

Serious questions on 'highline' project

□ EVERY "highline" parkland project in the world is on unwanted railway land, but the Camden one, which has just been granted planning approval, is unique.

As fast as it is being built, Network Rail might tear it down again, because of its published policy of May 2021 to reopen a third track through Camden Road station.

You cannot have both in the next few years.

London mayor Sadiq Khan certainly wants the railway track there relaid. Can he secure Treasury approval during his third term? In July 2021 he exclaimed: "Transport for London and I recognise rail freight plays a vital role in delivering goods for London, reducing congestion and improving air quality. Each day it removes about 4,000 HGV trips from London's roads, and rail freight produces 76 per cent less CO₂ per tonne than road freight.

"Transport for London has been working with Network Rail and others," he continues, "to produce London's first 'Rail Freight Strategy',



An image published as part of the planning application process, a model of how the route will sit alongside the railway at Camden Road

now published on the Network Rail website... and we must collectively encourage rail freight in London."

TfL is much more specific, saying in that policy document that it needs Camden Road station's Platform Three to be reinstated.

TfL has recently

claimed a recovery in passenger demand following Covid-19 and that its finances have stabilised, so future possible projects are moribund no longer.

It thinks: "The London Overground (LO) line from Canonbury to Stratford will see some of the strongest long-term

demand growth on the Overground network".

TfL would terminate its extra LO trains from Hackney and Stratford at Camden Road's Platform Two. LO services from Richmond and Clapham Junction, plus freight trains from across the UK, would use the replaced track past the

still-existing Platform Three. So more public transport across Camden and smoother so quieter journeys for freight.

TfL has told Camden Council that the highline has little transport function, and has fought a subsidy being taken from existing funds for more buses across

Camden, already paid by the King's Cross developers. Timescales and specific funding for Platform Three are uncertain, but the highline advocates need to answer an important question: "Is your current fund-raising diverting any donations to pay for future removal of your £50-million of infrastructure (your estimate of the cost in 2018) – or would council tax payers from the whole of Camden have to pay to remove staircases, lifts, etc, and taxpayers from across the United Kingdom have to remove the rest of the project from the Network Rail's viaduct?"

"How much money have you specifically put aside for its removal, and where will that money sit?"

Will Camden Council hold the "Highline Removal Donation Fund" money in trust before giving any final planning consent, so that it clearly appears every year in the council's accounts?

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