

THE NESTON SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT STANDARD[©]

The proposed Neston Public Transport Standard is designed to ensure the provision of sufficient and suitable public transport for the people of Neston to travel to Liverpool and Chester at all reasonable times seven days per week. That objective is appropriate for a sizeable market town with a population of around 15,000.

1. What is the Neston Public Transport Standard?

- a. It should be possible to arrive in Liverpool or Chester or Heswall by 8.30 from Neston or to reach Neston by 8.30 from Liverpool or Chester or Heswall, Monday to Friday including all Bank Holidays except Christmas Day.
- b. It should be possible to depart from Liverpool or Chester or Heswall to Neston up to 22.30 seven days per week including all Bank Holidays except Christmas Day.
- c. Public transport should be available to and from Liverpool, Chester and Heswall at least half-hourly between 07.30 and 18.30 hours Monday to Saturday and hourly on Sunday. After 18.30 hours it should be at least hourly from Monday to Sunday.
- d. Neston residents should have the same access to Merseytravel fares as those using Hooton, Ellesmere Port and Chester stations.
- e. It should be possible to travel with cycles on buses and trains and to rent and store cycles at Neston station.

2. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF NESTON PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION

ACCESSIBILITY FROM NESTON IS AMBER

AMBER

FARES FROM NESTON IS RED

RED

FREQUENCY FROM NESTON IS RED

RED

OVERALL DESIGNATION OF SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN NESTON FOR SEPTEMBER 2015 IS THEREFORE

RED

3. Accessibility to Liverpool, Chester and Heswall

The table below shows the current position in the town and designates the journeys as green, red or amber.

A designation of green is applied when the journey involves

- No changes in mode of transport
- No more than one change of the same mode of transport

- Completion of the journey within 65 minutes (Chester, Liverpool) or 30 minutes (Heswall)
- A star is added if the journey is green and allows the carriage of bicycles. In practice that is only currently possible by rail.
- A designation of amber is applied when two of those three criteria are met.

4. Accessibility of Liverpool, Chester and Heswall from Neston

<i>Journey from</i>	<i>Journey to</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Changes /Time in Mins</i>	<i>Arrives</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Rating</i>
Liverpool	Neston	Weekday morn	1/61	08.24	Amber 1	
Neston	Liverpool	Weekday morn	0/62	08.21	Green 2	
Chester	Neston	Weekday morn	0/40	08.22	Green 2	
Neston	Chester	Weekday morn	0/40	08.09	Amber 1	
Heswall	Neston	Weekday morn	1/28	08.21	Green 2	
Neston	Heswall	Weekday morn	3/39	07.49	Red	
Liverpool	Neston	Weekday aft	0/55	19.22	Green 2	
Neston	Liverpool	Weekday aft	0/52	19.25	Green 2	
Chester	Neston	Weekday aft	1/67	20.20	Red	
Neston	Chester	Weekday aft	1/63	19.39	Amber 1	
Heswall	Neston	Weekday aft	1/28	18.59	Amber 1	
Neston	Heswall	Weekday aft	0/17	19.19	Green 2	
Liverpool	Neston	Weekday eve	1/52	23.09	Green 2	
Neston	Liverpool	Weekday eve	0/61	23.33	Green 2	
Chester	Neston	Weekday eve	NO	NO	Red	
Neston	Chester	Weekday eve	2/111	00.26	Red	
Heswall	Neston	Weekday eve	1/17	23.09	Red	
Neston	Heswall	Weekday eve	1/44	23.20	Red	
Liverpool	Neston	Sunday morn	0/55	10.21	Green 2	
Neston	Liverpool	Sunday morn	1/57	10.09	Green 2	
Chester	Neston	Sunday morn	2/100	10.10	Red	
Neston	Chester	Sunday morn	1/63	11.13	Amber 1	
Heswall	Neston	Sunday morn	NO	NO	Red	
Neston	Heswall	Sunday morn	NO	NO	Red	
Liverpool	Neston	Sunday aft	0/55	15.21	Green 2	
Neston	Liverpool	Sunday aft	0/57	15.36	Green 2	
Chester	Neston	Sunday aft	1/81	16.18	Red	
Neston	Chester	Sunday aft	1/63	16.13	Amber 1	
Heswall	Neston	Sunday aft	1/29	19.20	Amber 1	
Neston	Heswall	Sunday aft	1/27	19.20	Amber 1	
Liverpool	Neston	Sunday eve	0/63	23.22	Green 2	
Neston	Liverpool	Sunday eve	0/63	23.36	Green 2	
Chester	Neston	Sunday eve	NO	NO	Red	
Neston	Chester	Sunday eve	2/128	00.45	Red	
Heswall	Neston	Sunday eve	NO	NO	Red	
Neston	Heswall	Sunday aft	1/29	23.20	Amber 1	

