

From John Cox
25 Feb 2019

Effectiveness of the Plan regarding transport

These comments are about the effectiveness of the Plan regarding rail transport.

My key words are 'passive provision'.

I do not concede that the DfT, Network Rail and Transport for London have a monopoly on London's strategic transport planning.

The general public (and lobbied local authorities) are perfectly capable of analysing some long-term transport issues and propose solutions of their own. They can then become democratically-established, published aspirations.

No-one is suggesting that this means producing full business cases, but some schemes are so long-term that no-one else could credibly produce them yet either.

(For instance, many people want an orbital north London tram system. A suitable corridor might be Sudbury, Harrow town centre, Kenton, Kingsbury, Colindale, Mill Hill East, Finchley, New Southgate, and so on. The point is that councils can be lobbied, independently of TfL, and it is possible that borough plans will increasingly include such aspirations that then successfully survive through EiPs.)

I believe that OPDC EiP efforts to determine if infrastructure is deliverable, and therefore sound, must not be allowed to have adverse effects on longer-term planning, where 'longer-term' includes dropping off the far end of the Plan period, into future decades.

For instance, decisions for the Plan period must not harm London-wide efforts to tackle the climate crisis, meaning greater and greater modal shift away from cars, however powered, towards public transport. That means encouraging passive provision in the OPDC plan for some transport capacity that simply passes through the OPDC boundary, and where no-one actually gets off!

Let me be more specific.

- WILLESDEN JUNCTION STATION needs to be developed only if there is passive provision for many more platforms, even if some may be opening nearer to 2050 than to 2019.

- HYTHE ROAD STATION is unlikely to ever require three platforms because north-bound trains should all reach Willesden Junction instead, maybe with an extra track across the West Coast Main Line, but certainly able to use the two existing terminating sidings beyond.

- OLD OAK COMMON STATION should have eventually six platforms, for 8-car (=carriage) trains, including two platforms on the Dudding Hill Line towards Brent Cross. The Mayor, in the form of TfL opposes this. The two centre platforms that he permanently opposes (meaning the space needed will go for ever) can also be used in the future for terminating trains running through Willesden Junction station.

Although the Mayor's London Plan-supported 'West London Orbital' rail project to Brent Cross suggests 3-car London Overground trains, the Brent Plan's submission version aspires to 8-car platforms at all stations in the borough, for long-distance, inter-regional trains. That is a great example of a local authority having independent thought, beyond those coming from the usual suspects.

- THE IEP RAIL DEPOT should not be used for housing, because it can be the site of a second high-speed line station at Old Oak Common, for Great Western and South-Western high-speed services, new lines that might open by 2060.

I wish to kindly ask if the Inspector would care to be accompanied on his expected walk-about of OPDC stations and proposed sites for stations in the OPDC area. This would just be on public streets and paths.

I am well aware of the correct protocol for such sessions – just pointing out features that are covered in written material already, and absolutely no lobbying.

This successfully happened a couple of years ago at Brent Cross, where everyone was clothed in high-vis safety clothes, but that was on operational railway land. Locations of CPO issues were pointed out to the Brent Cross Inspector, without straying beyond that information-gathering activity.

Regards,
John Cox

