



Guildford Vision Group The Guildford Society
24 Bury Fields, Guildford, Surrey, England, GU2 4AZ.

Chris Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

3rd April 2019

Dear Minister

Guildford Station – Future Service Provision

We are writing as chairman of respectively The Guildford Society and Guildford Vision Group, two leading local residents associations, committed to improving the quality of Guildford and its surrounding countryside, including the built environment.

Guildford Station is scheduled to have a consented major redevelopment along the East (Town Side) of the station – the Solum scheme (a Keir and Network Rail joint venture). The redevelopment has been the subject of much controversy, and the council and many Guildford residents still feel the planning system failed the town. Consent was given on appeal after a public hearing in November 2017.

This letter is **not** to re-open these arguments; but to raise a concern, both associations share, on the operational robustness, including capacity and resilience, of the station post-redevelopment. The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has published its determination that Network Rail can dispose of land to the Solum Scheme for redevelopment, as a two-month consultation. We are not entitled to write to the ORR directly. The issue we raise is important to Guildford's role in the South East Rail Transport network; particularly the operability and resilience of the London-Portsmouth corridor and the orbital route Reading to Gatwick.

Guildford Station is at the intersection of five routes and currently serves almost 8 million passengers per annum (ORR 2017/8 Statistics) being the fifth busiest station in the South East. The station is constrained at its southern end with the Portsmouth Line/North Downs Line entering via a tunnel under the North Downs. The layout involves sharp curves to access the current platforms on the west side of the station, any westward expansion will compound this constraint.

Network rail have announced they are minded to extend the platform capacity on the west side of the station; and have dropped plans to add a new platform on the east side of the station (Platform 0). We are concerned that dropping plans to add terminating capacity to the east side of the station has been driven by short term development considerations to develop the site at the station; rather than a proper determination of the operational needs of the railway over possibly the next 50 – 100

years. In particular, the resilience of the network when through incidents or planned maintenance the Woking line is blocked.

We assume the Solum Development will have a design life of circa 100 years, and its 438 apartments will be sold on long leases.

After a Freedom of Information request, we have seen documents that outline Network Rail's thinking on the future of Guildford Station covering 2014 to 2018 (Appendix A lists these documents). These are deeply worrying, and we are concerned that station operational area will be unnecessarily constrained to handle future growth and provide a resilient facility. This can be relatively easily resolved BEFORE BUILDING STARTS by a setback of one element of the Solum scheme by 2 Meters but will be impossible subsequently.

Our concerns include:

A) Demand Projections – Guildford New Line.

The Guildford New Line provides slow services via Effingham Junction to London. The original demand projection referenced (The Wessex Route Study - published in August 2015) provides for:

- 2No. additional tph from Guildford to Waterloo via Cobham, making 4No. tph in total in each direction.
- 2No. additional tph from Guildford to Waterloo via Epsom, making 4No. tph in total in each direction.

This entails 8 trains per hour each way on the New Line. This seems a prudent projection of long-term requirements considering, potential modal shift, rails role in tackling global warming etc. This demand prompted the desire to add a second terminating platform on the eastern side of the station.

Mysteriously this demand projection has been replaced in the most recent timetable modelling (May 2018) to the assumption that:

'Main Suburban services, those terminating or originating at Guildford that utilise the Guildford New Line via Cobham or the line via Leatherhead, were assumed to be as per the SWR franchise bid timetable.'

The Franchise commitment is for a short period running up to 2024/5 and is equivalent to today's level of service. Other services included the timetable modelling e.g. Heathrow Services, take a far longer-term view of likely demand.

B) Local Stations

There are firm plans for a new station at Guildford West and planning underway for a station at Guildford East. To make best use of these valuable additions to the rail infrastructure services on the two lines affected demand for usage is likely to be materially increased. Other local stations will have increased traffic due to proposed local housing notably Ash and potentially Effingham.

