

THE NORTHERN LINE EXTENSIONS PLATFORM INDICATORS – WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

by Kim Rennie

Original research by Brian Hardy

INTRODUCTION

The story of the abortive Northern Line extensions is a well-known part of the London Underground's history and, it seems, never ceases to fascinate. Had the project been completed in full and given all variations in train service patterns and routing arising, an entirely new set of platform indicators would have been required. Details of these replacement indicators were contained in papers obtained by the LURS back many years ago, but until now, have never appeared in *Underground News*.

PROPOSED SERVICE PATTERN

To and from:	Trains per Hour		Sundays All-day
	Mondays to Saturdays Peaks	Off-peaks	
Bushey Heath			
via Mill Hill (The Hale)	7	6	3
High Barnet:			
via Charing Cross	7	6	3
via Finsbury Park to Moorgate	7	-	-
Finchley Central:			
via Charing Cross	14(a)	12(a)	6(a)
via Bank	7(b)	-	-
via Finsbury Park to Moorgate	7(c)	-	-
East Finchley:			
via Charing Cross	14(a)	12(a)	6(a)
via Bank	7(b)	-	-
via Finsbury Park to Moorgate	7(c)	6(d)	8(d)
Alexandra Palace:			
via Finsbury Park to Moorgate	7	6	-
Highgate (High Level):			
via Finsbury Park to Moorgate	14(c)	12(c)	8(d)
Finsbury Park (Low Level) to Moorgate	14	-	-
Drayton Park to Moorgate	28(f)	12(c)	8(d)

Notes:

- (a) Half starting from Bushey Heath, half from High Barnet.
- (b) All starting from Finchley Central.
- (c) All starting from High Barnet.
- (d) All starting from East Finchley.
- (e) Half starting from Alexandra Palace, half from High Barnet (peak), or East Finchley (off-peak).
- (f) 14 from Finsbury Park (Low Level), 7 from Alexandra Palace, 7 from High Barnet.

The new indicators would have been of the standard 'sectioned' light-box design, as used on the 1926 scheme; and as with these, the complexity of the line meant that not all indicators would carry the full destination details of trains. For example, between Morden and Oval northbound, only the central area route taken (i.e. 'via City' or 'via West End'), and the relevant northern suburban branch served (i.e. 'Finchley Line' or 'Golders Green Line'), were to be shown (Fig.1). The exception was 'City & Euston', provided for trains terminating there. Naturally, no changes were needed southbound over this section, and indeed no indicators had been installed there in 1926.

On the Bank and Charing Cross branches, the actual final destination of trains was to be displayed (Fig.2), with no less than eight options available, plus the northern branch route traversed (i.e. 'via Golders Green' or 'via Highgate'). Meanwhile, on the direct northbound Northern City Line from Moorgate to Finsbury Park, no routing details were necessary (Fig.3). Finsbury Park (High Level) would have had an amended version (Fig.4), with the station's name replaced by 'Stops Here'. The planned inclusion of 'Highgate' (High Level) on these indicators implies some trains would terminate there and then work empty to Highgate depot via its south end. Presumably, no indicators were thought necessary on the southbound Northern City Line, with all trains terminating at Moorgate.

At Highgate (Low Level) only the central area route taken ('City' or 'West End') would be shown for southbound trains (Fig 8). At East Finchley, a single indicator was to suffice for northbound platforms 1 & 2 (Fig.9). Finchley Central was another station where one indicator would serve both northbound platforms (Fig.12). In each case, illuminated arrows were to be used to show the platform of the 'next train out'. From High Barnet to Finchley Central southbound, train information was

again to be basic (Fig.13). Southbound information from Bushey Heath to Edgware would also have been minimal, giving only the routing and/or the central area branch taken (Fig.14).

Bushey Heath, Edgware and High Barnet were, or would have been, multi-platform stations, with southbound trains departing from various platforms, and so special indicators were planned for these which combined the central area branch, routing, platform number, and 'next train out' details (Figs.15, 16 & 17).



The known data does not quite complete the picture. What were the intended indicator layouts of Stroud Green, Crouch End or Highgate (High Level); or Mill Hill East and Mill Hill (The Hale)? Doubtless, some platforms would not have had indicators at all, e.g. Cranley Gardens and Muswell Hill northbound, as all trains terminated at Alexandra Palace.

