

CHILTERN RAILWAYS EVERGREEN 3 PROJECT CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB (CTC) REPRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION

Although the initial consultation was addressed to the CTC National Office this representation has been produced by CTC local Right to Ride representatives and the CTC Public Transport consultant listed at the end

However, we are aware that other cycling organisations will be making representations and, therefore, our comments should be read in conjunction with these.

The CTC is generally supports the proposals. They would expand the bicycle/train mixed mode transport possibilities. They would form a vital part of the east-west Bedford/Milton Keynes/Bicester/Oxford railway reinstatement. They would reduce motor vehicle usage and the associated problems. They would provide new bridges on existing cycle routes to replace the existing level crossings and divert routes as necessary. They would provide cycle parking at existing and new stations.

We are, however, concerned that the Rights of Way report failed to recognise that cyclists have had a legal right to cycle on public bridleways since 1968. Hence, the importance of the bridleway level crossings.

The CTC detailed comments are set out below.

LEVEL CROSSINGS

Can wheeling ramps be provided on footbridges with steps?

Works No 8

This will have a substantial height having to cross a new embankment. It would be accessible and have a smaller footprint if a subway was provided before the embankment was built. It would also permit the route to be maintained during building works.

Tubbs Crossing (Works No 9)

The crossing is on the route of the National Cycle Network Route 51 between Milton Keynes and Oxford and is therefore especially important to cyclists. Sustrans, the promoter of the NCN, will comment additionally direct.

The CTC notes the proposal for a bridge and the substantial area needed for ramps to take the lane up to cross the railway at the required height. This will create a substantial visual intrusion, presenting a significant deterioration in privacy to neighbouring property, and add a considerable increase in the distance travelled to go up and down. Given a) the ground levels on both sides of the line, b) the rising formation of the new chord to the London-Birmingham lines close by, and c) the near to square crossing alignment, can the alternative provision of a wide through sighting subway be offered, with ramps about half the length as those proposed and substantially less land take up as the bridge approach ramps?

We note the concerns over drainage but we are aware of rail underpass layouts where the span is shared evenly between a cycle route and watercourse with the latter above the level of the path surface and a natural drainage arrangement to take any water overtopping the water channel to a discharge point downhill. In the Tubbs Lane case it would appear feasible to lead water alongside the branch of the path heading south (not the right of way heading east) and running parallel to the watercourse, until a gravity/natural drainage system can discharge into the stream or local drainage network.

Noting the historic severance many years earlier of Gavray Drive and the complete removal of the connection to Launton Road this may present an alternative or additional crossing point to consider, especially if the development indicated takes place north of Gavray Drive and the provision to reserve a reinstatement of a crossing (grade separated) at this point be made.

We note that Cyclists Dismount signs are proposed. These are not desirable. We recommend the advice contained in LTN 2/08 (p20-1) along with notes in TSRGD chapter 3 (p155) relating to the use of diagram 966 signs be followed.

London Road Crossing

This is a skew crossing presenting an increased risk of cyclists falling of when a tyre strikes a vertical edge running close to the direction of travel and is deflected sideways. We note the concerns relating to the crossing width and conditions presented to pedestrians, especially pram and wheelchair traffic by skew rail crossings with no space to square up to cross the flangways/vertical ridges. There are possible measures, which can be applied when the crossing is rebuilt for a double track railway, to remove the hazard and modify the way motor vehicles use the crossing. With the nearby A41 bridge providing the crossing point for non local traffic travelling at speed this could present the opportunity to design the crossing and road alignment to remove the option of running through the lights and control traffic speeds entering the main developed area of Bicester. There are clearly major areas provided for car parking north and south of the railway in this area and Oxfordshire County Council should work with Chiltern Railways to develop direct links to the A41 and thus reduce traffic levels through Bicester creating better conditions for cyclists and other non motorised traffic.

We note that an extension of Station Approach through the former goods yard and an extension to the car park could be connected to the A41 north of the railway, possibly providing a car parking capacity option for passengers travelling in from Chesterton and Ambrosden/Arncott. This would remove this traffic and its potential growth from Bicester town centre and by linking it with the Bicester Village Outlet potentially improving use of the extensive car parking capacity where the balance of demand for commuter parking may complement the times of peak demand for shoppers. Access to parking in this area can avoid motor traffic using the crossing.

Langford Lane Crossing

We support the proposed bridge and diverted highway that will maintain the through cycling route.

Mansmoor Lane/Holts Farm/BBONT Crossing

We support the proposed bridge. We are confused by the proposed new right of way linking in south of the crossing. We can find no trace on the Rights of Way plans of the right of way to be permanently stopped up. Please clarify.

We would encourage Chiltern Railways working with Oxfordshire County to improve the grassed bridleway on both sides of the railway. These are prone to severe flooding. On our recent survey we were unable to proceed along the route on the north side even having the appropriate outdoor equipment.

Oddington Road Crossing

We support the proposed bridge.

Islip (Mill Lane) Crossing

We support the proposed bridge.

Water Eaton Bridleway 5 Crossing

We support the proposed bridge and diverted bridleway. However, as most of the bridleway between Gosford and Oxford Road has a concrete surface it is well used by cyclists. We would therefore expect the diverted length to have a similar quality surface.

