

Introducing the North & East Kent Connectivity Continuous Modular Strategic Planning Study

I'm sure you'll agree that's a very long title – we've shortened it to the North & East Kent Connectivity CMSP Study or N&EKC Study for ease of use.

This is the next generation railway industry modular strategic plan for the North and East Kent area, from Abbey Wood and its connection to the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) or Swanley on the Chatham Main Line through to Margate on the Kent Coast and Dover via Canterbury East.

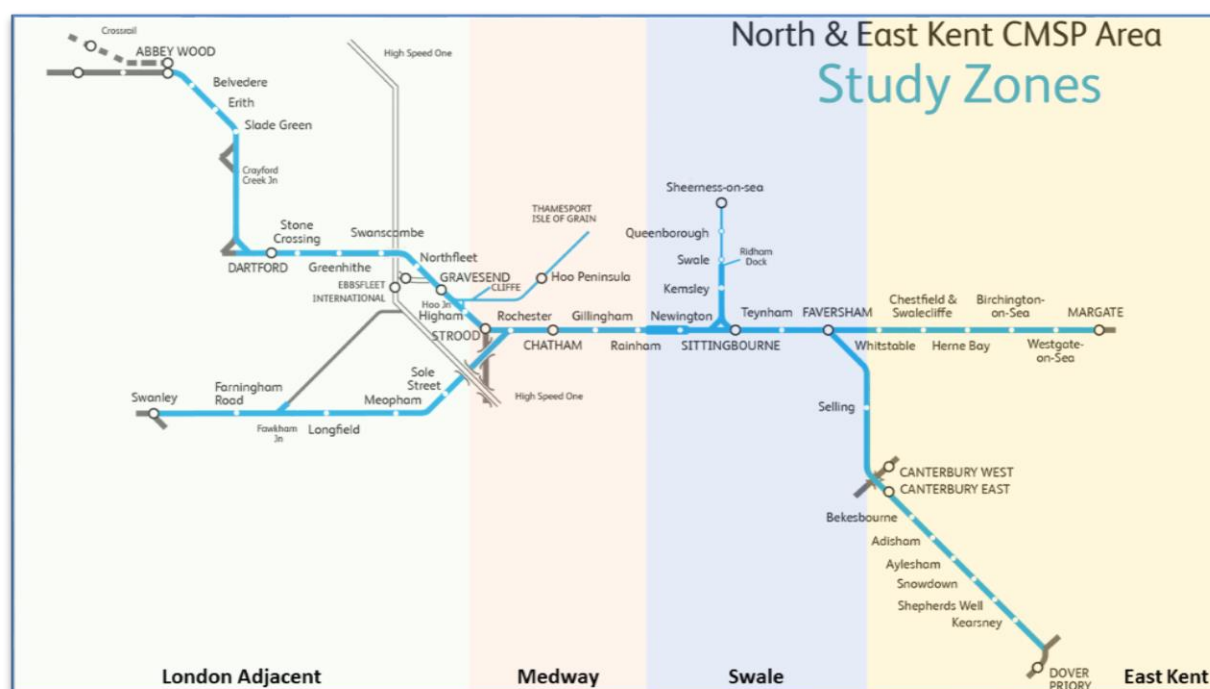
We are covering all passenger and freight train services including those on the Sheerness Branch and the Grain Branch. We will be reflecting the imminent change of the Grain Branch from being freight only to the reintroduction of passenger trains to Hoo Peninsula station, close to Hoo St Werburgh.

Our focus will be on connectivity to/from and within the Study area, the Kent Route Study and its predecessors tended to concentrate on London connectivity but that is not the main focus of this Study.

We don't stop at the boundary fence of the railway though, we look at first and last mile, car parking, wider connectivity, where people are travelling from and where they're travelling to. Commuters, day trippers, tourists, business trips – they're all important.

Typically, we would hold a launch event inviting all the local authorities, user groups and other key stakeholders but COVID-19 has changed that.

We will be launching the North & East Kent Connectivity Study online through a series of briefings/workshops at the end of July. Using Microsoft Teams to host the events, the scope area has been split into Study Zones as shown below.



Depending on attendee numbers Medway and Swale may be merged. There is also an 'All Kent' group looking at the whole area. If you can't make your group meeting we can catch up with you separately.

The events will be two hours long and consist of an introduction to the Network Rail System Operator team working on the Study and the CMSP process. Following the events, information gathered will be collated and shared with everyone so that all the issues, concerns and requirements are clearly communicated.

We need your help!

The events will be used to identify any projects outside of the railway environment that may impact passenger numbers or freight flows etc. A new housing development here and a distribution centre there all add up so we are looking to find options that will make the railways of North & East Kent robust and relevant in 5-, 10- and 30 years' time.

As part of the event we will look more closely at the Study Area/Zones and discuss current and future infrastructure, services, passenger numbers and plans so please come prepared with your local issues and plans.

We know you have produced your local plans and that these are available in the public domain, but we often find that beyond these there are strategic plans looking beyond the current published plan cycle. For the railway industry to keep in line with future strategies, we need to know them now so we can plan ahead too.

Some of you may even be rail passengers, we'd like to know what you would like from the network. If you're not a rail passenger we'd like to know what could help you change.

Rail is very good at moving large numbers of people over longer distances which is why our London commuting services are good for the passengers and the wider community. Buses are good for moving fewer people over shorter distances. Extra stations on existing lines will be considered but it must be noted that they cause delay to the existing passengers by lengthening the duration of the journey so please bear that in mind when thinking about the future. Also, in these areas the percentage of the population regularly using the rail service is surprisingly small.

We would also like to know about other people who could join the calls – large employers, local trade bodies (such as BIDs or Chamber of Commerce), travel groups, cycling/walking clubs etc. There will be Wider Stakeholder Group meetings later in the summer for some stakeholders in the summer so some may be invited to that instead.

If you feel this is not for you, please forward on to the relevant colleague and let me know (paul.best@networkrail.co.uk).