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OBJ/132

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Your ref. TWA/10/APP/02/OBJ/132

Dear Angela Foster,

4th August 2010

STATEMENT OF CASE

Thank you for your letter dated 17th June 2010. I apologise for not replying earlier; your letter arrived when I was away and I have been unwell since my return. We still wish to continue with our objection to Chiltern Railways' proposals but it is possible that making an oral presentation may be inhibited by surgery.

At the public meeting held on Thursday, 25th March 2010 in Wolvercote Village Hall, chaired by Evan Harris (at that time, the MP for Oxford West and Abingdon), Chiltern Railways made a powerpoint presentation on the virtues of their proposed Evergreen 3 project. Afterwards, they took questions and listened to proposals from members in the audience who would be adversely affected should the Evergreen 3 proposals be approved. The Company's response to our questions was far from satisfactory. The chairman of Chiltern Railways, Adrian Shooter, gave the impression that the equivalent of a TWA order in 1847(?) gave any railway company the right to re-develop the existing track from Oxford to Bicester to whatever standard and train-speed they and the railway authorities wished without regard to objections from local residents. This view is re-iterated in Chiltern Railways' publication *An Introduction to the Application* dated January 2010. (Page 5 under the headline *The Transport & Works Act*, and page 6 under *The TWA process*).

The attitude of the Company to the Bicester end of the line is completely different; there, a short section of new track has to be built to connect directly with the line to London (referred to as the Bicester cord line). It is noticeable that the maximum speed on the cord line will be 40mph, whereas between Water Eaton and Oxford it is proposed to raise the present 40mph maximum to 75-100mph. (These figures are taken from Chiltern Railways evergreen3 News, Issue 2, October 2009). Residents living close to the track on the approach to Oxford station are protected from these high speeds by a maximum speed limit of 25mph which cannot be changed by Chiltern Railways.

Consequently, it is the residents along a mile of track in the zone from Lakeside to northwest Oxford/Upper Wolvercote who will be subjected to trains travelling at 75mph if the Evergreen 3 project is approved as it stands. It would be good to know whether the 1847 Act effectively precludes objections from residents at the Oxford end of the line or whether our views can be included legitimately as part of the Public Inquiry.

There are a number of alternatives/modifications to Chiltern's proposals for the line between Water Eaton and Oxford station that could meet local residents' objections either completely or in part.

1. A new connection from Water Eaton to the Oxford-Birmingham mainline.

At present the Oxford-Bicester line joins the mainline track about 1.7 miles north of Oxford station. This proposal is for a new section of track from Water Eaton across undeveloped land near Stratfield Brake to join the Oxford-Birmingham mainline just north of the branch to Worcester. A direct connection to the Worcester line (shown on maps as dismantled railway) could be re-installed also with the advantage that east-west traffic could bypass Oxford station. This proposal is discussed in more detail in my letter of 26th February 2010 so further elaboration here is not necessary.

2. Terminate the high-speed rail link at Water Eaton Parkway.

In their *Introduction to the Application*, Chiltern Railways make it clear (page 4) that Water Eaton Parkway will have all the facilities of a mainline station with extensive bus services, car parking etc to meet the needs of passengers from Oxford, Kidlington, Headington, Witney etc. It is described as a 'multi-modal interchange for trains, buses, cars and bikes'. This raises the question of why there is a need for the high-speed link to extend to Oxford station. If this proposal were adopted it would probably be politic for Water Eaton Parkway to be renamed Oxford Station (North) or something similar.

3. Construct a tunnel from north of Lakeside to the south of Upper Wolvercote.

This tunnel would be just over a mile long and in part may be a surface tunnel. Provided it was covered with a few metres of soil and landscaped, airborne noise should be completely absorbed. There remains the question of ground vibration since clay is a particularly good transmitter of vibrodynamic loads. Chiltern Railways need to demonstrate that their track-bed construction is able to absorb vibration before it impinges on the clay subsoil and that this property is maintained over many years of use.

At the public meeting on 25th March 2010, I put the first proposal (above) to Chiltern Railways representatives. The chairman, Adrian Shooter, rejected consideration of the proposal on the grounds that (1) another set of people would object (2) Chiltern could not work satisfactorily with companies currently using the Oxford-Birmingham line and, in order to meet their tight timetabling schedules, Chiltern needed their own line into Oxford station. However it should be noted (1) that the new connection could be routed to avoid any housing, and (2) after construction, ownership of the upgraded track would revert to the track authority (Network Rail) who would then be responsible for upkeep and letting of slots to all rail transport companies.

Other members of the audience questioned the need for an increase in maximum speed from 40mph to 75mph as the trains pass by residential housing; for the 1 mile concerned it would take 90 seconds and 48 seconds at the two speeds respectively. Apparently Chiltern's scheduling is so tight that their timetabling cannot cope with another 42 seconds on this stretch of track.

There is an additional safety concern for residents of Lakeside. Although much of the track is in a cutting, at Lakeside the track is on an embankment about 3 metres above the natural lie of the land. At 75mph, the kinetic energy of an object is about 3.5 times the same object at 40mph. Should a high speed derailment occur there is virtually nothing to stop the carriages tumbling into our gardens and houses since they are so close to the line. We were reminded recently of the effects of high-speed derailment with a re-showing of the spectacular photographs of the Potters Bar accident. Of course derailments should not occur but on this stretch of line a slow-speed derailment of a freight train (maximum speed 30mph) destroyed the original track which is why the current track uses welded rail.

Chiltern Railways seem unwilling to give serious consideration to proposals that would stop/alleviate the damage that will be (and is being) caused to the lives of residents living close to the railway line in north Oxford. I believe their attitude is strongly coloured by a belief in the supremacy of the 1847 Act.

It seems the proposed new service to London is but the tip of an iceberg. At a meeting with local councillors on 25th January 2010, Chiltern envisaged that in due course 12 trains an hour will be passing our doors each day.

Yours truly,

Glyn Taylor.