

CABINET – 15 SEPTEMBER 2009

CHILTERN RAILWAYS EVERGREEN 3 PROJECT TO INTRODUCE A NEW LONDON MARYLEBONE – BICESTER – OXFORD TRAIN SERVICE

Report by Head of Transport

Introduction

1. Chiltern Railways have advised us that they propose shortly to submit a Transport and Works Act application to introduce a new London Marylebone – Bicester – Oxford train service, with consequent infrastructure works on and around railways in Oxfordshire. The County Council is a consultee in this process and it is therefore necessary now to formulate, as far as possible, the County Council's view on it.
2. The proposal is described in more detail below. The remainder of the report then covers the main issues which the Council will wish to take into account. It first describes the strategic context, then discusses the travel benefits which the proposed services would offer, followed by the potential impacts of the proposed scheme which will have to be taken into account.
3. Chiltern Railways (a subsidiary of Deutsche Bahn, the German national railway operator) holds a franchise from Government to operate train services from London Marylebone to Aylesbury, and to the West Midlands via High Wycombe, Bicester and Banbury. The current franchise started in 2002 and is currently scheduled to end in 2013. However, uniquely amongst rail franchises, it has a provision for the franchise length to be extended to 2021 if Chiltern Railways can agree with the Department for Transport, and implement, "secondary aspirations" which develop their network in ways considered beneficial.
4. Thirteen such secondary aspirations were included in the original franchise specification, from which a selection could be made of those to be taken forward for franchise extension. One was "to open a new railway line between Princes Risborough and Oxford via M40 junction 8 [and] to construct new stations at Thame, M40 and South Oxford". This inclusion was discussed with, and supported in principle by, the County Council at the time. However, it is understood that detailed site investigation showed that the route then intended is impracticable – or at least unduly expensive and disruptive – and an alternative link to Oxford is now proposed via Bicester. Chiltern Railways have branded this (and other related proposals) as Evergreen 3.
5. The railway from Oxford to Bicester is currently operated as a low-speed, single track branch as part of the First Great Western franchise. The track continues beyond Bicester Town station towards Bletchley (Milton Keynes) without a current passenger service. Just beyond the end of the current

passenger route, on the edge of Bicester, it passes under the Chiltern Railways line without physical connection.

6. Chiltern Railways' proposal now consists of:
 - A short new stretch of railway linking the two lines to allow through running from Marylebone to Oxford;
 - Upgrading and (at least partially) double-tracking of the Oxford – Bicester line to allow 2 trains each way per hour running at up to 100 miles per hour;
 - Enhancement of the stations at Bicester Town and Islip;
 - Provision of a new parkway station adjacent to the County Council's Water Eaton Park and Ride site;
 - Provision of an extra track into Oxford station and two new terminal platforms at the north end of the station;
 - A service over this route of 2 trains per hour between Marylebone and Oxford, replacing, between Bicester and Oxford, the current First Great Western service.
7. An overall plan of the proposal is shown as **Annex 1**, and further details can be found at www.chiltern-evergreen3.co.uk and in the Members Resource Centre.
8. To secure a franchise extension Chiltern Railways have to agree financial details with the Department for Transport by December 2009. To this end they propose to submit in October an application for a Transport and Works Act (TWA) Order. The TWA process is a national Government-level procedure making provision for planning consent and compulsory purchase for major infrastructure projects. There is an objection process and provision for a Public Inquiry if necessary. The submission will include an Environmental Impact Assessment, which officers understand is in preparation.

Context

9. Oxfordshire faces significant growth and infrastructure challenges over the coming decades. The South East Plan states that 55,200 dwellings are to be built in Oxfordshire between 2006 and 2026, of which 8,000 will be in Oxford and 4,900 in Bicester (although this figure may increase with the eco-town proposal). This will place significant pressure on the County's infrastructure and the already congested transport network. Improvements to the network between Oxford, Bicester and further afield are important to help accommodate this growth and in realising Oxfordshire's economic potential.
10. The road corridor between Bicester and Oxford suffers from daily congestion issues, particularly on the approaches to M40 Junction 9 and the A34. This is

for a number of reasons, notably that neither the bus service, which is also subject to the same congestion, nor the relatively slow and infrequent train service, currently provide a very attractive public transport alternative to the car along this route. Also, the poor job offer in Bicester, where housing outstrips employment provision, leads to approximately 60% of Bicester's population commuting out of the town to work. The "Access to Oxford" project is, amongst other things, aiming to resolve the transport issues on the Bicester to Oxford corridor. Therefore, it will be important that Access to Oxford and Evergreen 3 are aligned to meet the challenges that we are collectively facing.

