

## Railfuture East Anglia

### Whittlesford Parkway station audit

#### Introduction and summary of findings

This report details the findings of a station audit carried out by members of Railfuture East Anglia Branch at Whittlesford Parkway Station on Wednesday 23 November 2016.

The audit provides a snapshot of the facilities provided at the station and the perception of rail travel given to passengers.

Suggestions are made on ways to improve the passenger experience that can be taken forward by the train operator and local authorities. The work for the Greater Cambridge City Deal indicates that rail will have to play a much greater role in getting people out of their cars for the final section of their journey into the city.

Whittlesford Parkway station is located on the Cambridge to London Liverpool Street 'West Anglia' route around 11km south of Cambridge within South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) area. The proximity of the station to the A505, M11 and A11 trunk roads and large car park make it a railhead facility for a large area south of Cambridge and also parts of Suffolk and Norfolk.

The station also serves a number of villages including:

- Whittlesford (population 1737)
- Sawston (7145)
- Duxford (1898)

There are plans for 500 additional houses in Sawston in the draft SCDC Local Plan.

The Duxford Air Museum, which had 278,000 visitors in 2015 (Association of Large Visitor Attraction figures) is close by.

There are also a number of high-technology parks including Granta Park surrounding the station. There is growing trend for younger workers at these work places to cycle from the station but owing to the access problems at the station, these sites tend to bus many more people in from Cambridge station rather than use Whittlesford Station.

The station has three trains per hour off-peak in each direction. All trains terminate at Cambridge to the north (down direction in railway terminology), in the other direction (Up trains) two services run to London Liverpool Street, the other to Stansted Airport.

The footfall through the station for the year 2015-16 was 493,004 - an increase on the previous year of 8.4% and +45.7% from 2011.

## Station Description

### Access and parking

The A505 road now bridges the railway at the south end of the station. Subsequent northward platform extensions have cut the original course of this road so that there are two dead end access roads to the station with the station footbridge providing the only link between the original parts of this road - now Station Road West (down platform) and Station Road East (up platform). Both sides end at the platforms in an incoherent messy manner.

Station Road West also serves a hundred or so houses and a veterinary practice as well as station carpark.

Station Road East also serves the main station carpark, a council roads depot and a hotel.

### Station Road East

The main road access to the station and car park (320 spaces) is on the east side with a junction off the A505 road. Although there is a sign at the junction, there is no advanced warning on the road for approaching drivers. A turning lane is provided for motorists from the east. There is a no right turn for drivers leaving the station approach road, so they are required to turn left and turn around at the roundabout 500m away. Road markings are worn and unclear. During the visit, we saw a motorist ignoring this restriction.



**Picture 1: Access to the east station car park from the A505. A turning lane is provided. More advanced warning of the junction could be provided.**

### Car park

There is only a single ticket machine in the east car park meaning that many passengers have to walk some distance to buy a ticket and then return to their car. Although passengers can pay by phone, the instructions were not clear and dwarfed by the long list of parking regulations.

The car park is 100m from the station and there is no pavement on the road linking the two, although, being a dead end, traffic is light. A ramp and steps provide access from the road to the up platform and footbridge.



**Picture 2(A): The east car park with few available spaces at 11.00. Additional ticket machines are required. Could a revised parking layout increase the number of spaces available?**



**Picture 2(B): A lot of space in the car park is wasted. Some of the grassed area (inset picture) could also be used for parking.**

The east side provides access to/from the village of Sawston both for motorists and cyclists. Cyclists are expected share a narrow footpath alongside the fast moving traffic. The centre of the village is 3km away but the nearest houses are just over 1km away.

## Bus services

The 75A bus (every 75 minutes) also uses this road. There is no proper place to turnaround or a bus waiting shelter. The lack of pavement means that any passengers with restricted mobility would have find it difficult to use the bus. During the visit we saw two buses arrive and depart, no passengers boarded or alighted at the station.



**Picture 3: The bus has arrived at the station and is attempting to do a three-point turn as there is no space for a turning circle.**

The Citi 7 bus passes the station on the A505 every hour but there are no convenient bus stops on the main road.

## Station Road West

This road to the west side of the station provides access to/from the villages of Whittlesford and Duxford. Some of the houses in Whittlesford are adjacent to the station, with the main part of the village being around 1.5km away. Additional parking is available on this side of the station.

The approach roads have a parking restriction between 11.30 and 12.00 each day to deter rail passengers parking all day on the roads. The presence of many parked vehicles on the roads (the visit was conducted before midday) suggests that this restriction is being ignored. Enforcement levels are not known. Station Road West becomes Royston Road after its junction with Duxford Road. Considerable numbers of vehicles were parked along this road extension.

