

# West Sussex County Council response to the Govia Thameslink Railway 2018 timetable consultation questions

## Q1. Name (optional)

West Sussex County Council

## Q2. Address (optional)

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## Q4 - Q10.

(Refer to individual respondent use of rail services; therefore option selections are left blank.)

## Q11. Are you responding as an individual or group?

Group

## Q12. How did you first hear about the consultation?

Email

## Q13. How would you prefer to be alerted to future consultations?

Other (please specify) - Through multiple channels

## Q14. Do you support proposals to approach engineering works differently? Please select all options you support.

Reduce frequency on some routes after 23:00 on Weekdays and Saturdays

Earlier last trains on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays on some routes

Later first trains on Sunday mornings on some routes

I don't support proposals to change the current engineering works hours

## Any further comments on this proposal?

It is recognised that there is a need to ensure access to the rail network for maintenance and improvement works and that with increased train services this could intensify work needed to look after the infrastructure. However, the detail and implications of the options presented in the consultation response survey are not clear. Stakeholders have called for increased access to the network late at night and first thing in the morning. This is in order to support the leisure economy and cater for demand from passengers and staff wanting access to/from Gatwick Airport early in the morning, and late at night.

Currently on Friday evenings the last train from London Victoria along the Arun Valley Line to Chichester departs at 22:32 although a later train at 23:17 operates to Chichester on Saturdays via Hove. Furthermore, the earliest weekday train departing from stations along the West Coastway via Hove does

not arrive at Gatwick Airport until 06:26, and the earliest Arun Valley Line train does not arrive until 06:45 making it very difficult to use the train for journeys to work or to board the earliest flight departures from Gatwick Airport (there are typically 80 weekday departures by 07:30 (Gatwick Airport Limited information). It is disappointing for passengers accessing Gatwick Airport that overnight rail services are provided between Bedford, Gatwick Airport and Three Bridges (on 4-track railway north of Three Bridges), but there are no overnight services further south.

The consultation document implies that increased access to the network is required, reducing the ability to enhance provision of late evening and early morning services at these times. The County Council considers that this approach fails to recognise the significance of Gatwick Airport and the importance of providing access to/from the Airport early in the morning and late at night. Gatwick Airport is a major international gateway which employs 21,000 people, 84% of whom are shift workers. While the sustainable transport mode share for passengers has grown and currently exceeds its target, the [public transport mode share for employees](#) has remained relatively static and is currently missing its target, most notably on the Brighton and Sussex Coast transport corridor where the mode share in 2012 was 22% against a target of 30%. The County Council is disappointed that technological innovations in maintenance, such as bidirectional single track running, are not intended to be utilised and consider that greater use should be made of these innovations to reduce the amount of access time required for maintaining infrastructure on routes to/from Gatwick Airport.

Where maintenance access to the network is required we support this being undertaken at times when demand for services is lowest. When maintenance access is required, fast and high-quality coach services should be provided as alternatives with dedicated coach services between principal stations, and separate services for intermediate stations as appropriate. It is also important that coach replacement services are minimised to the shortest possible distances around maintenance 'blockades'.

### **Q15 - Q19.**

(Refer to questions about Thameslink services to the north of the Thames, on the North Kent Line, the Catford Loop line, Maidstone East services, Caterham and Tattenham Corner services; therefore option selections are proposed to be left blank.)

### **Q20. Any other comments in relation to the expanded Thameslink network from 2018?**

Meeting passenger demand

The consultation document includes reference (page 7) to accommodating growing demand '...providing a step change in service provision and meeting the needs of passengers and this demand throughout the regions we serve for decades beyond'. The County Council is concerned that the consultation document does not highlight the future demand pressures facing the Brighton Main Line as set out in Network Rail's Sussex Area Route Study. The Sussex Area Route Study suggests significant additional investment beyond the

Thameslink Programme is required in the Brighton Main Line throughout Control Periods 6 (2019-2024) and 7 (2024-2029) to meet predicted growth in demand. It is vital that GTR work closely with Network Rail to monitor service and station usage, and plan and invest to meet the expected population and demand growth on routes in the Thameslink and Southern network areas.

