

Proposed SL12 express bus route between Gants Hill and Rainham: 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. It is in this role that we are responding to TfL's consultation about proposed route SL12.

We make the following comments:

The benefits of limited stop, orbital bus routes

We support TfL's proposal to introduce the SL12. London TravelWatch has been calling for more orbital and limited stop bus routes for many years because we know that people value being able to travel across boroughs for work, healthcare appointments, schools and shopping trips. We support too that the SL12 will connect with other bus routes, Elizabeth line, London Overground, London Underground and National Rail services. By doing so, it will help connectivity and bring new, speedier connections to the boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge.

Making Superloop an enduring success

We are pleased that for passengers Superloop has quickly become a widely recognised and valued addition to London's bus network. However, Superloop services operate in the wider bus network where average bus speeds in London continue to fall year on year, with an average network speed of just 9.2 mph in 2024/25. And so, whilst London TravelWatch supports Superloop, we are concerned that for passengers a limited stop bus stuck in traffic is still just a bus stuck in traffic.

To make the Superloop network an enduring success, we call for TfL to redouble their efforts to give the bus the priority it needs on the road, both their own roads and in working productively with London's boroughs on their roads.

The SL12's stops

To enable passengers to make the easiest connections between the SL12 and the other bus services which run alongside it, we hope that TfL will, wherever possible, ensure same stop interchange.

To help with this, TfL should consider adding a stop for terminating SL12 buses at Gants Hill (in addition to the proposed stop on Eastern Avenue). If the SL12 calls at stop CH on Cranbrook Road, it would allow for same stop interchange with the SL2 and seven other bus routes. As the SL12 will need to pass stop CH en route to its likely bus stand on Perth Road, it would barely extend the SL12's running time.

In Romford, whilst we agree that the SL12 should serve Romford Station, we query the bus stops selected at this location. It's proposed that SL12 buses bound for Gants Hill will call at stop V but it would be more logical to call at stop Z, which is served by the 66 that, like the SL12, goes to Newbury Park and Gants Hill via Eastern Avenue. Similarly, it's proposed that SL12 buses bound for Rainham will call

at stop T but it would be more sensible to call at stop Y as this is where the other buses going to Elm Park and Rainham call. The 103 does go to Rainham from stop T but we would expect that more passengers (especially on the roads served by the 252 and 365) will benefit if the SL12 used stop Y.

In both these cases, if the SL12 and parallel routes share a bus stop it means that passengers who can use either the SL12 or the stopping route can see from the Countdown screens or their own digital devices whether their journey time will be shorter if they decide to wait for the SL12, or if it would be quicker or make no significant difference to take a stopping route arriving at that stop before the SL12.

The introduction for the first time of a bus route serving Ferry Lane industrial estate is a significant positive. However, it appears a knock-on impact of that is that the only proposed stop in Rainham itself is at a stop called Rainham station 'South Side,' which doesn't seem to offer particularly easy access to the station, especially for people with accessibility requirements. We urge TfL to work with local partners to ensure that both the bus stop and the connection to the station itself is made as accessible as possible.

The impacts on other local bus routes

The SL12 will free up capacity for the parallel bus routes calling at stops not served by the SL12. Maintaining the existing service levels of those bus routes is important as it should lead to more comfortable journeys for current passengers and hopefully encourage more people to use those routes. The consultation doesn't state if the introduction of the SL12 would lead to any reduction in the frequencies of the parallel routes, so we strongly hope that such a reduction will not happen.

Advertising the consultation

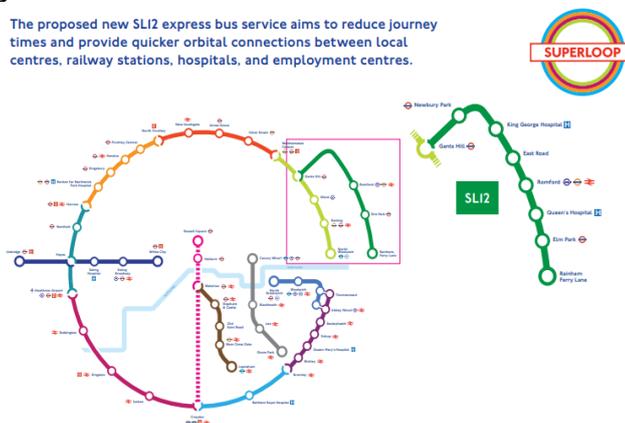
It is very disappointing that the style of bus stop posters and leaflet for the BL1 consultation, which showed clear locations of the proposed stops, has not been continued for this consultation. We ask why this is the case. Instead, TfL have regressed to the lesser quality of information seen in the first phase of Superloop consultations, which, as we said at the time, did not make the best use of the space available on the promotional material.

In the case of the leaflet for the SL12 (below right), we say again that it would be better to include all the SL12's proposed stops because the poster needs to show how the proposal will affect passengers.

The BL1 Bakerloop would be part of the Superloop express bus network and would provide quicker journeys between Waterloo, Elephant & Castle and Lewisham town centre.



The proposed new SL12 express bus service aims to reduce journey times and provide quicker orbital connections between local centres, railway stations, hospitals, and employment centres.



We ask why TfL did not use their geographic map (below) in the leaflet instead. This map is much clearer, more relevant and a better use of space than the image of the whole Superloop network. We expect that passengers affected by this consultation in, for instance, Rainham or Romford would find it more useful to see the proposed stops for the SL12 rather than see that Superloop services operate in distant Kenton or Kingston.

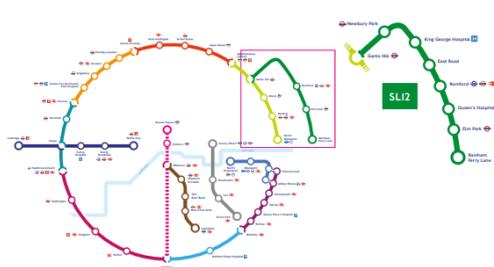


The issues with the Kent consultation leaflets apply similarly to the bus stop posters (below).

Your Bakerloop. Your Say.
A new Superloop express bus service.



Your Superloop. Your Say.
A new Superloop express bus service.



We are consulting on proposals to expand the Superloop network with a new express bus route BLI (the Bakerloop), between Waterloo, Elephant & Castle and Lewisham.

We are proposing to expand the Superloop network with a new express bus service between Gants Hill and Ferry Lane in Rainham, via Romford. The route would be numbered SL12.

For more details and to have your say, please scan the QR code, or:

- Visit: haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/BLI-superloop
- Email: haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk
- Telephone: 020 3054 6037 (call back service)
- Write to: FREEPOST TFL HAVE YOUR SAY (BLI)



For more details and to have your say, please scan the QR code, or:

- Visit: haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/SL12-superloop
- Email: haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk
- Telephone: 020 3054 6037 (call back service)
- Write to: FREEPOST TFL HAVE YOUR SAY (SL12)



The closing date for comments is Friday 23 May 2025.

The closing date for comments is Friday 14 March 2025.

Finally, we would point out avoidable errors on the consultation materials. Namely that the final westbound stop on the list of bus stops is at Gants Hill Cranbrook Road not Cranbrook Drive. And this stop (ET) is not shown at all on the geographic map.