

May 2012

OXFORDSHIRE
RAIL STRATEGY
& DELIVERY PLAN

Consultation Report

Rail enabling living and working

Working for you



OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2012, the Council's Cabinet approved a version of the draft Oxfordshire Rail Strategy & Delivery Plan for public and stakeholder consultation.

The consultation was launched on 6 February and was made available on the Council's e-consultation portal, making it possible for responses to be submitted using a questionnaire online or by returning a pre-formatted document in the post. The consultation lasted for six weeks and ended on 16 March 2012.

Invitations to take part in the consultation were sent to 650 individuals or organisations that have an interest in the rail network, including district and parish councils, local businesses using the railway as part of the business activity, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, interest groups, such as Oxfordshire Unlimited and Railfuture, and council staff involved in planning, strategy, infrastructure and economic growth.

Invitations were also sent to all our rail industry partners covering strategy (Department for Transport), planning (Network Rail), safety (Office of the Rail Regulator), and to passenger and freight operators (service providers).

In total, we received 89 responses (75 online and 14 by email or letter) and 980 individual comments were made. We have read each comment and each has been fully considered.

This consultation report summarises 138 issues that have been raised by more than one respondent, along with a Council response and any suggested changes to the draft Rail Strategy.

The final, approved Rail Strategy, including any changes, will be published in June 2012.

Conclusions

The draft Rail Strategy has been welcomed by many of those submitting a response, and the Council has been congratulated for producing a strategy that is comprehensive, well-researched and credible.

85% of responses said that we had identified the right issues and aspirations for railways in Oxfordshire, with 80% agreeing that our vision for rail to support economic growth and provide a sustainable and accessible network is the right one.

There was particular support for the Council's involvement in and prioritisation of Chiltern Railways' Evergreen 3 project, and East-West Rail project for the Oxford-Bicester corridor.

145 views were given about improving connectivity between the county and other areas. The most popular of these were a rail link to Heathrow (and Gatwick) Airports, a service from Oxford to Bristol and extension of Crossrail services to Reading. A station at Grove & Wantage was very well supported, as was the longer-term plan for a rail link to Carterton.

Other topics that generated significant numbers of comments were the need to provide for both freight and passenger growth, with new freight terminals and stations, more capacity and higher frequencies to meet future demand and calls for electrification to be extended. There was agreement for the Council setting up an Information Partnership with bus and rail operators with 45% of respondents welcoming this initiative, and some encouraging support for the Council's involvement in extending the benefits of Community Rail.

CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

Introduction

Question 1

Respondents are asked whether the purposes of the Draft Rail Strategy that we have identified are those that address the key issues for the rail network and service in the county and beyond.

Yes - the draft strategy has identified the key issues. **85% (44)**

No, the draft strategy has not identified the key issues (see below) **15% (8)**

What other purposes do you think the Draft Rail Strategy ought to address for the rail network and services in the county and beyond?

1

Increased and improved services at smaller train stations (i.e. Henley) including night services

Response: We have set out our minimum passenger service levels on pages 50 and 51, and Chapter 5 clearly sets out our aspirations and priorities. Where this is shown to be a demand for more services at a particular station we will support the local community and seek these from the train operator. We have set out our specific priorities for the Henley-on-Thames branch line on page 74 - Henley is actually a very busy station.

Strategy Amendment: None.

2

Reinstate Cholsey - Wallingford line

Response: The line is currently operated as a preserved railway by the Cholsey & Wallingford Preservation Society. There is no obvious business case to upgrade the line to a mainline standard given the size of Wallingford and the location of its station on the outskirts of the town. The Society is free to operate a peak-shuttle to Cholsey on its line but there is no physical connection with the Great Western Main Line. Whilst page 60 of the draft Rail Strategy says the Council will oppose development that compromises the operation of this rail corridor, it is not actively seeking any through train services. Rail passengers can get to Wallingford using Reading station and a single bus/rail ticket on X39/X40 bus services.

Strategy Amendment: We will include a section about the preserved railways at the end of Chapter 5.

3

The strategy should commit more to meeting the public transport requirements in line with the Transport Act 1985

Response: The preface in the draft Rail Strategy reproduces paragraphs 63(1)(a) and (b) of the Transport Act 1985, setting out obligations on the Council to consider the public transport services that are not met by other means. The Council expects transport operators to provide services on a commercial basis where they see a business case to do so. Where this is not the case, and if requested by the local community, then the Council will normally look at ways of securing the necessary services, albeit they may be provided by bus, train or community transport, and always taking into account the funding available.

Strategy Amendment: None.

4

Increase consultation and engagement with public and other stakeholders needs to be emphasised in the strategy, including PTRs

Response: The Rail Strategy deals with a diverse range of issues, many of which are led by parties other than the Council. However, as we have seen with the Bicester Rail Study, consultation and involvement can help officers and councillors make informed decisions to push for the outcomes that the community needs.

Strategy Amendment: We will include more details in Chapter 8 on our approach to consultation, based on the Council's consultation strategy *Ask Oxfordshire*.

5

Strengthen the environmental aspects beyond sustainability, e.g. reducing carbon foot print

Response: Railways do have environmental impacts but they are considerably less than both road and air travel. We have mentioned lower carbon emissions on pages 6, 12, 16 and 83 of the draft Rail Strategy but agree that we can strengthen some aspects on noise and safety

Strategy Amendment: We will include specific information in Chapter 3

6

More emphasis on access to rail services and integration with sustainable modes, particularly bus

Response: The draft Rail Strategy includes multiple references to interchange, both in general policy terms and at specific locations, for example Oxford, Didcot Parkway and Banbury. We intend producing a Bus Strategy during 2012 which will include more detail on our policy towards integration between bus and rail.

Strategy Amendment: None.

7

More car parking capacity at railway stations

Response: We believe rail users should be given a choice when travelling to their nearest station. This means ensuring there are appropriate facilities for walking, cycling, bus and car parking. At some stations, parking may be more appropriate, for example where public transport alternatives are limited. There are a number of specific proposals in the tables in Chapter 5 of the draft Rail Strategy, and parking is considered as part of strategic projects such as Evergreen 3 (Water Eaton Parkway), Didcot Parkway and Banbury.

Strategy Amendment: None.

8

Strategy has omitted the possible role of light rail.

Response: Although the draft Rail Strategy deals primarily with heavy rail, it does not rule out the use of light rail in the future. On page 90 we discuss the Oxford 'Eastern Arc and potential for some kind of rapid transit link. This is still at a concept stage and it would not be appropriate to specify whether this would be bus or light rail based. Light rail in the UK is usually only viable in larger conurbations as it is a relatively expensive transport option.

