



## LONDON OVERGROUND EXTENSION TO BARKING RIVERSIDE

### RESPONSE TO TfL CONSULTATION SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2014

The extension of the Barking – Gospel Oak route of London Overground to a new station at Barking Riverside is currently unfunded. This has been proposed as a cheaper alternative to an earlier proposal for the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) to be extended from Gallions Reach through Barking Riverside to Dagenham Dock, with a projected completion date of 2017. However, funding for the DLR scheme was withdrawn by TfL in 2008. Assuming funding (£165m<sup>[1]</sup>) can be secured in the near future, the London Overground extension could be open in 2020, subject to the granting of a Transport & Works Act Order.

#### I. IS EXTENDING THE BARKING – GOSPEL OAK ROUTE THE BEST SOLUTION?

- I.1 The expressed requirement for a rail connection to Barking Riverside is to permit the construction of more than 1,500 homes on the site, with an upper limit of 10,800. The existing planning permission requires a rail link if more than 1,500 dwellings are constructed.
- I.2 Compared with the originally envisaged DLR scheme, which would have provided Barking Riverside residents with a direct rail link to the employment opportunities of Docklands and the City and connections to those at Stratford, the current proposal looks just what it is; the cheapest solution to meeting the planning requirement of providing a rail link to unlock the potential of those 9,300 additional dwellings.
- I.3 To access the potential job opportunities offered by the scrapped DLR scheme, the residents of Barking Riverside will have to change trains at Barking onto either District and Hammersmith & City Underground lines or Essex Thameside (c2c) trains.
- I.4 Barking station is already an extremely busy interchange station with large passenger flows interchanging between c2c, London Underground (LU) and London Overground (LO) services. The station is also a focus for numerous bus services.
- I.5 Now in receipt of a long term franchise, c2c, as operator of Barking station, has announced a £5.3m upgrade for the station, however the timing is as yet unclear, as is whether the company's plans will deal with inevitable increased throughput of interchanging passengers that the LO extension will bring.

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<sup>1</sup> Modern Railways, October 2014, page 73.

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- 1.6 The question has to be asked, accepting the additional cost of track works to the west of Barking station, would it not make more sense to extend the Hammersmith & City Line to Barking Riverside?
- 1.7 This solution would require either a flat junction between the LU and National Rail (NR) lines east of Barking Station Junction or a new or widened LU bridge over the NR Southend Lines to allow the diverted Hammersmith & City Line to join the NR Tilbury Lines just east of Barking platforms 7 & 8. There should be no problems with signalling interference since signalling is already immunised due to both 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> rail DC and 25kv AC overhead electrification systems being present. NR and LU train services already share the same tracks in many parts of London.



Site of possible Thames View station marked on TfL plan issued with consultation document

## 2. IMPACT OF EXTENSION UPON REST OF BARKING – GOSPEL OAK LINE & ITS PASSENGERS

- 2.2 As is well known, as a result of TfL relying upon flawed data in its planning of Barking – Gospel Oak services when assuming responsibility for these in 2007 and ignoring the advice of the Barking – Gospel Oak Rail User Group (BGORUG), Barking – Gospel Oak (GOBLIN) services have become increasingly overcrowded over the last three years with no prospect of relief for another three years, in 2017.
- 2.3 The reason for this overcrowding is due to the fact the GOBLIN route was not electrified when TfL assumed control and the successful bidder for the London Rail Concession<sup>[2]</sup> included the procurement of 8 new 2-car diesel trains for GOBLIN services as part of its bid. These were delivered in late 2010, a year later than promised.

<sup>2</sup> MTR/Laing, later London Overground Rail Operations Ltd (LOROL), a consortium now formed of MTR Corporation of Hong Kong (majority holding Chinese Government) and DB Regio, a subsidiary of DB, German State Railways.

