

South Western Railway Timetable Consultation for December 2018

WinACC response

Main Points

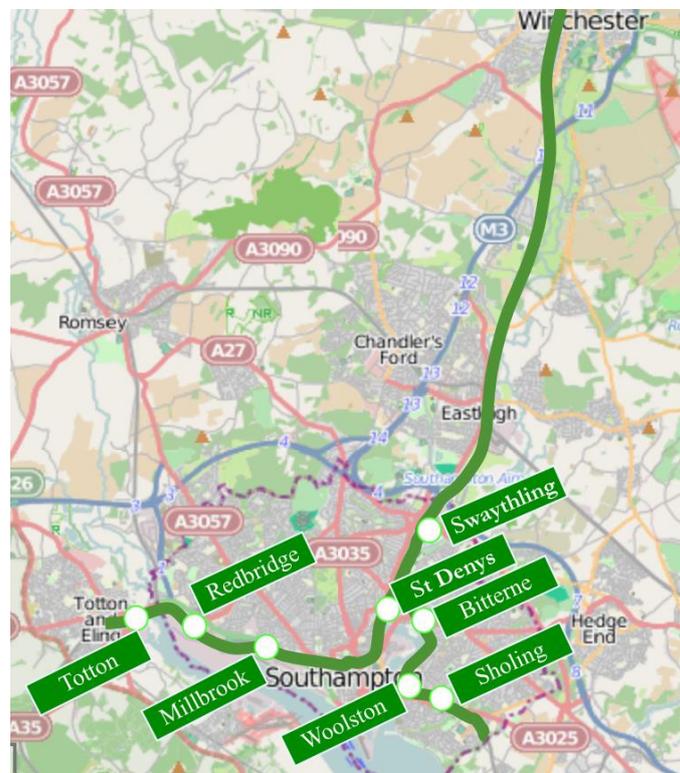
- The 8.8% decline in journeys in 2016/17 makes it urgent that new train journey opportunities be developed
- We hope that timetable revisions will encourage more people to use trains to access Winchester
- We welcome the better service between Winchester and St Denys, but are disappointed at the poor connectivity with the Southampton – Fareham services
- It is disappointing that direct trains between Winchester and Swaythling are sporadic, especially that one current peak all-stations train at 1744 has been withdrawn
- Connections with the Romsey – Romsey loop are not good, and we would like to see a reconfiguration of services across Southampton to improve journey opportunities and connectivity
- Connections towards Portsmouth for services from Shawford are not good
- The removal of further peak stops at Clapham Junction will make it even more difficult to commute by train from Winchester to work in south and west London, Surrey and Sussex
- We welcome the improvement in the late services from Bournemouth and Southampton to Winchester
- The electronic information at Winchester needs to be improved to give accurate and adequate information on the greater number of connections
- More local pocket timetables could encourage greater use of local services to Winchester.

A pressing need to open up new markets as a response to the 8.8% reduction in journeys

In 2016/17 the number of journeys on the franchise area reduced by 8.8% (ORR data October 2017). An appropriate response to this would be to develop new markets. The proposed timetable does this to a small extent (cross-Solent through services, additional stops at St Denys, late services east from Bournemouth) but we are concerned that too many of the changes concentrate on reinforcing services for the declining current flows, in particular by reducing still further the no-stop period at Clapham Junction, and failure to improve connectivity in many places. We suggest below a range of ways the timetable is disappointing for those of us who want to increase the range of train journey opportunities for Winchester.

Emissions reduction and the need for modal shift by people coming to spend a day in Winchester

WinACC is concerned to reduce the carbon footprint of people who commute into Winchester every day for work or education, or who visit Winchester for shopping, or for social, recreational, or other purposes. A majority of people who do this come from the urban conurbations in the Solent area to the south. Currently, large numbers of people come by rail, but a greater number of people come by car, usually along the M27 and M3. The M3 near Winchester is heavily congested and produces as high a level of emissions as any stretch of motorway in the south east. Worse, Winchester city centre is congested all day long, and suffers from high levels of traffic pollution.