Strategy Amendment: None.

9

Rebuild Shiplake viaduct to increase train speed at Shiplake.

Response: This is already identified on page 74 of the draft Rail Strategy.

Strategy Amendment: None.

10

Crossrail should serve Reading, not Maidenhead.

Response: We agree that there could be major benefits if Crossrail was extended to Reading, as it would allow easy-interchange with outer suburban services and possibly enable some services from Oxford to be redirected to serve Guildford and Gatwick Airport. This would create new opportunities to travel to the south coast avoiding London and is already mentioned in the draft Rail Strategy on page 85.

Strategy Amendment: None.

The Case for Rail in Oxfordshire

Question 2

Respondents are asked whether we have identified the corridors where better rail services could make a difference to both travel choice and congestion.

Yes	64% (35)
No	36% (20)

Question 3

Respondents are asked whether there are other road corridors in Oxfordshire where rail services could be further improved.

Yes - there are other rail corridors to consider; tell us below	52% (26)
No - all corridors have been identified	48% (24)

What are the other road corridors in Oxfordshire where rail services could be further improved?

11

Wantage to Didcot, via new Grove & Wantage station (A417)

Response: Agreed.

Strategy Amendment: We will include a reference to Grove/Wantage in Table 1.1 and refer to the A417.

12

Wantage to Oxford rail link (A338 and A420)

Response: Agreed.

Strategy Amendment: We will include a reference to Grove/Wantage in Table 1.1 and refer to the A338.

13

Swindon to Oxford and Birmingham, via Grove & Wantage (A420, A34 and A338).

Response: Agreed.

Strategy Amendment: None - already dealt with by the proposed amendments above.

14

Witney and Carterton to Oxford rail link (A40)

Response: This is not a currently a rail corridor. The congestion problems on the A40 between are well known and are mentioned on page 14 of the draft Rail Strategy. There is no immediate rail solution, although we have identified a Carterton rail link as a very long term project on page 91.

Strategy Amendment: None.

15

Princes Risborough to Chinnor

Response: The Princes Risborough-Chinnor line is currently operated as a preserved railway by the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway Association Ltd. Extending the line into the mainline station is an aspiration of Buckinghamshire County Council and the recent upgrading by Chiltern Railways does not prevent this from happening. However the rail industry has not identified any interest in running services to/from Chinnor. Residents can use the connecting rail bus service provided by the train company between these two towns. Whilst page 60 of the draft Rail Strategy says the Council will oppose development that compromises the operation of this rail corridor, it is not actively seeking any through train services.

Strategy Amendment: We will include a section about the preserved railways at the end of Chapter 5.

16

Abingdon to Radley Rail Link

Response: The former branch line would have little potential in isolation. There is very limited capacity on the mainline between Didcot and Oxford to accommodate new local services, although they could form part of segregated Oxford-based transit system in the longer term. We would prefer to develop Radley station as Abingdon's primary station, focusing efforts on improving bus services to the station from more areas of Abingdon, improving cycle paths and extending station car parking.

Strategy Amendment: None.

17

Need to identify the existence of congestion west side of Culham on Figure 1.1

Response: The congestion is around the Clifton Hampden bridge and the A415 / B4015 junction. The congestion estimates are taken from the Oxfordshire County Council traffic model and are based on an "average" day.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Rail and the Local Transport Strategy

Question 4

Respondents are asked whether we have identified the correct opportunities for rail in Oxfordshire.

Yes - the correct opportunities have been identified	43% (23)
No - other opportunities should be included (see below)	57% (30)

What other opportunities should we consider in the Draft Rail Strategy?

18

New Station at Milton Park

Response: We had initially looked at the concept of a station near the Milton Interchange but it was not favoured by other key stakeholders. There is limited capacity for additional stops on the Great Western Main Line west of Didcot Parkway, and track layouts would make a station costly to achieve. There is already a high frequency shuttle bus from Didcot Parkway station, with the potential for more bus services in the area in the years to come.

Strategy Amendment: None

19

New Station at Kidlington.

Response: The Council had been promoting a station on the Oxford to Banbury mainline but due to the difficulties of serving an extra station on that line, and with the emergence of the Evergreen 3 project, we are now of the view that the rail offer for Kidlington can better be met by Water Eaton Parkway Station. Existing premium route bus services, footpaths and cycle ways provide easy means of reaching the station.

Strategy Amendment: The Strategy will be amended to reflect Water Eaton Parkway as the station for Kidlington.

20

Increased bus connectivity to rail stations, improved integration between these modes

Response: See the response to Comment 6.

21

New station at Oxford Northern Gateway

Response: There is a considerable number of transport issues associated with major development in this area. Although the site is close to two railway lines, it is still unclear whether rail would be a means of accessing the site directly. Other large business parks have struggled to get their rail proposals introduced. Access to Northern Gateway could easily be made using a frequent shuttle bus from a Water Eaton Parkway station.

Strategy Amendment: We will include a reference in the Rail Strategy for the need to investigate any direct rail potential as part of development proposals.

22

New stations and improved rail connectivity within the 'Oxfordshire Growth Arc'

Response: The Chiltern Railways Evergreen 3 project will create a new station at Water Eaton Parkway, along with rebuilt stations at Bicester Town and Islip. The Council is also keen to prioritise development work on a new station for Grove & Wantage in Science Vale UK. East-West Rail will bring new rail services improving links throughout the 'Growth Arc' between the three main developments (Bicester, Oxford and Didcot), and externally with Reading and Milton Keynes. This is included in the Rail Strategy.

Strategy Amendment: None.

23

Inclusion of light rail, tram, tram-trains, or guided busway links to be included in the Draft Rail Strategy

Response: See the response to Comment 8.

24

Inclusion of Witney and Carterton in the rail network

Response: The draft Rail Strategy makes clear that any assessment of a new railway to Carterton would only be triggered if there were sufficient demand arising from a defence need or significant change in land use policy. Page 91 explains this will be very long-term project, if proven to be viable. Whilst page 60 of the draft Rail Strategy says the Council will oppose development that compromises the operation of this rail corridor, it is not actively seeking train services.

Strategy Amendment: None.

25

New Station at Redbridge

Response: The draft Rail Strategy correctly identifies that there may be a case for looking at a transport hub in connection with longer-term development of an “Oxford Eastern Arc” rapid transit system. However, page 91 explains this is still at a concept stage

Strategy Amendment: None.

