engage with our Asset Protection and Optimisation team (ASPRO). Similarly, there are a range of level crossings (both vehicle and pedestrian) that will experience increased usage from the proposed developments proposed within the draft Local Plan. As part of Network Rail's license to operate and manage Britain's railway infrastructure, Network Rail have the legal duty to protect rail passengers, the public, the railway workforce, and to reduce risk at our level crossings so far as is reasonably practicable. A case-by-case risk assessment is required for the affected level crossings as and when planning applications are made and full details of the development has been provided. The assessments may identify that improvements / closure of level crossing is required to mitigate the imported risk. As a public funded

company, Network Rail has responsibilities to spend public funds efficiently which consequently means we do not have the funds available to mitigate the impact of third-party development on level crossings. Consequently, Network Rail expect any mitigation required to be funded at no expense to Network Rail.

So as to not duplicate these process, we have reviewed the proposals from an overall strategic perspective. This will therefore not be a comprehensive response from Network Rail.

There are 9 stations in Canterbury City Council's boundary: 3 on the North Kent Line (Whitstable, Herne Bay and Chestfield & Swalecliffe), 3 stations on the Canterbury West line (Chartham, Canterbury West and Sturry), and 3 on the Canterbury East line (Adisham, Bekesbourne and Canterbury East). Our response is structured along each line.

### **Canterbury West line**

At Canterbury West, we recognise the opportunity for regeneration and would like to work with CCC and third-party proponents to realise this vision. Beyond our role as a key landowner, there are opportunities to further improve the operations of Canterbury West station, including provision of a new entrance towards the north and 12-coach platforms to improve service reliability and improve customer experience. These opportunities are currently unfunded and the current environment for rail industry finances means this is unlikely to change in the near term. Therefore, we ask that CCC consider funding opportunities for the most important rail gateway to Canterbury via this Local Plan process to meet the needs of future users generated by the proposed developments.

Chartham is currently a small station, but the South West Canterbury development (c. 3,000 homes) is approximately half way between Chartham and Canterbury East. It is possible that future rail passengers could be attracted to Chartham to avoid 'doubling back' via Canterbury centre. We recommend that this is considered in more detail from a first and last mile perspective – in particular cycle routes / facilities and bus options to reduce any risk of increased street parking.

Sturry station has short platforms, which means most trains which call there overhang across the level crossing when making a station call, increasing downtime for road users. The proposal for an Eastern Movement Corridor and c. 2,000 homes in East Canterbury will likely increase road demand over this crossing for those driving to the Kent Coast and therefore Network Rail would like to explore opportunities to secure funding via the Local Plan process to mitigate / resolve this issue. Network Rail are planning to renew the signalling infrastructure in the Sturry area in the next 10 years, within the life of this Local Plan, which offers an opportunity to deliver such improvements efficiently.

As part of the Kent Route Study, upon stakeholder request we considered the potential for a Canterbury Parkway or Canterbury Interchange at the intersection of the Canterbury West and Canterbury East lines. We note that this is also included in the draft Strategic Investment Plan produced by Transport for the South East. For clarity, Network Rail's position on this scheme is that there is unlikely to be a rail-based case for change due to the likely high costs, requiring a wider transport-system wide and development-based case for investment.

### **Canterbury East line**

At Canterbury East station it is recognised that there are opportunities for development, however we note the need to consider car parking provision (this is one of the cheaper car parks in Canterbury) as part of any future proposals to ensure existing and future customers can still access the railway.

We welcome that Bekesbourne Station is recognised as part of the catchment area for the proposed East Canterbury developments. We have identified the current poor quality of walking routes around Bekesbourne Station and so fully support proposals for “New and improved walking and cycling connections to the villages and wider countryside to the east and south, including to Bekesbourne Rail Station”.

We also welcome proposals for upgrades to Adisham railway station “including accessible facilities to both platforms and direct access from the site to the London-bound platform” to support the proposal for a Garden Community as this would be essential to support sustainable, accessible travel. We support the proposal for the upgrade to take place before

25 % of the site is developed, to ensure that sustainable travel options are available as early as possible and to reduce car dependency.

We note that Dover District has recently completed a consultation which, from a rail network perspective, overlaps with CCC's proposals at Aylesham. In addition, the catchment area for Aylesham station overlaps with Adisham station as they are so close. We request that an integrated planning approach is taken where possible as part of both CCC and Dover District's planning processes. Furthermore, we note that there are narrow pavements on road bridges over the railway line which should be considered.

### **North Kent line**

In Whitstable it is proposed to enhance active travel routes to the west and east of Whitstable, but not from the station. We encourage CCC to consider interventions to improve the walking/cycling route between Whitstable station to support sustainable access to Whitstable Harbour and proposed developments there.

We support proposals to provide new walking and cycling connections to Chestfield & Swalecliffe Railway station.

I trust that the above is clear, should you require additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

**Nick Donoghue**

Town Planner | Property (Southern)

Network Rail

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