
Document C

The proposal to close Watford station

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The proposal to close Watford station

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report informs members of London Underground Limited's case for the proposed closure and discontinuance of services to and from Watford station. It describes the representations received following notification of the closure and LUL's response to those representations. It further suggests issues members might consider as part of its deliberations and reminds them of their duties under the Railways Act 2005.

2 Background

- 2.1 Watford station is one of the northern terminal stations on the Metropolitan line. There has been a long-standing aspiration to divert the Metropolitan line via the former Croxley Green branch line to terminate at Watford Junction station. This would entail a short section of new railway being built to connect the Metropolitan line to the former Croxley Green branch line. The project is known as the Croxley Rail Link.
- 2.2 This development is being jointly promoted by LUL as the service operator of the Metropolitan line and Hertfordshire County Council (the Metropolitan line terminates in Hertfordshire). Powers to construct the Croxley Rail Link are presently being sought.
- 2.3 The closure process was initiated on 23 February 2012 by LUL. Closure of Watford station will only happen if and when the Croxley Rail Link is built and is operational.

3 London Underground's case

- 3.1 LUL have submitted a Supporting Statement (Document E) in the agenda pack.
- 3.2 LUL state that Watford station is comparatively lightly used and is in a low density suburban area. They say the station is poorly located to serve Watford's growing transport needs.
- 3.3 Should the Croxley Rail Link open LUL say the station would become less attractive because about 50% of existing passengers would be as close or closer to the new stations. The new stations will have parking facilities and be accessible, unlike Watford station which is presently inaccessible. LUL have undertaken a survey that,

they say, demonstrates that only a small number of passengers would have to walk further to the new stations, and then, at most 15 minutes extra. Just over half of existing users would see a small increase in travel time.

- 3.4 LUL have considered keeping the station open but, they claim, this would reduce the economic case for the station for three reasons:
- i) it would increase the operating costs. LUL say the cost would be £0.5 million per annum;
 - ii) a split service, serving both new stations and Watford station, would mean lower frequencies and therefore be less attractive to potential passengers;
 - iii) an additional terminal station would introduce additional operational complexities.
- 3.5 LUL have looked at other alternative options as well as the retention of Watford station. They have looked at the introduction of a shuttle service between Watford and Croxley stations and a new service to Amersham / Chesham. LUL claim the former would not be an attractive service to many passengers due to additional waiting times and passengers' dislike of interchange. They claim the latter would not be a good use of resources as demand would be low and costs would be high.
- 3.6 LUL believe that the Croxley Rail Link project will provide a significantly improved service for a large number of users both existing and future. The disbenefits to existing users are small overall and therefore, hardship caused by the closure of Watford station is both relatively slight and wholly outweighed by the benefits.

4 Summary of representations

- 4.1 During the objection period we received 16 objections / comments via the TWA process. We received 104 responses following the posting of the closure notices and as a result of TfL emailing its Watford station Oyster users. We received 99 objections on return slips, issued as part of leaflets from local councillors to residents. Subsequent to the close of the objection period we have received 5 items of correspondence. One of the late objections contained a link to an online petition with 1148 names, though some of these names are anonymous, some without addresses. All of these representations have been considered by the Secretariat and set out in the table below. Of course many objectors gave more than one reason for their objection.
- 4.2 It should be noted that not all of the responses to the consultation process were negative. 16 correspondents supported the closure.
- 4.3 There were 79 objectors that simply stated they were against the closure of Watford station, but not the Croxley Rail Link.
- 4.4 15 consultees opposed both the closure of Watford station and the Croxley Rail Link project.