Pedestrian / cycle access to Duxford village requires crossing the A505. A central refuge is provided for pedestrians but no traffic lights on this 60mph road. The sign on Station Road West was obstructed by a tree.



**Picture 4(A):** During the summer months, this sign to the station on the west approach road would be obscured by leaves.



**Picture 4(B):** Obscured sign



**Picture 4(C):** Pedestrians and cyclists wishing to access the station from Duxford Village have to cross the busy A505 road. A central refuge is provided but no traffic lights.

### Cycle Parking

A limited number of cycle racks are provided on the west side of the station and on the down platform (2). These are inadequate which has resulted in cycles being left locked to railings, signage and lamp posts. There are no cycle racks on the east side and cycles are left locked to the disabled access ramp and platform railings (adjacent to platform 1).



**Picture 5(A):** A lack of racks causes cycles chained to be chained to signage (left) and the ramp on the up platform (right) make it difficult of disabled passengers to use the ramp.



**Picture 5(B):** A small covered cycle rack is provided on the down platform but the majority of the cycles are secured using racks under the canopy.



**Picture 5(C):** Relocating racks from under canopy would provide additional shelter for passengers.

## Station Facilities

The station has 2 x 12-coach length platforms that are on a curve. Platform height is low and combined with the curve, creates a significant gap which can make boarding and alighting trains difficult.



**Picture 6(A):** The up platform. There is a large gap, both in height and distance between the platform edge and the train.

The platforms have yellow lines close to the platform edge but no tactile paving. The platforms are narrow in places and that width is further reduced by signage, OHLE stanchions, driver dispatch screens and cycles chained to fences.



**Picture 6(B): Parts of the up platform are narrow - cycles chained to the fence make this worse.**

The two platforms are linked by an uncovered footbridge (shown in the photo above).

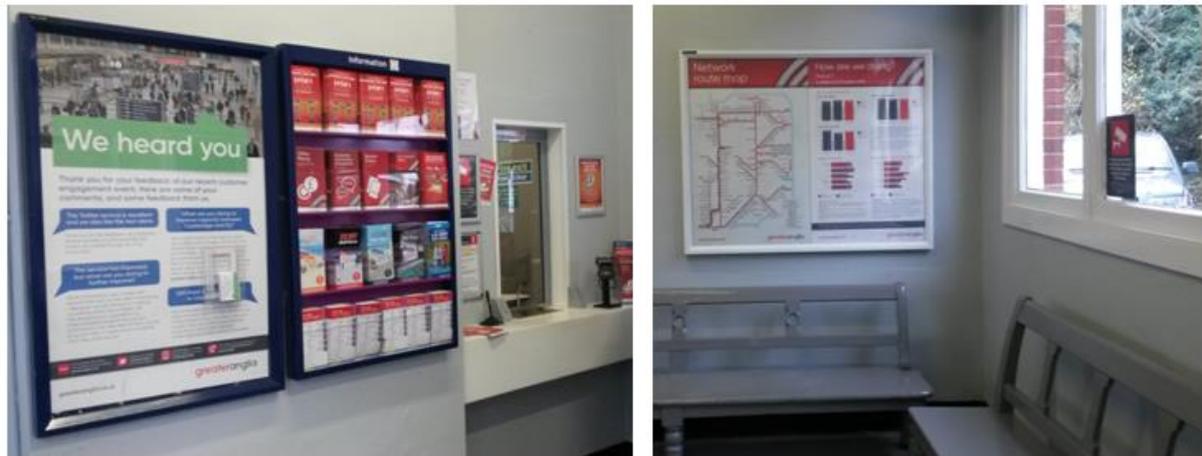
Both handrails on the stairs on the down platform does not reach the bottom step (shown in the photo right), which may hinder people with limited mobility such as someone using crutches.



Although step free access is provided to each platform from the adjacent road, unless arrangements have been made to pick-up/drop-off passengers the correct side of the station, passengers will need to use the footbridge. There is no lift provided and road access between either side of the station is lengthy and there is no pavement alongside the A505, making such access impractical.

As the footbridge is designed to be used also by non-rail passengers, there are no ticket barriers at the station.

The original station building is on the down platform and contains a ticket office and waiting room. Access to the building is from the platform rather than the station forecourt. The ticket office/waiting room is well maintained and contains an historic map of the Cambridge area (undated) which shows how the area has developed in recent years!



