

RESPONSE TO SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY TIMETABLE CONSULTATION DECEMBER 2022

Head of Service:	Viv Evans, Head of Planning
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	Whilst a decision is not urgent, the deadline for responses to this consultation is 19 th September 2021
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1: Draft response to consultation Appendix 2: Consultation document Appendix 3: Summary note

Summary

South Western Railway ("SWR") is consulting on plans to make changes to train service timetables across their network from December 2022, which will affect services running through Epsom and Ewell. Officers have drafted a response. The response objects in principle to the published plans. Officers intend to submit a final response having considered any new information or comments from the Committee.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- 1) Approve grounds of response to SWR consultation as set out in appendix 1.
- 2) Delegate authority to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to submit a final consultation response.

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 There is significant concern that a permanent reduction in the frequency of rail services serving stations in Epsom and Ewell would be contrary to the Borough's growth and sustainability ambitions.

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2 Background

- 2.1 Due to anticipated reduced commuting demand compared with pre pandemic levels, SWR are proposing not to increase the frequency of trains to pre pandemic levels across much of their network, including the “Main Suburban” routes, from December 2022. This is to ease congestion at points on the network closer to London Waterloo.

3 Assessment

- 3.1 The full details of the proposed changes to the SWR timetable to commence in Dec 2022 are set out at Appendix 2 (consultation document). The changes will have an impact on the stations in Epsom and Ewell because SWR operate on the Waterloo to Dorking and Waterloo to Guildford via Leatherhead line. The changes will comprise a reduction in frequency from pre pandemic levels. At Epsom station, this will mean that the frequency of SWR services (not Southern Services) stopping at Epsom will be permanently reduced from 6 to 4 per hour on peak (0800-0859) and 4 to 2 off peak (which is the same as current frequencies).

Justification for changes

- 3.2 SWR base their proposals on the findings of a Network Rail South West Main Line Strategic Study (Looking forward to 2050)¹ published in July 2021. Relying on that study, SWR anticipate that commuter travel is expected to recover to 60% of Pre Covid 19 demand from December 2022. In addition, the consultation draws attention to the easing of restrictions that have been enabled across the network because fewer trains have been operating during the pandemic. The consultation states that, according to SWR’s own customer feedback surveys, “performance and satisfaction improve significantly when fewer trains run while still meeting demand for our services”.
- 3.3 SWR have justified the proposed reduction in frequency on the following bases:
- 3.3.1 The current rolling stock is outdated. It will be replaced with up-to-date Arterio trains, which SWR advise will have increased capacity (Improved Rolling Stock).
- 3.3.2 For stations on the Waterloo to Dorking Line, another railway operator (Sothern Rail) also serves them.

Analysis of Plans:

Improved Rolling Stock

¹ <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/South-West-Main-Line-Strategic-Study.pdf>

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- 3.4 It is not clear whether the new trains will be used on the lines that run through Epsom and Ewell, exactly how many more passengers they will be able to transport than current trains or the timescale for their implementation.

Other Operators

- 3.5 Officers analysed the frequency of Southern Rail and SWR services to ascertain the total number of services that would be stopping at stations in the borough once the new timetable is implemented. The data in the table below reflects the service levels if SWR's plans are implemented.

Table 1: Survey data of train services in the borough

Station	On Peak trains into London			Off Peak trains into London		
	South Western Services	Southern Services	Total	South Western Services	Southern Services	Total
Epsom	4	7	11	2	5/6*	7/8
Stoneleigh	4	0	4	2	0	2
Ewell West	4	0	4	2	0	2
Ewell East	0	5	5	0	4	4

*Based on snapshot of two hours during off peak period according to Southern Rail timetables.

In Principle Objection

An objection is recommended, in principle, to the proposed planned changes to the Dec 22 timetable on the following grounds:

- The timetable does not take into account EEBC's growth ambitions covered in the local plan.
- The reduction in service will make the borough less attractive to businesses and investment.
- The Borough will be disproportionately impacted; unlike other boroughs in the Surrey economic area, EEBC do not benefit from other train services to the same extent.
- The new timetable would undermine the benefits of step free access to Stoneleigh station, for which funding had been awarded by the Department for Transport (DfT).
- The predictions of post pandemic demand are questionable because:
 - It relies on short-term assumptions about the levels of usage; and
 - Surveys were conducted in a time of uncertainty.

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- It is not clear how service levels will be reviewed or what the timescale for increasing services will be if the assumptions of demand are incorrect.
- The reduction in frequency limit travellers' choices, potentially leading to more car use, which would contribute to higher carbon emissions and increase congestion on the road network.
- It is not clear if lines serving stations in the borough will benefit from new trains and, if so, exactly what the increase in capacity will be compared to current trains.

3.6 The draft response objects in principle to the plans and seeks a firm commitment from SWR to agree to review demand if the timetable is implemented, so that any unanticipated increase in demand can be quickly accommodated by a revised timetable.

Other consultees

3.7 Officers have contacted Surrey County Council to establish if a response is intended from the County.

3.8 The Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) are not intending to the consultation, and neither is the Enterprise M3 LEP.

4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

4.1 Impact Assessment

4.1.1 The consequences of the revised timetable risk having a detrimental impact on the Council's housing delivery and sustainability objectives both in the Local Plan and Four Year Plan.

4.2 Crime & Disorder

4.2.1 There are no implications in terms of crime and disorder.

4.3 Safeguarding

4.3.1 There are no implications for safeguarding.

4.4 Dependencies

4.4.1 There are no implications for dependencies.

4.5 Other

4.5.1 There are no other risks.

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5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None arising for the purposes of this report.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None arising for the purposes of this report.

7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 7.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

7.1.1 Address the housing needs of the Borough, including affordable housing needs, through the development of our Local Plan.

- 7.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

7.2.1 The proposed reduction in train services would undermine EEBC's efforts to meet the Borough's housing need, a key component of the Local Plan which the Planning Service's service plan identified as a priority.

- 7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

7.3.1 Should the proposed revised timetable be implemented, there is a concern that residents will have less incentive to use trains and revert to private modes of transport such as the car, thereby increasing CO₂ emissions.

- 7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

7.4.1 From a sustainability perspective, the same concerns stand as that outlined in 6.3.1. There are no implications for community safety.

- 7.5 **Partnerships:**

7.5.1 It is considered that by responding to this consultation there is the prospect of opening a dialogue with South Western Railway, although this is not an official partnership.

8 Background papers

None

9 Other papers:

- Appendix 1: EEBC draft response to South Western Railway's consultation on its proposed December 2022 timetable.

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- Appendix 2: South Western Railway Timetable Consultation December 2022
- Appendix 3: Officer summary and analysis of the contents of Appendix 2.