Historically, the South Western Main Line railway timetable for trains serving Winchester has been designed primarily around the needs of people commuting into or visiting London. Given the volume of this traffic, this is understandable. However, the opportunities that exist for

providing easy rail journey options for people living in the Solent area who want to visit Winchester have never really been maximised. Since it is at the less busy southern end of the semi-fast service, promotion of this traffic would complement the high levels of business closer to London.

The volume of traffic using the M3 to visit Winchester from places near railway stations in the Solent area suggests there is a major potential for greater rail connectivity south of Winchester, which, if met, would increase ridership considerably, and reduce emissions and congestion on the M27/M3 and in Winchester City Centre.

We have considered the changes proposed in the consultation to see how far they will encourage this modal shift. There are some improvements, but more lost opportunities.

St Denys – Winchester - St Denys

The insertion of a generally hourly direct train service from St Denys (usually departing XX27 until 0023) to Winchester (usually arriving XX53) is very good news for people wanting to travel from that area to Winchester. However, the omission of a 1427 service from St Denys is surely a mistake and we hope it will be corrected by the addition of one further stop.

This good news is spoiled a little by continuing the practice of a 7-minute layover at Eastleigh for the slower trains to be overtaken by the faster trains. Perhaps the possibility of changing at Southampton Airport to arrive 9 minutes earlier will minimise this irritation, but, now the train starts at Southampton, it would seem possible for the slower train to leave Southampton after the faster train has left and avoid the layover entirely.

At first sight it would seem this will help connectivity towards Winchester from the Fareham – Southampton line and create a whole new series of train journey opportunities between south Hampshire and Winchester. Unfortunately, the connections proposed are not very good. The train leaves St Denys for Winchester two minutes before the proposed fast train from Portsmouth arrives, and half an hour after the proposed slow train. Sadly, South Western Railway connections via Southampton Central are no better. Fortunately, unless it is retimed, a CrossCountry train from Southampton Central leaves usually 17 minutes after the proposed slow train from Portsmouth arrives. This would give journey times to Winchester, for example, from Woolston of 52 minutes (currently 53 or 37 minutes, depending on which hour it is). This is a lost opportunity for creating good cross-Southampton travel.

In reverse, it is good that the consultation offers an even better roughly-hourly service to St Denys taking only 20 minutes. There is no anomalous gap in this direction with a train arriving at 1406, and no layover. Sadly, though, the all-stations connection to Portsmouth leaves 48 minutes later, so the potential for connectivity in this direction has also been lost. Via Southampton Central there would be over 21 minutes' wait giving an overall journey time from Winchester to eg, Woolston of 47 minutes. If CrossCountry timings remain unaltered the journey would take 24 minutes only, but the 7-minute change at Southampton would not always be reliable. Sadly, in this direction, it is unlikely the draft timetable will persuade people out of their cars for journeys like this.

Swaythling – Winchester – Swaythling

In peak hours some trains are proposed that link Swaythling directly with Winchester, with a direct peak-hours service roughly like the current service. However, it is disappointing that off-peak services do not provide the direct link. Now that most trains will stop at St Denys, we suggest that little would be lost with the insertion of an additional stop at Swaythling. If the 0820 from Southampton Central can stop at Swaythling at 0828 and arrive at Winchester at 0853, we are unclear why the XX22 off-peak trains could not leave Southampton Central two minutes earlier and always stop at Swaythling. This would have the additional commercial advantage of creating standard departure times. Since the trains start at Southampton and are overtaken at Eastleigh, the faster train will provide a better service for most journeys on this stage of the line; there would be few passengers on the train to experience the two minutes' increased journey time, and few of them may notice it. When there is no stop at Swaythling, it is true that passengers can leave Swaythling at XX43 and get to Winchester at X113, but the 21-minute change at Southampton Parkway is likely to deter passengers.