Water Eaton Bridleway 4 Crossing

We would prefer to see a bridge at the location of the crossing and the bridleway retain its existing alignment. The proposed diversion along the A34 would be unsatisfactory, as those who have cycled on the existing cycle routes running alongside know only too well. Noise and air pollution, debris, parked motor vehicles including food vendors, inadequate width and poor surface and vegetation maintenance discourage cycling.

CYCLE PARKING

Generally

Cycle parking should be under cover, secure (ie not hidden from view) and convenient to use. The proposed numbers of spaces should be regarded as minimum provision and should be provided in full when the project opens. At the same time adjacent space should be protected from development to provide for extra cycle parking. Sheffield stands are recommended for simplicity and ease of use. However, for higher parking densities and higher levels of security other types may be necessary. Front wheel holding stands should never be used. They bend wheels and lack means to fully secure the whole bicycle.

The parent company of Chiltern Railways (DB) has, through its subsidiary operation DB Rent, provided a high standard of managed cycle parking and cycle hire where appropriate. Call-a-Bike is a DB owned operation. We consider that a similar commitment to delivery of the whole journey be an essential part of the proposals. These should show measures to minimise any increase in motor vehicle traffic generated by the new railway and the same time to maximise non motorised traffic.

For example, the demand for cycling from residential areas and other generators, such as business parks, where the distances are cycleable, should be met by measures to provide crossings of major road, railway and river barriers separating stations from journey origins. This helps to reduce motor traffic surges, peak time congestion and car parking demand from short trip traffic, releasing road and parking space for those travelling in from greater distances.

Consideration should be given to identify Section 106 commitments from developers of relevant sites to promote rail use and at the same time railway development should make provision for future development.

Bicester

We note the high cost of providing two-level car parking at Bicester North and the constraint/congestion impact issues from the limits of the unchanged access and connections with local roads. We would like to have seen a review of the potential numbers within the cycling catchment area who would use the cycle parking and access to/from the station. For example, a review in Dorking found that 65% of rail season ticket holders own a bicycle compared to 49% nationally. We note also that the Better Stations report identified a pay back period of 10 to 15 years for car parking with the implied costs for sustainability and related impacts.

In the absence of any such review the proposed 60 spaces are acceptable provided, as stated above, that the situation is regularly managed and monitored to promote the cycle-rail connection for Bicester residents

Islip

We could find no mention of proposals for cycle parking. Are we to assume that the existing is held to be adequate? Given the increased importance of Islip station as the railhead, not only for the village but also for the surrounding area and future developments within cycling distance, can you give the likely footfall and demand for future cycle parking? The re-instatement of the second platform will change the way cyclists come and go and park. Please clarify.

Water Eaton

We feel that the proposed 100 spaces may be inadequate given that we understand that residential and business developments are planned in the area. How has this figure been arrived at? ECF Report Review 133 highlighted the significant range of 1.5 to 4 kilometres for over 60% of rail users using Dutch stations. Much of Kidlington, therefore, lies within this range.

Oxford

We are concerned there are no proposals to deal with the existing unsatisfactory situation at Oxford. This is clearly an eyesore, needing better management. We would encourage a joint approach by all parties, but with Chiltern Railways taking the lead, to develop a long-term solution. This could include a new cycle parking/storage/retail facility, such as built by NS in the Netherlands and by DB (Chiltern Railways' parent company) in Germany to provide for existing and future cycle parking users. Have Chiltern Railways made a serious study of doing this?

Oxford has been identified by the DfT Better Stations report as a Category B national interchange station with a minimum requirement of a cycle hub with secure cycle storage covering 5% of daily footfall using the station. We need evidence that this has been noted and will be met. We note that the National Rail Stations Made Easy information has no details of the number of cycle parking spaces available. Our figure from 2003 is 504 spaces from 252 stands in an open uncovered area. Current footfall indicates that an increase of about 50% is needed.

CYCLE ACCESS

We would encourage Chiltern Railways working with Oxfordshire County Council and other bodies to ensure that cycle access to the stations is given priority. We are particularly concerned about access to Oxford station and to the proposed Water Eaton station. In the former case cycle access needs to be improved to/from Botley Road, Frideswide Square, Hythe Bridge Street and Jericho. The existing cycle routes between the Park and Ride and Oxford are unsatisfactory. The bus lane is narrow while the shared use pedestrian/cycle track is also narrow and poorly surfaced. Cycle links to the proposed North Oxford Gateway and the existing Peartree Park and Ride are important, as are cycle crossings of the main roads in the area. At the same time links are needed to popular destinations. We support the cycle link to Bicester Village Outlet.

TRAINS

The provision for the carriage of cycles on trains is as important to cyclists as cycle parking. We urge that the design of the trains to use the line should take into account the needs of cyclists with, say, a minimum of six spaces per three or four coach train. There should be a simple procedure for travelling with a bicycle.

CONCLUSION

While, the CTC is generally very supportive of the proposals, there are several issues that we have highlighted that we should like to see resolved. We also look forward to a comprehensive approach to land use/transport planning in the railway catchment area that would seek to reduce trip lengths and maximise cycling and walking and minimise motor vehicle traffic. We would expect Oxfordshire County to play a key role in this. May we suggest a meeting between Chiltern Railways, its consultants, local authorities and cycling organisations to agree acceptable solutions? None of us, I am sure, wish to see these issues left to a public inquiry.

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17 February 2010

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