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To whom it may concern,

Response to Southend Local Plan consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Southend Borough Council's Local Plan consultation document.

Background

c2c is the operator of the Department for Transport's Essex Thameside franchise. c2c is owned by Trenitalia UK, the British arm of leading Italian train operator Trenitalia SpA. Trenitalia is in turn part of Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane Group (FS Group), one of the world's largest transport and infrastructure companies.

c2c holds a 15-year franchise for the Essex Thameside operation, which runs until November 2029. The length of this contract means we have an ongoing interest in the medium- to long-term growth and development of Southend borough and the wider south Essex and east London region.

Seven c2c stations lie in Southend borough: Chalkwell; Leigh-on-Sea; Shoeburyness; Southend Central; Southend East; Thorpe Bay; and Westcliff. These are all busy commuter stations; in addition Southend Central is a popular destination due to its position in the town centre, while Leigh-on-Sea also attracts significant numbers of visitors, and Chalkwell too during the summer months.

Consultation Response

c2c strongly supports the importance of continued economic growth and the provision of more homes, both in Southend borough and the wider region. The combination of comparatively low housing costs, easy access to and from central London, and the most punctual commuter rail service in the South East are important factors that underpin this growth.

To deliver this economic growth and the proposed housebuilding programme, maintaining and improving the transport infrastructure is absolutely essential. We are pleased to see the Council recognises it as such in its Plan. Supporting the railway infrastructure in particular is vital, given the unique economic and environmental benefits it provides that cannot be delivered by investment in roads. For example, only the railway provides a realistic link to central London and Canary Wharf for regular commuters, who then spend their salaries locally, bringing economic growth. The railway also provides the most environmentally-friendly form of transport for longer journeys, which will be vital for protecting local air quality.

Trenitalia c2c Limited is part of the FS Group.



Route Capacity

c2c's current franchise includes increased capacity delivered in stages as demand increases. To date this has been achieved through:

- Reconfiguring a proportion of our existing rolling stock to increase onboard capacity in 2015
- Implementing a new timetable which significantly increased the number of peak services from most stations in the borough in 2015
- Expanding c2c's train fleet with the addition of 24 new carriages in 2016

The final contractualised increase in capacity is scheduled for December 2021, with the addition of 60 new Bombardier Avenra carriages. This will provide a net 20% increase in seats across the c2c fleet. This capacity increase has been accelerated from its original scheduled date of 2022-2024 in recognition of the scale of growth that has already been delivered on the Essex Thameside franchise. However there are no further increases in capacity included in our Franchise Agreement with the Department for Transport.

Given the latest projected housing numbers reported by each local authority in the region, our latest analysis forecasts that our contractualised route capacity, including the additional rolling stock scheduled for 2021, will be exhausted by 2025.

This means the projected scale of housebuilding included in Southend's Local Plan, and in the other equivalent documents from local authorities in the region, is at risk.

The route capacity is set to be exhausted because:

- At peak times we are currently operating at the maximum capacity for the signalling system of 20 trains per hour. That means we cannot increase the frequency of service
- Our options for further increasing capacity by adding rolling stock and lengthening trains are limited. Many peak services are already operating at the maximum length of 12-carriages. Additional 12-car trains could also create problems at London stations and thereby increase delays route wide
- The replacement of the current signalling system is expensive and has been deferred to 2040. This will result in an ongoing decline in the reliability of the signalling infrastructure until that point

We also recognise that quick journey times are particularly important to Southend-based commuters, given the distance they travel to the capital. However the projected congestion across the route will adversely affect journey times, as heavy loadings will mean longer dwell times are required at stations. Even if c2c services from Southend stopped at fewer intermediate stations, which itself would have a profound negative impact on our customers living in other areas, this would not resolve the issue. The tracks into Fenchurch Street are a single line in each direction, and the lack of passing points means there is no opportunity to separate "fast" and "stopping" trains. Instead the fast services would be behind the stopping services with no opportunity to benefit from fast journey times.

Network Rail is undertaking a route study to evaluate our forecasts, and the potential solutions, which is due to report in late 2019.

One potential solution is ETCS Level 2, which is train-based signalling technology that would replace the current traffic-light signals. c2c's owning group, Trenitalia UK is currently developing an Outline Business Case for the Department for Transport for an investment in ETCS Level 2.

Installing this system on the core section of the current c2c route, between Fenchurch Street and Upminster, would unlock the possibility for a new higher-frequency timetable that can be operated while maintaining current punctuality levels. Combined with an estimated 12 additional units, ETCS has the potential to provide 24 trains per hour in the peak from December 2024, with the potential for up to 28 trains per hour beyond the end of the current c2c franchise. This would provide sufficient additional capacity across the route. It would also enable better separation between fast and stopping trains, and therefore faster journey times between Southend and London.

A funding strategy is currently being developed to gain support from the Department for Transport. If the Outline Business Case demonstrates a positive BCR for this scheme, it is essential that Southend Borough Council supports its development to mitigate the existing risk to the proposed targets in its Local Plan. The capital costs would require contributions from developers and others who benefit through appropriate mechanisms.

For example, we are aware that the Association of South Essex Local Authorities are undertaking a joint approach to strategic planning, which we welcome, and are considering an application to central government for a Growth Deal. We urge Southend Borough Council to support the inclusion of our scheme in this strategy, and identify funding sources across the region that can be used to contribute to the capital and net operating costs of the proposal.

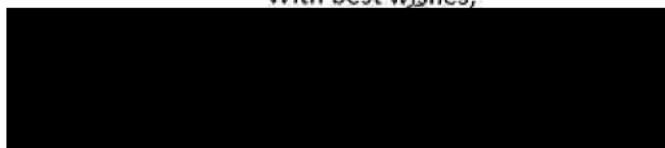
Station enhancements

It is important that the Local Plan recognises the need to support key improvements to stations in the Borough, to reflect the increased number of commuters projected. In particular:

- We have developed a Master Plan for the redevelopment of **Southend Central** station, with the objective of improving passenger facilities and redeveloping the forecourt to provide a plaza with potential wider public benefit. This transformational scheme would support regeneration of the station and surrounding area, and contribute to Southend Borough Council's objectives for the High Street. This project is currently unfunded, so would require support Southend Borough Council for it to be deliverable.
- Both platforms at **Chalkwell** station are currently inaccessible, which presents issues given the demographic of local residents and the attraction of the nearby beach for families. It requires a new bridge, and lifts to each platform. As part of c2c's franchise we will be addressing this issue, but with current funds available this is unlikely to be until towards the end of the franchise – up to ten years away. Support from Southend Borough Council to access funds, whether from national funding streams or relevant developer contributions, would help deliver an accessible station and benefit passengers and residents much sooner.
- **Southend East** station is inaccessible for passengers arriving from London. We have received indication that this will qualify for support from the Department for Transport's Access for All fund. However if this funding is not forthcoming, it too would benefit from Council support.
- **Excellent transport links** to and from each station are essential. This includes the provision of cycle storage facilities and work to overcome issues that form barriers to potential pedestrians – for example around Westcliff and Southend East stations.

I hope this response has been useful, and please do not hesitate to get in contact if you would like to discuss any of these issues in more detail.

With best wishes,



Head of Communications, Trenitalia c2c