26

More emphasis on travel on the national, inter-regional and regional rail network, and improved links

Response: Rail is by virtue a national network, with Oxfordshire located in a fairly central location (see Figure 2.1). This is emphasised throughout the draft Rail Strategy, with Chapter 2 setting the Oxfordshire rail network in its wider geographic context.

Strategy Amendment: None.

27

Growth of Culham Station and associated access improvements

Response: Culham station has an important role in Science Vale UK and provides direct access to the adjacent Culham Science Centre, where additional jobs and development is being proposed. We have set out in Chapter 5 the need to develop facilities at the station and provide more services, such as those proposed by the East-West Rail project. We will also be seeking line improvements to allow more trains at the times when they are needed (i.e. at the journey / from work peaks and for business trips).

Strategy Amendment: None.

28

The new National Planning Policy framework does not include continued rail route safeguarding

Response: This is quite right; the new framework is much more concise and as a result leaves many more policy decisions open to interpretation.

Strategy Amendment: We will amend the text under the heading ‘Safeguarding Land for Future Schemes’ so that reference to PPG13 is deleted, and the new planning framework is referenced. We will reiterate that our policy is to protect land for rail schemes that promote the aims of sustainable development.

29

Include Princes Risborough - Chinnor rail line in the strategy

Response: See the response to Comment 15.

30

Include Cholsey - Wallingford rail line in the strategy

Response: See the response to Comment 2.

31

Push for the extension of Crossrail to Reading, rather than Maidenhead

Response: See the response to Comment 10.

Our Vision

Question 5

Respondents are asked whether we have the right vision for the rail network, and if not what changes ought to be made.

Yes - the vision is right 80% (43)

No - changes to the vision are needed (see below) 20% (11)

What changes ought to be made to the vision?

32

Improved connectivity and integration of bus, rail, walk and cycle

Response: The vision needs to be succinct and already refers to integration. We have detailed more specific objectives throughout the draft Rail Strategy, and particularly in Chapter 5

Strategy Amendment: None.

Structure and Content

Question 6

Respondents are asked what the balance of priorities should be between the introduction of new services and improvements in the journey time and reliability of existing services.

Existing journey times should be improved before new train services are introduced 50%

The reliability of existing train services is acceptable 48%

Existing train services ought to be improved before extra train services are introduced on the same route 42%

The rail network should be expanded rather than improve what we've already got 42%

New railway lines should be introduced when needed 31%

New train services should be introduced when needed to meet demand 30%

Strategy Delivery

Question 7

Respondents are asked whether we have the right prioritisation categories for delivering the Draft Rail Strategy projects.

Yes - the prioritisation categories are acceptable. 85% (46)

No - some changes are needed to the prioritisation categories (see below) 15% (8)

What changes ought to be made to the prioritisation categories for delivering the rail station projects?

33

Extend Chinnor line onto existing rail land

Response: See the response to Comment 15.

34

Increase capacity on the Henley branch line

Response: We have set out on page 75 our aspirations for an improved service on this single-track branch line. This may be achieved in a number of ways, such as increasing the speed which trains can travel, for example by upgrading Shiplake Viaduct, or changes to stopping patterns to reduce the end-to-end journey time. The service is provided using one diesel train for most of the day.

Strategy Amendment: None.

35

Increase parking at station entry point.

Response: See the response to Comment 7.

CHAPTER 2: PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

Introduction

Question 8

Respondents are asked about their priorities for improving rail links between Oxfordshire and other parts of the United Kingdom.

36

Cambridge direct rail service from Oxfordshire (East-West Rail initiative)

Response: The draft Rail Strategy (pages 76-78) sets out our support for East-West Rail – in particular the western section from Reading to Bedford via Oxford. However the local authority-led consortium is also assessing a number of route options for the central section between Bedford and Cambridge. This is a more complex section of route, with interfaces with the Midland and East Coast Main Lines, and a number of major development areas. As such achieving the full route is a longer-term proposal that needs to be fully assessed.

Strategy Amendment: None.

37

London Heathrow direct rail link from Oxfordshire

Response: This is a key output to support economic and business growth in Oxfordshire and we welcome proposals for a western access to Heathrow Airport, as part of improved connectivity to international gateways outlined on pages 89/90 of the draft Rail Strategy. We will work with neighbouring local authorities to lobby the Government to introduce new regional train services to the airport should the project go ahead.

Strategy Amendment: None.

38

Bedford/Milton Keynes direct rail link from Oxfordshire (East West Rail initiative)

Response: The draft Rail Strategy (pages 76-78) sets out our support for East-West Rail – in particular the western section from Reading to Bedford via Oxford.

Strategy Amendment: None.

39

London Gatwick direct rail link from Oxfordshire

Response: A direct link to Gatwick Airport may be possible if Crossrail is extended to Reading as it would allow a service from Oxford to be redirected to Guildford and the airport. This is set out on page 85 of the draft Rail Strategy.

Strategy Amendment: None.

40

Swindon to Oxford direct rail link

Response: Until 2003 a service did exist but was withdrawn due to concerns about capacity in the Bristol area. The emergence of Science Vale UK as a centre for growth and a need to offer excellent rail connectivity from other parts of the country means we have identified a range of priorities on pages 81/82 of draft Rail Strategy. As part of the development of the Grove & Wantage station we will need to consider, with our partners along the route, a suitable train service that is achievable and offers value for money. The electrification and subsequent cascade of rolling stock may present a unique opportunity.

Strategy Amendment: None.

41

Bristol/Bath/South west direct rail links from Oxford

Response: See the response to Comment 40.

42

Choice/selection of services and time are priorities to other parts of the UK

Response: Oxfordshire benefits from a range of services to many destinations across the South West, Midlands, North West and North East of England and to South Wales as it is located at the focal point of two mainline axis. The number of destinations will increase further with the introduction of Evergreen 3 and East-West Rail.

Strategy Amendment: None.

43

Stratford-upon-Avon direct rail link from Oxford, via Honeybourne

Response: We have included a reference to this proposal on page 45 of the draft Rail Strategy when discussing the West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy, and on page 65 where it is shown as an aspiration. We are currently working with other local authorities to assess the feasibility of reopening this disused route. Given the challenges associated with re-opening the route through the centre of Stratford-upon-Avon, any implementation of the scheme will be some years away.

Strategy Amendment: None.

44

London St Pancras (International Gateway) direct rail link from Oxfordshire

Response: Geographically it will be difficult to provide a direct rail service to London St Pancras. The East-West Rail project would offer the opportunity to travel via Bedford and should there be a link between High Speed 1 and High Speed 2, a single change to reach mainland Europe would be possible at the Old Oak Common station in West London.

Strategy Amendment: We will add a statement on potential future international services in the section on High Speed 2 (pages 86-89).

