



Extending the DLR to Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead – London TravelWatch’s response

London TravelWatch is London’s independent transport watchdog, using evidence to campaign to improve journeys, and advocate for all people travelling in London.

Thank you for consulting with us and inviting our views about the proposed extension of the DLR to Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead. This follows our supportive response to TfL’s 2024 initial consultation on the proposed extension.

As a transport organisation, our response to these proposals will focus on the aspects related to travel and the impact on passengers. Other considerations, while still important, are outside of our remit and so we offer no comment on them.

We offer the following comments about TfL’s proposals:

The benefits of an extended DLR

London TravelWatch supports the proposed extension of the DLR from Gallions Reach to Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead.

An extended DLR would provide many benefits, offering new, faster, easier and low-cost cross-river links. It will have the benefit of offering new direct links and improved transport connections, not just in the immediate Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead Waterfront Development Areas, but also across Thamesmead, the Royal Docks and Docklands, as well as east and south-east London more generally. Passengers using the DLR at Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead will be able to travel more quickly towards Docklands and central London, and will benefit from interchange to the Elizabeth line at Custom House, the Jubilee line at Canning Town, the Windrush line at Shadwell and the other DLR branches at Canning Town, Poplar and Shadwell.

The design and locations of the new DLR stations

London TravelWatch believes that building new stations gives TfL a great opportunity to design using best practice and, crucially, to make the stations as user friendly and accessible as possible, so that everyone can benefit from new transport infrastructure. This good practice should continue in the environment outside stations so that people can benefit from an easy and accessible interchange, to support a properly integrated approach across TfL services and other infrastructure partners.

We are therefore pleased to see TfL’s commitments for Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead stations, including:

- Full accessibility, with step-free access between street and train.

- Station lighting, CCTV, help points, customer information displays and signage to help reassure passengers about their safety and security and provide live travel information.
- A canopy along each platform to provide shelter.
- A station entrance which will connect with other local transport options including buses.
- Secure cycle parking outside the stations.

Specifically for elevated Thamesmead station, we welcome lifts as well as stairs on each platform and that the station has been designed to support a future DLR extension. At Beckton Riverside, we welcome the covered footbridge between the platforms accessed by lifts, as well as stairs, and that the footbridge will be a publicly accessible connection to the new neighbourhoods on either side of the station.

We also reiterate the important design features we raised previously which have not been explicitly mentioned in this consultation, namely:

- At least one ticket vending machine in each station always able to accept cash payments.
- In-station passenger signage and information to be both audio and visual.
- Good levels of seating on platforms.
- Local maps, DLR service posters and onward journey information in the station entrance area.
- Clear signage outside the station entrance/exit directing people to other public transport options and local amenities.
- Clear integration between DLR stations and local bus routes e.g. bus stops/shelters directly outside the stations containing onward journey maps, timetables and real time bus Countdown boards.
- Safe and level pavements outside the stations and, where required, pedestrian crossings with tactile paving to bus stops, shelters and other local amenities.

TfL has rightly highlighted the key considerations of accessibility and inclusive design as the scheme is developed further. We urge TfL to engage in genuine and wide-ranging co-design with individuals and representative groups with lived experience and groups who may be harder to reach. Undertaking this engagement and applying this learning should result in outcomes which maximise positive impacts and minimise negative impacts.

In terms of the locations of the stations, we believe that it is sensible that Beckton Riverside station will be located at the heart of the planned new town centre and that Thamesmead station will serve both existing residents and the planned development of Thamesmead Waterfront.

Active travel improvements

We hope that TfL's proposed improvements to the DLR and its connection to the local bus network will encourage more use of public transport rather than private vehicle use. To further help with this, we urge TfL, London Borough of Newham and

the Royal Borough of Greenwich to take the opportunity to make extensive and co-ordinated improvements to walking and cycling in the regenerated areas to make for a good walking and wheeling environment.

The impact on passengers using Beckton station

In our response to the first consultation, we hoped that passengers who use Beckton station would not be unduly disadvantaged with a dramatic drop in service levels to that station once trains are diverted to Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead.

This latest consultation confirms that once the extension opens there would be a train every 8-10 minutes to/from Beckton, a frequency reduction from the current train every 5 minutes (off-peak). TfL acknowledge this would slightly increase journey times from Beckton and could potentially lead to a slight reduction in access to employment, education and leisure opportunities for passengers using Beckton and impact access to DLR services there. TfL add that they are 'assessing the potential impacts of the planned service pattern, and the EQIA will be updated with further information in future iterations.' It is disappointing that this analysis has not been completed in time for inclusion in this consultation, to enable people to fully assess the impact of the proposed changes to the DLR.

Future DLR service patterns including a possible need to change train

This consultation explains that both the Beckton and Thamesmead branches would operate a train every 8-10 minutes, to give a train every 4-5 minutes between Gallions Reach and Canning Town. However, the proposed destination of those trains isn't given. Will all Beckton trains go to, for instance, Tower Gateway, and all Thamesmead trains go to Stratford International? Or will the trains on each branch run as it currently does on the Beckton branch, with trains alternating between Tower Gateway and Stratford International?

We raise this as a possible issue because London TravelWatch knows that passengers don't like having to change en route to complete their journeys. Time spent doing so is involuntary as having to change is always second best to using a direct service. Changing adds extra time to a journey and uncertainty to the timing of the journey. It can also be difficult and stressful especially for passengers such as older and Disabled passengers or those with children or luggage. There is also concern about safety whilst waiting at stations, especially at night. In terms of this specific consultation, many DLR stations are in relatively isolated locations and only a few are staffed. Such circumstances can make it feel as if it invites opportunities for people to take advantage when few people are around.

The turnback location

TfL have advised that a turnback would be set up so that trains waiting for their next journey do not impact other services, which would reduce capacity on the lines and cause delays for customers. Having reviewed the final options of Royal Victoria station or to the west of Canning Town station, we believe that the Canning Town option is the better one. This is because, though both options will enable passengers to change to the Elizabeth line at Custom House, only the Canning Town option will

allow for passengers to also connect with the Jubilee line and other parts of the DLR network at Canning Town.

Advertising and engaging with the consultation

Turning to the consultation website, we were pleased to see TfL offer multiple channels to respond to this consultation, including via email, telephone and Freepost. Similarly, we welcome the variety of accessible formats provided including Easy Read materials, British Sign Language (BSL) videos and consultation conversation service, audio versions and the option to translate the webpage into a variety of languages. Holding various drop-in events about the consultation in both Beckton and Thamesmead is also a positive and inclusive way of engaging with those who live, work or visit in those areas.

Taken together, all these options help to make the consultation process more accessible. We strongly encourage TfL to keep offering these options to alert passengers to all consultations so that everyone who wants to respond to them can do so.