Implications for East West Rail proposal

11. The East West Rail (EWR) 'western' proposal, for a rail service of 2 trains per hour between Oxford, Bicester, Milton Keynes and Bedford, has been an aspiration of this Council and others for many years. A series of studies, which are project managed and funded by Milton Keynes Partnerships in association with the rail industry and steered by the EWR Consortium of local authorities throughout the route, is in progress. The studies include design work and the development of a business case for the introduction of this service, which is expected to be largely funded through proposed development in Milton Keynes and elsewhere.
12. The Chiltern Railways Evergreen 3 proposal initially presented to the County Council and others in 2008, included double-tracking of the entire route between Bicester and Oxford, with capacity for 6 trains (5 passenger, 1 freight) each way per hour. This would have been a major benefit for the EWR proposal, largely obviating the need for separate EWR investment over this section. This offer to help deliver EWR was strongly supported by officers. The public consultation (at which there was substantial public support) was also on the basis of this higher capacity railway.
13. We understand that the TWA application will still provide for a complete double track railway, and comments on the impact of the proposed infrastructure on its surroundings should therefore be on this basis. However, we also understand that Chiltern Railways' engineers have now discovered structural problems on part of the route between Bicester and Islip which would make double-tracking that section more expensive than initially envisaged. What would now initially be constructed would therefore be only partially double-tracked and have capacity for only 4 trains (3 passenger, 1 freight) each way per hour.
14. This would allow only a restricted EWR service of 1 train per hour whereas the County Council has previously strongly pressed for at least 2 trains per hour. However, it would not preclude further capacity enhancement for additional EWR trains. Chiltern Railways have stated that their construction would be done in such a way as to enable a further track upgrade to be carried out as easily as possible, and that the upgraded track and stations and car parks which they do propose, together with TWA authority for a fully double tracked railway, would make EWR easier and cheaper to implement than 'starting from scratch'. The implications of this change of scope have

yet to be fully explored by the EWR Consortium; but the initial reaction of their consultants is that Evergreen 3 does still appear to be potentially beneficial to the EWR project.

15. Nevertheless, Evergreen 3 as now scoped would not offer the major benefits for EWR which were initially envisaged. Insofar as the earlier support for Evergreen 3 was based on EWR, this change to the scope of the scheme makes it less attractive. That being said, it needs to be recognised (as described below) that the Evergreen 3 proposal offers significant benefits in its own right, especially in the enhancement proposed to the service between Bicester and Oxford, which was one of the core objectives of the EWR proposal.

Passenger Services Offered by Evergreen 3

16. Chiltern Railways proposes, broadly, a service of two fast trains per hour between Marylebone and Oxford; all trains would call at High Wycombe, Bicester Town and Water Eaton, selected trains would call at Islip and there may be other calls by at least some trains between Bicester and London. It is considered that this would provide a number of benefits:
 - (a) A much improved – 2 trains per hour normally taking 14 minutes, as opposed to the present 11 trains a day taking 26 minutes – train service between Bicester and Oxford, serving a station with much better facilities than the present minimal provision at Bicester Town (though in the short term the works to upgrade the line would be likely to significantly disrupt the existing Oxford – Bicester service).
 - (b) Two extra trains per hour between Bicester and London, additional to the two per hour already provided from Bicester North. The trains would however be spread between two stations, so would not provide a ‘true’ four trains per hour service; passengers would have to decide in advance which route to use and have only two per hour on their chosen route. Premises in the vicinity of Bicester Town – which includes Bicester Village retail centre – would gain a more conveniently located London terminal.
 - (c) A direct train service between Oxford and High Wycombe, providing a link not presently possible (save by a very indirect route) by rail and with a very limited service by bus.
 - (d) Two extra trains per hour between Oxford and London. These would be somewhat slower to Marylebone (66 minutes) than the present two fast trains per hour to Paddington (generally 57 minutes); Marylebone is slightly closer to most central London destinations as the crow flies, but on only one Underground line as against the three at Paddington. Because they will serve a different London terminal, the service will not be readily usable as a ‘true’ four trains per hour service. This proposal therefore does not represent an ‘ideal’ way of enhancing Oxford to London services. However, there are various infrastructure works planned on the Paddington route in coming years – a major