5. Frequency of Services

Frequency of service is also a factor in to be taken into account. The standard is met in full with half hourly services 8.30 – 6.30 (hourly on Sunday) and hourly services from then up to 10.30 on all days.

Liverpool	Neston		Green
Neston	Liverpool		Green
Chester	Neston		Red
Neston	Chester		Red
Heswall	Neston		Red
Neston	Heswall		Red
Borderlands	Line		Red

That is a score of four out of fourteen which is Red (28%), seven out of 14 (50%) would be amber. 10 out of 14 (71%) would be green. Frequency is clearly a significant issue.

6. Fares

Neston residents currently pay more for rail travel than residents of Hooton, Ellesmere Port and Chester. The fare element of the Neston Public Transport Standard is red.

Fares examples from Trainline Website

Hooton to Southport – Adult off-peak return	£6.35	
Neston to Southport – Adult off-peak return	£13.20	Neston 107% more
Hooton to Chester - Adult off-peak return	£4.10	
Neston to Chester - Adult off-peak return	£6.65	Neston 62% more
Hooton to Liverpool - Adult off-peak return	£4.20	
Neston to Liverpool - Adult off-peak return	£6.30	Neston 50% more
Neston to Manchester - Adult off-peak return	£17.70	

However, the above does not factor in additional local fare benefits.

We have some fare data. For example, on the Borderlands line, a peak return to Liverpool costs £6.60 and takes 45 minutes with one change. Hooton to Liverpool is £4.20 and takes 29 minutes, with the addition of time and bus fare (when there is a bus) or petrol and parking (add £2.50 and 20 minutes). That makes the Borderlands line competitive on time and cost if only there were more frequent and reliable trains.

Passengers travelling between Neston Station and Merseyside do not however have access to Merseytravel Tickets which are freely available at other stations in CWaC's area; specifically between Hooton and Chester/Ellesmere Port inclusive. For example a Merseytravel Off Peak, All Zone 'Saveaway' ticket, which costs £5.10, covers all trains, buses and ferries within Merseyside together with the train services between Merseyside and Chester / Ellesmere Port / Ormskirk. Using a 'Saveaway' ticket it is therefore possible to travel from Chester or Ellesmere Port out as far as Ormskirk or Southport and back after 09.30 or at weekends for only £5.10 (and have the flexibility to use other routes and modes of transport in Merseyside as well) whereas a rail only

return ticket between Neston and Ormskirk or Southport costs £13.20; more than double the cost! Even an off peak rail only return between Neston and Liverpool alone costs £6.30; 23% more than using a Saveaway ticket for an off peak journey from Chester. The current arrangements disadvantage those who use Neston Station and actively encourage Neston residents to access the Merseytravel network elsewhere.