Left: A view of Highgate High Level looking south, with a Down train (passenger or freight?) approaching in the distance. Certainly Way Out signs were hung from the canopy but other hooks were also under the northbound side

canopy until more recent times. Whether these were for train indicators or not isn't known, but as with so many issues involving the uncompleted Northern Line Extensions, we can only speculate, wonder, and marvel about what might have been.

PROPOSED INDICATOR LAYOUTS

The proposed new station indicator layouts were as follows (not to scale). Where appropriate, double-sided signs are shown as if looking in the direction of travel:

Fig. 1 – Morden to Oval northbound

FIRST TRAIN	SECOND TRAIN
CITY & EUSTON	CITY & EUSTON
CITY & GOLDERS GREEN LINE	CITY & GOLDERS GREEN LINE
CITY & FINCHLEY LINE	CITY & FINCHLEY LINE
WEST END & GOLDERS GREEN LINE	WEST END & GOLDERS GREEN LINE
WEST END & FINCHLEY LINE	WEST END & FINCHLEY LINE

Fig. 2 – Waterloo / Borough to Mornington Crescent northbound

FIRST TRAIN	SECOND TRAIN	THIRD TRAIN
GOLDERS GREEN	GOLDERS GREEN	GOLDERS GREEN
COLINDALE	COLINDALE	COLINDALE
EDGWARE	EDGWARE	EDGWARE
ELSTREE SOUTH	ELSTREE SOUTH	ELSTREE SOUTH
ARCHWAY	ARCHWAY	ARCHWAY
FINCHLEY CENTRAL	FINCHLEY CENTRAL	FINCHLEY CENTRAL
HIGH BARNET	HIGH BARNET	HIGH BARNET
BUSHEY HEATH	BUSHEY HEATH	BUSHEY HEATH
VIA GOLDERS GREEN	VIA GOLDERS GREEN	VIA GOLDERS GREEN
VIA HIGHGATE	VIA HIGHGATE	VIA HIGHGATE

Fig. 3 – Moorgate (NCL) to Drayton Park northbound

NEXT TRAIN
FINSBURY PARK
ALEXANDRA PALACE
EAST FINCHLEY

Fig. 4 – Finsbury Park (High Level) northbound

NEXT TRAIN
STOPS HERE
ALEXANDRA PALACE
EAST FINCHLEY

FINCHLEY CENTRAL
HIGH BARNET
EDGWARE
ELSTREE SOUTH
BUSHEY HEATH
HIGHGATE

Fig. 5 – Camden Town
northbound Barnet branch
platform 3

NEXT TRAIN
ARCHWAY
FINCHLEY CENTRAL
HIGH BARNET
EDGWARE
ELSTREE SOUTH
BUSHEY HEATH

Fig. 7 – Highgate (Low Level)
northbound

NEXT TRAIN
FINCHLEY CENTRAL
HIGH BARNET
EDGWARE
ELSTREE SOUTH
BUSHEY HEATH

Fig. 9 – East Finchley northbound platforms 1 &
2

TRAIN INDICATOR		
q-5	HIGH BARNET	-5p
q-5	EDGWARE	-5p
q-5	BUSHEY HEATH	-5p
q-5	ELSTREE SOUTH	-5p
q-5	FINCHLEY CENTRAL	-5p
q-5	STOPS HERE	-5p

