

STATEMENT OF CASE

IN RESPECT OF

THE CHILTERN RAILWAYS
(BICESTER TO OXFORD IMPROVEMENTS)
TRANSPORT & WORKS ACT INQUIRY

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STATEMENT OF CASE

With reference to our letter of 14th February 2010 and the invitation from the Department of Transport dated 17th June 2010 in respect of the above we set out details of our case below.

DOCUMENTS

- D1. Letter of objection dated 14th February 2010 and invitation to make representations.
- D2. Map showing location of our property in relation to the proposed scheme
- D3. Approximate distances between key points along the Oxford to Water Eaton Parkway (Proposed new station)
- D4. Map to show roads affected by the proposed new station at Water Eaton.
- D5. Relationship between proposed water Eaton Station and site for proposed Northern Gateway development site.

1. INTRODUCTION

We live at 41 Blenheim Drive, Oxford, marked on the maps at 2, 3, 4 and 5 above. A location on the northern fringe of Oxford chosen for its south west facing view across Green Belt land including Port Meadow and Wytham Hill. We believe that the Government and the relevant railway authorities and operators now an opportunity to improve the transport infrastructure without

simultaneously adding to pollution through noise, vibration and reduced air quality. Our objection to the proposals by Chiltern Railways Limited arises from the fact that in its present form the finished scheme which is to be outside the control of the applicant, will cause significant but unnecessary pollution from noise, vibration, fumes and traffic congestion. Arrangements can be made and measures taken to make the proposed scheme a true asset to the community it is designed to serve. Whilst we have been given oral reassurances by Chiltern Railways at a public meeting on 25th March 2010, we are concerned that following completion of the works, the use of the railway will not be under its control and so any reassurances given are purely on a trust basis without any wider power to limit the way the railway is used in any 24 hour period. Should the Inspector be inclined to grant permission for the Proposal we would respectfully request that conditions be applied as set out below.

2. THE IMPACT OF NOISE

2.1 Passenger Trains

At the public meeting held on 25th March 2010 Chiltern Railways stated that the noise levels would be monitored as existing and that the new trains would operate within a tolerance of those. We have not seen the results of the measurements but in any event would question how trains running at or in excess of the current 30 mph could have less noise impact than trains running at higher speeds. We question the reasoning and also the necessity for the higher speed trains. Whilst we appreciate that there must be some basis of measurement, we believe that it should not be necessary for Oxford residents to suffer increased noise from the railway in what is a sensitive residential and environmental area. Our concerns include the following:

- Currently there is single track working with one train of two carriages travelling at approximately 30 mph which can be heard but are not intrusive. The proposed service would run high-speed passenger trains at speeds of up to 75 mph between Oxford Station and Water Eaton Station. At the public meeting, the Chairman of Chiltern Railways Limited stated that they would use existing powers under the 1846 Oxford to Bletchley Railway Act to run trains at whatever speed suited them operationally, and that it was necessary to maintain higher train speeds in order to run trains at half-hourly intervals making the service more attractive to commuters. This contradicts Chiltern Railways' claim that it will attract passengers anyway because of the rebuilding of Reading Station and restricted services to Paddington for a prolonged period of time.
- We further believe that the existing train speeds of 30mph from Oxford to Water Eaton Station should be maintained as a condition of any permission for the scheme. This would not reduce the ability of Chiltern Railways to attract passengers to the service, adding only about 4-5 minutes to the overall journey whilst allowing a more peaceful life to thousands of Oxford homes. We believe it is reasonable that public transport and works should not be allowed to erode and spoil the quality of the environment within the community that it is to serve.
- At the public meeting Chiltern Railways assured us that the trains would be modern and quieter than most existing types of passenger train. This is due in part to the fact that they maintain their carriage wheels to a high standard.

- We are concerned that Chiltern Railways may not always be the passenger train operator on this line and that in years to come, old and poorly maintained trains would be much noisier than Chiltern are currently predicting. Further to the above, the noise impact of two trains passing at speed would worsen the effect of speed.