In the other direction, the service is similarly mostly peak hour only. There appears to be no replacement for the current 1724 all stations Basingstoke to Southampton Central service. Direct trains are proposed from Winchester at 1623, 1856, 1956, but it is not clear why the 1753 departure at the height of the peak in Winchester is not booked to stop at Swaythling. Indeed, it is unclear why all the Waterloo – Southampton semi-fast trains, peak or off-peak are not booked to stop at Swaythling. They are usually almost at the end of their journey, and there would be little knock-on effect.

Redbridge/Millbrook – Winchester – Millbrook/Redbridge

The connections into services to Winchester from the anti-clockwise Romsey – Southampton – Romsey loop generally require a 23-minute wait at Southampton Central, or a 20-minute wait at Southampton Airport for the same train. This means the journey time from these two stations to Winchester is an unattractive 47/44 minutes. (In some off-peak hours a CrossCountry train may reduce the overall journey time by about 8 minutes.) Although a slight improvement on the current timetable, this change is unlikely to attract much new business. However, the proposed return connection at Southampton Airport is a much more attractive 8 minutes (currently 11 minutes) and may be some compensation, giving overall journey times of 31/35 minutes.

Romsey / Chandler's Ford – Winchester – Chandler's Ford / Romsey

The connections into services to Winchester from the clockwise Romsey – Southampton – Romsey loop generally require 13 minutes' wait at Eastleigh, with 38/31 minute overall journey times. This is longer than respective bus times of 37/29 minutes that also benefit from greater frequency, but often suffer from congestion.

In the reverse direction, a cross-country train could provide a 16 minute connection at Southampton Airport if it is not delayed giving overall journey times of 29/37 minutes, the same as for the buses. Otherwise the connection off the proposed XX18 South Western Railway

service at Eastleigh is no less than 22 minutes, offering a disappointing overall journey time of 35/43 minutes.

The Romsey – Southampton – Romsey loop is not an arrangement that maximises route choice and connectivity. Only enthusiasts will wish to travel from Romsey to Romsey. We hope that future timetables will propose a more useful configuration of routes for stopping trains across Southampton, such as Basingstoke – Winchester – Eastleigh – Southampton – Romsey, and Romsey – Eastleigh – Southampton – Lymington, with careful thought being put into maximising connectivity.

Totton – Winchester – Totton

The switching of the through semi-fast service from the south west onto the Portsmouth line has cut the direct services between Totton and Winchester. However, the layover at Eastleigh always made the through trains slower than a change at Southampton. We are pleased that the convenient change has been maintained and that journey times are still the same and journey time is quite good.

Generally, the return journey is also good, but only if the train from London is running on time. The 27-minute off-peak journey time is good, but the 6-minute connection at Southampton may deter some people. Fortunately, they will have the option of taking the CrossCountry service from Winchester 24 minutes earlier. The late return service is extraordinarily good, with four services after midnight, three of them without requiring a change.

Winchester – Clapham Junction – Winchester.

Direct services between Winchester and Clapham Junction in peak hours are non-existent. The draft timetable appears to assume that all people who work in London work in central London. We understand that it is difficult to reconcile stops at Clapham Junction with maximising main-line track capacity, but this draft demonstrates an extreme track-capacity-led solution. The needs of Winchester people who work standard office hours in south and West London, and in Surrey and Sussex (including Gatwick), have been overlooked and their business lost at the cost of probable greater congestion and emissions on the M3 and M25. We hope it will be possible to find a better resolution of this conflict than the one proposed. We do not consider it to be a good response to heavy demand for services to withdraw others completely.

The proposed timetable is worse than the current timetable in this respect. In the current timetable, no direct up-trains from Winchester stop at Clapham Junction between 0714 and 0914 but in the proposed timetable the no-stop period is extended 44 minutes to between 0646 and 0930. However, in the evening the down no-stop period is reduced slightly from the current period between 1646 and 1912 to the period between 1721 and 1923.