45

Integrated timetables throughout train and bus networks

Response: We have won national awards for the rail feeder bus services which run under the Cotswold Line Railbus name. These are specifically timed to link with key trains to/from Oxford and London. The Bicester Taxibus also provides timed connections with peak hour train at Bicester North and is provided by the Chiltern Railways franchise. Throughout the draft Rail Strategy we have highlighted aspirations to extend the concept to other stations. We intend producing a Bus Strategy during 2012 which will include more detail on our policy towards integration between bus and rail.

Strategy Amendment: None.

46

Crossrail extension to Reading

Response: See the response to Comment 10.

47

Witney to Oxford rail link

Response: See the response to Comment 24.

48

South Coast (Brighton) direct rail services from Oxfordshire.

Response: A single journey each day used to be operated by the CrossCountry franchise but this was withdrawn several years ago and Brighton is no longer on the CrossCountry network. The most likely opportunity of linking the two cities would come from an Oxford to Gatwick Airport through service, with a single change on the Brighton Main Line.

Strategy Amendment: None.

The Role of Transport and Rail in Economic Development

Question 9

Respondents are asked what the key priorities should be for improving the rail network in a way that benefits business and job creation?

49

More stations to provide direct access to key employment locations and the provision of rail services in peak commuting periods, particularly in the 'Growth Arc'

Response: See the response to Comment 22.

50

Improved train services, frequencies, capacity, connectivity and reliability to address growing passenger demand

Response: One of the main challenges for the rail industry is to provide enough capacity to deal with expected levels of passenger (and freight) growth. The combination of longer outer suburban trains and new electric IEP trains will go some way to meeting demand, as will track and signalling improvements. This is a major theme for the draft Rail Strategy and we will work with our partners to ensure proposals actually happen.

Strategy Amendment: None

51

Progression of Grove & Wantage Station

Response: See the response to Comment 40.

52

Increasing rail freight (freight depots at key strategic destinations in Oxon, e.g. Bicester)

Response: We are highly supportive of moves to transfer freight to rail and this is shown on pages 48-49, 59-60 and 92-93 of the draft Rail Strategy. We recognise there is a need for a strategic freight terminal close to the motorway network, and improved capacity along the Didcot-Oxford-Banbury corridor for longer and larger freight trains.

Strategy Amendment: None.

53

Progression of East West Rail

Response: See the response to Comment 36.

54

New rail services and routes

Response: The draft Rail Strategy features a number of these; including Evergreen 3, East-West Rail, Oxford-Swindon-Bristol and Western Access to Heathrow.

Strategy Amendment: None.

55

Supporting inclusive cross ticketing

Response: The draft Rail Strategy (page 54) makes clear that we wish to see integrated ticketing across rail and bus services, using an ITSO-compliant Smartcard if feasible. We also wish to see the extension of the PLUSBUS scheme to Bicester, Thame and Henley-on-Thames.

Strategy Amendment: None.

56

More parking at stations (accommodating current and likely rise of home working and occasional travel needs)

Response: See the response to Comment 7. In addition we would like to see a more flexible approach to parking tariffs to better suit part-time workers and leisure travellers who do not require a full days parking.

Strategy Amendment: None.

57

Supporting light rail and feeder routes, or other rapid transit

Response: See the response to Comment 8.

58

Supporting additional inter-regional capacity

Response: Oxfordshire is already well connected but there are several improvements we have included in the draft Rail Strategy. These include Evergreen 3 which will bring a new rail link to High Wycombe, East-West Rail which will provide a link to Milton Keynes and to Bedford and new services west of Didcot to Swindon and Bristol. We also aspire for direct trains from Didcot Parkway to various destinations in the south and north of England. We will be discussing these with the train operators and Network Rail as necessary.**Strategy Amendment:** None.

59

Improved connectivity and integration between bus and rail services

Response: See the response to Comment 7.**Strategy Amendment:** None.

60

Improve the Cotswold Line

Response: The line has recently benefitted from a £67 million improvement scheme to add 20 miles of additional track and platforms at Charlbury and Ascott-under-Wychwood. Further major infrastructure changes are like to be some years away. On pages 65/66 of the draft Rail Strategy we set out our aspirations for further improvements.

The rail industry is already planning to provide extra capacity through longer trains and reintroduction of refurbished 'Adelante' trains and this will provide immediate benefits in terms of reliability, seat capacity and quality of the passenger experience.

Strategy Amendment: None.

61

Improve the comfort and price of rail travel

Response: Both of these issues are outside of the council's immediate control, but we know they are important issues for the rail industry and national Government. There are already committed plans to introduce longer trains and new IEP electric trains from 2017, which will improve comfort and capacity.

Fares are discussed on pages 52-54 of the draft Rail Strategy. Fares are used to operate the rail network and are regulated by a Government policy where the balance between the taxpayer and the passenger is being proportionally rebalanced so the taxpayer pays less and passengers pay more. Despite that, there continues to be a rise in passengers and more investment in major projects such as electrification and new trains.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Key Economic Drivers, Developments and Places

Question 10

Respondents are asked to consider each geographical area of the county and consider if there are other opportunities for better rail services that should be part of the strategy.

62

Witney to Oxford rail service/line, linking Carterton and Brize Norton

Response: See the response to Comment 47.

63

New Kidlington Station

Response: See the response to Comment 19.

64

New Grove & Wantage Station

Response: See the response to Comment 40.

65

Milton Park Station

Response: See the response to Comment 18.

66

Didcot to Abingdon rail link, more focus on Abingdon in the Draft Rail Strategy

Response: See the response to Comment 16.

67

Restoration of Oxford to Stratford-upon-Avon direct rail link, via Honeybourne

Response: See the response to Comment 43.

68

New Redbridge Station

Response: See the response to Comment 25.

69

Maximising potential of Reading for connectivity to inter-regional services, particularly from Didcot

Response: The draft Rail Strategy refers to the benefits arising following redevelopment of Reading station, and the potential extension of Crossrail services from Maidenhead is something we strongly support. However, we would prefer to see Didcot served directly by more inter-regional services in its role as the gateway to Science Vale UK.

Strategy Amendment: None.

70

Improve journey times between Oxford and Birmingham

Response: This is an aspiration that we have set out on page 70 of the draft Rail Strategy.

Strategy Amendment: None.

71

Improved Bicester to Oxford and Didcot rail service to benefit commuters

Response: The Council has already been successful in increasing travel on the Bicester-Oxford line by 203% since 2008. There is clearly latent demand for rail travel and with Bicester expanding there are some exciting new opportunities. Collectively Evergreen 3 and East-West Rail will offer four trains every hour to Oxford, with two of these planned to carry on to Didcot and Reading. A journey time around 25 minutes to Didcot compares favourably with the often congested A34.

