

# THE UP LINE

NEWSLETTER OF CAMBRIDGE HEATH AND LONDON FIELDS RAIL USERS

April 2024

## Train every 10 minutes

Great news from Transport for London. TfL is proposing to improve the peak-hour train service at Cambridge Heath and London Fields from December this year. The gaps between trains would vary from 7 to 12 minutes.

It is also considering providing more off-peak trains at our stations to reduce the gaps between trains from 15 minutes to 10 minutes.

The proposals are being examined to ensure that improving the service between Liverpool Street and Edmonton Green does not cause problems elsewhere, including to Greater Anglia services, so veteran rail campaigners warn: "There's many a slip..."

The improvements are being suggested in the same year that Liverpool Street station celebrates its 150th anniversary. The station opened in February 1874 and last month a special ceremony was held with speeches from Network Rail chairman Lord Peter Henty and two former station managers.

At the same time, Network Rail is supporting plans for a 20-storey building above Liverpool Street station, as a way of achieving accessibility improvements for passengers, including more lifts and escalators.

Critics say it will cause five years of disruption as part of the station is demolished to make way for a "hideous" 20-storey building. They say any gain will be undermined by inconvenience caused by the work. Conservation groups say the £15 billion plans will damage the grade II listed station which this year became Britain's busiest station with 80 million passengers a year.

"I have never seen anything as harmful as this proposed," said Connor McNeill of the Victorian Society. The glazed roof over the concourse would be replaced by a "modern" lower roof requiring artificial light and completely out of keeping with the current station architecture. The government has refused to provide money



to make the station more accessible, forcing Network Rail to look elsewhere for funds. There have been 2,100 objections to the plan to create one million sq ft of commercial accommodation. Rupert Wheeler of the Spitalfields Society says there is plenty of space in the existing station to put in more lifts and to improve passenger flow.

The plan is being considered by City of London planners. One commentator said: "It is hard to see any long-term benefit for the general public or users of the station. There will be no additional rail capacity."

### **Two million passengers**

More than 2 million people used Cambridge Heath and London Fields stations in the year to March 2023, according to estimates from the Office of Rail and Road. ORR believes there were 771,490 passengers at Cambridge Heath and 1,372,704 at London Fields.

### **Weaver Line**

The Overground line through Cambridge Heath and London Fields stations has been named the Weaver Line by TfL, which says the name celebrates the local textile trade, from the French Huguenots and Irish weavers to Jewish refugees and South Asian migrants.

### **Central line upgrade**

Thirty-year-old trains on London Underground's Central line are being modernised in a four-year, £500 million project, which provides new seat covers, better information screens, CCTV and more reliable motors.

# Improvements needed

We asked Transport for London to consider installing train information screens at ground level at Cambridge Heath, as at London Fields, Hackney Downs, Stoke Newington and Rectory Road stations. TfL responded, the screens were installed and were welcomed by passengers.

We asked for the reinstatement of the six peak hour trains (five in the morning and one in the evening) at Cambridge Heath which were cut in December 2011 and led to a fall in passenger numbers. TfL responded positively and the trains are back.

We asked for an earlier start to the Sunday service. TfL responded positively, although the earliest trains are around 0730.

## Changes needed at both stations

1. Lifts at both stations to help mobility-impaired passengers, including parents with buggies and small children as well as passengers with cycles and luggage.
2. Additional and improved platform shelters and seats to cope with rising passenger numbers.
3. Improved timetable to provide a train every 10 minutes rather than every 15 minutes as at present.
4. Stopping some Chingford trains at Cambridge Heath and London Fields to provide a direct service to Clapton and Walthamstow, without the need to change trains at Hackney Downs.
5. Designate Cambridge Heath and London Fields as art stations, to reflect the artistic community in the area and brighten up the stations.
6. Encourage artists to use the stations to display their art.

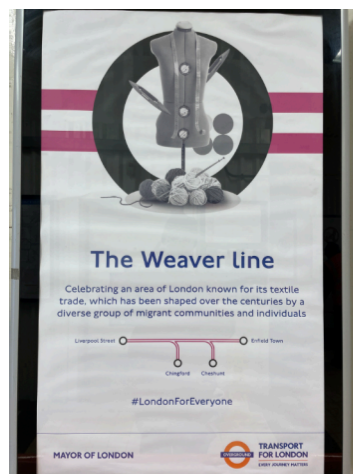
## Changes needed at Cambridge Heath

We would like to see:

1. Ground floor retail unit to be let.
2. Station name and logo on Hackney Road bridge as at Hackney Central.
3. Second entrance on Hackney Road, to augment the existing entrance on Cambridge Heath Road.
4. Refurbishment and deep clean of Cambridge Heath station to deal with peeling plaster and water leaks. Although we acknowledge that big improvements have been made over the years.

These changes are suggested by Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users for the

attention of Rory O'Neill, general manager of Transport for London's Overground, and Steve Best, managing director of Arriva Rail London which operates the Overground for TfL, and Claire Mann, TfL's chief operating officer. They will also be circulated to local politicians who have shown an interest in train services.



We are unhappy that the "official" estimates from the Office of Rail and Road understate the real number of passengers who use our two stations, when compared with our carefully recorded observations over 23 years.

We believe the ORR estimates for London Fields and Cambridge Heath were below the actual numbers. This undermines the case for improving our stations and the train services. According to ORR figures, Cambridge Heath station had 771,000 passengers in 2022-23, almost back to pre-pandemic levels. London Fields had 1,373,000 passengers in 2022-23, higher than the pre-pandemic levels.

The figures show that 14% of passengers at Cambridge Heath are heading for Seven Sisters, while 13% go to Liverpool Street. By contrast, 42% of passengers at London Fields are heading for Liverpool Street, while 12% go to Seven Sisters.

## Improvements since the CHLUG campaign began

Daytime off-peak, evening, Saturday and Sunday trains. Oyster card readers, and more reliable ticket machines with Oyster top-up facilities. Real-time information screens at street level as well as customer information screens and help points on all platforms. Live monitoring of CCTV at London Fields and Cambridge Heath. Platform seats. More timetables and printed information. Repainting. Improved lighting. Efficient graffiti removal. New signs. Cambridge Heath needle bin removed. Stair edge repairs. Litter collection and efficient cleaning. Additional entrance at London Fields. Public address system. Station staff while trains are running.