

THAMESLINK 2000

Summary of the Proof of Evidence on Planning Policy

By
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NR/10/A

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
Transport and Works Act 1992

Railtrack (Thameslink 2000) Order 1997
Railtrack (Thameslink 2000) (Variation) Order 1999

1. Inquiry into applications by Network Rail for the Thameslink 2000 railway project sites at:

11-15 Borough High Street, London SE1
2-4 Bedale Street, London SE1
7 Stoney Street, London SE1
16-26 Borough High Street and 7 Bedale Street, London SE1
Blackfriars Railway Bridge, London EC4
Blackfriars Station North, London EC4
Blackfriars Railway Bridge, London SE1 (includes proposed south bank station entrance)

2. Re-opened inquiry into applications made by Railtrack plc for orders under the Transport and Works Act 1992 and associated applications.

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I.0 AN ASSESSMENT OF KEY CHANGES IN THE RELEVANT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY BACKGROUND SINCE THE FIRST INQUIRY, AND THEIR IMPACTS ON THE SCHEME (2.0)

a) National Policy

I.1 The principal changes in national policies since the last inquiry are:-

- a. A Future for Transport (Department for Transport White Paper, July 2004);
- b. The Future of Rail (Department for Transport White Paper, July 2004);
- c. PPSI Delivering Sustainable Communities 2005;
- d. Sustainable Communities : Building for the Future (February 2003);
- e. PPG13, March 2001.

I.2 I am in no doubt that these and other changes to national policy have served to strengthen the case for Thameslink 2000. They emphasise the importance of coordinating land use planning and transportation to deliver the benefits of economic development within a sustainable framework.

I.3 In my judgement, new public transport infrastructure benefits from greater (and less conditional) policy support than any other form of development. It is recognised as beneficial in its own right and is capable of producing substantial economic and sustainability benefits.

b) Regional Policy

- I.4 RPG 9 for the South East was published in March 2001 and sets out direct support for the Thameslink 2000 project. In Draft RSS9 for the South East (January 2005) Thameslink 2000 is treated as part of the baseline, ie as a committed scheme and the draft strategy has been developed on that basis.
- I.5 In the East of England, Draft RSS14 (December 2004) also emphasises the absolute necessity for enhanced public transport provision across the region if growth aspirations are to be achieved.
- I.6 The Mayor's Transport Strategy (July 2001) and the London Plan (February 2004) both provide specific policy support for the Thameslink 2000 proposal. The London Plan is based on a vision that London should develop as an exemplary sustainable World City and the documents leave no room for doubt about the significance of major transport infrastructure investment in order to achieve that vision.

c) Local Policies

- I.7 At a local level, UDP policies in support of Thameslink 2000 have either increased their status or strengthened their support for the project since the close of the first inquiry.

2.0 AN UPDATED ASSESSMENT OF THE KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME AND ITS POTENTIAL TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND SOCIO ECONOMIC BENEFITS, HAVING REGARD TO CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES SINCE THE EARLIER INQUIRY (3.0)

- 2.1 It is clear that the Thameslink 2000 project would unlock the opportunity for objectives of strategic planning policy to be achieved.
- 2.2 Studies undertaken for TfL in relation to the Jubilee Line Extension have confirmed the expectation that enhanced public transport accessibility can transform the demand for property and thereby substantially assist with regeneration objectives.
- 2.3 There is a clear correlation between Thameslink 2000 and the regeneration and growth areas identified in regional guidance and the Opportunity Areas and Areas for Intensification identified in the London Plan. The project has the ability to help maximise the sustainable regeneration of a number of significant Opportunity Areas – particularly at King’s Cross, London Bridge, Farringdon and Brent Cross/Cricklewood.
- 2.4 The adopted London Plan leaves no room for doubt about the importance of ensuring sufficient public transport capacity in order to enable London to achieve its economic potential. Policy 3C.2 requires there to be sufficient transport capacity to allow for travel generated by new development proposals.
- 2.5 Development plans have been prepared on the assumption that Thameslink 2000 is proceeding and that expectation has been a significant element in the identification of regeneration and opportunity sites. Due to its long gestation, Thameslink 2000 is not only supported by policy, it has become a “keystone” on which policies themselves have planned future development. As a consequence, the objectives of the scheme and its clear transportation, regeneration and socio

economic benefits are even more significant than they were at the time of the first inquiry and the need to secure these benefits more urgent.