Summary of material issues raised by objectors

Issue Number	Issues	Number of Responses
1	Simply state against proposal and the Croxley Rail Link	15
2	Against proposal (object only to the closure of Watford station, but not the Croxley Rail Link)	79
3	Simply state in favour of proposal (fully support)	16
4	Alternative Proposals	
	4 (a) Run peak only or less frequent service	21
	4 (b) Run a shuttle between Watford and Croxley stations	13
	4 (c) Invest into extension of service from Watford stations to Amersham/Chesham stations	5
5	Additional walk/cycle time (to/from proposed stations, school and park)	58
6	Increased volume of local traffic	
	6 (a) Children being dropped off and picked up from school instead of using the train	22
	6 (b) Visitors to Cassiobury Park choosing car over train due to distance from the station	6
	6 (c) Commuters choosing car over train due to distance from station	18
7	Increased level of pollution due to potential increase in use of car	9
8	Car parking	
	8 (a) Car park provision (park and ride)	8
	8 (b) Car park cost	5
9	Increase in travel cost	
	9 (a) Increase in fare (zone extension)	8
	9 (b) Cost of additional car journey to new station(s)	2
10	Safety of routes (road safety and personal security)	
	10 (a) Require adequate and safe cycle routes	2
	10 (b) Pedestrian crossings, adequate lighting and cleanliness (children getting to school, nights, residents security)	19
11	Investment not worth the benefit	8
12	Loss of local bus route due to lack of use if Watford station ceases to operate	2
13	Re-run Bakerloo line to Watford Junction station	1
14	More passengers near Watford station compared to newly proposed stations or Watford station is a busy/well used station	10
15	Watford Junction station not able to handle the increased usage (train and passengers) from proposed Croxley Rail Link project	3
16	Improve bus service to give better access to stations	3

17	"I object to the proposed closure of passenger services as Watford Met station. I believe that there are viable options for retention of passenger services at Watford Met as being proposed by Watford Lib-Dems without impairing the proposed Croxley Rail Link service" (see 4(a), 4(b) and 4(c))	131
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5.0 Issues raised by objectors, LUL's response to these issues and comments of the Secretariat

5.1 On 25 April 2012 the Secretariat wrote to LUL setting out a summary of objections and questions flowing from them and from its own considerations. This letter, together with LUL's response, is Document F in the agenda pack. A further question of LUL was asked and responded to through email correspondence.

5.2 Alternative proposals (Issue 4 in table)

Objectors have suggested alternative proposals to the closure of Watford station. The various alternatives are listed below:

- a) Continue running the service to Watford station, but with a reduced service (for example one in three trains terminating at Watford station) or run a peak only service to Watford station.
- b) Run a shuttle service from Watford station to Croxley station.
- c) Extend the service from Watford station to Amersham/Chesham stations via the "North Curve" and Rickmansworth. This would maintain a Watford station to Croxley station service and objectors believe that this will extend the service to the whole of the West Herts and South Bucks region and thus extend the benefits of the capital expenditure of the Croxley Rail Link to many more people than in the current proposition.

LUL have considered these proposals. The first (a split service) is rejected as having a poor economic case because two reduced frequency services, costing more, would be created and would be less attractive than a single, high frequency service.

The second (a shuttle to Croxley station) is rejected by LUL due to cost, operational complexities and because it would provide a less attractive service to some passengers. Passengers are said to dislike waiting and interchange.

The third (a service to Amersham or Chesham stations) is rejected because there would be low demand (500 passengers per weekday) at a disproportionate cost, even with only a two- trains-per-hour operation.

Secretariat's comment

We have subsequently asked about the operation of a service that effectively uses the non-passenger journeys of trains, which are stabled overnight at Watford station, in passenger service. LUL say they believe that such a service is not viable to operate at such a low level in the very early hours and late at night. Such a service would add additional costs and operational complexities.

5.3 Additional walk/cycle time to new stations (issue 5 in table)

Objectors believe that the closure of Watford station will result in an unacceptable additional walk/cycle time to the nearest station, from their homes. They say additional travel times would also apply to many Watford Boys Grammar school boys and to visitors to Cassiobury Park

LUL have modelled the journey times of existing users. They acknowledge that some existing passengers will have longer journeys to the new stations under their proposals, but also believe some will have shorter journeys. Their model suggests that the net average impact on existing users starting their journey at Watford station will be a one minute reduction in journey time. Existing passengers travelling to various locations in Watford (the town centre, hospital etc.) will benefit from an average journey time saving of four minutes. It is suggested that only a very few existing passengers will see an increase in journey time of more than 15 minutes.