reconstruction of Reading station and its approaches; provision between Maidenhead and Paddington for Crossrail suburban services; and the recently announced electrification of main line services from Paddington, including those to Oxford. All of these works are liable to lead to some disruption to services on the Paddington line, and there is thus no possibility of an increase in the Paddington service at least until all are completed; the Chiltern Railways service would also provide a valuable alternative during periods of disruption (any equivalent disruption arising from construction of Evergreen 3 would largely be limited to the Oxford – Bicester service).

- (e) A link to London from north Oxford and Kidlington, through the proposed Water Eaton Parkway. Chiltern railways say that they will provide an extra car park here which would have capacity both for all of their passengers and any future EWR passengers. In addition, it would be convenient for frequent bus services to Kidlington, Summertown, North Oxford and the John Radcliffe and Churchill Hospitals, with potential to develop as a major interchange. Rail services from this interchange would of course also be available to Bicester, High Wycombe and Oxford station.
- (f) A link between Islip and London. However, the service proposed by Chiltern Railways at Islip is likely to be less than the 11 trains each way per day which this small community presently enjoys to/from Bicester and Oxford.

Potential Impacts

Green Belt

- 17. The proposed Water Eaton parkway station is in the Oxford Green Belt wherein there is a policy presumption against inappropriate development. The Government's Planning Policy Guidance 2 (Green Belts) defines the purposes for which green belt land may be used or developed. A railway station and associated uses such as parking and re-siting of the existing aggregates rail depot for example, are classed as inappropriate development. The development has the potential to provide significant transport benefits for Oxford which on the face of it would be difficult to provide on a non green belt site around the City. Nevertheless, the onus will be on Chiltern Railways to demonstrate in its Transport and Works Application that there are 'very special circumstances' which outweigh the harm caused to the green belt.
- 18. The Campaign to Protect Rural England has suggested that a Water Eaton station may create commercial pressures for employment and further development in the locality. Given the site's location in the green belt this is unlikely to be acceptable unless very special circumstances could be demonstrated.

Waste Management Site and Aggregates Rail Depot at Water Eaton

19. Two of the three options for a Parkway Station at Water Eaton involve the redevelopment of the site of the adjacent disused Grain Silo and all three options affect the rail sidings which are operated as the Kidlington aggregates rail depot.

- (i) On 1 September 2008 planning and Regulation Committee agreed to grant planning permission (subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement) for a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) on the Grain Silo site. Work undertaken for the Minerals and Waste Development Framework (MWDF) identified the Grain Silo site as one of eight sites that offered the potential for the development of a strategic waste management facility. Grundons has also nominated the site for possible inclusion in the MWDF for materials recycling; however, it is thought that Grundons do not own the site and should the company decide to withdraw its nomination (perhaps because of a difficulty over land purchase or lease agreements) the deliverability of the site would be questionable, which would affect its potential for inclusion in the MWDF.

However, it has been assessed that there is a need for a large scale MRF in the county to serve the main centres of population and employment, particularly Oxford, to help meet waste recycling and landfill diversion targets. Eight sites were identified at the 'Issues and Options' consultation stage of the MWDF within the Oxford City boundaries but it is unlikely that any would be deliverable. Others just outside the city but within the Oxford Green Belt were also identified. These included the Grain Silo site, and the resolution to grant permission for a MRF at this site indicates its suitability for waste management use. This site is important therefore in terms of its potential to accommodate a future waste management facility to serve Oxford.

Very special circumstances had to be demonstrated to justify a grant of planning permission for the MRF in 2008 because of its green belt location. If the Grain Silo site were to be used for other purposes, an alternative site to serve Oxford's waste recycling needs would be required. It is likely that the green belt search would need to be widened or, alternatively, Oxford's needs would have to be met further away from the City, with consequent increased travel distances. **It would therefore be strongly preferable for the Parkway Station to be developed in a way which allows for the provision of this important waste facility**, unless it can be demonstrated that there are other benefits which outweigh this. There should not be any conflict between a MRF at the grain silo site and an adjacent station at Water Eaton, as the waste recycling operation would take place inside a modern, well-designed building and would be subject to strict planning and environmental controls.

