

BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP

Chairman: Alderman Frederick Jones, Barking & Dagenham Council

Secretary: Graham Larkbey, 35 Carr Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 5ER

www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk
info@barking-gospeloak.org.uk



Mr. Martin Esom,
Executive Director of Environment & Regeneration,
London Borough of Waltham Forest,
The Town Hall,
Forest Road,
Walthamstow,
London,
E17 4JF

8th January 2008

Dear Mr. Esom,

WALTHAMSTOW TOWN CENTRE CONSULTATION

Please find attached a copy of the Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group's comments on the recent public consultation on the further development of the Town Centre and High Street area.

I apologise for the late submission of these comments but it took some time to consolidate all the members' views into one document and there was further delay due to the intervening Christmas and New Year holiday period. I hope that in spite of their lateness, you will still be able to give due consideration to these comments.

The Group has in the main confined its comments to the relationship of Walthamstow Queen's Road Station to the proposals for Sainsburys/Selborne Walk/High Street area of the plan and goal of improving public transport interchange between the Barking-Gospel Oak Line and the bus, rail and underground stations at Walthamstow Central.

Should you wish to clarify or discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Glenn Wallis
Executive Committee

cc The Leader of the Council

Councillors Phillips, Rayner, Sheppard, Highfield, Martin, Wheeler, Bhogal, Mbachu, Robbins, Ali, Khan, O'Rourke, Qureshi, Sullivan, Gray and Pye.

Neil Gerrard, MP for Walthamstow

Stella Creasey, Prospective Labour Party Parliamentary Candidate for Walthamstow



COMMENTS ON THE WALTHAMSTOW TOWN CENTRE THE VISION PROPOSALS AS THEY AFFECT WALTHAMSTOW QUEEN'S ROAD STATION

GENERAL

The Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group (BGOLUG) welcomes proposals to revitalise the Walthamstow Market area and wishes to ensure that access to the area by public transport is made easy and attractive to potential shoppers from outside the immediate area. BGOLUG has identified a definite, sizable flow of shoppers to Walthamstow Queen's Road station travelling by the Barking-Gospel Oak Line, this being at its most pronounced on Saturdays.

EXISTING ACCESS TO WALTHAMSTOW MARKET

BGOLUG considers current access to the Walthamstow Market area from Walthamstow Queen's Road station to be very poor. Shoppers are faced with a long walk through residential streets to access the Market via Willow Walk.

EXISTING ACCESS TO WALTHAMSTOW CENTRAL

Likewise, BGOLUG considers the access route to/from Walthamstow Central rail, underground and bus stations via Shrubland Road to be little better.

EXISTING PLANS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE MARKET

The council is aware of BGOLUG's views regarding the failure of the housing association developer of the Exeter Road Estate to comply with the condition of the planning permission for the construction of the estate, issued over ten years ago, to provide a footpath through the estate linking Walthamstow Central rail station with Walthamstow Queen's Road station. The condition applied to the planning consent by the council required a footpath from the eastern end of the Walthamstow Central car park to Edison Close and a new entrance to Walthamstow Queen's Road station where a stub-end roadway abuts the railway boundary adjacent to the existing station footbridge. A very short extension of a few metres would link the bridge with the roadway.

BGOLUG has also been aware of a long-standing council aspiration to provide a subway beneath Selborne Road and the Chingford railway line directly into Walthamstow Queen's Road Station and this has always had the full support of BGOLUG since this would dramatically improve both access to the market area and interchange between all public transport modes.

THE CURRENT "THE VISION" TOWN CENTRE CONSULTATION

Selborne Road-Exeter Road Estate Subway

BGOLUG was very interested to learn that the council's plan for a subway under Selborne Road and the Chingford railway line has changed and it is now intended for the subway to link Selborne Road with a proposed extension to the Exeter Road Estate and not Walthamstow Queen's Road station. This change would offer much improved Town Centre access benefits to residents of the estate and from the area to the south and east. There

would be limited public transport access benefits since any improved access for Walthamstow Queen's Road station would only occur should the new station entrance off



Edison Close, as required by the Exeter Road Estate planning condition be built. Since it is understood that the council's powers to enforce this planning condition will lapse in around twelve months, BGOLUG is very concerned that time is running out to get this entrance built.

BGOLUG doubts that the construction of the new buildings, shown on "The Vision" Town Centre Consultation Master Plan in the pocket of land to the west of Edison Close and bounded by the two railway lines, where the southern end of the subway would be located, is feasible. This proposal takes no account of the actual topography of the site, a large part of which actually comprises the embankment sides of the deep cutting in which Walthamstow Queen's Road station is built. The only possible site for a southern exit for a subway from Selborne Road that avoided Walthamstow Queen's Road station would be in the hammer-head of Edison Close abutting the Chingford railway line.