## Reliability

Southern and Thameslink passengers have experienced significant service reliability and disruption problems throughout the Thameslink Programme which has been compounded throughout 2016 by the industrial relations dispute between GTR, the RMT Union and the ASLEF Union over the future role of conductors on Southern services. It will be imperative that the 2018 timetable changes result in a timetable that is robust and reliable to help rebuild confidence in rail services in this area.

The ability to operate 24 trains per hour through the Thameslink core is very ambitious and we are concerned that this intensity of service provision, and the combining together of services from north and south of the Thames over a much larger geographic area, could result in increased reliability problems. This is because of the longer travel distances and times involved and the potential impact of newly created inter-dependencies; for example a broken down train near Cambridge could directly delay services to Brighton and have knock-on impacts on services much further afield than with the current service pattern. It is a concern that the consultation material does not explicitly discuss potential reliability issues of operating Thameslink services over a larger geographical area (including operators on the West and East Coast Main Line, South Eastern routes, as well as Thameslink and Southern routes), nor gives information about the contingency plans to manage any potential problems. As a consequence, it is not possible to scrutinise the robustness of these plans or comment on any potential implications for the proposed 2018 timetable.

## Clarity of information about timetable changes affecting stations and connections between routes

The degree of change proposed in the 2018 timetable is clearly significant. However, it is not clear how the proposed changes will affect individual stations based on the information that has been provided.

While the 'station by station comparison' tool provides some information about anticipated changes in service levels, information presented within this tool is incomplete. More detailed and comprehensive commentary should be provided on a station by station basis where there are changes proposed to the current timetable, along with explanation of the rationale behind these changes, so that local communities can more easily comment on changes which affect their local station. The 'station by station comparison' tool does not include information about the full range of destinations served on specific routes, for example, no information was provided about journeys to and from Portsmouth and Southampton. In order to explain the impact of the timetable changes on capacity in 2018, clearer information should also be provided about existing and future train lengths.

It is also not clear how Thameslink service levels will change between 2016 and 2018 because of the way this tool presents information for routes to London Bridge which are not currently served by cross-London Thameslink services during the Thameslink Programme construction works around London Bridge. It is misleading to present changes on services levels to London Bridge which do not make comparisons to a pre-Thameslink Programme reference case.

A key issue for parts of West Sussex is the need for good connections between different routes, for example between the Brighton Main Line, West and East Coastway, and North Downs Line routes. This is of particular relevance for travel to Gatwick Airport where the quality, timing and reliability of interchange between services is essential. Clearer information on the implications of service changes affecting connections between routes is important.

It is important that clearer information is provided on these issues for the phase 2 consultation, and that there is still an opportunity to meaningfully comment and influence services at this stage in order for the consultation to be effective.

**Q21. Now there's a chance to comment on any of the Thameslink routes**  
**Comments on the Thameslink Mainline Route TL1:** (Bedford – Brighton, fast service, 2 trains per hour)

Please see Brighton Thameslink services comments under Q26.

**Q22. Comments on the Thameslink Mainline Route TL2:** (Bedford – Gatwick Airport, stopping peak service/semi fast non-peak service, 2 trains per hour)

We have no specific comments about this service.

**Q23. Comments on the Thameslink Mainline Route TL3:** (Bedford – East Grinstead, fast peak service, 2 trains per hour)

It is understood that existing peak time Southern East Grinstead – London Bridge services will be transferred to Thameslink which will be extended on the Thameslink route to and from Bedford. It is understood that there will be 1 additional Thameslink service and 1 additional Southern London Victoria service departing from East Grinstead for the 3-hour morning peak, and 2 new additional Thameslink services towards East Grinstead for the 3-hour evening peak. This will result in 2 Southern services per hour between East Grinstead and London Victoria throughout the day and 2 Thameslink services per hour to and from East Grinstead during the 3-hour morning and evening peaks. These additional services are welcomed in principle.