Fig. 11 – East Finchley southbound platform 4

NEXT TRAIN	
CITY VIA KINGS +	WEST END

Fig. 12 – Finchley Central northbound platforms 1 &
2

NEXT TRAIN		
q-5	HIGH BARNET	-5p
q-5	EDGWARE	-5p
q-5	BUSHEY HEATH	-5p
q-5	ELSTREE SOUTH	-5p
q-5	STOPS HERE	-5p

FINCHLEY CENTRAL
HIGH BARNET
EDGWARE
ELSTREE SOUTH
BUSHEY HEATH
HIGHGATE

Fig. 6 – Archway
northbound

NEXT TRAIN
STOPS HERE
FINCHLEY CENTRAL
HIGH BARNET
EDGWARE
ELSTREE SOUTH
BUSHEY HEATH

Fig. 8 – Highgate (Low Level)
southbound

NEXT TRAIN
CITY
WEST END

Fig. 10 – East Finchley
southbound platform 3

TRAIN INDICATOR
CITY VIA FINSBURY PARK

Fig. 13 – High Barnet to Finchley
Central southbound

NEXT TRAIN	
CITY	WEST END
VIA KINGS CROSS	
VIA FINSBURY PARK	

Fig. 14 – Bushey Heath to Edgware southbound

NEXT TRAIN	
CITY	WEST END
VIA GOLDERS GREEN	VIA GOLDERS GREEN
VIA ARCHWAY	VIA ARCHWAY
VIA FINSBURY PARK	

Fig. 15 – Bushey Heath – ticket hall level

TRAIN FOR	PLATFORM	NEXT TRAIN
WEST END VIA GOLDERS GREEN	1. 3. 4.	q-5
WEST END VIA ARCHWAY	1. 3. 4.	q-5
CITY VIA GOLDERS GREEN	1. 3. 4.	q-5
CITY VIA ARCHWAY	1. 3. 4.	q-5
CITY VIA FINSBURY PARK	1. 3. 4.	q-5

Fig. 16 – Edgware – ticket hall level

TRAIN FOR	PLATFORM	NEXT TRAIN
WEST END VIA GOLDERS GREEN	1. 4. 5. 6	q-5
WEST END VIA ARCHWAY	4. 5. 6.	q-5
CITY VIA GOLDERS GREEN	1. 4. 5. 6.	q-5
CITY VIA ARCHWAY	4. 5. 6	q-5
CITY VIA FINSBURY PARK	4. 5. 6.	q-5

Fig. 17 – High Barnet – ticket hall level

TRAIN FOR	PLATFORM	NEXT TRAIN
WEST END	1. 2. 3.	q-5
CITY VIA FINSBURY PARK	1. 2. 3.	q-5
CITY VIA KINGS CROSS	1. 2. 3.	q-5

APPENDIX ‘A’ – TRAIN ‘VIA’ PLATES

For stations without platform indicators, and to provide an additional reassurance to passengers, the 1938 Tube Stock had a three-piece destination plate display¹. This allowed the exhibition of the destination, the route taken, and the line name.

The ‘via plates’ were enamelled black-on-yellow to differentiate them from the usual white-on-black type. There were also three known examples where the ‘via’ information was combined with a destination on a single plate (q.v.), possibly for use on Standard Stock driving motor cars, which only had a two-piece layout.

With the post-war abandonment of the full project, not all the proposed plates were actually produced, but drawings show the following were originally planned:

VIA CITY	VIA FINSBURY PK	VIA HIGHGATE AND CITY
VIA WEST END	VIA GOLDERS GRN AND CITY	VIA GOLDERS GRN AND WEST END
	VIA HIGHGATE AND WEST END	
MOORGATE VIA FINSBURY PARK	EUSTON VIA CITY	MOORGATE VIA CITY

¹ More Information on Underground destination plates can be found on Mike Horne’s *Metadyne* website:
LT Railway Destination plates (metadyne.co.uk)



The 'via City' and 'via West End' plates were amended post-war by a sticker overlay to read 'via Bank' or 'via Charing X' respectively. Destination plates were also made for the new Alexandra Palace, Bushey Heath and Elstree South (lettered as plain 'Elstree') termini, but though regarded as highly-collectable today, these were originally no rarer than say, High Barnet, Kennington or Morden etc.

Left: Seven different 'via plates' (the one lettered 'via Golders Green and West End' is a facsimile).

Photo: Donald McGarr

APPENDIX 'B' – STATION LINE DIAGRAMS

The other means of providing train routing information were the enamel station line diagrams. Many of these were manufactured and installed on the Northern Line in anticipation of the forthcoming new extensions.

