

Appendix 15: Willesden Junction

Old Oak West OBC | Version 2: Revised December 2023

OPDC
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DEVELOPMENT
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Department
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Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities



Appendix 15 – Willesden Junction

The Middle of Everywhere: Transforming Willesden Junction Station

Summary

1. Comprehensive regeneration of Old Oak West is high value for money (Medium and Medium+ both have BCRs above 3).
2. Medium BCR is higher than Medium+ because Medium+ includes the costs of the scheme at Willesden Junction Station (WJS) which includes capacity, accessibility and public realm enhancements as well as housing delivery.
3. Upgrading WJS is essential to:
 - Provide the additional capacity required to cater for demand generated by development.
 - Provide step-free access to ensure the station is accessible from the south and east, which caters for demand generated by Old Oak West development.
 - Connect Old Oak West to surrounding communities.
 - Provide a gateway for Old Oak West.
 - Mitigate station overcrowding issues.
 - Improve interchange between the Bakerloo Line and London Overground services.
4. In addition to the essential requirements for upgrading WJS, the scheme proposed generates the potential to deliver circa 500 new homes on Network Rail land.
5. The economic appraisal has monetised neither transport benefits from station upgrades nor all wider transformation impacts.
6. Taking this into account, and the wider strategic case and the SMART objectives, the Preferred Option is still considered to be the Medium+ which delivers the best outcome for society.
7. Value for Money has been performed on the *likely* lifetime funding requirements and the scheme - at a point in time. Station upgrades would likely be the subject of future business cases to secure detailed approval.

Strategic Fit

Local Communities and Placemaking

1. The station feels isolated and entirely **disengaged from its adjacent communities**. The existing "alleyway" connection from Harrow Road to WJS (see Pictures 1 and 3 below) is long, circuitous and feels unsafe. Upgrades to WJS will provide a **new accessible, safe, direct link** which ties the community in Harlesden to the emerging new neighbourhoods at Old Oak West.
2. Willesden Junction is a **poor gateway**: it is hard to find the station unless you know it exists; approach by foot is dominated by rail and road infrastructure (see Picture 2 below) and the public realm is often not accessible for mobility impaired users. WJS must be transformed to act as a **gateway entrance** to Old Oak West: improving the **destination** feel, and **perception** of the area.

Capacity, Overcrowding and Station Improvements

1. Passenger numbers are forecast to more than double in the morning peak and nearly triple in the evening peak by 2041¹.
2. To date, only static modelling has been undertaken using data from the old Local Plan OPDC scheme (Old Oak North scheme rather than Old Oak West). The modelling undertaken indicated that capacity increases are required to the existing station in the growth scenario (the growth scenario considers 35% additional demand by 2041²). This included additional ticket gates, and wider passageways throughout the station. These capacity enhancements could only be facilitated with a complete redesign of the station as per the scheme proposal.
3. As things stand, the station suffers from significant **crowding** during peak periods due to narrow corridor routes through the station and significant level changes which creates crowding issues at the top and bottom of the stairways.

¹ Mott MacDonald, 2021 *Willesden Junction Feasibility study*

² As stipulated by Network Rail's Station Capacity Planning Design Manual

4. The low-level and high-level platforms are not very far apart from each other, but the pedestrian routes connecting them and the station entrances for access or interchange between services are **convoluted, narrow**, involve the use of stairs and a subway and are **not legible**. While there are lifts available to both sets of platforms, their location within the station creates very long routes if people are using them to interchange between the platforms.
5. There is **no direct step-free access** at the station from the east and south. The only step-free entrance is from Station Approach and the step free route is poorly designed, inconvenient, and convoluted. The scheme proposal provides step-free access from all access locations, significantly enhancing the accessibility to the Bakerloo Line and Overground Lines for the local community.
6. Several areas within the station need **maintenance and repair**. These shortcomings will only get worse as the regeneration of Old Oak West comes forward.

Homes and Value

1. The proposed scheme generates the potential to deliver **500 new residential units**, new cultural, community and workspace opportunities, immediately next to a transport node, utilising publicly owned land.

Planning

1. The OPDC Local Plan/Infrastructure Delivery Plan considers WJS upgrades **essential**, in the same way it considers upgrades to North Acton Station essential. The importance of the upgrade is exacerbated by the fact that Old Oak Common will be the terminus for HS2 for longer than originally envisaged.
2. Local Plan policy speaks to the need to improve permeability and **reduce severance** by delivering connections between Old Oak North, Harrow Road, Harlesden Town Centre and to Old Oak Lane. This will be essential to ensure that **existing communities are 'knitted in'** and able to access the opportunities and facilities delivered at Old Oak West.
3. The Brent Local Plan also highlights the need for WJS upgrades stating: "a key priority is to improve the connectivity between Old Oak and Harlesden, now likely to focus on Old Oak Lane, in addition to an enhanced Willesden Junction Station (including over-station development), and wayfinding."

Value for Money

1. The Value for Money assessment (which takes a holistic view in considering the strategic case, SMART objectives alongside the Value for Money metrics) concludes that the Medium+, which is high value for money and delivers fully against the vision for Old Oak West, is the Preferred Option that delivers the best outcome for society.
2. **Both Medium+ and Medium are assessed as high value for money relative to the BAU.** As such, there is strong evidence to support **comprehensive regeneration**.
3. **Based on Cost-Benefit Analysis, only the Medium has a slightly higher BCR than the Medium+.**
4. The economic analysis is based on the scheme at a point in time and confirms that **intervention through comprehensive delivery offers value for money**.
5. Medium+ benefits are underestimated in the BCR, given user transport benefits are not included from the WJS upgrade, and the fact that it is not possible to capture all wider transformational impacts.
6. The Green Book review has made clear that Business Cases should not rely solely on BCRs, but also factor in the importance of the strategic case.

Funding

1. The project is viable in the Medium+ scheme, which includes WJS upgrades.
2. There are significant costs associated with delivering upgrades to WJS (£59.7m for the station upgrades and £57.3m to enable development adjacent to the station³). However, as part of a wider comprehensive scheme, the proposals are still viable and the cashflow gap can be funded via recoverable funding.

³ Note that these costs are indicative and will be subject to further scrutiny as the proposals are refined.

3. Relative to the BAU, plots around Willesden Junction receive a 10% transport and 12.5% placemaking premium⁴, part of which is driven by the WJS upgrades.
4. The timing, extent and source of further recoverable funding will be established through a funding and finance strategy feeding into the Interim Business Plan at the next stage of work.
5. The proposals for WJS are at an early feasibility stage and as such have high assumptions for risk and contingency and the value engineering task which would look to generate cost savings within the scheme has not yet been undertaken.

Delivery

1. **NR and TfL strongly supportive** of upgrades to WJS. Both TfL and NR have jointly commissioned feasibility studies with OPDC.
2. The Leader of **London Borough of Brent reiterated their strong support** for WJS upgrades at the June OPDC Board meeting (during which it considered the Old Oak West OBC). The delivery of the upgrade will be critical to the support of Brent going forward.
 - Any upgrades to WJS would be subject to scrutiny via **further business case and approval processes**.



Figure 1 Map of station entrances and access points



Figure 2 Approach to Willesden Junction Station is long and not very visible

⁴ Note the regeneration premium is subject to its own time weighted build up / value curve that is built up over about 5 years, meaning that the full premium may not be entirely attributable to station upgrades.



Figure 3 Alleyway to Harlesden and Harrow Road is barely visible from the station