2.2. Freight Trains

Notwithstanding the reassurance given by Chiltern Railways about their own train operations:

- Whilst Chiltern Railways have emphasised the efficiency of their own operations in promoting their scheme to the public, we understand that Chiltern Railways will have no control over the running of freight trains which from our experience are very noisy and often run at night. We are given to understand that the operation of freight trains might become much more frequent on the proposed railway, particularly during the times when passenger trains are not operating, i.e. mainly at night. Any permission granted as a result of this proposal will benefit all future schemes such as the East West Rail link to extend the Oxford to Bicester line through to Cambridge and the east coast sea freight terminals.
- We were advised by the Chairman of Chiltern Railways that as with train speed the 1846 Act already gives unlimited powers to the railway operators to run trains at any time of day or night. We understand that the noise created by freight trains results from locomotives pulling long

and heavy trains, old and noisy rolling stock and heavy axle loadings. We believe it is possible to grant permission for the current proposal subject to operating conditions, and that it is not appropriate to permit the new railway with all the privileges given to railways in Victorian Britain. The needs of society have changed greatly over the last 150 years and there is no reason why new transport services cannot meet the need of communities and not simply fulfil entrepreneurial profit objectives. We believe that quietly run trains through residential areas are an essential requirement where the opportunities arises, and that restrictions should be applied to night time freight operations to prevent households from being woken.

- We also understand that the original railway system built by the Victorians included a loop-line enabling freight trains and long-distance trains to avoid the then Oxford suburbs. The fact that this line has now gone does not remove the need to treat the suburbs with respect. The nature of housing has changed significantly since the Oxford-Bicester was reduced in operation in the early 1970s and since Oxford places reliance on its ability to maintain a balanced housing stock for its own working population, it is bad policy to threaten that housing with degradation in order to transport commuters into London.

We do not believe that it is appropriate to revert to the Victorian railway era in a modern society using technology with the ability to operate in ways more sensitive to residential areas and the environment generally. In particular we believe it should be possible to operate freight trains with lighter axel loads and impose slow speed limits through residential areas.

3. IMPACT OF VIBRATION

Our information on vibration is hearsay based on the experience of residents who lived close to the railway in the 1960s and early 1970s. We understand from long term local residents that that heavy trains used to cause vibration as far as the Woodstock Road.

Chiltern Railways have assured us that modern methods of track-laying would minimise any vibration but we have no way of knowing that this is true.

We are concerned that once a TWA has been granted, with insufficient protection to the residents of Oxford there would be little or no possibility of further measures being put in place to eliminate vibration from the railway.

4. POLLUTION AS A DIRECT CAUSE OF TRAIN OPERATIONS

We understand that all trains would be diesel hauled and that the possibility of electrification is not yet in sight.

A member of the audience at the public meeting held on 25th March explained that the impact of long-exposure to diesel particulates causes cancer.

We are particularly concerned about this as we are informed that the Wolvercote Roundabout is already heavily polluted from cars and this is where road and railway converge.

5. ROAD CONGESTION

The proposed Water Eaton station is to be a major commuter station. Within the area to be acquired for the construction of the station, Chiltern Railways have included a large amount of new car-parking spaces with the clear

intention of attracting commuters predominantly by car. The existing park and ride facility would remain intact the other side of the station car park and there will be some provision for cyclists. From the plans provided it is clear that bus travel to and from the station is secondary to car usage.

Chiltern Railway's prioritisation of car usage will cause an increase in road traffic which is unnecessary. The provision of new public transport through their proposal should be in tandem with measures to encourage the use of public transport to and from the railway stations, and we do not understand why Chiltern Railways are not working closely with the local authorities and public service companies to replace car usage with more and better buses delivering and collecting from the stations to all parts of Oxford and the surrounding towns and villages. It is not good enough to rely on buses passing by with limited destinations when there is an opportunity to truly connect up the would be commuter to the railway system by easy to use public transport. We do not understand why Chiltern Railways have not made local public transport link ups a priority in their scheme in a bid to reduce, not increase private car usage. We believe that many more people would happily travel by bus if there was a good local bus service which ran direct to the stations and with a drop off point next to the station building. We believe that the future of public transport should be seen as premium and prioritised and not second rate and sidelined.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There are merits in the proposals made by Chiltern Railways, but we believe much of the scheme is profit led and not with the best interests of the public and local communities served by the railway at heart. We would respectfully

request the Inspector to make the following conditions if the scheme is to go ahead:

- Set speed limits of 30mph through Oxford’s housing areas
- Impose axle weight limits on freight trains
- Impose night time restrictions on all trains
- Retain existing proposals to provide noise and vibration dampening measures as appropriate such as quiet track bed, noise barriers and so on.
- Make provision for buses to access the station forecourt and provide pick up and drop off points adjacent to the station buildings.

Signed:

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Jeremy Thorowgood

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Helena Chance