Secretariat's comment

The Secretariat has timed the walk between Watford station and the proposed new Ascot Road station. It took 12 minutes one way and 13 to return (uphill) and so it seems that LULs suggestion of the largest additional walking time being 15 minutes is reasonable.

LUL have modelled the number of Watford Boys Grammar School boys using the station at 70. Members have indicated that they thought there were more on the day of their visit. This issue could be discussed further at the public meeting.

In undertaking site visits it was apparent that there is scope for improving the quality of the public realm – the pavements and local environmental quality of walking routes in the area. If members supported the closure they could ask that Hertfordshire County Council (the local highway authority) improve the walking environment.

5.4 Additional car journeys (issue 6 in table)

Objectors believe that the closure of Watford station will result in more passengers choosing to travel by car, instead of using public transport, resulting in increased local traffic. They suggest:

- a) the increased distance from the newly proposed stations to the Watford Boys Grammar School will result in parents/guardians choosing to drop off/pick up their children using their cars;
- b) the additional distance from the newly proposed stations to Cassiobury Park will result in visitors to the park choosing to travel by car rather than train;
- c) the additional distance and journey time from the newly proposed stations for local residents will result in commuters travelling by car rather than train.

We asked LUL to tell us their estimate for additional car journeys due to this closure or if there would be a net reduction in car use.

LUL state that the traffic assessment undertaken as part of the Croxley Rail Link project will result in 3,750 fewer car trips a day. Some roads will see a small increase of no more than 5%.

Secretariat's comment

LUL have not addressed the issue of a possible increase in the very local congestion and parking demand that may occur near Cassiobury Park and/or near Watford Boys Grammar School.

5.5 Increased pollution levels (issue 7 table)

Objectors believe that the additional use of cars will result in an increased level of pollution.

LUL state that as the number of car trips is forecast to reduce then pollution levels will reduce.

5.6 Car parking (issue 8 in table)

Objectors are concerned about car parking provision and cost:

- a) Objectors are satisfied with the car parking facilities at Watford station and are concerned about parking facilities at the newly proposed stations and Watford Junction station.

We asked LUL how many spaces are available now at Watford station, to tell us about any plans in place to provide parking facilities at the newly proposed stations and the number of parking spaces that will be available. We asked about the parking facilities available at Watford Junction station and the Harlequin shopping centre.

- b) Objectors were also concerned about the costs of parking at the new stations and the higher charges at car parks serving Watford Junction and Watford High Street stations. Objectors stated that the Watford Junction station car park costs £7 a day.

LUL tell us that the present Watford station has 70 car parking spaces and that the new station at Ascot Road will have about 200 spaces and car drop off points. LUL say the fee scale for the Ascot Road station car park is yet to be determined and there is no reason to suppose it will be higher than the fees at Watford station. There will be no parking facilities at Watford Hospital station.

LUL also say that Watford Junction station car park has 750 spaces, for which the daily weekday charge is £4.50. The Harlequin Centre has several car parks containing 2,000 spaces in total, with a daily charge of £6.

Secretariat's comment

There is disagreement regarding the price of parking at Watford junction station. The Secretariat will update the panel on this figure at its meeting. Members may want to ask LUL for further reassurance regarding the costs of parking into the future.

5.7 Additional travel costs (Issue 9 in table)

Objectors believe that the closure of Watford station will result in increased travel costs:

- a) Watford Junction station is presently in a different zone to Watford station. It seems a complicated picture and dependent on which zones the new stations are put into. We asked LUL to tell us what the differences will be for the various fares for passengers that presently use Watford station and in the future would have to use one of the alternatives, including Watford Junction station. We asked if any consideration been given to a period of lower fares for those that will be negatively affected.
- b) Objectors believe that the closure of Watford station will result in them having to take another form of transport to get to their nearest station, resulting in an increase to the total cost of their journey. In the case of the additional form of transport being a car, objectors believe it may be cheaper to drive to their final destination rather than pay the petrol and parking costs at the station and travel by train. We asked LUL what assessment they had made of this.