- (ii) The Aggregates Rail Depot site is safeguarded for this use in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan (saved Policy SD9). This is one of only

three rail depots in Oxfordshire where crushed rock is brought into the county for the general aggregates market, to supplement local supply, and it is the only one close to Oxford. Although the proposals seek to retain the Depot in some form, the use would probably have to be moved further north to a green field site in the green belt. As set out above, very special circumstances would have to be demonstrated by Chiltern Railways to justify this development and there is no guarantee that this could be achieved. Loss of the depot would result in an increase in transport of aggregates by road to supply the market in the Oxford area and could lead to increased production from quarries in Oxfordshire. It is therefore important that this rail aggregates depot is retained, in either its existing or a suitable nearby location, unless it can be demonstrated that there are other benefits which outweigh this.

Transport Impacts

20. Chiltern Railways are currently testing the traffic impact of their proposals using the County Council's Central Oxfordshire Transport Model (COTM). It is too early to ascertain the outputs of the modelling work. However, once these are known it will be imperative that these are accurately reflected in Chiltern's TWA submission as part of a full Transport Assessment which, to date, the applicant has not agreed to undertake. In advance of receiving the modelling results, officers have concluded that a number of issues will need to be addressed and these are set out in Annex 2. Note that these issues may alter depending on the modelling outcomes. The main points of concern to date are:
- (a) the amount of private motor vehicle traffic generated as a result of the proposed parkway station at Water Eaton;
 - (b) the impact the increased attractiveness of the Bicester Town service and station might have on the highway network;
 - (c) the impact of the increase in the frequency of service at Bicester on the level crossing on the London Road – upgrading is likely to be needed;
 - (d) the management and operation of the new car park at Water Eaton and ensuring that the operation of the Council's free Park and Ride car park is not undermined;
 - (e) access to and from the stations and interchanges, and integration with other public transport modes.
21. There is a particular concern about the impact on the existing County Council Water Eaton Park and Ride site (point (d)). This site is important for people transferring from car to bus for travel to the city centre and, increasingly, to the John Radcliffe, Nuffield and Churchill Hospitals. In accordance with County Council policy at all Park and Ride sites, parking there is currently free. It will be important to ensure that spaces do not instead become occupied by rail users; this would be especially a concern if there is a charge for the adjacent rail station car park (as is common rail industry practice), but could also be an issue if the number of rail users exceeds the capacity of the rail station car park (especially since rail commuters typically arrive earlier in the day than bus commuters). A clear management regime needs to be agreed which jointly ensures that such issues do not arise, whilst avoiding the

County Council being committed either to expenditure (on control barriers and systems, for example) which would otherwise be unnecessary or to an otherwise undesired change in policy at Park and Ride sites.

22. There would also be significant implications for Oxford Rail Station and the Access to Oxford work. Chiltern Railways' proposal includes two new platforms at the north end of Oxford Station, one five car in length and one six car in length. Oxford Station is owned by Network Rail and leased to First Great Western as part of the Great Western Franchise. Chiltern is not proposing to take over the management of Oxford Station. The County Council is a key stakeholder as it is currently working in partnership with Network Rail on proposals to enhance Oxford Rail Station as part of the Access to Oxford project.
23. The Station Enhancement Project consists of Network Rail's proposal to build a new bay platform south of the existing station on part of the site currently occupied by the long stay Becket Street car park. This is being funded by Network Rail. The County Council is preparing a business case to ensure this platform is properly integrated with the existing station building. This will be achieved by creating a new transfer deck across Botley Road to replace the existing footbridge and integrating this into an extended station building. There will also be improved forecourt and interchange facilities to ensure the station is able to accommodate future growth that will arise from development in Central Oxfordshire and the continued promotion of rail as a means to access Oxford sustainably. The County Council has £6 million allocated for this scheme as part of Access to Oxford, with funding available in 2010/11.
24. Chiltern's proposals would require the demolition of existing staff accommodation facilities to the north of the station and the relocation of the short stay car park. There could also be an impact on the existing main station building. Chiltern have funding available to deliver the new track and platforms needed for their scheme and relocate facilities as required but there is an opportunity to integrate this work within the wider Station Enhancement Project, thus delivering a bigger and better scheme. The improvement in passenger services associated with Chiltern's proposals would inevitably lead to passenger growth at Oxford Station and therefore increase the need for a larger station building with better interchange facilities to enable passengers to access the station by sustainable modes. The County Council is developing a Masterplan for the Oxford Station site which takes into account the possibility of Chiltern's proposals being delivered.
25. In addition to the £6 million allocated to Oxford Station as part of Access to Oxford, an additional £15m is allocated to improvements on the Oxford to Bicester Railway Line, including a new Parkway station somewhere on the line to help relieve pressure on the A34. The Evergreen 3 proposals, if completed, would deliver most, if not all the benefits that were anticipated for this £15 million. There may be the opportunity to transfer this money to other elements within the Access to Oxford package, potentially increasing the amount of money available for the station enhancement project to £21 million.