Strategy Amendment: None.

72

Create commuter transport on the closed Beeching lines

Response: We have included safeguarding of some disused, freight only and preserved lines on page 60 of the draft Rail Strategy, although there are no immediate plans to introduce any commuter services. Our role would be limited to working with the rail industry to assess the feasibility of a proposal on a financial and operating basis and they would determine acceptability.

Strategy Amendment: None.

CHAPTER 4: NETWORK ASPIRATIONS

Rail Industry Investment Plans

Question 11

Respondents are asked whether they agree with the proposed County Council support for the measures shown in rail industry investment plans.

Yes - I agree with the County Council's proposed support **80% (43)**

No – I disagree (see below) **20% (11)**

What changes should we consider in our proposed support for measures included in rail industry plans?

73

Investment that supports Oxfordshire's economic development should be prioritised over easing commuting into London, support if compatible with the 'Oxfordshire Growth Arc'.

Response: The draft Rail Strategy sets a priority for rail to support economic growth in Oxfordshire, and improve connectivity with other parts of the country. We cannot ignore the fact that many people live in Oxfordshire, contribute to the local economy, but choose to commute to London and elsewhere for employment. Similarly we need to ensure that the county is an attractive location for businesses to locate and they need good rail links, for example to Bristol, London, Milton Keynes, and to Heathrow Airport. Improving public transport connectivity will deliver benefits locally within the 'Growth Arc' and further afield.

Strategy Amendment: None

74

Bring forward investment needed for Grove & Wantage station

Response: See the response to Comment 40.

75

Oxfordshire County Council's support of passenger and freight enhancements on Didcot-Oxford-Banbury, should preclude closing intermediate stations

Response: We are not proposing any station closures, but a review of how those stations are served would be welcomed so the rail network can accommodate increases in freight and passenger demand. We will consider passenger and freight markets equally, and will support the provision of additional capacity on this congested section of railway, and also proposals that shift freight off the road and onto rail, as that results in fewer lorry journeys, less congestion and better road safety for local communities.

Strategy Amendment: We will clarify our views on the mix of freight and passenger traffic, and the need to make best use of the network.

76

Make reference to potential reinstatement of Honeybourne-Stratford-upon-Avon route in Western RUS

Response: See the response to Comment 43.

Rail Franchising Policy

Question 12

Respondents are asked whether they agree with the County Council's support for rail franchising.

Yes – I agree	77% (37)
No – I disagree	23% (11)

Passenger Service Levels

Question 13

Respondents are asked whether the minimum service levels shown in the draft strategy are adequate and acceptable to meet the needs of Oxfordshire residents and businesses.

Yes – the minimum service levels are adequate and acceptable	72% (34)
No – the minimum service levels are not acceptable (see below)	28% (13)

What changes should we consider to the minimum service levels shown in the draft strategy to make them adequate and acceptable?

77

Late trains from airports and stations to Oxfordshire should be added

Response: The only airport link we currently have is to Birmingham International, and the last train to Oxford departs at 2215 on weekdays and 2115 at weekends. Giving some time to reach their final destination after Oxford, these times are actually quite good. The draft Rail Strategy is seeking later trains from London to Oxford (page 50), and we support the introduction of direct trains to Heathrow and Gatwick Airports. A need to do maintenance on the track overnight often dictates when the last train can run, but the industry is moving towards a 24/7 railway on primary routes, such as the one through Oxford.

Strategy Amendment: None.

78

More trains in peak periods (06.00 - 08.30) and (16.00 - 18.30) from Culham Station

Response: Our research over six years indicates a dominant flow of people commuting from Oxford to Culham in the morning and returning in the afternoon. The timetable provides for this commuter market with five trains at 0617, 0646, 0710, 0731 and 0806, and four trains at 1601, 1702, 1732 and 1831. The draft Rail Strategy sets out the future importance of Culham within Science Vale UK, and we have indicated (page 62) that a review of stopping patterns should be undertaken to better match services with demand.

Strategy Amendment: None.

79

Arrivals into Oxford, Banbury and Didcot during peak periods should be at least 2 tph.

Response: We agree and our aspirations (outlined in chapter 5 of the Draft Rail Strategy) go some way beyond that.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Train Service Performance

Question 14

Respondents are asked whether the current punctuality and performance targets are still appropriate, or whether the County Council ought to seek more challenging targets as part of new franchises.

Yes - the punctuality and performance targets are still appropriate	53% (23)
No – the punctuality and performance targets should be higher	47% (20)

Fares and Ticketing

Question 15

Respondents are asked whether they agree with the County Council's policy regarding fares and ticketing.

Yes - I agree	70% (35)
No – I disagree (see below)	30% (15)

What changes should we consider to the County Council's policy regarding fares and ticketing?

80

Full integrated ticketing across buses and trains, ITSO Smartcards (e.g. Plusbus)

Response: See the response to Comment 55.

81

Increased range of tickets available to rail users (e.g. day tickets)

Response: This is a matter for the Train Operating Companies, but is something that we would welcome. There are already a number of one or three day rover tickets that give unlimited travel within defined areas covering Oxfordshire, the Thames Valley or the Cotswolds, and also an Oxford evening out ticket.

Strategy Amendment: None.

82

Plusbus tickets should be sold on buses for bus to train journeys to be enabled

Response: This is hugely desirable but the changes to ticketing equipment on board buses would be very expensive and not something bus operators could reasonably be expected to provide. PLUSBUS tickets can be bought in advance online or via the telephone, and used at both ends of a rail journey to get you to and from the station. A more instant solution may come from stored-value smartcards and we have set out our position on this on page 54 of the draft Rail Strategy.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Stations

Question 16

Respondents are asked whether they agree with the County Council's policy towards the development of stations facilities, and in particular producing a Rail Quality Partnership and Station Travel Plans.

Yes - I agree with the policy on development of station facilities **80% (40)**

No – I disagree (see below) **20% (10)**

What comments or changes would you like to suggest to the policy on the development of station facilities, as Rail Quality Partnership and Station Travel Plans?

83

Use of developer funding and Community Infrastructure Levy to fund station facilities/improvements

Response: A number of funding sources are available, and for the Council it is usually better to offer match-funding with a Train Operating Company. There are many calls on development-based funding and the terms of the agreement often prevent it being used on projects that are not associated with the development. Changes in the way which funding is secured for major priority projects in Oxfordshire may come into effect in 2013/14. It should be noted that the Community Infrastructure Levy will be a District Council function.

