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Before you read on – this article comes with an advisory content warning! The briefing that follows is about the unglamorous, expedient interventions in the track geometry, designed to squeeze in some extra capacity into an already congested railway and where the technical considerations and language might strike the casual observer as arcane or even mundane?

Quite demonstrably, this is not the glamorous railway world of Agatha Christie's gripping 1934 story, *Murder on the Orient Express*, the daring exploits of Jenny Agutter in Lionel Jefferies' 1970 film of *The Railway Children*, the ground-breaking GPO Film Unit's production of *Night Mail*, written by W.H. Auden or less still, 'the Great Train Robbery' at Brodego Railway Bridge in 1963! Here in fact, we show you how a relatively simple and conventional civil engineering project is set to underpin the building of thousands of new homes and house sales in the Upper Lea Valley.

The Ponders End Scheme Explained in Detail

Enfield Council, in consultation with Network Rail have concluded that by installing a dynamic passing loop on a section of the West Anglia Mainline at Ponders End, it will be possible in future to permit up to four or even six trains an hour to and from the new station at Meridian Water to Stratford via Tottenham Hale (where passengers can transfer for services to London Liverpool Street or interchange with the sub-surface London Underground station for destinations via the Victoria Line.) Traditionally, passing loops have been used as a means by which slower freight or passenger trains can in effect, 'pull over' temporarily into a designated 'siding' and pause to allow faster (express) or prioritised services to proceed at the line speed without having to slow down and lose time. This is achieved by laying a relatively short stretch of rail, but long enough to accommodate the longest of freight trains, next to an existing set of through tracks, with signals and points controlling egress and access to the mainline.

Whereas, *dynamic* passing loops follow the same principle, but typically involves laying a far longer length of track alongside a mainline railway, which allows speed-restricted heavy freight or slower passenger trains diverted by the signaller into the loop, to continue moving throughout the manoeuvre at a reduced speed in the same direction towards the 'exit', until the right of way is granted and indicated by the appropriate colour aspect signal. This solution has the advantage of saving some precious time for diverted train services, as well as the express services that have overall priority.

Project Status

To date, the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) written by Michael King, the Rail Lead for the Meridian Water development, has been approved and is reported to be at Stage 3 of the *Governance for Railway Projects* (G.R.I.P.) investment management and control process. The project will be funded by the GLA via the H.I.F (Housing Investment Fund) at an estimated minimum cost of circa. £ 25 Million. Enfield Council will be the delivery agent and when installed and operational, the uplift in train services will be provided by the current operator, *Greater Anglia* using (when delivered by Bombardier) new Class 720 'Aventra' trains, currently under construction in Derby.

Find out more

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