**Picture 7(A): Interior of the station building waiting room including ticket office window.**



**Picture 7(B): Overall view of the main station building.**

The station building canopy provides shelter on the down platform but the effective area is reduced due to cycle parking. The shelter is around one railway coach long and there are no other shelters on the down platform.

The up platform has a brick-built shelter and a more modern enclosed and heated waiting area. These cover around one coach length of the 12-coach platform. The automatic door on the modern shelter was not working and there was a puddle on the floor from a leaking roof.



**Picture 9(A): Brick-built shelter and a more modern enclosed waiting area on up platform.**



**Picture 9(B): Enclosed and heated waiting area on up platform with puddle on floor.**

A ticket machine is provided on each platform – located under the canopy on the down platform and under the stairs on the up platform. It was noted that the machine allows for tickets to be brought for tomorrow after 12.00am. This should state 12.00 noon for clarity.



**Picture 10: Views of the TVM on the up platform.**

There are four sets of seats on the down platform and six on the up platform.

Departure screens at both entrances but difficult to read. Dot-matrix displays showing next three services on each platform but not visible on entire length of platform and are partly obscured by other signage.



**Picture 11: Part of the customer information screen is obstructed by other signage.**

There are signs indicating the presence of CCTV but the cameras were not obvious and no sign of coverage to the station entrances, car park and cycle stands.

Wi-Fi is provided at the station. It was not tried during the audit.

The up platform has a pleasant small community garden area looked after by the station adopters.



**Picture 12: Information about the community garden area.**

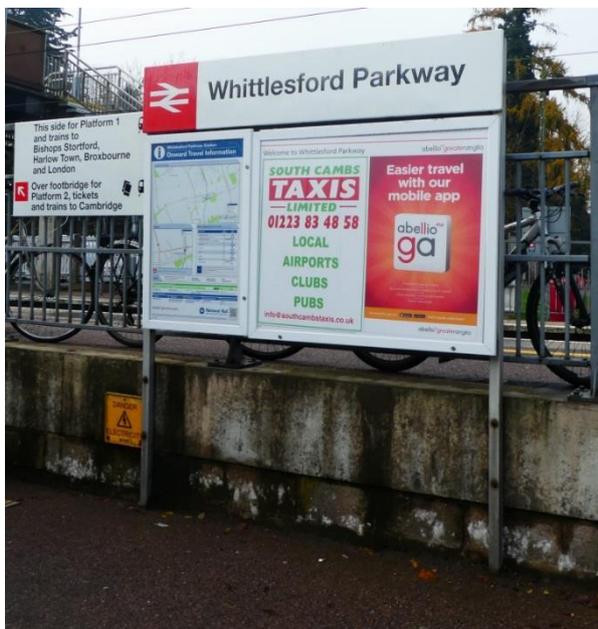
Signage on the station, like many other stations has evolved over the years and lacks consistency and is generally not very helpful. For example, for passengers arriving on the west side, it is not clear that access to the ticket office is via the platform. For passengers alighting from trains, signage to the bus stop or directions to local villages is non-existent. The local maps provided only show a few local roads and do not show the location of surrounding villages or recent housing development close to the station.



**Picture 13(A): Station approach signage on the west side of the station – confusing and lacks presence.**



Picture 13(B): Station approach on the east side of the station



Picture 13(C): Station signs on the east side – the local map contains no useful information at all!



**Picture 13(D): On the up side signs indicate the way out is via the bridge with no indication of the east side exit at all. Very confusing!**

## Recommendations for further work

The following list suggests areas where improvements could be made to the station to improve the passenger experience.

### Station Access and Parking

- Review signage on approaches to station including new signage to help promote the presence of the station and to provide better notice of the road junctions. Signs to the station should be provided in adjacent villages. Signage for car users should be different than that for cyclists. The road network around the station is very "managed" with few direct routes available.
- Improve station visibility from the approach roads on both sides of the station. Provide covered entrance facility to the station where local and train information, ticket machines etc. can be concentrated in one place.
- Provide better signage and maps for arriving passengers towards local villages and Duxford Museum.
- Consider safety improvements for pedestrians / cyclists crossing the A505 to and from Duxford village.
- Provide additional secure and covered cycle parking on each side of the station. Possible sites include the grass area adjacent to the access current ramp on the up platform and by removing the shrub area between the station building and the A505 on the down platform.



**Picture 14:** There is spare land adjacent to the up platform that could be used to provide a large covered cycle storage facility. Space could also be provided within this site for additional waiting shelters or a small coffee kiosk.