Strategy Amendment: None.

84

Encourage greater levels of car parking at stations at fair pricing levels, particularly where none currently exists

Response: As explained on page 56 of the Draft Rail Strategy, we support the aspiration for greater levels of car parking capacity; particularly at stations where driving is the most viable option. Pricing is a matter for the car park operators; but should be set at levels that encourage rail travel and discourages parking in inappropriate locations (for example on residential side streets).

Strategy Amendment: None.

85

Oxford station travel plan needs to address Botley Road bridge issues

Response: This is noted and will be considered when the Oxford Station Travel Plan is developed.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Safety and Personal Security

Question 17

Respondents are asked whether they agree with the County Council's policy towards safety and personal security.

Yes - I agree with the policy on safety and personal security	96% (48)
No – I disagree	4% (2)

Passenger Information

Question 18

Respondents are asked whether they agree that the County Council should set up an Information Partnership for bus and rail companies, and set standards for the supply of travel information.

Yes – the Council should setup an information partnership	84% (41)
No – I disagree. This should be left to the individual companies	16% (8)

Customer Expectations

Question 19

Respondents are asked whether there are other customer expectations that ought to be considered to improve customer satisfaction.

Yes - there are other customer expectations (see below)	50% (24)
No – there are no other customer expectations	50% (24)

Please tell us what other customer expectations ought to be considered to improve customer satisfaction.

86

Reliable Real Time Information for rail services, including delay announcements

Response: We totally agree that this is important and the reassurance given by accurate information can be the deciding factor to use the train, especially when there is disruption. We have previously jointly-funded with the rail industry new information displays at local stations that hitherto had no facility and will keep this under review as part of the proposed Information Partnership.

Strategy Amendment: We will make a specific point about the need for accurate reliable information in Chapter 4 of the Rail Strategy.

87

Encourage community owned rail and bus services to feed into the main rail network

Response: Please see responses to Comments 2 and 15.

88

Off-peak ticket/fare reductions, affordable train tickets

Response: This is a matter for Train Operating Companies and is discussed on pages 52-54 of the draft Rail Strategy. Fares contribute to the cost of running the railway and are regulated by a Government policy where the split between the taxpayer and the passenger is being proportionally rebalanced so the taxpayer pays less and passengers pay more. A large range of tickets are available with excellent off-peak deals if booked in advance. In the draft Rail Strategy we highlight a few anomalies and issues that deserve attention – specifically fare levels for journeys of a broadly similar distance and differences at the start and end of the peak hours.

Strategy Amendment: None.

89

Rest areas on rail side, warm sheltered waiting rooms and clean and good quality facilities at stations

Response: We have worked extensively with the Train Operating Companies over the past five years to improve facilities at local stations, with all but one platform benefitting from sheltered waiting facilities. Some significant works has been done at several of the stations and we remain highly supportive of efforts to improve facilities and the overall experience of using a station. Chapter 5 of the draft Rail Strategy sets out further projects on a route by route basis.

Strategy Amendment: None.

90

Increased station and rail accessibility for those with mobility impairments

Response: This is inherently part of everything that we do, and has not been made too explicit in the draft Rail Strategy. The Council is not the service provider but groups such as Oxfordshire Unlimited can provide valuable input to shape decision-making by the rail industry. The rail industry is governed by a number of legal obligations under the Equality Act and Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations, and complies with DfT approved guidance on design and customer service. It is clearly not affordable or practical to make all of the 2,500 stations on the UK rail network accessible so evidenced-based proposals stand more chance of success.

Strategy Amendment: We will add some wording on train and station accessibility under the 'Customer Expectations' section in Chapter 4.

91

Comfort and quality of rail services, including increased luggage storage and toilets

Response: The Council is not responsible for, or involved in, the specification for rolling stock used on services in Oxfordshire. We appreciate that comfort is an important issue and therefore welcome the introduction of refurbished 'Adelante' trains, and new electric IEP trains from 2017. We believe internal seating and luggage space should be adaptable and suitable for the kind of journeys on which they are used.

Strategy Amendment: None.

92

Affordable parking at stations

Response: See the response to Comment 84.

93

Regular rail services

Response: Whilst we agree that regular services are important it is equally important that supply is tailored to match demand, ensuring there is a mix of fast and stopping services to broaden their appeal and make optimal use of the track capacity. It isn't possible for every service to stop at every station; so choices do have to be made about stopping patterns. Chapter 5 of the draft Rail Strategy sets out our aspiration for rail services on a route by route basis.

Strategy Amendment: None.

94

Increased train punctuality and reliability

Response: This is a crucial aspect of the train service and one that passengers rightly expect. Reliability (a train running) is generally good, and projects, such as the recent redoubling of the Cotswolds & Malverns Line and the expansion of Reading station are intended to boost punctuality (a train on time) by minimising delays caused en-route. We received a neutral response to our consultation question about setting higher standards, and the Council will be particularly supportive of proposals to increase track and signalling capacity through the Didcot-Oxford-Banbury corridor, including Oxford station.

Strategy Amendment: We will stress the importance of striving for, and maintaining, high levels of punctuality in Chapter 4.

Question 20

Respondents are asked what their top priority would be when travelling by train.

Train arriving/departing on time (i.e. punctual)	28% (15)
Frequency of trains	21% (11)
Value for money for price of your ticket	15% (8)
Availability of a seat	13% (7)
Sufficient room for all the passengers to sit/stand	6% (3)
Car parking at station	4% (2)
Connections with other public transport	4% (2)
Journey time as short as possible	4% (2)
Availability of staff	2% (1)
Provision of timetable information	2% (1)
Toilet facilities	2% (1)
Café/coffee shop at station	0% (0)
Catering on-train	0% (0)
Cleanliness of the station	0% (0)
Cleanliness of the train	0% (0)
Ease of ticket buying facilities	0% (0)
Luggage space	0% (0)
Personal security	0% (0)

Station Adoption and Community Rail

Question 21

Respondents are asked about their views on the County Council supporting Community Rail, and what other measures could generate community interest in local rail stations and services.

95

Agree in principle to adopting a station scheme and community rail partnership

Response: These are important initiatives; especially given the Government’s ‘localism’ agenda, and we have excellent experience of involving the local community in their station.

Strategy Amendment: None.

96

Reiterate ticket and parking charges and access

Response: See the responses to Comments 7, 56 and 84.

97

Good car parking, cycle storage/parking along with good connectivity is required

Response: See the responses to Comments 7, 56 and 84.

Strategy Amendment: None.