New entrance to Walthamstow Queen's Road station from Selborne Road

This appears to be a much less defined and developed option with a lower priority than the subway referred to above and yet would offer by far much greater value for money in terms of ease of access to/from the market and improved public transport interchange and so has the full support of BGOLUG.

It appears that this scheme has yet to be developed and so could consist of improved access to the existing Walthamstow Queen's Road station or a re-sited station further north-west, between Selborne Road and High Street. This seems to depend upon how the plan for the Mid High Street section of the Master Plan develops. However "The Vision" Town Centre Consultation Master Plan shows the existing station retained with a new station building parallel to the site of existing station footbridge, which could prejudice the retention of the recently installed disabled access ramps. While supporting the new entrance off Edison Close, BGOLUG sees little point in developing the existing Edinburgh Road entrance to the station and footbridge (though this should be retained) and would prefer any new station building to be associated with a new Selborne Road entrance.

BGOLUG PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR WALTHAMSTOW QUEEN'S ROAD STATION

(i) Existing Edinburgh Road Entrance

BGOLUG wishes to see this entrance and associated footbridge and disabled access ramps retained in order to maintain easy access for residents living to the east, south and west of the station. BGOLUG would welcome the new entrance from Edison Close at the opposite end of the existing footbridge but is seriously concerned that any further delay in provided this will cause this opportunity to be lost, for reasons outlined above.

(ii) New Station Entrance from Selborne Road

BGOLUG calls upon the council to "fast track" this proposal ahead of the finalisation of the rest of the Town Centre Master Plan and the Mid High Street section in particular as it is felt that this could be adapted to be compatible with any future redevelopment of the existing Sainsbury's site or Selborne Walk Shopping Centre. BGOLUG is against any re-siting of the station to the north-west, nearer the High Street as this would worsen access to residents from the south of the Chingford line and not significantly improve interchange with the bus, rail and underground stations at Walthamstow Central.

(a) Within Existing Selborne Walk Shopping Centre



BGOLUG proposes the refurbishment of the currently disused sections of the station platforms to the foot of the Chingford line embankment and the construction of a subway from the Eastbound (Barking) platform under the Chingford line and Selborne Road. A new footbridge would link the station end of the subway on the Eastbound platform with the Westbound (Gospel Oak) platform. The northern end of the subway would link into the basement of the existing Selborne Road entrance of the Selborne Walk Shopping Centre.

BGOLUG urges the council to fully investigate and progress this option in view of the benefits it would bring by linking the Shopping centre directly with the station and greatly improving interchange with the Walthamstow Central stations.

(b) Redevelopment of Sainsbury's and Selborne Walk Sites

This proposal is similar to that outlined above except that the redevelopment would allow a street level station building to be provided. A more ambitious version would see that station building constructed over the railway line, fronting onto Selborne Road with stairs/escalators and lifts leading to separate subways leading in turn directly to the platforms.

This new station access, within the new redeveloped Mid High Street area with mixed retail and residential accommodation, with improved links to the bus, rail and Underground services at Walthamstow Central, coupled with Transport for London's plans to develop the newly created London Overground network, which includes the Barking-Gospel Oak Line, will create a busy station and a new focal point in the new Town Centre and will create a welcome boost to the number of shoppers from outside the borough.

Transport for London (TfL) have recently re-staffed the station and as part of their plans to improve the station as part of the newly created London Overground network and intend to provide permanent station buildings. Therefore it would seem sensible for any new station buildings, especially those associated with a new Selborne Road entrance, to be built by TfL and the council in partnership.

Currently TfL plans for the Barking-Gospel Oak Line intermediate stations (except Blackhorse Road, operated by London Underground) are for a single member of staff and self-service ticket machines but a new station entrance in a rebuilt and revitalised Town Centre is likely to make the station the most busy intermediate station on the line after Blackhorse Road, creating a need for more staff and perhaps a ticket/information office.

It is a matter of record that BGOLUG has long been dissatisfied with the highly-misleading name "Walthamstow Queen's Road". A station entrance inside the market area on Selborne Road would be the catalyst for finally giving the station a name more descriptive of the area it serves, e.g. "Walthamstow Market", "Walthamstow Town Centre", "Walthamstow Selborne Road" ["Walthamstow Selborne Walk" should option (a) be adopted] or even "Walthamstow Central Low Level".