C) General Service Increases

Thirdly, there are long-term plans for general service increases on the London - Portsmouth Line, Reading - North Downs Line. These are reflected in projections. It should be noted that the North Downs Line is a natural adjunct to the 'East West Rail' that is linking the arc of Cambridge to Oxford where services could be linked around via Reading, Guildford, Redhill to Gatwick and/or Sevenoaks. There is probably growth in services on this route not reflected in the traffic assumptions over the long term.

Network Rail are now dropping plans for Platform 0 and concentrating extra platforms at the west side of the station. Although using the west side is possible; it does impose several unnecessary constraints including:

- The ability to increase service frequency on the Guildford Slow Line (New Line) appears to be severely constrained without a new platform on the east side of the station. Currently the Guildford slow line (newline) is only accessible from platform 1 (terminus) and through platforms 2 and 3. Network rail have modelled several options (appendix B) to remodel the station to provide room for a terminating platform for the New Line all appear significantly more expensive than just adding a platform on the east side.
- Fully utilising eastern through platforms at Guildford makes access to the tunnel straighter thus speeding approach and leaving speeds. Currently, the eastern through platform are often blocked by terminating services – again a new eastern platform would obviate this issue. These through platforms would also provide resilience to the network as Waterloo-bound trains could be diverted up the newline, but only if there are no terminating trains blocking platforms 2 and/or 3.
- Heathrow Terminating Services should ideally terminate between the Portsmouth main lines thus avoiding conflicting movements. Positioning these platforms between the Southward and Northward lines would involve pushing Northward Services to the west platforms thus involving curvature, and slow approach speeds, coming from the south. Note: Digital Signalling will allow significant increases in platform approach speeds thus releasing capacity.

The end result of building the Solum scheme as planned, could be a station that is not easily operated despite capacity being increased and is unnecessarily lacking in resilience.

Before the Solum Scheme 'breaks ground' it would be good to understand if Network Rail have objectively considered likely service needs, including resilience, for the next 50-100 years. Rail is a crucial element in promoting modal shift and disposal of unique operational railway land needs to very carefully considered against future operational needs.

There is a simple solution to our concerns, one that has been considered by Network Rail in 2014! (Appendices B Option 1, Appendix C plan) The Solum development Multi-Storey Car Park, can be moved to the east by a few metres to leave the necessary space for an extra terminating platform. Network Rail have proposed this and estimate the move is in the order of 2 metres. Appendix C has

the drawing that Network Rail developed. This minor change would not stop development, but also doesn't block possible station requirements over the decades to come. To unnecessarily lose the option for minor expansion on the eastern side of the station, to service operational demands and enhance resilience; which will have to be lived with for maybe a century, seems mistaken. We believe this minor change to the development can be accommodated with minimal delay.

Network Rail's first duty is to manage a robust and efficient rail system, it is not a property company. It would be good if Network Rail could share its planning assumptions for Guildford Station and explain why it is allowing the east side of the station to be constrained by the Solum development.

At the November 2017 planning appeal both Guildford Vision Group and The Guildford Society questioned the positioning of the Solum Development, as the groups were unclear how a Platform 0 which was still planned could be fitted in alongside the Solum Development. Network Rail by letter re-assured the enquiry that Platform 0 could still be built Appendix D. This statement, in the light of the FoI documents, is highly questionable as it was not made clear that Network Rail had considered and rejected a variety of schemes to get around the issue ranging from elevated platforms to terminating services at another station to a flyover; all far less credible solutions. Despite owning 50% of Solum Network Rail appear powerless to insist on the retention and preservation of critical land to allow for a proper long-term layout of Guildford Station.

We hope that with your ministerial powers, you can call in this ORR application and question whether Network Rail have a comprehensive view of the services demands that Guildford Station will have to handle in future, and that has been translated into a proper determination of operational capacity required. It is also important that Network Rail manage development partners effectively. Currently, in absence of available information, we fear that the Station will be constrained for the foreseeable future, with the only beneficiaries being the Solum consortium.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Rigg".

