



Councillor Tim Coleridge
Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Transport and the Arts
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
The Town Hall
Hornton Street
London
W8 7NX
Tel: 020 7361 3946

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London
Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London
SE1 2AA

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Dear Boris,

I am pleased to send you the Royal Borough's response to the Transport for London (TfL) consultation on Crossrail 2.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for listening to our previous consultation response in August 2013 and am grateful that you have considered an option further west on King's Road.

I am also keen to express how important we consider Crossrail 2 to be to the Borough and wholeheartedly recommend that TfL progress an option to include a station in Chelsea.

Why we support a station in the Royal Borough

As you are aware, the Council has always been supportive of the plans for a cross-London underground line serving Chelsea. This would help our residents and visitors to move around London in a more efficient and sustainable manner.

Sloane Square is the only station on the underground network between Fulham Road and the Thames, leaving many reliant on bus services which, due to the sheer volume of traffic, can take some as long as twenty minutes to travel from the west of the borough to a station.

The ability to connect our borough with key destinations in a matter of minutes would be hugely beneficial. Our residents acknowledge this and share this Council's support for Crossrail 2.

Although the 2013 TfL survey found some resistance to the Kings Road option, I note that in a much larger response (almost 3,000 people) to our own survey at the same time, there was very strong support for the line and a station in Chelsea. This was across all parts of Chelsea.

It was clear that most Chelsea residents want Crossrail 2 and there has also been substantial support from local businesses with 88 per cent supporting Crossrail 2. This has been stressed to me by several businesses in Chelsea who I understand have also written to you in support of a new station on King's Road.

In its consultation, TfL has not identified the precise location of the two Chelsea station options, so we have assessed them in relation to their general location as opposed to any specific site.

Both the King's Road and Chelsea West sites have their advantages to the Borough and to London as a whole. However, on balance, the Council would prefer TfL to progress the King's Road option.

Kings Road (easterly) Option

It is clear that a station here would help to galvanise the already strong pull of this cultural and commercial hub in the heart of Chelsea. There are also significant benefits for our residents.

A station in this location would bring 5,500 Royal Borough households within an 800m walk of an underground station. As referred to above, many residents face a lengthy bus ride and tube journey to access the West End and the City. By providing a direct link to these locations - plus an interchange with Crossrail, allowing faster access to the City and Docklands - Crossrail 2 will make travelling across the capital much easier.

This station would also provide major economic benefits, anchoring this end of the King's Road (East) Major Shopping Centre. Currently, most visitors will arrive at Sloane Square and walk west along King's Road. Footfall tends to drop significantly at Sydney Street; this is in part because people turn around to return to Sloane square station. On average, footfall in this location falls by more than 90% when compared with the east of the centre.

Providing stations at either end of the busiest stretch of this iconic retail hub would help to distribute footfall evenly and provide the connections that befit a centre of this significance. It would also help to promote the retail offer around the station; adding more vibrancy and vitality to the centre. A station at this location would help protect the King's Road's future as a major shopping and cultural destination for decades to come.

Furthermore, it would halve journey times to Kings Road from southwest London, parts of which would be just ten to fifteen minutes away.

This would be particularly advantageous for the many businesses and offices in the local area, particularly major employers such as the Royal Marsden and Royal Brompton hospitals.

As well as being major employment generators and healthcare providers, the hospitals form part of a burgeoning Chelsea medical research quarter. The stronger transport links provided by Crossrail 2 would support this quarter.

A station on King's Road could also dramatically reduce congestion, and improve air quality by providing a faster alternative to cars and taxis.

It is very important to mention at this point that there are conservation constraints in this location. The character of the area is such that we would not envisage development associated with the Crossrail station that is notably higher or bulkier than its surroundings.

Dovehouse Green is considered in the current safeguarded route as a potential temporary construction site. However, this is a former burial ground and provides a valuable public space for visitors and residents alike. The impact on Dovehouse Green and the surrounding historic townscape will need to be balanced and we actively encourage TfL to join officers from the Council on site to discuss how these impacts can be minimised.

We will also need to work closely with TfL to ensure that the construction phase is carefully managed so as to minimise the impact of noise, disruption and traffic.

Chelsea West Option

With regard to Chelsea West, it is clear that it has some certain advantages - primarily, bringing slightly more households within an 800m walk of an underground station. The Lots Road area in particular would benefit from public transport accessibility offered by the Chelsea West option.

However, the Chelsea West option would result in fewer economic development benefits than the King's Road option. A new station at the Cremorne Estate would be too far from Sloane Square to act as an anchor for the King's Road (East) Major Shopping Centre, and would serve fewer businesses and major employers than the King's Road option.

Moreover, based on evidence available to date, the Council takes the view that the risks associated with the Chelsea West option are greater than those associated with the King's Road option. We know that in order to build this station there will not only be significant detrimental impacts on our conservation areas but also on residents living on the Cremorne Estate. The uncertainty of not knowing who will be impacted by this decision, and how any such impacts could be mitigated, means that we are not in a position to recommend that the TfL progress this option in its current form.

No Station Option

It is of concern to us that an option still exists to bypass the borough completely. We consider such a choice would be wrong and would represent a serious missed opportunity to improve accessibility in Chelsea and neighbouring boroughs. We understand that TfL considers there to be a substantial saving in construction costs from this option but we believe that the economic benefits of a new Crossrail station in Chelsea would far outweigh the cost.

The Crossrail 2 has long been seen as the key to addressing the relatively poor accessibility in Chelsea. There is no other major transport infrastructure plan, so a decision not to build a station would condemn Chelsea to, at best, incremental improvements to its public transport. This would be a terrible outcome.

In conclusion

The Council believes it is essential for TfL to deliver a Crossrail 2 station in Chelsea – the “no station” option would be unacceptable.

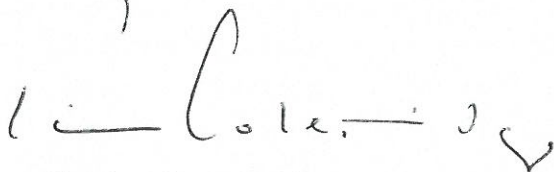
On balance, the Council’s preference between the King’s Road and Chelsea West options is for the station to be delivered at the King’s Road (easterly) site. Not only would a station in this location radically improve the public transport accessibility of thousands of homes in south and west Chelsea, but it would also have greater economic development benefits and would help to protect the King’s Road as a major shopping and cultural centre for decades to come.

The Council does recognise certain benefits of the Chelsea West option, especially the improved public transport accessibility for the Lots Road area, but there are also many more uncertainties and constraints around that option. If TfL were to chose the Chelsea West option, the Council would insist on guarantees to protect the interests of its residents and tenants in the Cremorne Estate.

At this stage, prior to the finalisation of locations and station design, it is difficult to form an assessment of the impacts. However, given the potential for disruption from traffic, noise and disturbance during construction, the Council urges TfL to work closely with us throughout the design programme and construction phase to ensure that the impacts are carefully controlled and managed.

We hope that you find these comments helpful and would urge TfL to meet with my officers to discuss these options in a greater level of detail as you progress towards a preferred option.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy Coleridge', with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Cllr Timothy Coleridge
Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Transport and Arts