It is noted that the new Thameslink services to and from East Grinstead are only intended to operate at peak times. The provision of the new journey opportunities provided by these Thameslink services throughout the rest of the day would provide benefits to the local economy in the places served on these routes for example, by enabling new business trips which cannot currently be made directly. Setting aside comments about reliability concerns, we think there is a case for providing these services throughout the rest of the day, and request that this is reconsidered.

**Q24. Comments on the Thameslink Mainline Route TL4:** (Bedford – Littlehampton, fast peak service, 2 trains per hour)

It is understood that existing Southern London Bridge services to and from Littlehampton will be transferred to Thameslink with the number of services increasing from 2 to 4 in the 3 hour morning peak (London-bound) and 3 to 4 in the 3 hour evening peak (coast-bound). This is combined with an additional 2 trains in the 3-hour morning peak to London Victoria and 1 less train to Brighton, along with an additional 1 train each from Brighton and London Victoria to Littlehampton in the 3-hour evening peak. These additional services are welcomed in principle.

It is noted that the new Thameslink services to and from Littlehampton via Worthing are only intended to operate at peak times. The provision of the new journey opportunities provided by these Thameslink services throughout the rest of the day would provide benefits to the local economy in the places served on these routes for example, by enabling new business trips which cannot currently be made directly. Setting aside comments about reliability concerns, we think there is a case for providing these services throughout the rest of the day, and request that this is reconsidered.

We also seek clarification that Thameslink services to and from Littlehampton (TL4) will call at Gatwick Airport, which we believe they should to provide access to the Airport and interchange with North Downs Line services.

**Q25. Comments on the Thameslink Mainline Route TL5:** (Peterborough – Horsham, stopping peak service/semi fast non-peak service, 2 trains per hour)

It is understood that there will be 4 additional London Bridge services provided in the 3-hour morning peak, with 2 of these services replacing stopping trains which currently operate to London Victoria via Crawley. This will provide 2 Thameslink trains per hour to and from Horsham throughout the day. These additional services are welcomed in principle.

It should be noted that developers have proposed potential new stations between Horsham and Crawley at Kilnwood Vale and/or North Horsham but at this time, there is no certainty that either of these stations will come forward before the 2018 timetable changes. Passive provision for a new station should be planned as part of the 2018 timetable changes.

**Q26. Comments on the Thameslink Mainline Route TL6:** (Cambridge – Brighton, semi fast service, 2 trains per hour)

Along with the continuation of services that operate between Brighton and Bedford, it is understood that new direct all-day train services will be introduced between Brighton and Cambridge. All of these Thameslink services will serve Gatwick Airport. The overall change in service levels is unclear due to the way that information is presented in the 'station by station comparison' tool about current Thameslink services which do not serve London Bridge, as noted in the response under Q20. However, the additional capacity and new journey opportunities for Brighton Main Line Thameslink services is welcomed in principle.

## **Q27 - Q34.**

(Refer to questions about Thameslink services to Maidstone, Sevenoaks, on the Catford Loop line, to Rainham, Sutton and Wimbledon; therefore the following response is proposed: "No comments as there is no direct impact on West Sussex".)

### **Q34. Do you support proposals to change Sunday services between London Victoria and the West Coastway, to enable faster journeys between London, Chichester and Portsmouth similar to weekdays? (optional question, please skip if not applicable)**

Yes

#### **Any further comments on this proposal?**

It is understood that there are proposals to reduce journey times between Portsmouth, Chichester and London Victoria by providing services via the Arun Valley route on Sundays which is similar to the service pattern Monday to Saturday (Sunday services currently operate via Hove). Proposals to improve journey times between Portsmouth, Chichester and London Victoria are supported in principle. Appropriate service levels will also need to be retained between stations west and east of Barnham on Sundays along the West Coastway route. Further information should be provided to explain whether it is possible to split and join services at Horsham, instead of Barnham, as takes place throughout the rest of the week, to further improve journey times for longer distance services to and from Portsmouth and Chichester.