Impact on Public Rights of Way

26. Public Rights of Way are public highways in law and Oxfordshire County Council as Highway Authority is responsible for protecting and asserting the public's right of access to and along the 2,600 mile network across the county. Within the scope of this project there are 12 Public Footpaths, 2 Public Bridleways and two public road crossings which form key links within the Rights of Way network.
27. The assessment of need and consequent impact of this scheme on public rights of way is drawn from the visions and objectives in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006 – 2011; see **Annex 3**. Adopting these principles, officers are seeking to minimise the impact of the scheme on the rights of way network, while acknowledging the limitations of what can be provided. The principal objective of improving public safety by physically removing any direct contact between the railway and Rights of Way users is supported.
28. Discussions with Chiltern Railways' consultants confirm that many of the initial concerns regarding provision of crossings and the length of diversions have been satisfactorily addressed. Some minor issues are still being considered by the consultants. However, two key areas of concern for countryside access remain:
 - Oddington Footpath 6 – this forms a direct footpath link between the communities of Charlton-on-Otmoor and Weston-on-the-Green. Countryside Service officers consider this to be a primary route given its connections both to these settlements and the extensive rights of way network across Otmoor. Chiltern Railways propose this route be diverted to a new public road bridge over the railway which would provide access to Oddington Grange & Barndon Farm. This would require a detour and additional walking distance of over 1.5km but this is considered inappropriate in this setting. This is the longest diversion proposed in the scheme. Given there is no alternative route that can be used and the value to the rights of way network beyond these settlements, this primary link should be preserved. A footbridge should be installed at this point, as is proposed at similar locations elsewhere in the scheme.
 - Islip Level Crossing [LC] – The LC is situated just west of Islip village on a quiet lane between Mill Lane & the Kidlington Road. The proposal is to close the LC completely as it is no longer needed. While its closure for motorised vehicles is not objectionable, it should be retained principally for equestrian use, but also for cyclists & pedestrians. This quiet link provides a means of bypassing Islip without having to negotiate the high traffic flows and narrow streets and is also a means of improving links between bridleway networks. Consideration should be given to maintaining a non-motorised access across the present LC by the use of Miniature Stop Lights as has been used at other similar locations in the county.

Suitable provision has been made for the Oxfordshire Way and for the Kidlington Circular Walk which run through the corridor of the scheme.

District Council Views

29. Cherwell District Council's Executive considered a report into the proposals earlier this year. In brief the resolution was to support the proposals provided Chiltern Railways can satisfy the criteria in PPG2 and PPG13, whilst noting some concerns about the visual and traffic impacts of some options for Bicester Town station upgrading and the effect on traffic flow of the level crossing at the station, also noting the need for links to Bicester Town station from other parts of Bicester, and to consider whether any Section 106 money was available from the Bicester Village Development.

Financial and Staff Implications

30. The proposed rail network enhancement and improved rail service would be provided at no direct cost to the County Council. The recommendations seek to ensure that any direct consequential costs (of necessary highway changes, etc) are borne by Chiltern Railways as part of the project. As described in paragraphs 13 and 24, Evergreen 3 might offer capital cost savings to other possible future County Council projects, though this is only speculative at present.
31. If the TWA proposal goes to public inquiry there will be significant staff time implications for a short period, and other staff time is likely to be required in diverse ways to ensure effective liaison with Chiltern Railways as the project develops.