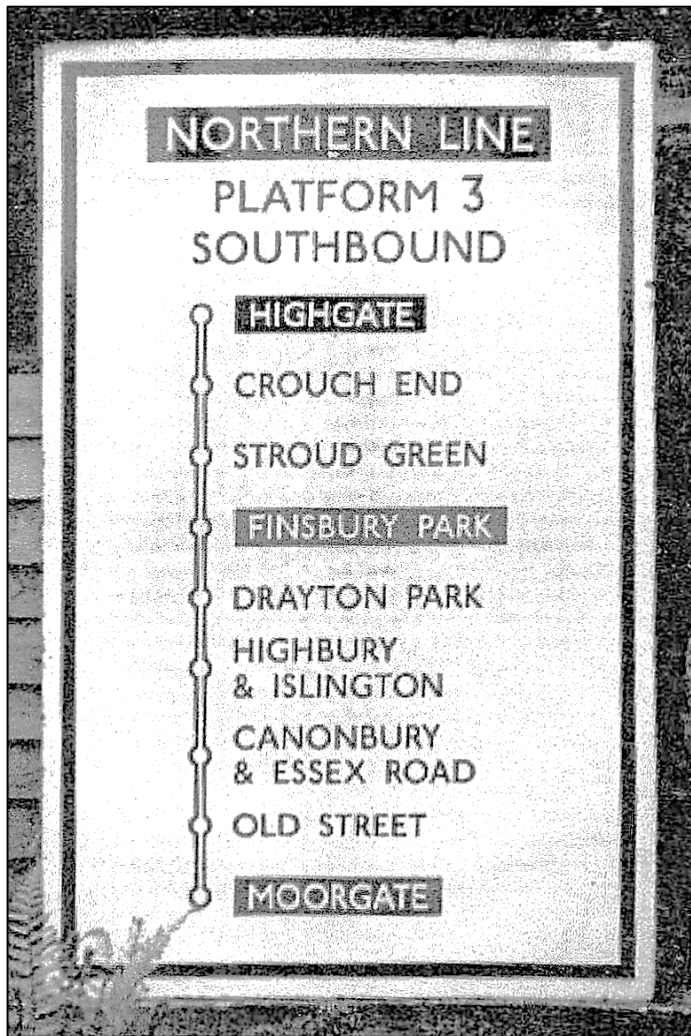
Following the deferment, and then abandonment, of the Edgware – Bushey Heath, Finsbury Park – Alexandra Palace, and Mill Hill East – Edgware sections, such signs were usually amended with paper to cover up the

uncompleted parts. A number lasted well into the late-1960s/early-1970s and were only replaced when large numbers of new signs were required to accommodate Victoria Line interchanges with the Northern Line from 1968.



Above: The 1938 Tube Stock on the Northern Line carried the destination plates for the extensions until their withdrawal in 1978 as the destinations that weren't used were on the reverse side of those that were. 'Alexandra Palace' is seen on a stabled service train in Edgware Sidings (Left) while 'Bushey Heath' is seen on three-car unit 10173 in White City Depot (Right) after withdrawal, which was being used for training purposes at the time.

Both photos: Brian Hardy



Above: (Left) East Finchley platform 3 showing the service via Highgate (High Level) to Moorgate via Finsbury Park and the Northern City Line. The 'interchange' station names highlighted would have been coloured black for Highgate (Low Level), blue for Finsbury Park, and green for Moorgate².