LUL have supplied the table below which sets out the fares from Watford station and the proposed new Watford Metropolitan line stations. LUL do not think it is viable to offer existing passengers a lower fare for a limited period. No assessment has been undertaken looking at how many passengers will switch modes to private car travel as LUL believes few passengers would abandon the Metropolitan line for their trips as there are financial disincentives (parking charges and Congestion Charge) that will dissuade them.

Fares from Stations in Watford to Central London

Station	Fare Zone	Day anytime Travelcard to central London	Monthly anytime Travelcard to central London
Watford Met	7	£19.60	£222.80
Ascot Road	7	£19.60	£222.80
Watford Hospital	7	£19.60	£222.80
Watford High Street	8	£19.60	£262.70
Watford Junction	Special	£20.20	£291.90

Secretariat's comment

There is a recent precedent of LUL compensating passengers, for a limited period, that were disadvantaged by having to change their journey. When the East London line was blockaded for two years passengers were given some compensation for their additional costs. Any compensation would affect very few passengers who presently use Watford station, but would, in future use Watford Junction station and Watford High Street stations. Members could ask the Secretariat to investigate this further.

5.8 Road safety and personal security (Issue 10 in table)

Objectors believe that the road safety and the personal security of passengers travelling to the proposed stations is inadequate:

- a) An objector has requested that safe, sustainable cycle routes be implemented in the region of the newly proposed stations. One objector has also requested a new path and cycle route running along the line from Watford station to the new Ascot Road station, with cycle racks at the station.
- b) Objectors believe that the areas around the newly proposed stations are “unsafe” and are concerned about lighting and cleanliness. Objectors also believe that the school children using the station will have to cross two busy roads from the proposed Ascot Road station to travel to/from school. At present it is suggested that there are not sufficiently safe crossing points.

LUL say that there will be significant street works that will improve access – dropped kerbs, resurfaced roads and cycle parking for example.

The cycle route suggested along the track formation is not practicable as the railway will remain in operational use.

LUL say that there are safe pedestrian crossing points , but that also Hertfordshire County Council will be investigating the link to the school.

5.9 Benefits not worth the investment (issue 11 in table)

Objectors believe that the money, time and effort invested in the Croxley Rail Link project are not worth the benefits of the new service. Objectors do not believe that sufficiently more people will use the Metropolitan line as a result of the Croxley Rail Link project to justify its implementation.

LUL state that the project has a good business case and that it has been granted funding. This would only happen if a positive business case had been made to Government.

These issues will be considered through the TWA process which is a more appropriate process than the closure process to debate these issue.

5.10 Loss of local bus services (issue 11 in table)

Objectors believe that the closure of Watford station will result in the loss of the local bus service (W30) as it will become less used. Objectors are concerned that this will cut the link between the local area with the business park and town centre.

LUL describe the bus service and note that larger vehicles are being introduced. The present contracted service runs to the end of 2012/13. It is accepted that, like other contracted services it could be reviewed.

5.11 Re-run Bakerloo line to Watford Junction (Issue13 in table)

An objector believes that it will be beneficial to run the Bakerloo line to Watford Junction station, as in the past, and continue it down the old Croxley Green branch line to terminate at Watford station.

We asked what consideration had been given to re-running the Bakerloo line to Watford Junction station in order to reinstate Underground services to central London. We also asked why this suggestion was not a better alternative to achieve a link between Watford Junction station and central London.

LUL say that the re-extension of the Bakerloo line back up to Watford has been considered, but rejected for a number of reasons, not least because the London Overground now provides a good service with connections to the Bakerloo line. The proposal would also not provide the connections to Watford town centre from deprived areas of Watford that need regenerating. LUL claim there is neither a business case, nor an engineering case to do this.