Conclusion

32. It is disappointing that Chiltern Railways have now reduced the scope of their proposal from that upon which they previously consulted stakeholders and the public, to one which will no longer deliver the full upgrade required for East West Rail. However, the proposal still appears likely to make a significant contribution towards delivering EWR. Perhaps more importantly, it offers substantial benefits in its own right, especially in greatly improving the train service between Bicester and Oxford.
33. The proposed Water Eaton Parkway station (which was not part of the EWR proposal, though it appears to offer benefits to it) raises significant concerns on Green Belt, transport, minerals and waste issues. There are other, generally lesser, issues associated with the proposed upgrading of the existing track and stations (which EWR, too, would have had to address). Officers understand that Chiltern Railways are working to address all of these issues as part of the TWA process; if they can do so satisfactorily, the benefits appear great enough to justify support for their overall proposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

34. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
- (a) **advise Chiltern Railways that, if the full transport benefits as now outlined in this report continue to be offered, the council supports in principle the Evergreen 3 proposals subject to:**

- (1) the submission of a full and acceptable Transport Assessment which addresses the points raised in Annex 2 of this report;**
- (2) the Transport and Works Act application being accompanied by evidence to demonstrate that there are very special circumstances which justify the development on the site in the green belt;**
- (3) the proposals accommodating the existing Aggregates Rail Depot and, if appropriate, the development of a Materials Recovery Facility at the Water Eaton site;**
- (4) satisfactory arrangements to ensure that there is no prejudice to continued operation of the free County Council car park at Water Eaton for bus access to the city centre and hospitals;**
- (5) effective liaison with the Access to Oxford project to upgrade Oxford station;**

and on the basis that Chiltern Railways should also pay due regard to all other impacts in Oxfordshire of their proposals, including in particular the Rights of Way issues mentioned in the report.

- (b) delegate to the Heads of Transport and Sustainable Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Growth and Infrastructure, the authority to respond to the TWA application and other aspects of this project as it develops, in accordance with the general principles outlined in this report.**

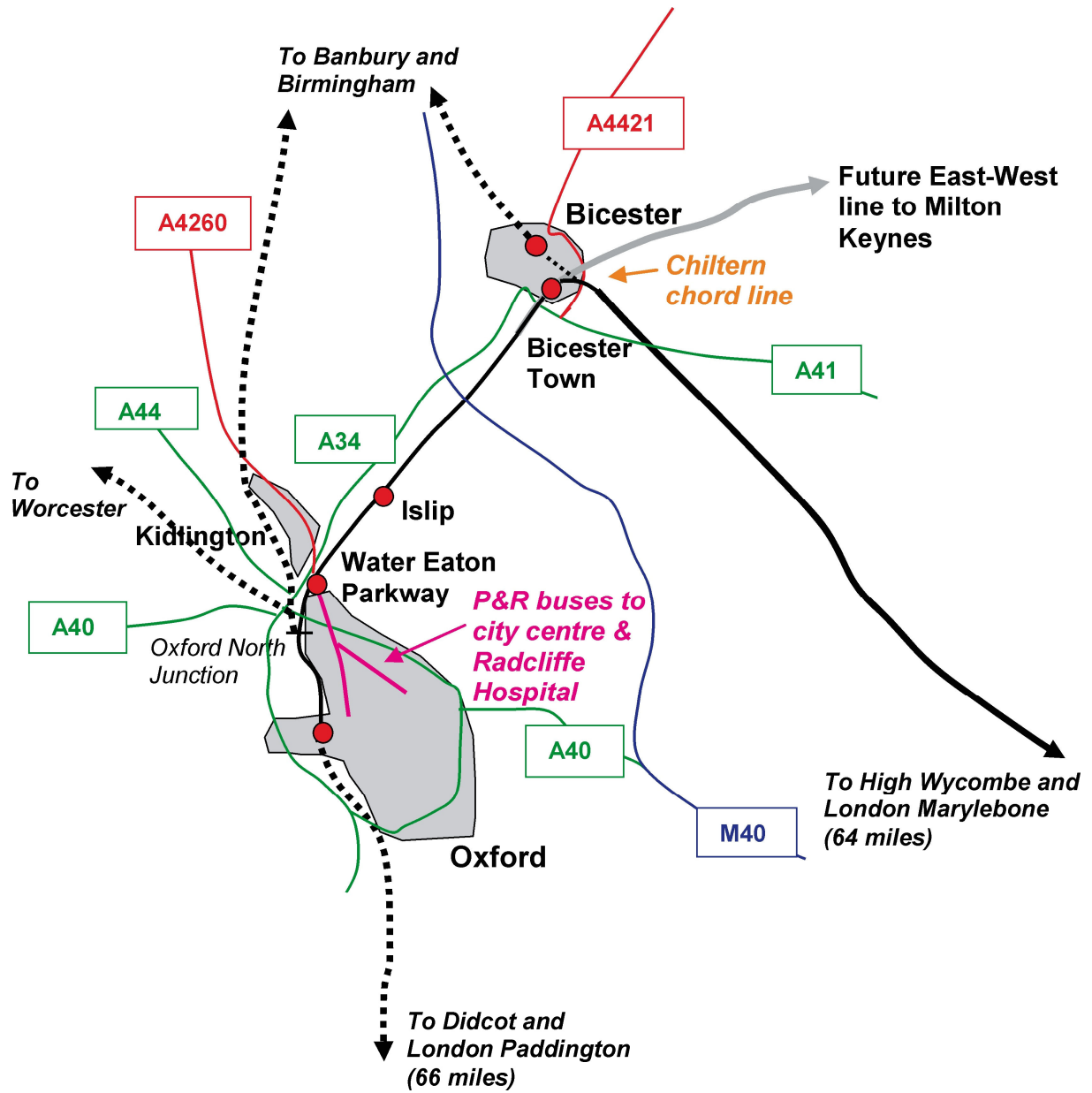
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Background papers: Information from Chiltern Railways on Evergreen 3 Project; see www.chiltern-evergreen3.co.uk and in Members Resource Centre