The potential for the connection at Shotton is demonstrated by one journey from Chester to Neston that takes only 31 minutes; 22.01 from Chester, change at Shotton, 22.35 at Neston on weekdays. The 16.02 from Chester on Sundays allows arrival in Neston at 16.27 – just 25 minutes later. The return fare is £6.65 off peak or £6.95 anytime. However, at current frequency of service a connection failure results in a long wait at Shotton (two hours on Sunday)

The measure for fares is that Neston fares are the same as from Hooton (Green) or they are not (Red). The assessment is clear that Neston fares are Red. No data are available for bus fares but in general terms the area does not have the benefits of Merseytravel fares and bus fares are therefore assumed Red.

7. ASSESSMENT

The data collected for this study show that:

- Allowing a score of 2 for green, 1 for amber and 0 for red there is an overall current score of 37 out of a possible 72 – 51%.
- Our target should be to raise all reds at least to amber, i.e. a score of 50 out of 72 – 70%.
- The current provision of public transport in Neston is therefore about 20% short of what we might reasonably expect.
- Travel between Neston and Liverpool is possible at all reasonable times.
- The 487 is an exemplary public transport service with high quality vehicles.
- The Borderlands railway line makes a limited contribution compared to the 487
- Travel between Neston and Chester is of very variable quality.
 - Weekday service is adequate in the morning and barely adequate in the afternoon.
 - It is very poor in the evening.
 - It is adequate during the day.
 - It is inadequate on Sunday at best and non-existent at worst.
- Travel between Neston and Heswall (and therefore onwards to other parts of North West Wirral) is of variable quality.
 - Weekday service is inadequate in the morning but better in the afternoon.
 - It is inadequate in the evening and on Sunday morning and evening
 - It is adequate during the day on weekdays.

Neston's public transport service is just Amber for connectivity BUT clearly red for frequency and fares levels - giving an overall judgement of RED.

8. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The axis on which public transport is most effective is that from Wrexham to Liverpool which corresponds to Neston Town Council's view that this is the axis of economic activity with Deeside at one end and Liverpool at the other. That reinforces the case for priority to be given to transport on this axis.

In particular it underlines the case for rail improvements on the Borderlands line with through trains to Liverpool as a priority.

The weaker link from Neston is towards Chester and this is the route that has generated the most adverse public comment. The importance of this link is something that needs further examination to establish the extent of the existing and the potential demand.

The route to and from Ellesmere Port is not included in this study but deserves consideration to establish the extent of existing and potential demand.

The position of Hooton Station is relevant to all these routes as it provides a high quality and frequent service to Liverpool, Chester and Ellesmere Port. Improved links to Hooton therefore offer a potential solution to the weaknesses in the Chester links as well as improved connections to Ellesmere Port.

Hooton station is also a potential threat to the viability of direct services from Neston to Liverpool. A balanced approach is therefore needed in improving links to Hooton to ensure that Neston maintains a case to improve its own direct links.

Currently there is no transport capable of taking cycles, other than folding cycles, at key commuting times.

8. KEY FINDINGS

A half-hourly service between Wrexham and Bidston on Borderlands, with an hourly service on Sundays and Bank Holidays would largely ensure the achievement of the Neston Public Transport Standard by making journeys to Chester easier and improving access to Deeside, especially if more trains stopped at Hawarden Bridge.

Bus travel has the advantage of offering free travel to some people who qualify for that concession and should remain an important part of provision

Better access to Hooton is a short-term solution and should be regular and affordable.

Merseytravel tickets need to be available between Neston Station and Merseyside so that those travelling between Neston and Merseyside pay the same price as similar journeys between Chester/Ellesmere Port and Merseyside.

9. CONCLUSION

This paper has established a possible standard for public transport in Neston, the achievement of which provides the Neston Town Council with an immediate strategy to set alongside its longer term aim of an electrified rail link direct to Liverpool. The

proposals are realistic and may be secured with a reasonable additional investment by Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC). The benefits in terms of improved employment and other economic prospects for the town are significant. The approach is consistent with the priorities established by the CWaC administration in the recent election campaign.