- Additional ticket machines in the car park. The new structures could include a kiosk/coffee shop.
- Add CCTV to the car park.
- Reline the car park spaces. There are wide gaps between parking rows which may allow an additional row (50 spaces) to be added especially if part of the grass verge could be used. Plan to provide a deck over the car park.
- Provide disabled parking spaces close to the station entrance.
- Provide a proper bus stop with shelter.
- Extend bus operating hours to enable a service that could be used by commuters with through ticketing from Sawston village and the Duxford Museum.
- Consider new path from end of down platform to south side of A505. This would provide a quicker and safer route to/from Duxford village. This may produce awkward sight lines for train drivers but this could possibly be overcome by dropping the footpath down almost to track level under the road bridge and fenced in tightly alongside the over-bridge's back wall with a short commensurate platform extension at its northern end.

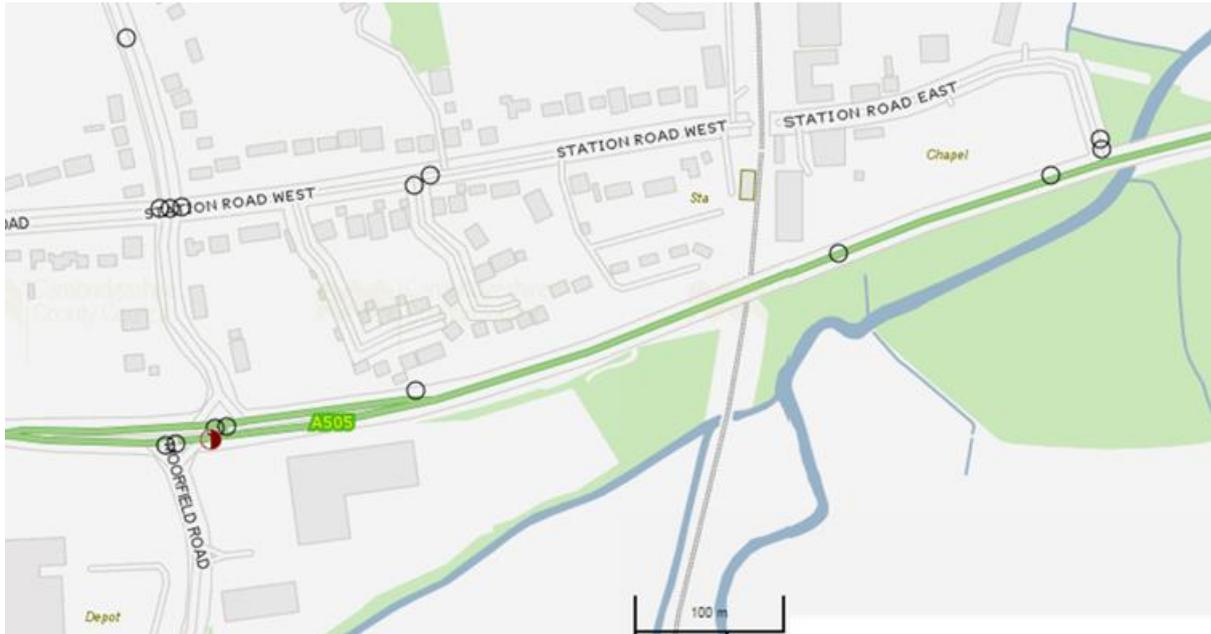


**Picture 14: The A505 bridge at the south end of the station. A footpath either side of the bridge to the road would provide better access to Duxford Village and could facilitate the provision of new bus stops on the main road.**

- Plan for a direct pedestrian / cycle route between the station and Sawston that avoids the A505.
- Provide suitable bus stops on the A505 for the Citi 7 service.

## Station facilities

- Remove cycle racks under station building canopy (down side) to increase shelter available to passengers. Provide additional seating under canopy.
- Additional platform shelters at the Cambridge end of each platform.
- Lifts up to the footbridge are an absolute imperative to assist mobility impaired passengers.
- Review signage to provide a consistent strategy and avoid signs obstructing each other.
- Additional platform customer information screens towards the Cambridge end of the platforms.
- Repairs to stair handrail and “mind the gap” signs on platforms.



**Map 1: Local road accident map in last 5 years around station ( [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk) )**

## Conclusion

Whittlesford Parkway station has developed into a railhead in a piecemeal fashion over 20 years. There has been no overall plan. We advocate that a "model" plan be drawn up to enable the station buildings/facilities and its road approaches to be gradually redeveloped to be a modern fit for purpose modern multimodal interchange.

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