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A new plaza will replace the hostile traffic island at Centre Point (© Gillespies)

# Zone of influence

Infrastructure projects should not end at the station exit. **Camilla Ween** explains how Crossrail will set the standard for improving the environment around its stations, going well beyond the requirements of the Act authorising its construction



In an age of significant social change we have to ask ourselves what kind of place we want to live in and what infrastructure we expect to support our activities. Transport infrastructure is not an isolated component of the city, but an integral part of the whole. It is therefore not acceptable to treat infrastructure in isolation. The moment a new transport infrastructure project is conceived, opportunities are created to think about how the local environment could be improved or even radically changed and enhanced. These issues should not be wished away in the effort to bring down costs and it is not good enough to confine a project to just an engineering solution.

At the heart of a civilised society is social interaction. The ancient Romans and Greeks created cities where the public could meet, engage with one another or simply contemplate life. All rail journeys start and end with the experience of getting into and out of the station, and the quality of the space around stations is more often than not woefully inadequate. Crowding, annoying detours, clutter and a degraded environment versus comfortable logical access and good quality public realm can make the difference between high levels of anxiety and a pleasurable experience. This aspect of the journey, not just the train ride, should be integral to a transport project.

Can we, as a society, afford to ignore this opportunity? Crossrail, the local authorities and Transport for London did not think so, and as a result Crossrail agreed to an Urban Integration Programme to review the opportunities at each station. The Crossrail Act allocation for "reinstatement" was con-

finied to 'making good after construction was finished. However, through collaboration, partnership and joint working, many opportunities have been identified to manipulate the urban realm so that accessibility is both easy and convivial, to create easier access for cycles and to address poor lighting, signs, street furniture and planting. Public realm designs have been created that go well beyond just slapping back a bit of asphalt.

Crossrail set aside funds for urban improvements around the stations and additional funds have been levered in from various sources to pay for the works. These improvements will transform many grotty environments into delightful places.

Crossrail is effectively two distinct projects – the outer lines beyond central London and Canary Wharf are mainly existing surface rail lines with existing stations, but the central portion is a new underground line, which interchanges with seven existing stations on the London Underground. Crossrail is responsible for the new tunnels and new station arrangements at the existing Tube stations. Network Rail is responsible for the necessary modifications or new stations on the surface sections.

The additions to the central London Tube stations are to be flagship structures. Beyond central London Network Rail will mainly adapt existing stations to accommodate the increased passenger numbers, though some stations will require major modifications or replacements.

It has long been recognised that transport nodes are the place to develop, and Transport Development

Areas have been central to regeneration thinking. When London Underground extended the Jubilee Line there was a dramatic increase in property values along the new route.

Crossrail commissioned a property impact study published in 2012, which predicted that the project would help create £5.5bn in added value to residential and commercial property along its route by 2021. The report says it is likely to support the construction of 57,000 new homes and 3.25 million m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space. Commercial office values around the stations in central London will increase by 10% over the next decade. Residential capital values are projected to increase by 25% close to Crossrail stations in central London, and by 20% in the suburbs.

Liz Peace, chief executive of British Property Federation, said: "Crossrail demonstrates that investing in infrastructure makes sound economic sense. Every pound of properly targeted infrastructure spend can generate up to ten times the initial investment in broader economic terms."

As a result, Crossrail with local authority partners is placing emphasis on the eight major town centre stations outside central London, where significant growth opportunities are deemed to exist. These are Ilford, Romford, Abbey Wood, Ealing, Southall, Hayes & Harlington, Maidenhead, and Slough.

Doug Oakervee, Crossrail executive chairman to 2009, recognised that ensuring that the new stations were properly integrated into the local urban fabric would require a concerted effort and leadership on the part of Crossrail.

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**The quality of space around stations is more often than not woefully inadequate**

**Ilford currently opens on to a busy highway (inset, © Camilla Ween). Pavement areas will be widened to allow generous waiting areas at the bus stops (© BDP and Hyder).**



**Unattractive and uninviting corners within and outside London will be renewed**

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He set up the Urban Integration Team to help achieve the highest quality public realm around its stations. The team is working closely with all the interested parties to exploit the opportunities for repairing and enhancing the public areas and ensuring that communities are connected to the new infrastructure. Many places will be transformed from basic stations to integrated high quality city fabric.

