

## PROPOSED CHILTERN RAILWAYS (BICESTER TO OXFORD IMPROVEMENTS) ORDER

### EAST-WEST RAIL (WESTERN SECTION) PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This note provides an update on relevant planning policy for the East West Rail Scheme, following a request from the Inspector to Patrick O’Sullivan on Day 1 of the Inquiry. I have only considered those documents relevant to the western section from Bicester to Bletchley and Milton Keynes. This note sets out relevant policy extracts from the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan [LTP2] 2006-2011 [CD/4.5], the Oxfordshire Local Transport [LTP3] 2011-2030 (consultation draft 2010), the Oxford City Core Strategy Proposed Submission [CD/4.9], the Cherwell Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy [CD/4.12] and the Milton Keynes Sub-Regional Strategy [CD/4.2].

#### 2 Oxford Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 [CD/4.5]

- 2.1 Relevant extracts from the Local Transport Plan are:

*The County Council’s priorities for improving Oxfordshire’s railways are:*

- *Implementation of East-West Rail (initially from Oxford to Bedford via Bletchley/Milton Keynes) [page 9]*

*...the County Council and Highways Agency accept that the capacity of this busy trunk road [A34] is very unlikely to be increased in Oxfordshire in the next twenty years. TIF funding could therefore provide funding for rail schemes, highway route management and measures to enhance local public transport in this corridor, including:*

- *East-West Rail linking Oxford to Milton Keynes and Bedford, providing a fast, inter-urban rail service along the line of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, linking centres of potential high tech employment growth and housing growth where the road alternative is largely single carriageway [page 16]*

*The Regional Assembly (SEERA) has identified three rail schemes within the region that it feels should be regarded as of “national significance”. Two of these are within Oxfordshire. East-West Rail, between Oxford and Bedford, and the upgrading of the railway between Southampton and the Midlands to allow new sized freight containers to be carried by rail rather than by heavy lorries on the A34 trunk road. [page 19]*

#### *Policy T4: Regional Spokes*

*The County Council recognises the importance of achieving a level of service on the various road and rail spokes serving the Oxford hub to support the city's role as a focus of economic activity...*

*...Public transport is particularly important for inter-urban journeys including premium bus routes, the existing and frequent coach services to London and rail services, particularly East-West Rail for access to the rapidly growing Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and High Wycombe areas. [page 21]*

#### *Policies T12-T14: Freight*

*Part of the rail network in Oxfordshire runs parallel to the A34 and increased local and strategic rail use for freight and passenger movement would reduce the pressure on this congested route. The County Council also considers that improvements are needed to the Cotswold Line and the Bicester Branch Line – the latter linking strongly with the regional aspiration for East-West Rail between Oxford, Bletchley/Milton Keynes and Bedford. [page 22]*

#### *South Midlands/Milton Keynes/Aylesbury*

*The Milton Keynes/Aylesbury sub-region adjoins the COSR to the northeast. A Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy has been prepared for the designated growth area up to 2021. Following an Examination in Public, the Secretary of State's proposed changes were published in October 2004. Milton Keynes would accommodate 44,900 dwellings with a further 15,000 in Aylesbury.*

*The sub-regional study indicates that improved east-west links are needed and specifically identifies the western section of East-West Rail (between Oxford and Bedford). A land use and transport study for the Oxford to Milton Keynes/Bedford corridor, funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and a supplementary report funded by the East-West Rail Consortium, were both completed in early 2006, and were supported by the County Council. Further work involving regional stakeholders along with Government delivery agencies will take this strategic project towards implementation during this Local Transport Plan period. (page 24)*

*...Oxfordshire County Council and Buckinghamshire County Council have developed and agreed a Joint Transport Policy Statement, initially to cover the 2006-11 Plan period. The statement covers the following key strategic issues, work areas and projects:*

- *Public Transport- Promotion of the East-West Rail Project [page 25]*

### **3 Oxfordshire LTP 3 Draft for Consultation – October 2010**

#### **3.1 The relevant extract from LTP 3 is:**

*Of the infrastructure schemes the following strategic transport schemes were identified as being necessary to support development in the short term:*

- *Chiltern Railways Evergreen 3 Project;*
- *East-West Rail (western section); [paragraph 1.20 page 5]*

