

CLAPHAM JUNCTION STATION

ACCESS TO AND FROM LONDON OVERGROUND PLATFORMS

EXPRESSION OF CONCERN BY THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY

The Battersea Society has long been campaigning for improvements to the transport interchange at Clapham Junction – which is both the busiest interchange on the rail system and officially the second worst station in Britain for passengers.

We welcome the progress recently made, in that there is now access by lifts to all platforms and step-free access to the station through the reopened Brighton Yard entrance. We also welcome the provision of additional stairways from the overbridge to platforms 11-12 and 15-16, where there has been a recognised risk that congestion could reach dangerous levels.

There is however an unresolved and increasingly urgent problem in relation to the provision for London Overground services. We have previously drawn attention in several contexts to the need for modifications to the station to accommodate the newly enhanced service of four trains an hour on the West London Line between Clapham Junction and Willesden Junction and the introduction by late 2012 of a service of four trains an hour on the East London Line between Dalston Junction and Clapham Junction. The London Overground orbital network will then be complete.

Network Rail has now consulted the planning authority on the modifications it proposes to platforms 1-2 at Clapham Junction (planning application 2011/1879):

platform 2 will become platform 1, and will we assume continue to handle all West London Line train movements

a new platform, to be known as platform 2, will be built out end on to the track serving that existing platform and will we assume handle all East London Line train movements

the present platform 1 will remain unused and will be redesignated as platform 0.

We do not comment here on the adequacy of these modifications to handle future train movements or how they might relate to further developments such as the Airtrack proposal for a new rail link between Waterloo and Heathrow. Our immediate and urgent concern is about the inadequate circulation space for passengers joining and more especially leaving trains on these platforms.

These platforms are exceptional at Clapham Junction in that the trains using them terminate there. This has the effect of producing sharp peaks in the numbers of passengers using them, as is already apparent when rush hour West London Line trains arrive at the present platform 2. Apart from a small lift, the only access to the platforms is by one stairway to the overbridge and one narrow stairway leading to the subway. The majority of arriving passengers use the latter. Presumably this is primarily because they will be continuing their journeys by bus or on foot, rather than by train. There was originally a second stairway

down to the subway level, but it was removed when the present Grant Road entrance to the station was constructed. A further consequence of construction of the present Grant Road entrance is that the remaining stairway does not lead directly into the subway but funnels into a narrow passage running alongside the Grant Road ticket hall.

With a further doubling in the number of trains using the London Overground platforms, and the prospect of major increases in passenger numbers as a consequence of much improved links and more frequent services, we are seriously concerned at the looming prospect of dangerous congestion at busy periods and the apparent absence of any measures to deal with this. This particular part of Clapham Junction was run right down at a time when it was only being used by a couple of short trains to Olympia at rush hours. There seems to be a lamentable failure to match the frequent bright new trains of London Overground with acceptable provision for passengers at this crucial terminus and interchange.

We want to put forward a constructive suggestion on a scale which may have some prospect of being implemented within the next couple of years. It seems to us the only immediate solution is to rearrange the Grant Road entrance to the station by moving the ticket office, machines and gates to positions nearer the road, thus releasing space for two stairways from the London Overground platforms directly into the subway.

We believe this relatively simple alteration to the Grant Road entrance would also open up the possibility of resolving a separate and well known problem, the absence of step-free access to Clapham Junction station from the north side (which is a considerable distance from Brighton Yard). That could be achieved by the combination of a new lift from the Grant Road entrance to the London Overground platforms and the existing lift from those platforms to the overbridge.

These suggested improvements are not ideal, but we put them forward as urgent expedients to deal with what will otherwise be unacceptable dangers and inconvenience.

The Battersea Society

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3 June 2011