

EDINBURGH WAVERLEY MASTERPLAN

Comments from Transform Scotland

26 April 2019

1. Introduction.

Transform Scotland has long campaigned for improvements to the passenger facilities and surrounding public realm at Waverley Station. We have consistently advocated a partnership approach between the city council, the various rail industry players and government. The attached Appendix A highlights various proposals over a 20 year period – all failing to deliver the 21st century station which Scotland's capital city richly deserves. Instead, piecemeal refurbishments and additions have been made to the station with no overall masterplan as the context. We therefore welcome the new partnership and the emerging ideas in the Waverley Masterplan.

Waverley Station is the gateway to Scotland: the station layout, facilities on offer, and immediate impressions on stepping outside the station will paint a lasting impression in the minds of visitors and locals. It enjoys a wonderful location in Scotland's capital city sitting between the Old and New Towns. However, current passenger facilities at the station and the associated public realm outside reflect very badly on Scotland. They are in marked contrast to those at the southern end of the East Coast Main Line at King's Cross and other major cities around Europe and the world.

For all its listed status, the current station has limited architectural merit and is most certainly not fit for purpose as a 21st century transport hub. The approach ramps now serve no useful purpose and severely impact on the station's potential for improvements to rail capacity and passenger facilities. The central station building with its associated booking hall has merit and can and should be saved. It is however currently compromised by roof struts being keyed into the upper sections of the building and by the passenger overbridge and its juxtaposition with the main building. It is therefore our view that significant changes to the existing structures are necessary to create a fitting station and transport hub to serve Scotland's capital city.

The station's outstanding feature and key selling point is its location in the heart of the city. That apart, it compares badly with the many great stations in the UK and around the world.

2. Specific Comments on the Masterplan Proposals.

Whilst welcoming the Masterplan we wish to offer the following comments on the station potential and detail within the plan.

The station, including the former goods yard, enjoys a very large footprint and offers great potential. The current signalling centre is not attractive and this facility could be moved elsewhere. The adjacent surface car parking area should be put to much better use as part of the proposed transport interchange. There is adequate car parking in the underground car park adjoining New Street.

More through platforms will be needed as rail traffic grows generally and specifically with the arrival of HS2 trains. It may also be possible to create more terminating platforms in the former goods yard area.

Removal of the ramps will create much needed space. Service vehicles should be provided with alternative means of accessing the station thus removing the current conflicts between motor vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists.

The proposed provision of more access routes through the station is welcome; it will enhance the public realm, create greater connectivity between the Old and New Towns and make the station more accessible.

The overall site boundary illustrated on the proposals does not include Princes Street and we believe this to be a mistake. The primary interchange with buses is via the Waverley Steps entrance to Princes Street and the waiting environment in this area is overcrowded and unpleasant. To create an effective transport hub and convenient interchange facilities, it is essential to include this area.

The proposals to create more and better public space within the station and in the adjoining public realm are to be welcomed. Perhaps it is also time to consider re-connecting the station to the adjacent Balmoral Hotel which was built by the North British Railway as a premier station hotel. At King's Cross, St Pancras, York, and a number of other stations, the former station hotels are directly connected to the station and that encourages hotel customers to arrive and depart by train.

As stated above, we support retention of the historic central building but believe that the bulk of the staff accommodation currently located within the building should be relocated – possibly to the new transport interchange. This would allow much of the building to revert to use as passenger facilities.

Whilst the facilities on offer within the station are clearly beyond the scope of this Masterplan it is worth stating that these should offer the very best of Scottish produce by way of food and drink offerings. The current offerings fall very far short of this ideal.

The status of the current roof will no doubt stimulate much debate. It is however our view that the preferred strategy is the optimum solution if we are to create a station and transport hub for Scotland's capital city that is fit for the future. It therefore appears necessary to replace the roof with a new one that encompasses the new concourse and the central historic building and allows light to flood into the station below.

Finally, there is the matter of where this project lies within Scottish Government priorities. As stated above, this is the gateway to Scotland and its capital city for many people. Economically, Edinburgh is the engine room of the Scottish economy, contributing hugely to the wider wellbeing of the country. Waverley Station should offer the very best in transport and passenger facilities and help to showcase Scotland as a progressive country which practices what it preaches in terms of sustainable transport and climate change. It is therefore our view that this should be a priority project with a ranking ahead of the various road-building projects which in themselves will simply generate more road traffic making it more difficult to achieve climate change targets. As already illustrated and catalogued in Appendix A, twenty years have elapsed since the last major proposal for Waverley: during this time Scotland has fallen well behind other countries. So now is the time for a clear action plan to be confirmed and delivered in a short timescale and certainly within the next decade.

3. Conclusions.

1. We strongly support the partnership approach and preferred strategy for the Masterplan.
2. Scotland has fallen well behind others in the provision of a station fit for purpose in its capital city in the 21st century.
3. Waverley Station and the surrounding public realm enjoy a large footprint in a unique location between the Old and New Towns – this offers tremendous potential for redevelopment to create a transport hub fit for the future.
4. The present station has limited architectural merit compared to many others in the UK – but we do support the retention of the central building and booking hall.
5. The time for decision and action is now – twenty years have elapsed since the last major proposals for Waverley.
6. The Scottish Government should prioritise this proposal over other transport schemes which will fail to deliver sustainable transport improvements and undermine climate change targets.

Appendix A: Timeline of Proposals for Waverley Since 1999

1999

Railtrack announced major redevelopment of Waverley Station, financed by substantial retail etc above current roof. It subsequently became clear that the return from retail etc. was insufficient to finance the desired scale of station improvement, and that there was a need for public sector contribution. Railtrack finally collapsed after Hatfield crash, and was replaced by Network Rail in 2001, with a greater focus on core business, and less on property development.

2002

Partnership established to progress Waverley upgrade, consisting of Strategic Rail Authority, Network Rail, Scottish Executive & The City of Edinburgh Council. This identified 3 scales of upgrade ('Options A, B, & C'), costing up to £795 million; work was to be financed by: budget for renewals required in future, commercial development, and Scottish Executive. The partnership also identified the need for interim layout to accommodate services during disruptive work.

2003-04

Scottish Executive tells Partnership that Options B & C will provide more capacity than can conceivably be needed in future; it will therefore fund only redevelopment based on interim layout, and Waverley Steps.

2006-07

Upgrade including new track layout, through platforms by Balmoral and Klondyke walls, and Haymarket 'platform 0'. Completed under budget; escalators and lifts (Calton Road) added.

Since 2006, additional trains have been incrementally added, using up the spare capacity notionally provided by the 'interim' layout.

2010-12

Roof glazing replaced.

Total investment 2006-2012: £130 million?

.....

**Scotland's alliance for
sustainable transport**

Transform Scotland
5 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PR
t: 0131 243 2690
e: <info@transformscotland.org.uk>
w: <www.transform.scot>

transform
scotland

We campaign for walking, cycling and public transport to be the easiest and most affordable options for everyone. Our diverse membership brings together public, private and third sector organisations from across Scotland. We are a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).