98

Need to have full support from Oxfordshire County Council, rail users and train companies, plus local political support

Response: Agreed. All of these parties have already worked together on various projects and are fully behind the concept of Community Rail.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Freight

Question 22

Respondents are asked whether the proposed County Council policy on rail freight is appropriate.

Yes - the policy on rail freight is appropriate **88% (43)**

No – the policy is not correct (see below) **12% (6)**

What changes should we consider making in our policy on rail freight?

99

Policy presents a clear conflict between freight services and fast passenger services on the existing network capacity

Response: See the response to Comment 101.

100

Support should only be given where passenger services are not disrupted (e.g. passing loops required)

Response: See the response to Comment 101.

101 Support the continuation of rail freight facilities on the condition that it must be compatible with enabling local passenger services

Response: There is a balance to be struck and we will consider passenger and freight markets equally when consulted about any service changes. Our support will be given to proposals that see more freight taken off the road and onto rail, as it results in fewer lorry journeys, less congestion, better air quality and safer roads. Equally we want to see local passenger services that meet the needs of local communities and encourage economic growth. The rail industry is moving towards a 24/7 railway which would distribute trains over a longer day with less interaction, and we will champion track and signalling capacity improvements on the busiest section of route, between Didcot-Oxford-Banbury.

Strategy Amendment: We will clarify our views on the mix of freight and passenger traffic, and the need to make best use of the network.

Question 23

Respondents are asked whether there are any priority freight projects that the County Council ought to support.

102 Improved freight routes to the West Midlands and Southampton (A34 corridor)

Response: We are already working with the Department for Transport on the East-West Rail project which would create an alternative freight route via Milton Keynes. Gauge enhancement of the route via Banbury has increased the rail market share by 6%.

Strategy Amendment: None.

103 Only slow local lines should be increased freight traffic be encouraged, with passing loops

Response: See the response to Comment 101.

104 Prioritise East West Rail

Response: See the response to Comment 36.

105 Rail freight depot at Graven Hill

Response: This is identified as an aspiration on pages 72 and 92 of the draft Rail Strategy, and discussions are already underway with the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Transport in the context of the East-West Rail project. A strategic freight terminal with excellent road and rail access could be included in redevelopment of the site.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Safeguarding Land for Future Schemes

Question 24

Respondents are asked whether the County Council should be safeguarding land along the five rail corridors identified.

Yes - safeguard the land in these five corridors	98% (51)
No – land should not be safeguarded	2% (1)

CHAPTER 5: LINE OF ROUTE ISSUES AND ASPIRATIONS

Great Western Main Line

Question 25

Respondents are asked whether the County Council has the right priorities and aspirations for the Great Western Main Line through Oxfordshire.

Yes	57% (29)
No (see below)	43% (22)

What other aspirations and priorities should we consider for the Great Western main line through Oxfordshire?

106 Prioritise Grove & Wantage Station

Response: See the response to Comment 40.

107 Direct train service from Milton Park and Grove & Wantage to Reading, London, Birmingham and Swindon

Response: See the response to Comments 18 and 40.

108 Trains should have a clockface timetable, but trains in opposite directions should be scheduled to cross at key interchanges where possible to maximise interchange possibilities with other trains and buses.

Response: Whilst this is desirable, and in some cases entirely possible, the rail network is a highly complex operation and changes to timings can have an impact over a very wide area. As an example, the timings on CrossCountry trains are based on the time each train needs to be at Birmingham New Street. A more achievable arrangement would be higher frequency services so the time between connecting journeys is reduced. Altering the bus times is easier but care has to be taken not to disadvantage non-rail passengers and the Council cannot specify the timing of commercial bus services where the bus company is free to do whatever they choose.

Strategy Amendment: None.

109 Additional platforms may be required at Didcot

Response: There is no evidence to suggest that an additional platform is required, and in any case land is limited to do so. A previous proposal by the rail industry to build an extra platform on the tracks avoiding the station was not pursued and would have a major effect on capacity on the route. We believe better use can be made of the existing five platforms if timetables are reviewed to eliminate lengthy dwell times of some trains.

Strategy Amendment: None.

110 New Milton Park Station

Response: See the response to Comment 18.

111 New Redbridge station

Response: See the response to Comment 8.

112 New 4-platform Oxford station on Oxpens Road

Response: Oxford station is one of our top priorities and the main issue is the capability of the track, signalling and station to handle a significant increase in the number of trains and passengers. With other priorities including more freight by rail, Evergreen 3 and East-West Rail the station area becomes a very serious capacity bottleneck. We are working in partnership with Oxford City Council, the rail industry and other stakeholders to develop a master plan for the station, which will set out how the station should be developed. The intention is to produce a proposal that takes account of commitments in electrification and resignalling and delivers an upgrade to passenger and interchange facilities. If that can be achieved on the existing site that would be preferable to relocation, and we had previously ruled out a move to the Oxpens area for that reason.

Strategy Amendment: None.

113 More frequent stopping services at Culham Station

Response: See the response to Comment 27.

114 Direct rail connections to London Heathrow and Gatwick

Response: See the responses to Comments 37 and 39.

115 Prioritise the upgrade of infrastructure to increase capacity between Oxford - Didcot, SVUK, East West rail to Bristol corridors

Response: Improving access to Science Vale UK is a top priority and we are waiting for a Government announcement on East-West Rail in the summer, and will be starting work on the outline business case for Grove & Wantage station during 2012.

Strategy Amendment: None.

116 Line - singular, start re-opening some of the closed routes where land is available

Response: The cost of reopening closed routes is significant and could only be justified by high levels of demand and a very strong business case. Development of East-West Rail has taken over 10 years even in areas where there is significant population growth.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Cotswolds & Malverns Line

Question 26

Respondents are asked whether the County Council has the right priorities and aspirations for the Cotswolds & Malverns Line through Oxfordshire.

Yes	78% (38)
No (see below)	22% (11)

What other priorities and aspirations should we consider for the Cotswolds & Malvern line through Oxfordshire?

- 117** Trains should have a clockface timetable, but trains in opposite directions should be scheduled to cross at key interchanges where possible to maximise interchange possibilities with other trains and buses

Response: See the response to Comment 108.

Strategy Amendment: None.

- 118** New Northern Gateway Station

Response: See the response to Comment 21.

- 119** Ensure adequate parking at stations along this line

Response: We are very aware that parking is a major concern at many stations on this line and we have been working with the rail industry to find appropriate solutions. We are pleased to have supported the bid to extend the car park at Charlbury, which will begin in May and open by September this year, and we supporting a bid to create a new car park at Hanborough station, where there is a chronic shortage of parking space. As a largely rural area, we recognise that driving to a station is more appropriate than, say, catching the bus, but where practical we do provide that as an alternative option.