The problem is exacerbated because of the extension of the up no-stop period even for slower direct trains between Woking and Clapham Junction, and the inclusion of slower trains in the down no-stop period in the evening at Clapham Junction. For example it is currently possible to leave Clapham Junction at 1724, change at Woking (arriving 1810, departing 1813), and arrive at Winchester at 1849 (1hr 25 minutes). In the proposed timetable a returning commuter would have to wait until 1808 to leave Clapham Junction, change at Surbiton (arriving 1824,

departing 1837), change at Woking (arriving 1906, departing 1912) and arrive at 1947 (1 hr 39 minutes).

It is disappointing that no way has been found to mitigate the no-stop period at Clapham Junction. We suggest that in the up direction signalling systems could be changed so that up-trains could stop at the up-loop platform at the same time as non-stop trains overtake them. In the down direction one or two peak Woking/Guildford trains could be routed along the slow lines until Wimbledon where they could regain the fast lines and resume towards Woking with minimal conflict with other trains. They could even add Vauxhall and Wimbledon stops as well as Clapham Junction.

Micheldever and Shawford

Within Winchester District alternate trains, half an hour apart serve these two stations in the off-peak. This means that journeys between them are slower than they need be, and require a 28-minute connection in both directions at Winchester with an overall journey time of around 40 minutes. Stopping both slower trains at both stations would resolve this.

Some trains will disappear from both these stations on the shoulders of the peak. This appears to have been designed only with journeys to/from Waterloo. However, the late morning peak, and the early evening peak will be more important for local journeys. We would not want journeys at these times at these stations to be deleted.

Trains stopping at Micheldever usually terminate at Portsmouth. If there are no service disruptions, good connections will be available for Southampton and return of 6 or 7 minutes (if the southbound CrossCountry train is not altered) but the electronic departure information at Micheldever will not show this unless it is modified, and only timetable enthusiasts will know. If there are problems with the electronic information, then a poster would help.

Trains stopping at Shawford will be terminating at Southampton, which means Shawford – Portsmouth journeys will take 1hr 35 minutes and generally require a 31-minute connection at Eastleigh. Fifteen minutes can be saved on journey to Portsmouth by connecting at Southampton but this would not help people wanting to connect for Hedge End and Botley. Again the electronic information will not reflect the complexity of this.

A well-timed all-stations service from Basingstoke to Romsey (or Lymington) could improve this connectivity considerably.

Winchester – Salisbury – Winchester

It is important for Winchester-based passengers to have good connectivity with routes to the west at Basingstoke. The commentary suggests that Exeter trains will run fast to Andover. The draft timetable appears to contradict this. We very much hope that the draft timetable is correct, and that Winchester will continue to have good connections to Salisbury and beyond.

Late Trains from Bournemouth and Southampton to Winchester

We very much welcome the improvements proposed for the late services from Southampton Bournemouth and Weymouth to Winchester, and the elimination of the unreliable connection at Eastleigh. People in Winchester will now be able to use the train to attend evening concerts in Bournemouth, for example.

Departure information and pocket timetables at Winchester

The electronic 'next train to' departure board at Winchester is frequently less accurate than the paper posters it replaced. It shows the next direct train departure even if there are good connections available before this. For example, it often urges passengers for Swaythling to wait four or five hours, even though there is usually an hourly connection at any time of day. Under these proposals through services will be replaced by connections to many stations west from Southampton. We would urge you to ensure that the departure boards are reviewed to ensure that connections are accurately and clearly shown.

We suggest that pocket timetables showing the local services to and from Winchester, at least where the service is good enough, for example, from Totton, St Denys, Swaythling, Chandler's Ford, Fareham, Botley, Hedge End would be very helpful. This would help promote better use of the railway for people coming to Winchester locally.

21 December 2017

WinACC (Winchester Action on Climate Change)