The Borderlands line could make a significant contribution, with little cost, if more trains on the Chester to Holyhead line stopped at Shotton; or if the Borderlands timetable were revised to ensure connection achieved a journey time of 40 minutes or less between Chester and Neston with a suitable margin to change trains at Shotton.

In order to ensure that these findings reflect the views of the people of Neston a period to allow consultation, comment and discussion should be considered.

APPENDIX 1: DATA USED FROM THE TRAVELINE/TRAINLINE WEBSITES

1. Weekdays

Liverpool to Neston morning. 07.23 train to Port Sunlight; 8 minute walk; 487 to Neston; arrive 08.24

Neston to Liverpool morning; 07.29 Neston 487 direct to Liverpool; arrive 08.21

Chester to Neston morning; 07.20 to Shotton by bus; 07.59 train to Neston; arrive 08.09.

Neston to Chester morning 07.42 arrive Chester 08.22 by bus

Heswall to Neston morning 07.53 bus 85; Thornton Hough bus 487 arrive 8.21

Neston to Heswall morning 07.10 train; walk 5 min; bus 472 arrive 07.49

Liverpool to Neston afternoon; 18.27 487 bus arrives at 19.22

Neston to Liverpool afternoon 18.33, 487 bus 19.25

Chester to Neston aft.; 19.13 train to P Sunlight, 8 minute walk; 19.59 487 to Neston; arr. 20.20.

Neston to Chester afternoon; 18.36, 487 bus to Port Sunlight; 8 minute walk to station, 19.16 train to Chester arrive 19.39

Heswall to Neston afternoon; 18.33 472 bus to Barnston; walk 5 min; train arrive 18.44

Neston to Heswall; 19.07 bus arrive 19.19

2. Evenings

Liverpool to Neston 22.28 train to Bidston, 22.56 to Neston arrive, 23.09.

Neston to Liverpool evening 22.32 487 bus; arrives Liverpool 23.33.

Chester to Neston evening. NO

Neston to Chester evening. NO

Heswall to Neston; 22.52 86 bus to Heswall station; train arrives 23.09

Neston to Heswall; 22.36, 487 bus to Clatterbridge; 86 bus arrive 23.20

3. Sundays

Neston to Chester morning 10.10 to Hawarden, 10.44 4S bus to Chester, arrive 11.13.

Chester to Neston morning – 08.30 train to Hamilton Square arrive 09.06; 09.26 to Bidston arrive 09.50; 09.57 to Neston arrive 10.10.

Chester to Neston afternoon 14.08 S5 bus to Liverpool arrive 15.14; 487 to Neston 15.29 16.18

Neston to Chester afternoon 15.10 train to Hawarden arrive 15.29; 15.44 S4 bus to Chester arrive 16.13.

Neston to Chester evenings; 22.37 487 to Liverpool arr 23.24; Coach departs 00.15 arr Chester 00.45.

Chester to Neston evening; No

Neston to Liverpool morning train 09.12 to Bidston arrive 9.35; depart 09.46 arrive 10.09.

Liverpool to Neston morning 09.26, 487 bus arrive 10.21

Liverpool to Neston afternoon, 14.26 487 bus arrive 15.21

Neston to Liverpool afternoon 14.33 487 bus arrive 15.36

Liverpool to Neston evening 487 Depart 22.27 arrive 23.22

Neston to Liverpool evening 487 Depart 22.33 arrive 23.36

Heswall to Neston morning: No

Neston to Heswall morning: No

Heswall to Neston afternoon: 18.52, 87 bus to Thornton Hough, 487 bus arrive 19.18

Neston to Heswall afternoon : 18.37 487 bus to Clatterbridge, 87 bus arrive 19.20

Heswall to Neston evening : no

Neston to Heswall evening: 22.37, bus 487 to Clatterbridge, 87 bus arrive 23.20

Comments on this paper should be emailed to transport@neston.org.uk