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August 2009

Plan of Chiltern Railways Evergreen 3 Proposals



Main issues to be covered in the Transport Assessment

Given the potential scale, range and complexity of transport issues, Chiltern Railways is urged to set out full details of the implications of the proposals in a full TA. This should cover:

1. Outcomes from the COTM modelling undertaken and proposals to mitigate any overall impacts, particularly those arising from peak-hour congestion on key parts of the highway network;
2. More local transport impacts of various locations to be agreed (using SATURN; LINSIG, Picady and Arcady of the immediate junctions affected and a wider area assessment using VISSIM, PARAMICS, or AIMSUM) and proposals to mitigate these impacts;
3. Overall fit with proposals for Access to Oxford, particularly Oxford Station;
4. Passenger Forecast assumptions and prediction years to be explained, including passenger origin and destination information. This also needs to cover the number of vehicles both entering (for drop offs) and parking at the Water Eaton site;
5. Main elements of a construction stage travel plan, to include items such as routing agreements to determine whether any road closures/temporary signals etc will be required during this period.
6. Relationship of proposed parking at Water Eaton with Park and Ride parking to consider:
 - Evidence that the additional capacity proposed will cater for full rail user demand and what the life of the proposed expanded car park is; i.e., what year has it been modelled to;
 - who will own and manage the extra spaces provided for the station and whether it be given to OCC to manage;
 - what arrangements there should be for parking charging (if any);
 - what stay limitation should be imposed and whether it should be applied to both car parks, or zones within the car parks;
 - whether, as part of the proposals, Chiltern rail should provide and fund a system to manage the car park (ticket machines / barriers / ANPR cameras);
 - whether the whole site (including the current P&R) should be managed as a Develop Build Fund Operate (DBFO);
 - if not managed as one car park, how the two will be separated and operated to ensure rail users don't use the OCC P&R Car Park.
7. Bicester Town Station;
 - Chiltern propose that the station be accessed from London Road. The worst case scenario in terms of the number of trips that are likely to be made in the peak is needed so that a judgement can be made about

the impact on the network when the level crossing (LC) on London Road is closed. Since there are at this stage different options for the station access and car parking, on either side of the LC, separate analysis of each option is likely to be required. London Road is a key route through Bicester so additional traffic may cause it to suffer from more frequent and greater congestion;

