

THAMESLINK 2000

Summary of the Proof of Evidence on London Bridge Masterplan

By
Christopher Bennie

NR/4/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.

CONTENTS

| | | |
|------------|---|----------|
| 1.0 | SCOPE OF EVIDENCE | 2 |
| 2.0 | BACKGROUND TO MASTERPLAN | 2 |
| 3.0 | THE MASTERPLAN DESIGN | 3 |
| 4.0 | BENEFITS OF MASTERPLAN | 5 |
| 5.0 | RESPONSE TO MATTER 8A | 6 |
| 6.0 | MASTERPLAN AND LONDON BRIDGE TOWER | 7 |
| 7.0 | CONCLUSION | 7 |

1.0 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 The purpose of my evidence is to introduce and explain Masterplan to the inquiry. Network Rail proposes that Masterplan should be substituted for the Terry Farrell designs for London Bridge presented at the first inquiry.
- 1.2 In addressing the merits of Masterplan I also deal with matter 8a) of the Statement of Matters (6 January 2005).

2.0 BACKGROUND TO MASTERPLAN

- 2.1 The Masterplan design for London Bridge grew out of the “Masterplan Feasibility Study” commissioned by Railtrack in 1998. I was the partner at TP Bennett responsible for delivering the commission.
- 2.2 The brief was, in general terms, to produce a design for the redevelopment of London Bridge which would:
- a. integrate with the proposed Thameslink 2000 modifications to the track at the station;
 - b. address and resolve peak period overcrowding and congestion at the station taking into account predicted growth;
 - c. exploit the opportunities for maximising the commercial property return from the site;
 - d. enhance the passenger experience through the station;
 - e. better relate to the surrounding area and contribute to regeneration;
and
 - f. deliver a building worthy of a major railway station serving the ‘world city’ of London.

- 2.3 Masterplan was developed from Masterplan Schemes outlined in the Masterplan feasibility report. It incorporates the 'northern boundary single platform' which enables all the tracks and platforms to be optimised in terms of their capacity. It also provides for the ultimate train and passenger capacity within the overall width of the station which the Thameslink 2000 track layout will allow. A further advantage of the scheme is that it can be constructed with the station remaining at all times operational.

3.0 THE MASTERPLAN DESIGN

- 3.1 London Bridge Station is an agglomeration of brick arch structures added incrementally over the last 169 years by train companies seeking access to and control over their own tracks into the station and beyond.
- 3.2 The complexity in the station's historic structure and plan form makes it difficult and expensive to bring new structures down through its fabric. It is for this reason that the cramped and overcrowded access tunnels serving the through platforms have not been rationalised. Masterplan addresses these structural impediments to rationalisation and improvement by cutting out an entire swathe of the viaduct arches between the through tracks above and the street level below to create a new concourse and circulation hub for the station.
- 3.3 Appendix 6 shows the through track layout agreed between the Masterplan and Thameslink 2000 teams which form the basis of the Masterplan design development.
- 3.4 Appendix 7 demonstrates how the Thameslink 2000 TWA track layout is accommodated within the Masterplan Scheme.
- 3.5 Appendix 8 contains key Masterplan approved drawings. They demonstrate how, in Masterplan;

- a. all the tracks and platforms have been repositioned to provide optimum widths and locations using the entirety of the site at track bed level;
- b. all the through platforms are capable of receiving escalators, stairs and lifts from the street level concourse and via the interchange concourse;
- c. the opportunity is taken to enhance the public realm around the station by creating 4-storey high glazed facades at the northern entrance to the station in Tooley Street, the southern entrance in St Thomas Street and a Piazza in the vicinity of the existing concourse;
- d. the station and its layout is made legible to passengers and other users in terms of access and egress and the use of its facilities;
- e. the street level concourse breaks down the physical barrier between areas to the north and south of the station offering opportunities for commercial activity and regeneration in the area generally;
- f. the redevelopment scheme can be achieved whilst the station remains operational; and
- g. the built form of the station and office development above is of a quality appropriate to a major railway station in London.

3.6 The two station elements of through stations and terminus are retained in Masterplan but are linked by the canopy of the office building deck which extends over the whole station. They are further linked by the interchange concourse giving direct access to all platforms by escalator for the large numbers of passengers who change trains at London Bridge.

3.7 Clearly defined and attractive entrances to the station are provided at Tooley Street, St Thomas Street and via the proposed Piazza at its western end. The Piazza also provides an appropriate setting to the main entrances to Southwark Towers and its proposed replacement London Bridge Tower.

3.8 Improved taxi facilities are provided in Tooley Street and the bus station is expanded to incorporate 15 stands which can accommodate 6 articulated buses (plus 3 regular bays).

- 3.9 Within the station the opportunity is taken to incorporate a wide range of retail facilities on the new concourse including a supermarket at its southern end. The retail units will serve the local community as well as passengers using the station.
- 3.10 The retail market hall (1837), only half of which is in use, will be opened up to enhance the access between the National Rail and LU stations.
- 3.11 The 10 and 11 storey office building over the station will create space with large floor plates up to 65,000 sq ft which is much in demand in London. Despite its size, however, it would not represent an obtrusive feature in the locality. The entrance will take the form of a 6 storey stone monolith which will be a contribution to public art in north Southwark.
- 3.12 The design of Masterplan incorporating all these elements has been subject to pedestrian flow analysis. The results demonstrate that the building can accommodate the potential future growth in passenger numbers in the station with provision for perturbation.

4.0 BENEFITS OF MASTERPLAN

- 4.1 In summary, Masterplan provides:
- a. a fully integrated transport interchange;
 - b. a world class 21st century station environment;
 - c. straighter, cleaner, safer platforms;
 - d. accommodation for the Thameslink 2000 service;
 - e. flexibility in station management;
 - f. proper gating and revenue protection;
 - g. DDA compliance;
 - h. future-proofed station capacity beyond 2020;

- i. high quality and appropriately located commercial and office development; and
- j. urban improvement and regeneration.

5.0 RESPONSE TO MATTER 8a

- 5.1 The relevant deficiency identified by the Inspector was the design of the concourse and the canopies in the Terry Farrell scheme which he found were “inappropriate to a major station in a capital city of world city status”.
- 5.2 Masterplan has re-examined London Bridge Station from first principles. The design involves the removal of all that can currently be seen at existing concourse level including several acres of train shed and the entire concourse itself.
- 5.3 The new Masterplan north/south street level concourse with the interchange concourse above, has been described in earlier sections. The scheme has been considered in detail by LB Southwark and English Heritage. Both support its development as part of Thameslink 2000. The general preference for the scheme was also recognised by the first inquiry Inspector. After the closure of the first inquiry, TfL commissioned Colin Buchanan and Partners to produce an objective study of London Bridge Station. For the reasons set out in my proof and in the Buchanan report, particularly with respect to passenger circulation and capacity, I contend that Masterplan meets and overcomes all the deficiencies identified by the first inquiry Inspector.

6.0 MASTERPLAN AND LONDON BRIDGE TOWER

6.1 Masterplan and the creation of a landscaped Piazza at the western end of the station is more favourable in terms of providing an appropriate setting to the proposed entrance to London Bridge Tower ('the Shard of Glass') than the existing station concourse. In view of the fact that both schemes have planning permission, the wider public interest in seeing first class urban development at London Bridge would favour, in my view, the substitution of Masterplan in the Thameslink 2000 scheme.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 For these reasons, I commend Masterplan as the appropriate station redevelopment at London Bridge in the Thameslink 2000 scheme.