John Rigg - GVG

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alistair Smith".

Alistair Smith - GSoC

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CC.

Andrew Jones	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport
Anne Milton	MP - Guildford
Andrew Haines	Chief Executive, Network Rail
John Halsall	Managing Director South East, Network Rail

Appendix A

Documents supplied under Freedom of Information Request.

Wessex LTPP Route Study
Guildford – Station Capacity
Pre-GRIP Feasibility Report
December 2014
Issue 2.0

Wessex LTPP Route Study
Guildford – Station Capacity
Pre-GRIP Feasibility Report -
Addendum
29 November 2016
Issue 2.6 Addendum

Timetable Analysis Report
Capability & Capacity Analysis – System Operator
29/05/2018

Supporting Station Plans

Appendix B



Infrastructure Projects

5.2 Options Summary

All works to the platforms will increase the platform areas covered by canopies which will be of a similar design to that of the existing platform canopies. All works to the footbridge and canopies will cater for the future provision of overhead electrification by allowing sufficient clearances to be achieved above the running lines.

Option	Outline	Land Take Required	Key Advantages	Key Disadvantages
Option 1	New bay platform P0 to East.	1050m ²	Minimal land take; minimal rail disruption; potential increase in benefit: cost.	Solum development incursion. Impact and potential financial impact to Solum & Network Rail.
Option 1a	New bay platform P0 to East with reduced width on platforms P1 & P2.	920m ²	Reduced land take of approximately 130m ² relative to option 1.	Works required to canopy, platform and track slew.
Option 2	New island platform P0 to East.	1800m ²	Similar to above.	Increased land take required. May prevent or significantly hinder Solum development.
Option 2a	As above with reduced width on platforms P1 & P2.	1450m ²	Reduced land take of approximately 350m ² relative to option 2.	Works required to canopy, platform and track slew.
Option 3	New platform P0 to West & new viaduct.	None	Opens up development to the West; no impact on Solum.	Relatively high cost to scheme due to viaduct and ramp works; loss of sidings.
Option 4	London Road terminus.	None	Avoids need to develop Guildford Station.	May not further ambitions for Guildford to be an interchange station.
Option 5	Platform P2 extension & new platform P0.	300m ²	Reduces land take relative to other options.	Unfeasible due to signal sighting.
Option 6	Elevated platform P0 in stacked platform format.	Not established	Innovative.	Land take likely to be similar to option 1; access issues, high cost.
Option 7.1	New side platform P0 with additional turnback.	570m ²	Land take less than options 1, 2 & 6.	Large amount of track works. Solum development incursion.
Option 7.1A	Reduced P1/P2 width	470m ²	Land take reduced	
Option 7.2	New side platform P0 with additional turnback.	570m ²	Land take less than options 1, 2, 6 & 7.1.	Large amount of track works. Solum development incursion.
Option 7.2A	Reduced P1/P2 width	470m ²	Land take reduced	