5.12 Watford station serves more local passengers than Watford Junction station(objection 14 in table)

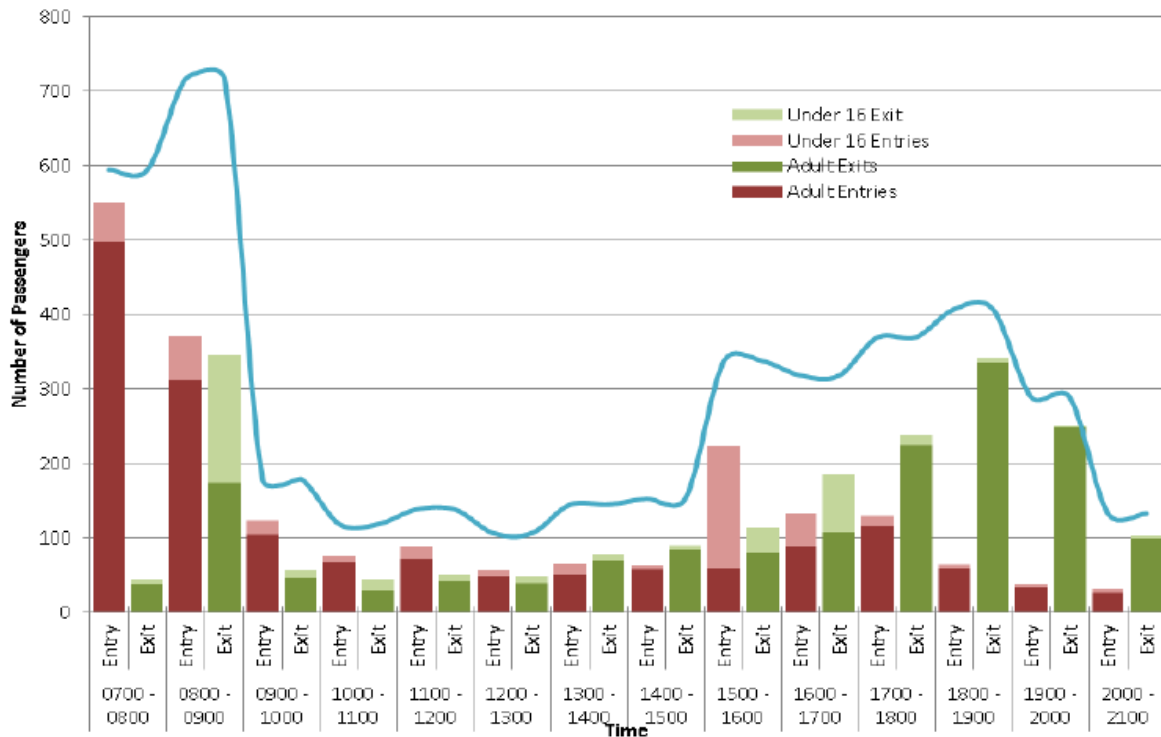
Objectors believe that enough passengers use Watford station to justify its existence. Objectors also believe that more passengers reside near Watford station than in the areas of the newly proposed stations and dispute the closure of Watford station.

We asked LUL to tell us how many passengers presently use the station broken down by peak, off peak and weekend. We asked how many passengers access and use the station by car during these periods, how many Watford Boys Grammar School boys use the station a day and how many passengers LUL estimate will use the new service and stations during peak, off peak and weekends.

LUL restate how comparatively lightly the station is used, being presently the 25th least used station of 268 underground stations. Patronage has decreased since 2007 in contrast to a rising level on the network as a whole. It is suggested that this is due to the improvements seen in the London Overground services. Patronage will fall further should the Croxley Rail Link open and some passengers transfer to the new stations.

LUL say surveys and ticket data indicate that there were 2631 entries and 2466 exits on an average weekday in 2010 there is a peak between 7:00 and 10:00 on weekdays and between 15:00 and 16:00 in the afternoon. On Saturdays demand is lower with no discernable peak. Graph (D) below is taken from LUL's Supporting Statement.

Figure D – Weekday Entries and Exits at the Station



They restate the 70 Watford Boys Grammar School boys figure which we have questioned above. The overwhelming number of passengers arrive by foot.