#### **4 Cherwell Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy [CD/4.12]**

4.1 The relevant extracts from the Core Strategy are:

*The M40 motorway passes through Cherwell close to Banbury and Bicester. There are direct rail links from Banbury and Bicester to London, Birmingham and Oxford. The rail link from Bicester to Oxford is planned for improvement as part of wider east-west rail objectives. [paragraph A.6]*

*The District has good links to airports, ports and the national road and rail network. Connections to London and Birmingham are particularly strong with regular high quality train services via the Chiltern line and proposed improvements to the line between Cambridge and Oxford as part of the East West Rail project. The M40 corridor provides links to the wider national motorway network. Improvements to junction 9 of the M40 motorway are being progressed with the Department for Transport, Highways Agency and Oxfordshire County Council. The proposals to improve the rail link between Bicester and Oxford are also supported as it will promote more sustainable modes of transport and reduce congestion on the A34 and M40 trunk roads. [paragraph A.178]*

*The key issues section above identifies a number of the key challenges facing Bicester's economy. Bicester is also, however, in an excellent position to benefit from a number of important wider initiatives:-*

- *The proposed improvements to the rail network from Chiltern Railways and the East-West Consortium. [paragraph B.24]*

#### **5 Oxford City Council Core Strategy Proposed Submission [CD/4.9]**

5.1 The relevant extract from the draft Core Strategy are:

*Supporting accessibility to Oxford*

*Whilst many of the strategic decisions on transport issues are taken by other bodies (including Oxfordshire County Council as highways authority, the Highways Agency, the rail industry and bus operators) the City Council has a key partnership role in helping to implement projects and schemes. In particular the City Council will work with partners towards:*

- *Implementation of East West Rail (a new, high-quality rail network linking Oxford with Milton Keynes and Cambridge), and improvements to the Bicester line [page 39]*

## 6 Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy [CD/4.2]

- 6.1 The statement from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government dated 6 July 2010 states that Regional Strategies have been revoked under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Attached to that statement, the Secretary of State published guidance to cover the period between revocation of Regional Strategies and legislation to abolish them altogether. The advice is clear that where local planning authorities are currently bringing forward development plan documents they should continue to do so. The guidance recognises that some authorities may decide to retain their existing housing targets that were set out in the revoked Regional Strategies.
- 6.2 Despite the move away from regional targets, applying this guidance the underlying drivers for economic growth and new housing in the areas served by the Order Scheme remain of relevance. Whilst it is recognised that with the revocation of regional strategies, the precise level of planned growth may change, there remain strong demographic reasons to conclude that substantial growth will continue to be planned for in the Oxford area and that delivering this growth without associated improvements in supporting transport infrastructure will be difficult. As such the evidence regarding growth of housing and employment presented in the Regional Strategies, specifically in this instance the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy, is considered relevant to the policy context of the Evergreen 3 Scheme.
- 6.3 The following are growth targets for Milton Keynes Borough and Aylesbury Vale District 2001-2021 from the Strategy:

<b>Growth Target</b>	<b>Milton Keynes Borough</b>	<b>Aylesbury Vale District</b>
Employment	44,900	12,690
Housing	44,900	15,000

- 6.4 Relevant extracts from the Strategy are:

*Some of the key characteristics of the Sub-Region are:*

- *There is a need to improve transport and community infrastructure: for example the transport network has weak east-west links, public transport is in needs of substantial improvement and there is a need to expand the capacity of health and social care services and higher and further education provision; [paragraph 13]*

*East-West Rail*

*The growth anticipated in this area means that further proposals for improving public transport will need to be developed and implemented alongside plans for new housing. The Government will support a study by key partners covering transport and*

*growth in this corridor. This study will include examination of the wider and long term private funding options for improving public transport in this corridor. Any decision on the East-West Rail (Western Section) will need to be informed by the outcome of this study. [paragraph 28]*

*East-West Rail east of Bedford can only be considered in the longer term as one possibility for improving public transport in the Bedford to Cambridge/Stansted corridor. Other passenger transport options need to be considered that may be more feasible. [paragraph 29]*

## **7 Conclusion**

- 7.1 This note provides extracts that show policy support for the western section of the East West Rail Scheme at both local and regional level. Various local policy documents also include policies establishing that developer contributions will be sought towards meeting the costs of East West Rail. In policy terms, it is seen as being a key strategic transport scheme in the Milton Keynes/Aylesbury to Oxford corridor which will deliver housing and economic development.