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**Transport and Works Act 1992 Inquiry on 2 November 2010**

**Statement of case by Michael Gotch, Oxford City Councillor, Wolvercote**

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Michael Gotch, Oxford City Councillor for Wolvercote, will say:

1. Many Wolvercote residents welcome, in principle, Chiltern Railways' proposed improved rail service to Bicester, and the new service to Marylebone, and the new station at Water Eaton.
2. However, major reservations have been expressed with regards to noise, vibration, possible structural damage, and nuisance, caused by more frequent, heavier, and faster passenger and freight trains, running 24/7.
3. The dualling of the existing single track, necessary to provide improved services in general, carries the disadvantage of moving the rails nearer to adjacent buildings, playgrounds, and gardens – exacerbating the problems mentioned in paragraph 2. There are also reservations managing the increased traffic flow that will be generated by the new station, all day, but particularly in rush hours.
4. Chiltern Railways have publicised their proposals widely at public meetings, exhibitions, and with leaflets distributed in the area. The concerns of residents, authorities, and users of roads etc, expressed by letter, email, at public meetings, and at 2 meetings held with local councillors, have been addressed in part by Chiltern, and some compromises and adjustments have been offered – but substantial and important issues remain unresolved, leaving residents, and the primary school community, anxious and concerned, and seeking the assistance of the Inspector in resolving issues.
5. Unresolved issues include passenger train maximum speeds past Lakeside, Woodstock Road North, Fairlawn End, First Turn, St Peter's Road, Ulfgar Road, and Blenheim Drive (and Stone Meadow Road further south). Chiltern have claimed that in order to maintain a ½ hourly passenger train service between Oxford and Bicester, it is necessary to increase the present maximum speed from 40mph to 75mph – to allow adequate turnaround time at Oxford Station. However, in a letter of 28 June 2010, Chiltern stated that only *some* westbound trains (i.e. from Bicester to Oxford) would stop at Water Eaton Station, yet would still maintain a ½ hourly service. If so, then there is some slack in the timing, and non-stopping trains could reduce their speeds through Wolvercote to, perhaps, 50mph. Such a reduction would benefit and reassure many residents living near the line, in Wolvercote.
6. Similarly unresolved or undeclared publicly, are the sound and vibration mitigation measures proposed by Chiltern – most acutely at Lakeside where, at some addresses, track levels are above ground floor levels of the houses, with very short back gardens. Some form of semi or totally enclosed tunnel could be considered perhaps. Other houses and the school, close to the tracks, are at First Turn, St Peter's Road, Ulfgar Road, part of Blenheim Road, and Woodstock Road North. It is accepted that modern track design, and train suspension and brake systems, are much improved, and that Chiltern Railways intends to minimise noise and vibration by mitigating measures – but details are required to inform and reassure residents – and the school, where there is some concern on the visual effect of a sound barrier.

The following are issues that Wolvercote residents request the Inspector to address by way of conditions attached to a possible consent:

1. Freight trains using the route (operated by any Company) to be restricted to 40mph or less between Water Eaton and south of Blenheim Drive.
2. Passenger trains to be restricted to 50mph or less between Water Eaton and south of Blenheim Drive.
3. Train service frequencies not to exceed:
  - Chiltern's Oxford to Marylebone service.....2 per hour each way  
from 6am to 11pm
  - East-West proposed new passenger service.....2 per hour each way  
from 6am to 11pm
  - Cross-country proposed new passenger service.....1 per hour each way  
from 6am to 11pm
  - Freight trains.....1 per hour each way
4. Designs of new ballast and track beds, rails, and suspension systems between Lakeside and Blenheim Drive (and further south at Stone Meadow) to be of the highest possible standards – to minimise vibration, noise, and nuisance to trackside residents throughout, and to Wolvercote Primary School, and St Phillip and St James' School.
5. Designs of the suspension systems, and engines and brakes of trains, carriages, and freight wagons to be of the highest possible standards – to minimise vibration and noise, as in paragraph 4 above.
6. Buildings, gardens, and school playgrounds that are particularly close to the track, or at a lower level than the track (for example at Lakeside) and in Woodstock Road North, First Turn, St Peter's Road, Ulfgar Road, Fairlawn End, and Blenheim Drive, to be protected from excessive vibration, and noise and nuisance, by specially designed localised track details, and by barriers, walls, and other noise amelioration measures – possibly with a semi or totally enclosed tunnel in part of Lakeside. The same particularly exposed properties to be fitted with double or triple glazing to windows and doors, as appropriate, and with wall insulation where necessary and required by legislation. All sound reduction measures proposed to be installed following consultation with building users, and approval.
7. A structural survey is to be carried out by Chiltern of buildings considered to be fragile or at risk of damage by vibration – to ensure that if damage occurs following the construction of the dualled track, then it can be identified rapidly, and remedial measures instigated.
8. All construction works to track, embankments, bridges or tunnels, buildings, and roads, to be completed efficiently, with minimal disruption to users and residents, following comprehensive notification, and updating, of all affected by the works.
9. The proposed new rail station at Water Eaton should proceed only when the highway authority – Oxfordshire County Council – has approved Chiltern's proposed

alterations to improve access and egress, and traffic flow across the junction, and traffic flows in general in the area.

10. Any major variations to possible approvals of Chiltern's proposals, to be subject to widespread consultation with the authorities and the community and a further Inquiry if objections are received.

**M.L. Gotch**  
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**Oxford City Councillor - Wolvercote**