5.13 Watford Junction station is busy now and will be over capacity if the Croxley Rail Link project goes ahead (issue 15 in table).

Objectors believe that Watford Junction station will not be able to cope with the additional passenger and train traffic that will result from the introduction of the Croxley Rail Link. Objectors are concerned that the Croxley Rail Link project will not mean any investment into the development of Watford Junction station to be able to deal with the additional train and passenger traffic. We asked if this had been considered and what the impact of additional passengers would be.

LUL tell us they that there will only be a 6% rise in passengers at Watford junction station and so have not included any capacity enhancements at Watford Junction station in the project.

Secretariat’s comment

LUL have not responded regarding the question of additional trains traffic and the capacity of Watford Junction station. Members could ask about this at their meeting.

5.14 Request for improved bus services (issue 16 in table)

Objectors believe that the bus service can be improved to allow better access to the newly proposed and existing Watford stations (existing and proposed) to minimise the disruption caused by the closure of Watford station. We asked if improvements to bus services were proposed.

LUL tell us there are no proposals for new bus services, but that this could happen.

Secretariat's comment

Members should note that outside of London, bus services are not regulated and operate either commercially or with the support of the local transport authority (Hertfordshire).

If members support the closure they could ask, in their report, that a review of bus services is undertaken as part of the Croxley Link Rail project.

5.15 Alternative services (Issue 17 in table)

We have received 99 leaflet return slips from councillors George Derbyshire and Peter Jeffree signed by 131 local Watford residents objecting to the closure of Watford station. The petition was also in favour of three alternative proposals similar to those described in 4 a), 4 b) and 4 c). We asked if LUL had anything to add to their earlier response.

Secretariat's comment

LUL made no further response.

5.16 Further alternative proposal not raised by objectors

A further possible alternative use of the Croxley Rail Link project alignment would be for a service more local to Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire rather than a connection to Central London.

This alternative would retain the existing service pattern to and from Watford station and provide an alternative service from Amersham/Chesham to Watford Junction station via the Croxley Rail Link. This would provide a link between the main centres of West Herts and South Bucks and provide significant local benefit as well as retaining the existing service to Watford station.

Secretariat's comment

In response LUL said that this proposal would not be good value for money (as demand would be low and the costs relatively high). However, they also said that the Croxley Rail Link project would provide the possibility of such a link in the future.

- 5.17 Several objectors wrote with objections which London TravelWatch cannot take into account as part of this process as they are not directly passenger issues.

Summary of non-material issues raised by objectors

Issue Number	Issues	Number of Responses
1	Impact on property value	13
2	Heritage (character of building etc)	1
3	Noise from construction and operations	5
4	Visual impact of viaduct	5
5	Impact on survival of business	1

6 Secretariats observations

- 6.1 LUL's case has been clearly outlined in their Supporting Statement and they have responded thoroughly to the objections and issues raised.
- 6.2 The Secretariat has noted a few issues that arise or appear to have not been fully answered. Members may wish to raise this in their discussion with the service operator (LUL) and objectors.
- 6.2 In considering the closure proposals members should refer to paragraph 4 of Document B, particularly paragraphs 4.2 and 4.4 (summarised below):

London TravelWatch is required, under section 25, Schedule 8 of the Railways Act 2005 to:

(a) consider the objections made during that period [the objection period];

(b) consider any representations made by the service operator; and

(c) report to the Mayor of London on the hardship the Committee considers will be caused by the proposed closure.

The report to the Mayor of London may contain proposals for alleviating any hardship to which it refers.

- 6.3 Members should note that in their consideration of hardship and what might be done to alleviate hardship they are advised of the need to consider the cost to the public purse and consider whether any proposals represent value for money.

7 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 7.1 These issues will be explored as part of member's consideration of the closure proposals.

8 Legal powers

- 8.1 London TravelWatch is required to conduct this process under the Railways Act 2005, Section 25 and the associated Schedule 8.

9 Financial implications

9.1 This is covered in Document B