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- 2.4 Electrification of the route was announced by the Chancellor on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013. However, NR do not expect to start work until 2016 and expect to have completed the project by the year end.
- 2.5 TfL have started the procurement process for a batch of between 39 and 45 4-car electric trains for use on GOBLIN, West Anglia Inner (Liverpool Street – Chingford/Cheshunt via Seven Sisters/Enfield Town) and Romford – Upminster routes. 8 of these 4-car trains are so far earmarked for GOBLIN services, which would merely replace, like for like, the existing diesel fleet, albeit with 2 extra coaches per train with little possibility for service enhancement.
- 2.6 TfL plan to order these 4-car trains in Spring 2015, with a projected delivery for the first trains in mid 2017. TfL has promised that the GOBLIN route will be the first to receive these new trains.
- 2.7 While these new trains will be in service before the planned opening of the Barking Riverside extension, 8 sets will not allow the existing frequencies to be maintained, so TfL must allocate at least 10 trains to GOBLIN to maintain the 15-minute interval service.
- 2.8 TfL have no plans to increase the frequency of GOBLIN services beyond the existing 4 trains per hour (tph) until 2040 when it plans to spend £20m to achieve 6tph.
- 2.9 As stated previously, it is likely that there will be a large ‘churn’ of passengers at Barking with large numbers of Barking Riverside passengers alighting for LU and c2c services and many passengers from buses, LU District Line and c2c services boarding, probably requiring lengthy dwell times. Using the track bed of the former up Goods Line (lifted in 1996) it should be possible to widen Platforms 7 & 8 at Barking to deal with the increased volume of interchanging passengers.
- 2.10 However, a sizable number of Barking Riverside passengers are likely to remain heading for jobs and schools across North and West London or to interchange with the LU Victoria Line at Blackhorse Road. TfL is risking serious overcrowding developing all over again by not planning frequency enhancements before 2040.
- 2.11 Since it is now emerging<sup>[3]</sup> that TfL are likely to include some 5-car trains for the existing LO electric services in the Spring 2015 rolling stock order, it is apposite to consider if GOBLIN services would benefit from receiving 5-car trains in 2017/18 rather than the planned 4-car trains, given that there are no plans to increase service frequency until 2040. 5-car trains would largely remove the risk of overcrowding reoccurring following the opening of the Barking Riverside extension.

### **3. DEMAND FOR AN INTERMEDIATE STATION SERVING THAMES VIEW ESTATE**

- 3.1 BGORUG has received representations for an intermediate station to serve Thames View Estate and is aware the idea is supported by local councillors. This would require a station where the extension line will run along the south side of the existing railway formation. Due to the way the up and down Tilbury Lines divide to pass around Ripple Lane Yard, the only possible site for a station would be at the west end of Ripple Lane Yard where the up and down Goods Lines join the Tilbury Lines, immediately east of the A13 Alfred’s Way over bridge.
- 3.2 A station at this location could also be served by c2c services and would ease passenger volumes at Barking by allowing Barking Riverside and Thames View Estate residents to join both east and westbound c2c Tilbury Line trains without having to travel to Barking to do so.

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<sup>3</sup> Commissioner’s 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014 report to TfL Board & comments by TfL Director of Rail at GLA Budget & Performance Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

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3.3 The added cost of this station would be somewhat offset by savings in catering for less interchanging passengers at Barking.

**4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 BGORUG has no objection to the extension of the GOBLIN service to Barking Riverside so long as due weight and consideration is given to:

- (i) The huge increase in volume of interchanging passengers at Barking
- (ii) Possible mitigation of this by adding an intermediate station for GOBLIN and c2c services at Thames View Estate at the west end of Ripple Lane Yard (Rippleside)
- (iii) The impact the additional passengers from Barking Riverside would have on the existing (and future) passengers using GOBLIN services west of Barking – should 5-car trains be ordered for 2017 and 6tph brought in earlier than the planned 2040 date?
- (iv) Would the residents of Barking Riverside be better served by an extension of the LU Hammersmith & City Line which would greatly reduce the numbers interchanging at Barking and allow a reduction in the passenger capacity improvements that would be required at the station?

