

Transport for London
Windsor House
50 Victoria Street
LONDON
SW1H 0TL

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Northern Line Extension to Nine Elms and Battersea

I am writing to you as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on the London Assembly. Having been a local councillor in Southwark for 12 years and retained strong links with the Kennington and wider communities, I have been contacted by a number of concerned residents about the proposals. I have set out below my views on the strategic value of the Northern Line Extension (NLE) scheme, as well as details of the mitigation measures that I would urge TfL to put in place if the NLE goes ahead in order that the NLE does not have a detrimental effect on local residents.

Alternatives to the Northern Line Extension

When details about the NLE were first released it was announced that it would be funded entirely by the developers of the Battersea Power Station site. At that time I understood from TfL that it was not a priority and if public money was being spent on public transport, then this would be spent on other projects not this one. Given the collapse of Treasury Holdings it seems that public money is now going to be used to finance at least some of the scheme. I am not convinced that this is value for public money.

I have consistently called for a wider consideration of the alternative transport measures that could be put in place for this new development. These could include national rail links; Crossrail 2; Victoria Line extensions; light rail or trams; buses; and cycling and walking solutions. It is my understanding that TfL has conducted some recent modelling work on the relative costs and benefits of these options. However this updated research has not been published. I am concerned that TfL is not properly considering the alternatives to the NLE. I urge TfL to publish all the studies that have been carried out into the alternatives to the NLE and to justify why the NLE is the preferred option. Without doing this, questions will be raised about the NLE and whether or not it is value for money.

Capacity on the Northern Line and at Kennington Station

As many regular passengers are aware the Northern Line is one of the most overcrowded lines on the London Underground. TfL has informed me that trains from the extension will only run directly on the Charing Cross branch. In addition Crossrail, after opening, will offer the best route for commuters wishing to access the City or Canary Wharf. Firstly I think in the interests of transparency it would be useful for TfL to release this modelling to give the public the evidence behind their assurances. Secondly I am concerned that customers for the City and Canary Wharf will be forced to cram onto already overcrowded Bank branch trains.

Regular passengers are also rightly concerned about the impact on Kennington station. Passengers already feel that this station is dangerously overcrowded at peak times and are concerned about how even a few additional passengers may affect it. I urge TfL to carry out works at Kennington Tube Station to help reduce overcrowding and passenger flows before the NLE opens.

Temporary shafts

The temporary shafts are the cause of a great deal of concern for many local residents. Many of the residents already suffer noise disturbance from the existing Northern Line service. They are justifiably concerned that they will have to put up with months of disruption during construction of the NLE and at the end of it suffer even more noise disturbance.

I understand that TfL is considering a 'gallery tunnels' construction method which would remove the need for the two temporary shafts on Radcot Street and Harmsworth Street. I strongly urge TfL to adopt this approach to reduce the impact that this construction has on local residents.

Kennington Park Shaft

Local residents are also worried about how the location and size of the permanent ventilation shaft will affect the area. The consultation proposals suggest that the shaft will be 13.5 metres across and 25m deep. This appears to be much larger than originally intended. I urge TfL to clarify what size they expect the shaft to be and to do everything they can to reduce its size. In consultation meetings TfL has also suggested that the existing community space on the site will be preserved and buildings will be erected to screen residents from the unsightly ventilation shaft. I urge TfL to publicly commit to this and to consult with residents about their proposed design for the reinstatement.

Noise mitigation measures

As I have previously stated in this submission there is a group of residents whose lives are affected by the operation of the Northern Line, whose lives will be further inconvenienced by the construction of the NLE and are fearful that once the NLE is opened they face higher levels of disruption than currently is the case.

The most pressing concern for many of these residents is the noise disturbance caused by Northern Line trains, particularly on the turnaround loop. It is my understanding that the installation of 'floating track' would help to reduce the noise impact of trains on local residents and I would urge TfL to investigate installing this on the loop as well as parts of the new extension track where appropriate. With regard to the construction of new tracks, residents are concerned that TfL will not be adhering to the highest possible noise standards. I would strongly urge TfL to conform to the highest possible industry standards in terms of noise abatement during both construction and operation.

Local area improvements

One of the principal objections to the NLE is that it will only benefit the residents and business that are located on or very close to the Battersea Nine Elms development site. In order to make sure that the whole area benefits I would urge TfL to invest in bus improvements for the area. For example investment in bus shelters and countdown signs could, at relatively low cost, help improve transport for existing residents. TfL should ensure that bus routes are improved; that the Vauxhall gyratory is transformed to make it safer for cyclists and pedestrians; and to ensure that the Wandsworth Road Nine Elms Station is built and opened at the same time as Battersea Park Station.

Considerate construction

As you will be aware construction works and their related traffic can have a significant impact on local communities. Recent examples in London have highlighted some of best and worst ways of approaching this. Works on Upper Ground in Southwark have led to a well-used cycle route being closed for an extended period without proper consideration of diversion routes. In contrast many of the Crossrail road closures have included provision for cyclists. I strongly urge TfL to consider cycle routes both official and unofficial when planning road closures.

In addition TfL also needs to consider in detail the impact and dangers that the construction traffic can pose to other road users. TfL must insist on the highest possible safety standards and equipment to be installed and working on all vehicles that are involved in the construction of the NLE. This should include but not be limited to seeking the amount of heavy goods vehicles that deliver to the site; reducing the amount of left turns that the vehicles make and ensuring that drivers are not incentivised to drive too fast. TfL should also ensure the maximum use of the River Thames to bring in materials and to remove spoil to reduce the number of vehicle movements associated with the project.

In summary my view on the Northern Line Extension is that there may be other transport projects that could be more cost effective in the area and meet the same objectives. However if the project is to go ahead TfL needs to be taking the steps that I have outlined above to ensure that the project does not have a detrimental effect on existing local residents.

With best wishes

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Caroline Pidgeon AM

Chair, Transport Committee

Leader, London Assembly Liberal Democrat Group