The station modifications necessary to accommodate Crossrail will be funded by the project, but improvements beyond the project boundary will require additional funding. Initially it was uncertain how funding for urban realm schemes would be raised.

It is reasonable that the developers should contribute to the costs, both of Crossrail's construction and the wider urban realm improvements. Funds, mainly for construction, will be levied through a Business Rate Supplement that will be applied to commercial property, as well as developer contributions required for development in London through the mayor's Community Infrastructure Levy. On top of this, local authority CIL contributions will be expected – these will vary depending on the local authorities' CIL policy, but are likely to focus on the regeneration areas.

Crossrail has set aside £30m and TfL has committed itself to match this with £30m for Crossrail Complementary Schemes (within the Greater London area). The aim is to raise a further £30m from third parties – a total of £90m for public realm enhancements. So far £9.5m has been agreed for the two Bond Street exits, £9m for the Tottenham Court Road area, £4m for Liverpool Street, and £5m

for each of Abbey Wood and Ilford. Local authorities are advancing their development plans to align with the emerging urban realm schemes, so that they will be able to tap developers for contributions towards the cost. This will mean that in London about three times the funding allocated will be secured for high quality urban realm. Outside London, Crossrail is still working with Network Rail, local authorities and landowners to secure the necessary funding.

## Scheme details

**Bond Street** station has two exits, one on Davies Street and one in Hanover Square, and both will have new station buildings. The urban realm characteristics are different, with the eastern exit opening on to a large urban square, whereas the western entrance opens on to a tight network of streets leading to Oxford Street. Architect John McAslan and Partners developed the urban realm strategies for both ends. Westminster Council had a clear vision from the outset and prepared planning briefs for all its Crossrail stations several years ago, which formed useful briefing documents when the public realm work started.

Passenger numbers at Hanover Square are predicted to rise to 10,000 in the morning peak by 2026. Hanover Square is currently a traffic gyratory with a London square in the middle, which is difficult to get to. A comprehensive scheme has been designed which enlarges the green space and provides pedestrian access from the square to the station and improved permeability to the whole area. The proposal is extensive and the funding will have to come from various sources, so implementation is likely to be phased.

## Tottenham Court Road

When Crossrail was granted Royal Assent, London Underground already had a project to upgrade Tottenham Court Road station, a long-term formal requirement following the 1987 King's Cross fire public inquiry. The Crossrail project had to be dovetailed with London Underground's. This meant that construction started early and the new London Underground station will open in 2016, followed by the Crossrail station in 2018. The huge gain at Tottenham Court Road is a public realm scheme evolved over several years of exemplary collaboration between the two boroughs, Westminster and Camden, and Crossrail, TfL and London Underground.

The base of the Centre Point office block has been a miserable traffic island since the 1970s, with traffic and buses leaving little room for pedestrians and cyclists. Everyone agreed that the project presented a huge opportunity to fix a key area of central London. The new scheme addresses one of the key "missing links" in London – the shoppers' trail between Oxford Street and Covent Garden. It will create a significant new open space which will encourage this movement, as well as an all-direction crossing of St Giles Circus (the Oxford Street/Tottenham Court Road intersection). Landscape consultant Gillespies has designed an elegant scheme that rebalances road use and will greatly improve life for cyclists and pedestrians. This required TfL to address the question of displacement of buses (many of which terminate at Centre Point), taxis and general traffic.

The scheme is comprehensive and therefore expensive, but several major developers surrounding the new St Giles area are expected to contribute to the new scheme.

## Whitechapel

Opportunities at Whitechapel concern place-making and improved connections between communities and across the railway. Architect BDP has been retained for both the station design and the urban integration programme. The station will be completely rebuilt, with only the facade being retained.

