

Rail Developments in Oxfordshire – summary of Nov 2009 position

Chiltern Railways Evergreen 3

- A proposal, to be funded by Chiltern Railways as part of their franchise commitment, for a new half-hourly service London Marylebone – Bicester – Oxford to be operational from mid-2013
- Infrastructure works, commencing mid-2011 at the earliest, will include a short length of new railway in Bicester; major upgrade of Bicester – Oxford line; expanded station buildings and car park at Bicester Town; new Parkway station at Water Eaton; new platforms at north end of Oxford station.
- Chiltern Railways to submit Transport and Works Act application mid – Nov; OCC support has been agreed in principle subject to being satisfied about impacts on: transport; Green Belt; aggregates and waste strategies; operation of the Water Eaton Park and Ride; and the upgrade of Oxford station (see below)
- TWA application will be for double track throughout from Bicester to Oxford, but CR propose initially to retain single track over part of route.
- Evergreen 3 proposal also includes infrastructure for faster Marylebone – Banbury – Birmingham service

East West Rail

- A proposal, being developed by OCC and other local authorities plus English Partnerships (government development agency), in partnership with rail industry, for a new service Oxford – Bicester – Milton Keynes – Bedford.
- Consultants carrying out work on infrastructure design and cost, and business case, to railway industry GRIP4 standard (the second last of 5 stages of project design); to report early 2010.
- Uses same route as Evergreen 3 for part of the way; TWA application (see above) will allow for full EWR requirement on this section, but CR will only construct sufficient for 1 train each way per hour.

Oxford – Bicester interim upgrade

- OCC is currently funding an enhanced evening and Sunday service on this route, using s106 funding
- Network Rail are exploring possible low-cost infrastructure upgrades, also to use secured s106 funds, which will both improve journey time in the short term, and also be useful for the two larger scale projects above in the longer term.

Oxford station upgrade

- Station re-development Masterplan being produced to deliver a co-ordinated phased approach to the enhancement of Oxford Rail Station.
- The Masterplan is taking account of Chiltern's Evergreen 3 proposals, DfT's electrification aspirations, the Great Western RUS (further details below), Network Rail works and how the Station fits within the regeneration of the West End.
- First phase of the Masterplan is to implement a transfer deck to connect the existing station to the new platform on Becket Street Car Park. Plans are also being progressed to enhance the Station's forecourt. Implementation in 2011.
- Consultation to take place in December and January 2010, with a potential press release about the plans at the end of this month.
- The Masterplan is a key part of the Frideswide Square co-ordination.

Cotswold Line

- Redoubling in progress from near Finstock to Evesham, funded by government; major preparatory work undertaken during line blockade in summer 2009; completion scheduled for 2011.
- Should give major improvement in reliability.
- Gives scope for increased service frequency; consideration needs to be given as to what this might consist of (Cotswolds and Malverns Transport Partnership, of which OCC is a member, have a long-established aspiration for an hourly service).

Didcot Parkway Interchange

- A proposal for a major improvement to facilities, especially for buses and pedestrians, on the station forecourt, to be funded by OCC (mainly s106) and rail industry.
- Upgrade to facilities inside the station, using Growth Point funding channelled through SODC, was completed this year (as *quid pro quo* for rail funding for forecourt development, see above).
- Some minor planning and rail industry acceptance issues outstanding
- Construction start likely summer 2010, completion late 2011.

Electrification

- Government has just agreed to fund electrification from London to Bristol/Swansea and to Oxford.
- Construction work anticipated from 2014, electric trains to Bristol and Oxford from end 2016
- Fast services will use new 10-coach – capable of splitting to 2x5-coach - IEP trains (some having diesel (probably) generator car for service beyond electrified lines)
- Local services likely to get 'second-hand' trains from other lines.

Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy

- Covers extra infrastructure needed to cope with expected growth on existing services; draft for consultation just published by Network Rail; lists proposed housing and other developments in the South West as taken into account but appears unaware of proposals in Oxfordshire and the south east.
- Extra tracks through Oxford and south-facing bay platform noted as already agreed and committed
- Longer term proposals include multiple track from Radley to Wolvercote, status of these unclear and not wholly consistent with shorter term proposals.
- Officers are drafting a response seeking clarification of this and other proposals, and challenging the basis for growth predictions in Oxfordshire; ACTVaR are responding in similar terms.

Longer term projects

- Rail schemes which might be considered in LTP3 include potential local stations between Didcot and Swindon (including Grove/Wantage); improved cycle and car parking and bus interchanges at Cotswold Line stations; improved rail access from Oxfordshire to Heathrow; possible local service in south Oxford.
- HS2 - a high speed line from London to Birmingham and the north is being considered by at least three separate organisations –Network Rail (who recently published a report), 'HS2' (who have been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport for the purpose, and lobby Group Greengauge 21. All studies seem still to be at the stage of considering if there is a business case for long distance traffic, and none has yet considered possible intermediate routes in detail – it could go via Oxfordshire, but equally could pass further east, and the route selection process, when/if it occurs, is likely to hinge mainly upon environmental considerations and the best access corridors into London and the West Midlands.