

Closing Submission

Glyn Taylor (OBJ/132)

For the residents of North Oxford there are two issues to be resolved and since they are not directly related they should be treated separately.

1. Fast Passenger Trains to London

The concerns here are noise, vibration, safety, damage to our properties and way-of-life, financial loss. Chiltern propose to run much larger, heavier trains at a higher speed and much more frequently than at present. This will convert a little-used, single-track branch line into a twin-track mainline.

It has been shown that the proposed passenger service from Oxford to London does not require high-speeds between Oxford Station and Water Eaton Parkway (approx. 5.8 km); a maximum speed of 40mph, as at present, is more than enough to cover this distance in the scheduled 8 minutes (i.e. an average speed of 27mph). Three solutions have been proposed. If Chiltern insist they must have high speeds (75-100mph) all the way into Oxford station, then they must pay the price; either build a new connection from Water Eaton to the Birmingham mainline north of the A40 or reset the present track in a tunnel between the North Oxford Golf Course and a point south of Upper Wolvercote, a tunnel length of 1.7km. The third solution, which is much cheaper for all concerned, is to terminate the fast train service at Water Eaton Parkway; a shuttle using light-weight trams could ferry passengers between Oxford Station and the Parkway although it is acknowledged that most passengers would not need this service. This solution means little or no change to the track passing through sensitive residential areas.

2. Freight Traffic

Chiltern claims it is solely a passenger train company with no interest in freight. However, Phase 2A of the Scheme, the enlargement of the Wolvercote Tunnel, is of no benefit to passenger trains and yet is part of Chiltern's proposals. In fact, because there is no benefit to passenger traffic, the costs of Phase 2A will be borne entirely by Network Rail/DfT but they are not promoters of the Order Scheme and therefore not answerable to this inquiry. Phase 2B is, again, designed to benefit freight traffic and will proceed only if the East West Rail project is authorised (PoE, Graham Cross, page 11, clause 6.5).

Although Chiltern claims to have no interest in freight traffic, many believe a sister company, DB Schenker Rail (the largest freight company in the UK), would benefit from a connection to the West Coast Mainline at Bletchley. It is clear that both parts of Phase 2 are designed to facilitate freight traffic and the East West Rail project in particular, and should have no place at an inquiry into a passenger service between Oxford and London. Therefore, I urge the rejection of the whole of Phase 2 so that these issues may be properly examined at a future public inquiry at which Network Rail and the benefiting freight companies may be expected to defend their proposals.