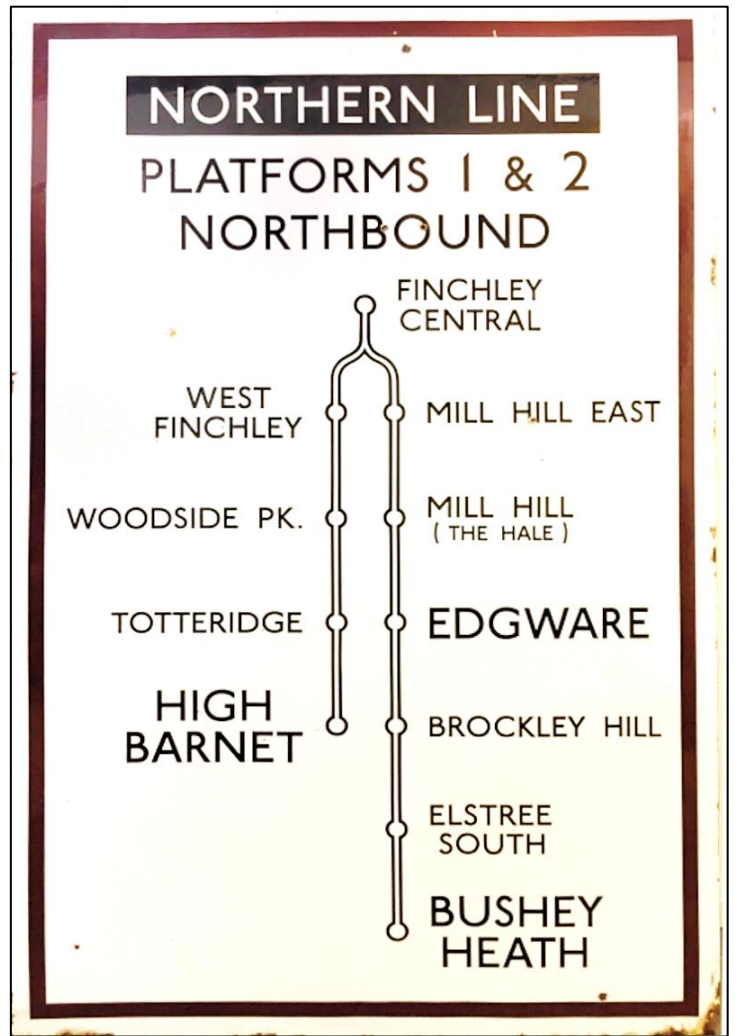
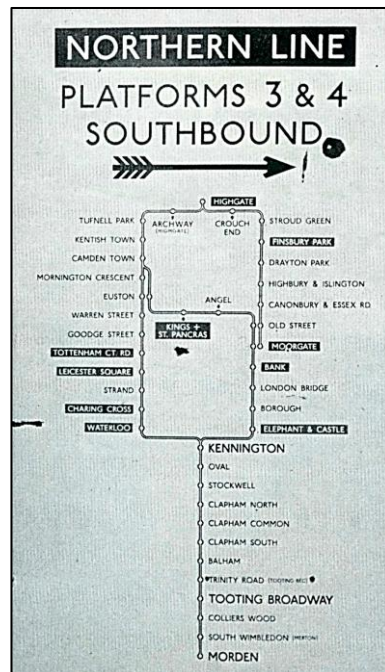
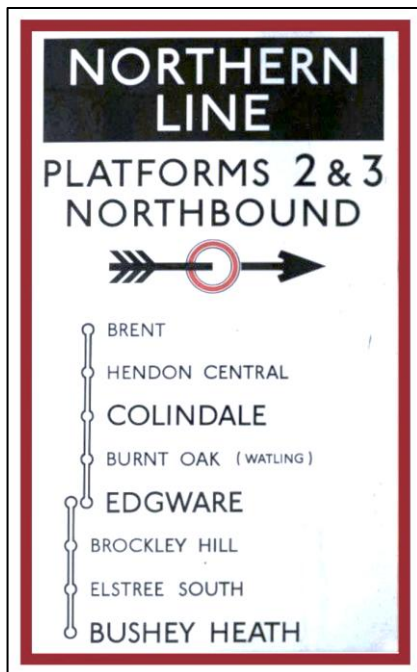


Photo: Author's collection

Above: (Right) East Finchley, with a sign designed to cater for trains departing from either of the two northbound platforms.

Photo: Author's collection



Far Left: A sign from Golders Green reflecting that trains to Brockley Hill, Elstree South and Bushey Heath operated via Mill Hill, and so passengers for these stations had to take an Edgware train and change there for stations beyond.

Photo: LT Museum

Left: This diagram at East Finchley showed the three southbound routes that would have been possible – via City and via West End, both from platform 4; and to Moorgate via Finsbury Park from platform 3. The diagram was saved (officially!) after being spotted rotting away in a corner of Chiswick Works.

Photo: Author's collection

² This was during the 1937-1949 period when all sub-surface lines were coloured District Line green on maps.



Above: A post-war scene at Waterloo. Through the arch is a line diagram pointing to Northern Line platforms 1 & 2. Just discernible below the arrow are the Edgware – Bushey Heath and Edgware – Mill Hill East sections covered over with black paint or paper. Also of note is the staff member, possibly a Traffic Guide, and the illuminated 'Follow the Lights' wayfinding sign.

Photo: LT Museum

The 'Follow the Lights' signs were once a familiar sight at many of the major central London Underground stations. The system was trialled at Charing Cross (today's Embankment) by the District Railway in 1920 and extended to other sites post-war. The illuminated signs gave directions to main line termini and also Piccadilly Circus. Each destination had its own back-lit glass coloured panel bearing the destination and, in some cases, a direction arrow. The colours were carefully chosen so as not to clash with lines serving that station – e.g. brown for Euston, red for Piccadilly Circus, and blue for Waterloo. Yellow was used for Paddington, but presumably chosen before the Circle Line got its own identity in 1947. The signs began to fall into disuse in the 1970s and all were removed by the early-1980s.