The area has for a long time suffered from lack of coherence and high levels of traffic on the Whitechapel Road. Some work has already been done to implement proposals set out by Design for London's "High Street 2012" vision. The urban realm integration will build on this and Tower Hamlets Council's master plan for the area. A wide area was defined for research and transport analysis and the local communities (both business and residential) have been encouraged to participate in the plans. Some of the main issues to be

**Below: Bond Street's east exit at Hanover Square will have generous pedestrian space and improved access to the central garden**



addressed are better access to the London Hospital, north/south links and connecting surrounding streets. Tower Hamlets Council has now embarked on a wider masterplanning exercise for Whitechapel, building on the work by BDP.

## Ilford

One of the outer London town centres that is likely to be transformed is Ilford. Redbridge council was determined to reap all the benefits it could from Crossrail. At the Bill stage, the borough lobbied successfully to make sure that Crossrail would stop at all four stations in the borough.

Ilford lies in a growth corridor from Stratford to Shenfield and is one of largest London metropolitan town centres. Though the borough is disappointed that the 150-year-old station will not be rebuilt, it is determined that the urban realm of the town centre should be modernised and less dominated by vehicular activity. The borough population is predicted to grow by almost 70,000 in the next 15 years; the borough aims to attract economic development, and so it wants Ilford to be an attractive gateway.

The borough's Local Development Framework (LDF) and an Area Action Plan for the Crossrail corridor were adopted last year. The LDF identifies the whole of the Ilford Rail Depot as a regeneration asset and safeguards it for rail use (as opposed to releasing it for development) because the site provides important specialist employment opportunities. Redbridge is also the first London borough to adopt its Community Infrastructure Levy, which became effective in January 2012. This means the borough is already gathering developer contributions, some of which will go towards the urban realm enhancements.

Currently, accessing Ilford town centre from the station is not a pleasant experience. The pavement is too narrow, pedestrians have to make a detour to cross the road and the street layout is for cars and buses rather than people. The immediate area has to cater for high volumes of buses and interchanges between bus, train, taxi and cycles, and pedestrians are squeezed. The Ilford Urban Integration Study, undertaken by consultants BDP and Hyder and led by a four-client group (Crossrail, TfL, the borough and the now defunct LDA) has looked at how to integrate the Crossrail station into the townscape. The new £5m scheme will turn the town centre into an attractive place for people to travel through and dwell in.

The road in front of the station will be narrowed, presenting a problem for TfL Buses. TfL carried out exhaustive traffic modelling to satisfy itself that



BDP

changes were safe and desirable, but would still allow for the high volume of bus to bus interchange.

Redbridge is expecting TfL to contribute complementary funds as well Crossrail funds, but it is prepared to make a contribution from its CIL if necessary. Further, though less ambitious, urban realm studies will also be progressed for Chadwell Heath (with neighbouring borough Barking and Dagenham), Seven Kings and Goodmayes.

Crossrail has now agreed urban realm schemes for all the central and 12 of the surface stations. All the urban integration designs for areas around the Crossrail stations in London will be complete by the end of this year.

Crossrail might have been just a transport infrastructure intervention into the city, but through common sense and collaboration many unattractive and uninviting corners both within and outside London will be renewed. The project is setting the standard for how future rail infrastructure projects should be conceived and will be an exemplar of best practice.

For future projects, such as HS2, the cost of comprehensive integrated infrastructure solutions (as opposed to pure technical fixes) should not be considered additional or optional, but should form part and parcel of our expectation of what will be delivered.

A big question will be how urban realm integration is considered during



the development phase – is it acceptable to allow this aspect of a project to be left to the vagaries of goodwill and collaboration? Funds for public realm and integration should be included in the overall funding strategies from the outset, or at the very least mechanisms for how funds will be levered in should be included.

Civil servants are always worrying about scope creep, but that is because the scope initially defined is nearly always too narrow. The starting point should be the zone of influence of a station, so that all opportunities are identified and exploited. Perhaps in future there should be a second boundary line, which identifies the zone of opportunity – a green line?

**Camilla Ween is an architect and urbanist and a director of Goldstein Ween Architects. She worked for TfL for 11 years advising on the impact of land-use development on transport.**

**At Whitechapel, a new pedestrian bridge will improve north/south links. The station is designed to address the severance caused by the rail cutting (© BDP)**