

***PROPOSED HEADBOLT LANE STATION:
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING STATEMENT***

October 2021



This document is intended to be read in conjunction with the 'PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF NEW STATION AT HEAD BOLT LANE, KIRKBY August 2021' document, originally submitted in support of the proposed works to construct a new rail station at Headbolt Lane, Kirkby

Proposals for a New Rail Station at Headbolt Lane, Kirkby

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) has secured £172.5 million in capital grant from the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) for local transport investment between 2018/19 – 2022/2023. The fund supports programmes of interlinking interventions which will transform sustainable transport connectivity in key commuter routes in major city regions. The funding forms part of the wider Strategic Investment Fund.

The funding has three priority themes:

- Theme 1: Improving and expanding the public transport network to meet new areas of demand
- Theme 2: Improving the appeal of public transport, and particularly bus, against private transport
- Theme 3: Intervening for health and wellbeing

The Headbolt Lane proposals meet all three of these themes. **The LCRCA has secured £66m of investment from the Transforming Cities Fund, subject to completion of the project by 31 March 2023.**

The Headbolt Lane project proposes to deliver a new station with multi-modal interchange facilities providing good quality access by bus, park & ride, cycling and walking. The new station and track upgrades will enable the Merseyrail network to be extended from Kirkby to Headbolt Lane, with four Merseyrail trains per hour connecting Headbolt Lane to Liverpool Central. The existing (approximately hourly) Wigan/Manchester service currently operated by Northern Rail will then end at Headbolt Lane, rather than Kirkby. In order to achieve this extension to the Merseyrail network, Merseytravel will introduce innovative dual power (DC/battery) – the first use of this technology in the country. This enables Merseyrail to provide a continuous electric powered service to the new station which will be significantly quieter than the current diesel powered Northern service to Kirkby. The reduction in diesel use will also have a positive impact on local air quality. Merseytravel will also purchase an additional Class 777 train to support the delivery of the revised timetable without any adverse performance impacts.

Public Support for the Proposals

Public consultation on the scheme proposals was carried out in May and June 2021. The key engagement tool was a dedicated site using the 'Commonplace' web platform, live for 3½ weeks between 19 May – 13 June 2021 to receive comments. This was promoted via Merseytravel and LCRCA's digital media channels. The web platform included a CGI flythrough video (hosted on the LCRCA YouTube channel) which has attracted over 2,100 views to date. A site plan, stills from the video with descriptive captions and a FAQ section were available to view

on the website. Of the 363 respondents who confirmed their email address, **83% (301) expressed positive feelings** for the station scheme. Of the remainder, 8 % (30) were neutral and 9 % (32) were negative.

Postcards (15,000 copies) were also used to signpost to Commonplace and to enable those without online access a chance to comment. These were door dropped to targeted households, delivered to local primary and secondary schools, community groups and centres, and the town's existing rail station. Of the 472 postcards returned, **74.7% (314) expressed positive feelings** about the new scheme proposals. Of the remainder, 21.7 % (91) were neutral and 3.6 % (15).

Meeting the Knowsley Local Plan and Strategy objectives

Sustainable Economic and Employment Growth

The new station offers significant improvement to access existing jobs, training and employment opportunities through the provision of a direct rail link into the city centre for people living in the areas of Tower Hill and Northwood – reducing travel time to just over 20 minutes from the new station to Liverpool Central. This will provide a significant journey time saving over the private car as well as the current public transport options. In addition, the station and extension of the Merseyrail network offers improved connectivity to areas across the City Region and potentially West Lancashire.

Sustainable Transport

Data from the 2011 Census (ONS) shows that 37 % of Knowsley residents do not have access to a car or van for travel; 12 % higher than the national figure of 25 %. These low levels of access to a car are even more pronounced in areas immediately around the proposed station site, where the majority of households within a 1km do not have access to a car (some Output Areas in Tower Hill and Northwood having 60-90 % of households without access to a car). Travel to Work data from the Census finds that commuting by taxi is more than 5 times the national average – a financial burden on residents.

The new station will provide safe and secure access to the rail platforms for people with non-mobility-related disabilities (sensory, cognitive and other hidden impairments), as well as step free access on all routes connecting the highway to the platforms. Together with the new trains, access from platform to train will be at the same level so that people will no longer require ramp assistance, for example passengers using wheelchairs, bikes and buggies).

Promoting Health and Wellbeing

The new station provides the opportunity to increase levels of walking and cycling. The current severance created by the rail line will be removed through the provision of a new footbridge. The widening of an existing pedestrian route under the rail line will enable cyclists to share the route, providing a safer and more attractive off-road route. In addition, walking and cycling improvements to the surrounding highway network will enable more and safer journeys to be made by active travel (to be delivered by Knowsley Council).