Strategy Amendment: None.

- 120** Reference should be made to current business plan study of 11 funding partners led by Stratford on Avon District Council

Response: We have included a reference to this proposal on page 45 of the draft Rail Strategy when discussing the West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy, and on page 65 where it is shown as an aspiration. It is also included in the Delivery Plan on page 129.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Chiltern Main Line

Question 27

Respondents are asked whether the County Council has the right priorities and aspirations for the Chiltern Main Line through Oxfordshire.

Yes	80% (39)
No (see below)	20% (10)

What other priorities and aspirations should we consider for the Chiltern main line through Oxfordshire?

- 121** Trains should have a clockface timetable, but trains in opposite directions should be scheduled to cross at key interchanges where possible to maximise interchange possibilities with other trains and buses

Response: See the response to Comment 108.

122 Include Princes Risborough - Chinnor link

Response: See the response to Comment 15.

Cherwell Valley ('Oxford Canal Line')

Question 28

Respondents are asked whether the County Council has the right priorities and aspirations for the Cherwell Valley Line through Oxfordshire.

Yes **68% (34)**

No (see below) **32% (16)**

What other priorities and aspirations should we consider for the Cherwell Valley line through Oxfordshire?

122 Trains should have a clockface timetable, but trains in opposite directions should be scheduled to cross at key interchanges where possible to maximise interchange possibilities with other trains and buses

Response: See the response to Comment 108.

124 Kidlington Station

Response: See the response to Comment 19.

125 Northern Gateway Station

Response: See the response to Comment 21.

Bicester Branch Line ('Bicester Link')

Question 29

Respondents are asked whether the County Council has the right priorities and aspirations for the Bicester Branch Line.

Yes **88% (43)**

No (see below) **12% (6)**

What other priorities and aspirations should we consider for the Bicester branch line?

126 Trains should have a clockface timetable, but trains in opposite directions should be scheduled to cross at key interchanges where possible to maximise interchange possibilities with other trains and buses

Response: See the response to Comment 108.

127 More emphasis on Islip (hourly frequency)

Response: Whilst we have seen increased use at Islip since services were enhanced in 2008, we would have to be convinced there was actual demand for an hourly service before lobbying the rail industry. A new station will open not far away at Water Eaton as part of the Evergreen 3 project and it will be important to consider the impact on journey time for the majority of users. As a minimum we expect to see today's level of service maintained in the future allowing for commuting to both Bicester and Oxford, and a two-hourly service though the daytime may better match demand. We will keep the situation under review.

Strategy Amendment: None.

Henley-on-Thames Branch Line ('Regatta Line')

Question 30

Respondents are asked whether the County Council has the right priorities and aspirations for the Henley-on-Thames Branch Line.

Yes	85% (40)
No (see below)	15% (7)

What other priorities and aspirations should we consider for the Henley-on-Thames branch line?

128 Crossrail to start at Reading

Response: See the response to Comment 10.

129 More capacity, station car parking, better direct services to Paddington from Henley

Response: See the response to Comment 34. There remains some concern about the future of the existing direct services to London after completion of the electrification and Crossrail schemes. We will be lobbying for their retention but it is unlikely to be possible to introduce additional direct trains until such time as the branch line is also electrified. The car park at Henley has 280 spaces and is more than adequate to satisfy future demand.

Strategy Amendment: None.

CHAPTER 6: STRATEGIC PROJECTS

Question 31

Respondents are asked whether the County Council has correctly assessed its involvement in, and support for, the strategic projects and, what other issues they should consider.

Yes	42% (37)
No (see below)	58% (50)

What other issues should we consider?

130

Electrification of the East-West Rail line

Response: Whilst this would be desirable, adding the additional cost into the business case could jeopardise the entire project. The immediate priority is to get East-West Rail implemented as it has an exceptional business case using cascaded diesel trains. The Consortium promoting the project has worked with the Department for Transport to ensure that structures and stations are built to accommodate electrification in the future should the rail industry wish to introduce that enhancement.

Strategy Amendment: None.

131

New station at Milton Park

Response: See the response to Comment 18.

132

OCC should reconsider its association with group 51M and its position/policy on the objection to HS2

Response: The County Council is a non-contributory member of 51M and does not give any funding for its activities. It is important that we discuss the project with neighbouring councils because of its far reaching consequences, and the group is a useful mechanism to do that. Although we have concerns about the high cost, we need to be involved in the development of the project to represent the views of the highway authority and get the best deal for Oxfordshire residents close to the new railway.

Strategy Amendment: None.

133

Drop HS2 from the strategy

Response: The Government is committed to delivering High Speed 2 and as it has broad all-party support there is a strong likelihood it will go ahead. We therefore need to ensure we are involved in development of the project so we can get the best deal for Oxfordshire residents close to the proposed new railway. Although we have concerns about the costs involved, our Rail Strategy has to include this national project.

Strategy Amendment: None.

134

Protect public rights of way when promoting electrification

Response: We will consider Public Rights of Way issues on a case by case basis should they arise, but we do not envisage any major issues arising from electrification.

Strategy Amendment: None.

135

Extend Crossrail to Reading

Response: See the response to Comment 10.

136

IEP is the wrong approach

Response: The Council is not responsible for, or involved in, the specification for rolling stock used on services in Oxfordshire. We hope the new IEP trains will improve journey times and be better for the environment, and we believe the internal seating and luggage space should be adaptable and suitable for the kind of journeys on which they are used.

Strategy Amendment: None.

CHAPTER 7: FUNDING AND DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY

Question 32

Respondents are asked whether the County Council has correctly identified all potential sources of funding for rail infrastructure and services, or if there are other sources that ought to be investigated.

Yes - the strategy correctly identifies the sources of funding **50% (5)**

No – there are other sources of funding (see below) **50% (5)**

What other potential sources of funding for rail infrastructure and services ought to be investigated?

137

European Union

Response: The availability of EU funding is likely to be limited but a €50bn spending plan to improve Europe’s transport, energy and digital networks will form a key element in the EU budget up to 2020. The *Connecting Europe Facility* “will help to create jobs and boost Europe’s competitiveness” with “targeted investments to upgrade infrastructure and eliminate bottlenecks”.

Strategy Amendment: On page 100, we have included a reference to potential EU funding for internationally significant upgrades from the Connecting Europe Facility.

138

Section 106/developer contributions

Response: This is already identified as a source of funding on page 98 of the draft Rail Strategy.

Strategy Amendment: None