Increasing the frequency of services along the Arun Valley Line route on Sundays would also be welcomed to bring the service frequency into line with Monday-Saturday services and to support recreational travel and access to the South Downs National Park.

## **Q35 – Q46.**

(Refer to proposals for Cooksbridge and Plumpton, services between London Victoria and Eastbourne/Bexhill/Hastings, services between Lewes and Seaford, services for Redhill, services for Merstham and Coulsdon South, services for Horley, Salfords and Earlswood, services for Purley, services between Redhill and Tonbridge, services to Reigate, and services to and from New Cross Gate. These questions refer to services that do not directly serve West Sussex, or refer to changes in service patterns for stopping services in the south London area which operate to and from Horsham, Three Bridges and Gatwick Airport where no specific comments are proposed; therefore the following response is proposed: "No comments as there is no direct impact on West Sussex".)

### **Q47. Which option do you support? (optional question, please skip if not applicable)**

Revising evening and Sunday services to be consistent with the proposed Monday to Saturday daytime frequency which would include direct trains between London Victoria, Reigate and Tonbridge.

Retain the current evening and Sunday train frequency with direct trains to Bognor Regis (evenings and Sundays) and Brighton on Sundays Only. Trains to

Reigate and Tonbridge would be provided as shuttle trains starting from and terminating at Redhill. ☒

### **Any further comments on this proposal?**

It is understood that it is proposed to remove stops at Redhill on evening and Sunday Arun Valley Line services and from London Victoria to Brighton Sunday services so that these services operate in a consistent way to other Monday-Saturday services. These proposals are welcomed so that they contribute to journey time improvements on these services, although it is recognised that this will inconvenience those that wish to stop or interchange at Redhill.

### **Q48. Do you have any specific comments in relation to services on the Coastway West routes?**

It is noted that there is a 90-minute gap in services from Littlehampton via Worthing to Gatwick Airport in the am peak, and a 60-minute gap in the evening peak for services in the opposite direction. For services on the Arun Valley Route to and from Chichester and Gatwick Airport there are gaps between direct connections of over 2 hours in the morning and evening peaks. Provided that the addition of these stops does not contribute to the overloading of these services between London Victoria and Gatwick Airport, consideration should be given to providing additional calls at Gatwick Airport in Arun Valley and West Coastway route services during peak times to reduce the gaps between direct services. As noted under our response to Q24, we also seek clarification that Thameslink services to and from Littlehampton (TL4) will call at Gatwick Airport, which we believe they should to provide access to the Airport and interchange with North Downs Line services.

It is also noted that there are no significant changes proposed for West Coastway services, in particular between Brighton and Portsmouth Harbour/Southampton Central as part of the 2018 timetable change. There are longstanding stakeholder aspirations to reduce journey times on the West Coastway route, as well as improve the quality of rolling stock, increase capacity, and provide direct services to Southampton Airport, in order to support economic growth and raise the performance of the West Sussex coastal economy to bring it into line with the regional average. The West Sussex Economic Strategy 2012-2020 identifies east-west connections along the A27 corridor as a barrier to business growth. Whilst opportunities to improve journey times are constrained, the Network Rail Sussex Area Route Study (September 2015) outlined some of the opportunities that may exist around changing stopping patterns of existing services and improving infrastructure. It is disappointing that opportunities to improve journey times along the West Sussex Coast between Southampton/Portsmouth and Hove/Brighton have not been included in the proposed 2018 timetable.