Improving transport connectivity by non-car modes will reduce local congestion into Kirkby and Liverpool, thereby improving local air quality. Improving public transport and active travel options will contribute to the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (e.g. supporting staff travel carbon reductions).

The **Knowsley Local Plan** also outlines the core strategy policies which will aid the delivery of one or more of the strategic objectives. This includes **Policy CS7: Transport Networks** which states that, as a part of the overall transport strategy, "*planning powers and other interventions will be used to support a sustainable and integrated transport system*". To meet the priorities of Kirkby, **Policy CS12: Principal Regeneration Area – Tower Hill** states the need for infrastructure improvements, including enhanced public transport provision and maximising opportunities for walking and cycling to create accessible linkages in Tower Hill and surrounding areas. A new rail station and Park and Ride at Headbolt Lane is specifically identified to deliver significant change and new development to address the high levels of deprivation in one of the most vulnerable areas of Knowsley.

The **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Tower Hill** was adopted by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council in April 2007. This document notes that Tower Hill is currently around 1km from the existing Kirkby Station, therefore further than the 800m walking radius for sustainable development. A station at Headbolt Lane would bring the whole area to within 800m of a station and remove the severance effect of the A506.

Construction impact mitigation

The planning application contains a Noise Mitigation Appendix which details the best practicable means to minimise impacts of noise and night-time working for residents and businesses. These actions represent best industry practice while taking into account the constraints from existing rail operations. To be awarded Transforming Cities Funding, the project Full Business Case must include a delivery programme which demonstrates the ability to meet a deadline of 31 March 2023. This date is fixed for the end of the five-year investment from the Transforming Cities Fund. There is no secured funding after 31 March 2023.

Northern Trains operate an hourly passenger service from Kirkby to Wigan and Manchester. Regular freight trains serve the waste recycling centre at Knowsley Freight Yard, using the same track as Northern. Only one train can operate at a time – therefore, if during construction, an engineering train is on the line, neither Northern or freight trains can operate.

Knowsley Freight Yard has approximately 110 vehicles per day dropping off 1600 tonnes of material. The recycling centre manages the 430,000 tonnes per year of Merseyside and Halton waste left over after recycling, transported by rail to the energy-from-waste facility in Middlesbrough. Each freight train can carry 900 tonnes of waste via 66 containers using the Northern Rail network (through Rainford). Any disruption to the operation of these freight trains would require a fleet of replacement HGV lorries to transport waste through Knowsley to the Middlesbrough facility. This would require a compensation payment to the Freight Yard to fund this lorry fleet which would be paid by Network Rail, and ultimately from the TCF project costs. Obviously this would have a detrimental impact on local traffic and residents, while increasing overall project costs (reducing the Benefit Cost Ratio). Due to current issues with

availability of HGV drivers, road transportation may not be a viable option to guarantee a continuous transportation service to Middlesbrough.

Currently Merseyrail Electrics provide 15-minute services from Kirkby connecting 3 million passengers per year to Liverpool Central. To maintain this intensive service, the only opportunity for working on this section of line is Saturday night/Sunday morning. There is no potential for daytime working on or near the line. There is very little overnight time to allow works to be carried out at midweek nights with less than 4 hours working time available between last and first train service provision. Trains must clear the line at the end of service at 00:09 and return back to the Kirkdale depot. A similar allowance is required for the journey from Kirkdale depot to start the first service at 06:00. It is only once all train movements have been completed and the line is clear can a possession of the line be taken followed by the electrical safety isolation procedures to switch off the 3rd rail. Typically allowing for any delays to train services, it is expected that to take a possession and isolation can add 1 hour to the start and finish of works allowing only 4 hours of actual working time on site.

To close the railway to train services requires the payment of compensation to train companies from loss of train access and to pay for rail replacement buses – increasing project costs and disruption to many passengers. Restricting works to daytime only would lengthen the delivery programme. For Transforming Cities Funding, the Combined Authority requires the Full Business Case to include **a robust project programme and risk register demonstrating the completion of construction by 31 March 2023**. Attempting to achieve this within an already very tight programme, together with increased costs and longer disruption to freight and passenger services, will add unacceptable levels of risk to the project.

The Outline Business Case found a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.4 which is categorised as ‘Low’ by the Department for Transport. Increasing construction costs and delivery risks through lengthening the project programme will reduce this BCR and overall public value, weakening the economic case for investment. Decreasing the viability of the project will jeopardise the award of funding for the project. **There is no secured funding to complete the project after 31 March 2023.**

Therefore, bearing in mind the constraints for both passenger and freight trains, it would be impractical and undesirable to close the railway to deliver this scheme. Without being able to demonstrate a realistic delivery programme within the required timeframe, there is a risk that the project would not be awarded funding.

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