Dear London Travelwatch,

**Objection to the proposed closure of the Luton Station ticket office**

I strongly oppose the proposed closure of the Luton Station ticket office, managed by Govia Thameslink. The closure of the Luton Station ticket office would impact the ability to buy tickets, plan future journeys, receive advice and assistance, and navigate the station, as well as potentially jeopardising future redevelopment of the station.

**Availability of staff and assistance**

Luton Station ticket office is situated on the upper-level bridge cut-through between Luton town centre and the High Town area. Having staff in this central identified ticket office provides passengers with confidence to know where to go to access assistance, information and advice. If staffing levels were reduced or existing ticket staff redeployed to ‘multifunctional roles’, this crucial point of contact would be lost.

Multifunctional staff may be beyond the ticket barrier; therefore, passengers would need to buy a ticket to access the service they require. This undermines the quality of service that railways provide passengers.

**Accessibility**

Closing the Luton Station ticket office will force passengers to purchase tickets through online booking or at Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs). Many passengers will find this detrimental to their needs, as they choose to interact with a staff member who can advise them on the best and cheapest route to their destination.

42% of people over the age of 75 report not using the internet at all. Disabled people are disproportionately represented in the number of people with no access to the internet; 23% of disabled adults had no access to the internet in 2019 compared to just 6% of non-disabled adults. This makes online ticketing inaccessible for many passengers.

TVMs are also not an adequate solution. Some TVMs do not accept cash which, again, will disproportionately impact elderly and disabled people. Furthermore, some concessions and ticket types are also not available from some TVMs, such as the 50% wheelchair user discount which can only be purchased at ticket offices. A TVM service only will pose functionality barriers to disabled passengers, including those with visual impairments.

**Safety and security**

Visible staff at the Luton Station ticket office are critical to passengers’ safety and security, as they can a static point of contact which could offer immediate help during an emergency, be it to deal with law-breaking or health-related issues, from a position of security. Closing the ticket office would make it less easy for passengers to find an identified member of staff when needed, particularly during off-peak hours.

**Future of Luton Train Station**

Luton Station has long required investment to deliver a comprehensive redevelopment to ensure it is fit for the 21st Century. The closure of the ticket office would be considered as the government ignoring the needs of the station, allowing it to further decline and undermining the service Luton passengers receive.

The Luton Station ticket office staff provide an excellent service, going above and beyond to ensure passengers receive support to travel with confidence. I am concerned that their expert service, found at a reliable point of contact, will be lost under this proposed ticket closure.

Kind regards,