It is noted that with additional and longer trains operating along the West Coastway route, this has the potential to increase level crossing downtimes for the large number of level crossings along the West Coastway route. This is because additional services will increase the number of calls on level crossings, at peak times in particular, and also increase level crossing downtime if longer trains call at stations with short platforms adjacent to level crossings (e.g. Angmering). Although the increase in frequency and new journey destinations

provided by the 2018 timetable will benefit rail users, we are concerned about the impact on road users at level crossings and request further information from GTR and/or Network Rail about the impacts on level crossings.

In terms of the Arun Valley Line route, we support further investigation with Network Rail of line speed/infrastructure improvements on the Arun Valley Line to improve journey times and support economic growth. The fastest pm peak journey time between London Victoria and Chichester is 1 hour 28 minutes in the May-December 2016 timetable, with a journey time of 37 miles per hour for an 'as the crow flies distance' of 54 miles. This compares to a fastest peak journey time speed of 58mph for a 1 hour 11 minutes journey time for 69 miles between London Waterloo and Southampton.

Stakeholders have also suggested increased use of the Arun Valley Line to reduce journey times between London and Littlehampton to support economic growth for the town. We welcome this issue being considered in further detail, however are mindful of the potential impacts there may be on other services and stations on the route.

#### **Q49 – Q52.**

(Questions refer to services between Brighton and Lewes, services between Brighton and Seaford, services between Brighton and Ore, and services between Brighton and Ashford International; therefore the following response is proposed: "No comments as there is no direct impact on West Sussex".)

#### **Q53. Do you have any specific comments in relation to services on Oxted routes?**

Please see comments under Q23.

#### **Q54 – Q61.**

(Questions refer to specific services in the South London Metro area; therefore the following response is proposed: "No comments as there is no direct impact on West Sussex".)

#### **Q62. Do you have any other specific comments in relation to South London Metro services?**

There are currently no services operating on the Horsham / Dorking / Epsom / London Victoria route on Sundays, and into the later evening. Provision of Sunday and later evening services between Horsham and Dorking should be given further consideration to grow passenger demand on this route, and it is disappointing that this is not discussed within the consultation document.

#### **Q63 – Q64.**

(Questions refer to changes to West London Line services; therefore the following response is proposed: "No comments as there is no direct impact on West Sussex".)

#### **Q65. Comments on the Southern Mainline Route SN1 (Brighton Main Line):**

Please see comments under Q26.

**Q66. Comments on the Southern Metro Route SN2 (West London Line):**

No comments as there is no direct impact on West Sussex.

**Q67. Comments on the Southern Metro Route SN3 (South London Metro):**

Please see comments under Q62.

**Q68. Comments on the Southern Mainline Route SN4 (Oxted): London to East Grinstead and Uckfield**

Please see comments under Q23.

**Q69. Comments on the Southern Mainline Route SN5 (Redhill):**

Please see comments under Q47

**Q70. Comments on the Southern Mainline Route SN6 (Mainline West):**

Please see comments under Q34 and Q48.

**Q71. Comments on the Southern Mainline Route SN7 (Mainline East):**

No comments as there is no direct impact on West Sussex.

**Q72. Comments on the Southern Mainline Route SN8 (Coastway West):**

Please see comments under Q48.

**Q73. Comments on the Southern Mainline Route SN9 (Coastway East):**

No comments as there is no direct impact on West Sussex.

**Q74. Comments on the Gatwick Express Route GX**

We would like to see the provision of 15-minute even interval Gatwick Express services at peak times (between Gatwick Airport and London Victoria), so that this is consistent with timings throughout the rest of the day, albeit we recognise the complexities of peak time operation of services on the Brighton Main Line.

**Q75 – Q86.**

(Questions refer to changes to Great Northern route services; therefore the following response is proposed: "No comments as there is no direct impact on West Sussex".)

**87. Any final comments on the 2018 proposals?**

Please see general comments about under Q20 regarding meeting passenger demand, reliability, rolling stock and the clarity of information provided as part of this consultation about timetable changes affecting stations and connections between routes.