

Planning, Housing & Economy

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24 June 2009

Dear Allan

Evergreen 3: Response to Public Consultation by Chiltern Railways for a New Oxford to London Route Proposed Railway Improvement Scheme between Bicester and Oxford

Further to our meeting on 7th May and previous correspondence, I confirm that the Executive agreed the report on the above at its meeting on 15th June 2009. In summary the Executive agreed the contents of the report as the basis of the Council's response to the public consultation and in particular agreed the representations should include comments made by Councillors. It was also agreed that Cherwell District Council, hereafter referred to as "The Council", should consider and make appropriate representations on the details of the scheme as the Transport and Works Act application proceeds. As promised I set out below the formal response of Cherwell District Council to the consultation by Chiltern Railways which we hope to take forward with you as the scheme progresses in more detail.

- The Council supports the proposals to improve the rail line between Bicester and Oxford as part of the wider improvements to the Oxford to London Marylebone route.
- The Council supports the proposals for a new parkway station at Water Eaton as set out in Option 1 provided Chiltern Railways can satisfy the criteria for assessing park and ride facilities in the Green Belt set out in paragraph 3.17 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2): *Green Belts* and Annex E Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG13): *Transport*.
- The Council welcomes the proposed improvements to the station facilities and rail service at Bicester Town in providing a recognised station to complement the existing services from Bicester North. However, the Council has concerns about the visual impact and traffic impact of Option 3

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- The Council also has some concerns about the frequency and length of time the level crossing at London Road in Bicester will be closed and will work with the Highway Authority to look at traffic impacts within the town.
- The Council requests that the links between Bicester Town station and the Bicester North station are discussed in more detail with Chiltern Railways in order to encourage improved links to Bicester Town station from Bicester North to support the creation of a sustainable community. This should include links with North West Bicester.
- The Council does not want to see a major station development at Islip therefore the proposals for Islip to remain as a station principally for local community use are generally welcomed and supported.
- Land at Gavray Drive has been safeguarded for a connecting railway line in the Cherwell Non Statutory Local Plan and the Council supports the proposed connecting line.

In addition we draw Chiltern Railways attention to the following general comments as part of the Council's response. The majority of the line within the District is in the open countryside and Chiltern Railways should give careful consider to the visual impact of new structures and crossings in rural locations. There are a number of residential properties within Bicester, including a number adjacent to the level crossing at London Road that are likely to be affected by the increased use of the railway line both in terms of train movements and passengers. It will be necessary for the Environmental Impact Assessment to consider the impact of noise and vibration on these properties together with a number of more isolated farmsteads and dwellings close to the railway line in the countryside. The Council will continue to discuss the proposals in more detail with Chiltern Railways particularly in relation to the options to reduce the number of level crossings. In conclusion, the initial proposals are broadly supported and welcomed as they will encourage more sustainable modes of transport and improve rail services in the District.

We look forward to discussing the proposals in more detail as the scheme progresses. In the meantime if you have any queries or would like more information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Bowe
Implementation Officer

cc. Michael Gibbard, Porfolio Holder Planning, Housing and Economy
Mary Harpley, Chief Executive, Cherwell District Council
Linda Griffiths, Cherwell District Council