

**The Chiltern Railways (Bicester to Oxford Improvements)
Transport and Works Act Inquiry**

Statement of Case of

OXFORD GREEN BELT NETWORK

The Oxford Green Belt Network's case relates principally to the need to protect the Oxford Green Belt in the vicinity of the proposed new station at Water Eaton. This locality is part of the narrow gap of countryside that separates Oxford from Kidlington and protection of such spaces between settlements is one of the 5 basic purposes of national Green Belt policy as set out in PPG.2, paragraph 1.5. The importance of protecting this gap was established when the first plan for Water Eaton park and ride was rejected in 1999 and only a reduced scheme later permitted.

We do not object to the station which replaces the existing silo, but we do not wish to see any extension of development into the Green Belt beyond the existing footprint of developed land., We have two main concerns, which relate to the present aggregates depot and the waste facility for which permission has been granted by the County.

It is our understanding that if the TWA Order were granted there would be deemed planning permission for the relocation of the existing aggregates depot to a greenfield site, with a new access road from the A.4165 to serve it. We question this need because Hansons, the present operator, appear never to have felt the need to obtain planning permission or a certificate of lawful use in connection with their operation. Given this position, and the fact that use of the railhead appears not to have been continuous over the years, we suggest that it casts doubt on the need to relocate the facility at all. Even more to the point, we question whether any deemed planning permission for relocation of the aggregates depot could apply to the present operator if, as has been suggested to us, the use of the land to which deemed permission is given must relate to the statutory undertaker alone (i.e. Chiltern Railways for their needs) and does not apply to a third party, Hansons in this case, for their quite separate undertaking. We do not have the legal resources to seek a legal opinion on this point (or feel we should be required to do so), but if we are correct, it would seem that Chiltern Railways are not entitled to request deemed planning permission for someone else's operation and benefit, and that this reference to relocation of the aggregates depot should be deleted from the Order.

So far as permission for Grundon's waste facility is concerned, we have been told by ERM acting for Chiltern Railways that granting of the TWA Order would prevent the construction of the facility. This would seem to be self-evident in that the station and the waste facility cannot be co-located on the same site, but we are anxious to know whether the County, having given permission for the waste sorting facility, are under an obligation - moral, legal, financial or political - to find an alternative site in this vicinity, in the same way as one is being requested for the aggregates depot. What we do not want to see is the creation near the station of an industrial estate comprising aggregates depot, waste facility and new road, collectively taking a major bite out of the Green Belt at this vulnerable, sensitive and important location in the "Kidlington Gap".

We have another concern which relates to the proposed closure of the pedestrian access across the rail tracks to the allotments on the other side of the railway from Aristotle Lane and the effect on Port Meadow of any alternative means of access being made. We believe that this matter has been taken up by the City Council but do not know how the negotiations, if any, have proceeded. Our position is that we do not wish to see engineering works from the present footbridge, or road access across the Meadow from Walton Well

Road, that would have a damaging impact on the visual and other amenities of Port Meadow.

We understand that the railway tunnel under the Woodstock Road roundabout will need to be deepened to accommodate the trains using the new service. We should like to know where the equipment and vehicles required for this work will be stored and, in particular, whether it is proposed to use any Green Belt land for this purpose and, if it is, what steps will be taken to avoid damage to this land.