

# MEETING REPORTS

## WHITECHAPEL AND CROSSRAIL

by Tracey Bailey, Community Relations Officer, Crossrail

A report of the Society meeting on 11 January 2011

*“Delivering a World Class Affordable Railway  
Safely Through Effective Partnership”*

Tracey started by apologising that her background is in business rather than engineering – so it was likely members of the audience would know more about the technical side than her! She has worked for London Railways for over 10 years (with a couple of breaks) on projects such as the East London Line extension and transfer to London Overground and the Croyley Rail Link. Since the beginning of 2010 Tracey has been one of a team of five Community Relations Officers, covering the area from Spitalfields to Canary Wharf which includes the shafts of Eleanor Street, Mile End, Stepney Green and Whitechapel station.

Crossrail will involve upgrading 28 existing stations and building nine new, along with the installation or adaptation of 90km of track. A new 21km tunnel will be bored from Paddington to Stratford with portals at Royal Oak, Pudding Mill Lane, Victoria Dock, Custom House, Woolwich and Plumstead. The depot to house 60 trains (each of which will be over 200m long and carry 500 people) will be at Old Oak Common.

Crossrail's aim is to bring £42bn to the British economy over 60 years, employ 14,000 people across the projects and bring 1.5 million extra people within a 45 minute journey of Central London. Following the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010, Crossrail has to save £1bn from its budget of £15.9bn so are reviewing designs and looking for value for money.

Whitechapel station will be redesigned to include improved north-south walking routes between Whitechapel Road and Durward Street. Its main entrance will still be on the High Street, opposite the hospital and the current frontage will be maintained (due to its historic status) but all existing structures behind the frontage will be demolished and the new build will feature much wider concourses to assist with majority of passengers who will be using the station as an interchange. Its roof will sweep up from the heritage front over the District and Hammersmith & City lines and then down under Durward Street.

There will be a shaft constructed as part of the station at Essex Wharf. An entrance to the new walkway will be created in Durward Street (near the Sports Centre).

Another ventilation and emergency shaft will be built in the current car parks of Albion Brewery and Sainsburys on Cambridge Heath Road. The shaft-head building will be similar in height to the Albion Building and visible from the Whitechapel Road. It will include acoustic protection and be clad in metal strips to minimise noise pollution and mitigate the view for the residents who overlook it.

The new station will feature step-free access to all three lines (Hammersmith & City/District, London Overground's East London Line and Crossrail) with the majority of station buildings being overground. Their design will allow natural light in to the LO platforms and the old brick walls of the cutting becoming a heritage feature. The H&C/D platforms will be changed to an island layout and lengthened. The upper concourse will be on a north/south alignment with the H&C/D continuing to run in an east/west direction – the Crossrail tracks will also run east/west below this.

It is planned to keep Whitechapel station open throughout the three years of works with a temporary ticket hall being created on Durward Street and used while the rebuild is underway behind the historic frontage.

Tracey works closely with local stakeholders such as:

- Whitechapel Sports Centre (as their emergency exit is compromised by Crossrail's work in the ex-ELL compound).
- Swanlea School (the Durward Street entrance backs directly onto their land – currently Crossrail have a compound within their playground and their electricity sub-station and supply cables have had to be moved).

- Sainsburys Supermarket – have had to build a temporary car-park deck due to Crossrail Cambridge Road shaft, and the need for their car park for a construction site.
- Residential buildings of Trinity Hall, Kempton Court and Albion Brewery – noise and disruption due to building works and removal of some parking provision.

The estimated schedule of works is:

- Summer 2011 - all preparations works should be complete.
- January 2014 – Start construction on the Durward Street entrance.
- March 2014 – Close Whitechapel Road entrance and open temporary access on Durward Street to H&C/D and ELL.
- Middle of 2017 – Whitechapel Road entrance reopens with access to lines as above where possible.
- End 2018 – Crossrail starts running trains.

(This timetable is one year later than originally planned due to delays imposed by the Comprehensive Spending Review).

For further details: [www.crossrail.co.uk](http://www.crossrail.co.uk), Helpline: 0345 602 3813, or Tower Hamlets Ideas Centre.

## QUESTIONS

Q: If there is to be a 24 train per hour service with 60 trains doing a return journey between Heathrow and Shenfield of at least 240 minutes – how does that add up?

A: Tracey was unsure and will contact the Scheduling Section and supply their answer to LURS. Someone in the audience wondered whether the 24 trains/hour might only refer to the central section. That is a correct assumption, 24 tph is between Whitechapel and Paddington, with the service thinning out east and west.

Q: Will the connection to Heathrow be by tunnel?

A: Again Tracey was unsure of the answer but will investigate and reply to LURS. The connection to Heathrow uses the existing tunnel that the Heathrow Express operates through.

Q: What are community relations like around Whitechapel?

A: Relatively good but quite challenging. The construction work will affect the residents but Crossrail are trying hard to mitigate this. They hold regular meetings with residents, and new works or changes to works are regularly advised to the local community via Information sheets and through the website. A Visitor Centre has been established in the Ideas Store (aka Tower Hamlets Library near Sainsburys on Whitechapel Road/Cambridge Heath Road) and this is staffed on Mondays and Wednesdays between 12.00 and 19.00, or there is the website and helpline (as above.)

Q: Will there be any entrance to the station from the south side of Whitechapel Road (e.g., by the hospital).

A: Tracey replied that this was a negative as the underpass would need to be so deep for safety reasons that it would not be viable. However, Crossrail are working with Tower Hamlets on their regeneration of Whitechapel Road and there is a much improved street level crossing planned. A member of the audience raised that there is a tunnel connecting the basement of the Hospital with the north side of the main road but this has not been open for 80 to 90 years and so is unlikely to meet modern safety standards.

Q: Does the planned timing of 2 minutes journey from Whitechapel to Liverpool Street include the time it will take to get from the street to the platforms?

A: It is likely to be a long walk from the H&C/D and ELL platforms to Crossrail but there will be lifts and/or escalators and the new walkways will more direct and lighter than the current passages at Whitechapel. The existing lines will also have their exits closer to Whitechapel Road than at present.

Q: Are any more changes allowed under the Bill?

A: The new design is well within the Bill's remit except for one or two technical issues.

The meeting then thanked Tracey in the usual manner.

**Amanda Day**