Table 2 - Option Summary

Appendix C

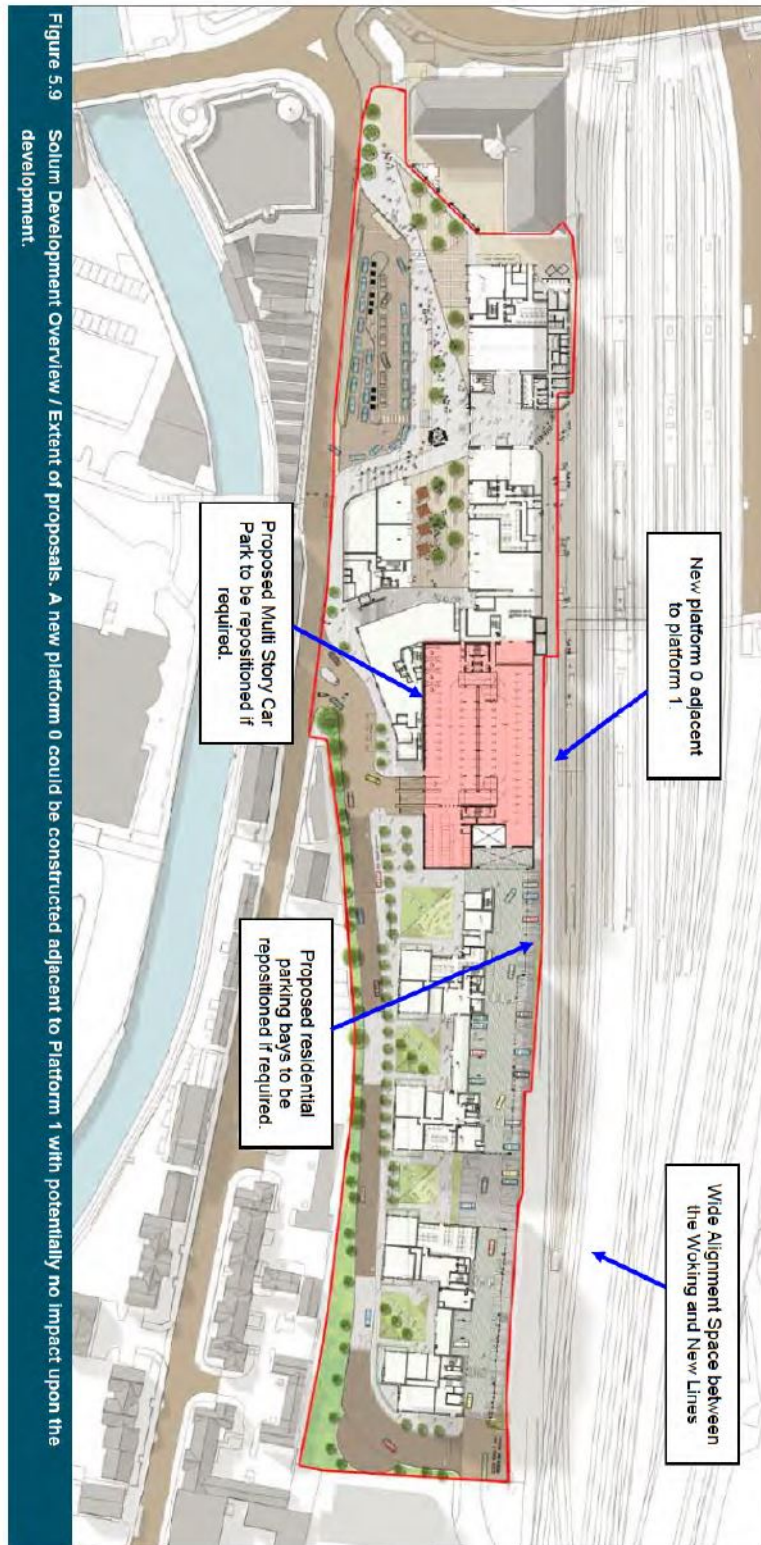


Figure 5.9 Solum Development Overview / Extent of proposals. A new platform 0 could be constructed adjacent to Platform 1 with potentially no impact upon the development.

Infrastructure Projects



Appendix D

Network Rail Statement in Response to Guildford Vision Group's ORR Point

1.1 It is correct that an application for LC7 consent to dispose of land to the ORR at Guildford Station was withdrawn by Network Rail.

1.2 Since the withdrawal of the LC7 application Solum and our Route Strategic Planning team have undertaken further work and studies which has provided options that are capable to bring forward both Platform O and the Solum Scheme. This allowed the previous statements to the inquiry to be made by NR.

1.3 As is the normal course of events, the ORR has not been included in these discussions and will be unaware this work has been undertaken. A new LC7 application will be submitted to enable the disposal of the site, which has been allowed for in the proposed programme. The LC7 application process is governed by a statutory timetable and would normally take approximately four months.

Norrie Courts

Director of Stations, Network Rail