3.0 AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEW PLANNING APPLICATIONS AT BOROUGH HIGH STREET AND BLACKFRIARS (4.0)

a) Borough High Street

3.1 Since the inquiry closed four new planning applications for replacement buildings have been submitted to LB Southwark in relation to the following sites:

- a. 7 Stoney Street
- b. 2-4 Bedale Street
- c. 11-15 Borough High Street
- d. 16-26 Borough High Street

3.2 The provision of a beer garden at 7 Stoney Street will provide an active street frontage which complements the surrounding mix of uses and is attractive to tourists/visitors to the area. The proposals for the other three sites seek to replace existing uses.

3.3 The proposals accord with the area-wide policies which seek to regenerate the Borough and the Bankside area. In terms of land use, the proposals in Borough Market are in accordance with the statutory development plan.

b) Blackfriars Station and Bridge

3.4 Since the inquiry closed a total of five new applications for planning permission and listed building consent have been submitted in relation to three sites:

- a. Blackfriars North
- b. Blackfriars Bridge North
- c. Blackfriars South

- 3.5 According to their Statement of Case, the Corporation of London supports the principle of redeveloping Blackfriars Station, where a building of a similar scale is now proposed, and the related work to the listed building is considered acceptable in historic building terms.
- 3.6 The Blackfriars Bridge North proposal is considered by the Corporation to be more workable than that seen at the public inquiry and overall represents an improvement.
- 3.7 The development at Blackfriars South, which will include a new station entrance on the South Bank, is in accordance with area-wide regeneration policies and local land use policies.
- 3.8 My review of the nine new applications that relate to Borough High Street and Blackfriars Station and Bridge clearly demonstrates that, in land use terms, the applications are in full accordance with the current development plans (the London Plan, the LB Southwark UDP and the City of London UDP). Furthermore, the proposed works in these two areas are of fundamental importance to the Thameslink 2000 scheme, the delivery of which accords with wider land use, transport, sustainability and regeneration objectives.

4.0 WHETHER, IN THE LIGHT OF UPDATED ASSESSMENTS, THE TRANSPORT AND OTHER BENEFITS WOULD OUTWEIGH THE HARM ARISING TO HERITAGE INTERESTS, PRINCIPALLY IN THE BOROUGH MARKET AREA (5.0)

- 4.1 It is important to recognise the strength of the Inspector's overall conclusions at the previous inquiry in relation to the project. In particular, in relation to specific heritage concerns, the Inspector acknowledged that overall the benefits outweigh the harm.
- 4.2 I have clearly identified the advances in planning policy which have taken place at national, regional and local levels since the previous inquiry closed. In particular, the spatial strategy to accommodate London's projected growth which is set out in the London Plan assumes that the Thameslink 2000 project will proceed. My evidence also identifies a strong national and regional interest in the delivery of the Thameslink 2000 project.
- 4.3 Clearly, I urge a conclusion that the proposed designs are of high quality and entirely acceptable. If that is the case, and taking the Inspector's conclusions as a baseline so that only changes in circumstances are examined, there is no balance to be drawn – the only prudent outcome is the grant of consent and the confirmation of the Order.
- 4.4 I urge the grant of planning consent even if the Inspector and/or the Secretaries of State are insufficiently impressed with either one or all of the reinstatement proposals. It is my view that every effort should be made to find a mechanism to grant consent and confirm the Order, rather than condemn the project to further years of delay. If, nevertheless, any element of the proposed designs is felt to be of insufficient quality, genuine harm would be protected against by a simple condition preventing demolition prior to the approval of designs for reinstatement.

- 4.5 There are, therefore, strong new material considerations which enable a conclusion to be drawn that the Order should be confirmed and that planning and listed building consent should be granted for the proposed applications.