- with the proposed increase in the frequency of the train service for Bicester, the effect on the level crossing on the London Road will require careful assessment and is likely to be a significant concern. Infrastructure improvements are likely to be required to London Road level crossing and these are likely to be costly;
- current access arrangements on to the London Road are inadequate (construction, visibility, geometry etc.) and proposals would need to be agreed. With the number of parking spaces quoted for a multi-storey, a right turn is likely to be needed;
- access into Bicester Town Station does not appear to be able to accommodate a two-way bus movement or other large vehicles (e.g., deliveries, emergency vehicles). There appears to be no room within the site for buses etc to turn. It is unclear whether a one-way system is planned via Bicester Village. If so, traffic problems around Bicester Village will affect the punctuality of bus services. In addition, Pingle Drive is a private road and this will need to be addressed. Impacts of additional traffic on the Bicester Village 'peak' times as well as traditional peak hours, needs to be considered;
- the consultation document says that commuters will use the Bicester Village car park on weekdays; however, Bicester Village also has a desire to increase weekday trade. There is potential for conflict if the combination of visitors and commuters increases beyond the level of car parking at each site. There are also concerns about Bicester Village's capacity to manage traffic flows and parking once on this site. This will need to be addressed if congestion from different types of traffic using Pingle Drive and the approaches to it is to be avoided. Confirmation of the types of trips that are expected and how sustainable modes will be promoted foremost is needed;
- justification of the number of parking spaces suggested needs to be provided, as well as how this would impact on the existing public car parks and/or the surrounding streets;
- the approach to charging (or not) for parking needs to be agreed, as well as any implications for on-street parking in the locality- financial contributions may be required to address resulting problems;
- there is no information regarding links for pedestrians and cyclists or cycle parking. Cycle and pedestrian links between Bicester Village and the town centre need to be improved and opportunities that arise through these proposals should be encouraged, including seeking contributions to appropriate schemes;
- drainage/flooding issues need to be addressed.

8. Water Eaton Parkway Station;

- management of parking arrangements adjacent to Water Eaton Park & Ride need to be agreed to ensure that free Park & Ride parking is not misused;
- impacts on the highway network around Kidlington, Gosford & Water Eaton (Bicester, Oxford and Pear Tree directions) suffers from congestion, especially at peak times. The Transport Assessment must include junction assessments, roundabout analysis, implications for buses, cycle & pedestrian links within an area to be agreed;
- the traffic controlled junction (traffic lights) access arrangements into Water Eaton are not suitable to accommodate the proposed station. Currently there are two separate accesses serving adjacent sites (i.e., Grain Silo and Park & Ride). One controlled access must be secured which may help towards easing congestion. In addition, the bus lane must remain for the use of buses only;
- drainage/flooding issues need to be addressed;
- cycle parking needs to be addressed;
- Station Travel Plans for staff and user access, including delivery vehicles are needed.

The Oxfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006 - 2011

This document was adopted as council policy on 21 February 2006. It contains 4 main aims and 9 outcomes directly related to the management, protection and development of the Rights of Way network to better meet modern needs. The plan links closely to the Local Transport Plan (LTP2) covering the same period.

The vision of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan is:

To improve the existing public rights of way network for all users and would be users, and improve the extent, use and understanding of the network, so that Public Rights of Way fulfil their role as a vital part of life in the county.

To realise this vision there are four specific aims:

1. **Public Rights of Way are protected** and well maintained
2. **A better joined up network that meets the needs and demands of users** whilst accommodating the interests of land managers, the natural environment & our cultural heritage
3. **A public rights of way network that enables access for all**
4. A thriving countryside where residents and visitors are able to understand and enjoy their rights, in a responsible way

In practical terms we have undertaken an assessment of need, comparing the present route network available to different groups based on the different status of routes, **equestrians** were found to be very poorly provided for and even the footpath network sometimes requires difficult connections along busy roads. This is generally referred to as 'network connectivity' and something we are seeking to address as/when opportunities arise.

Oxfordshire Way – Is a 65 mile cross county recreational route promoted by Oxfordshire County Council running between Bourton on the Water in Gloucestershire and Henley-on-Thames.