

Economic Development & Planning
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For the attention of Spatial Planning

spatialplanningpolicy@wiltshire.gov.uk

6th March 2021

Dear Sir or Madam

Wiltshire Local Plan Review Consultation

Please find attached Railfuture's response to the above Consultation. Our comments are arranged by the headings for the individual towns as appropriate and relate mainly to the topic of Transport.

If anything in this response requires clarification, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Bray

Nigel Bray
Railfuture
Secretary, Severnside Branch.

Planning for Bradford-on-Avon

We agree that the town has a very good train service but it would seem to be difficult to connect it directly by rail to Chippenham and Swindon without either reversal at Trowbridge or reinstatement of the northern curve at Bradford Junction which was removed in the early 1990s.

Planning for Chippenham

We support the intention (para.26, item ii) to make further improvements to the railway station, particularly in terms of interchange with bus services, of which those to Calne should be a priority. We hope the Council will press for completion of the deferred sections of Great Western electrification, including Chippenham to Bath and Bristol Temple Meads.

In listing the key features under Transport, the consultation document has omitted to mention that Chippenham is on the TransWilts rail route, which has enjoyed an enhanced service since December 2013.

Planning for Corsham

We welcome the intention (para. 22, item v) to safeguard land for reopening of a railway station. A station would almost certainly be viable, not only because of its position on a main line to Bath, Bristol, Chippenham and Swindon but because Corsham is now a significant centre of employment itself, notably at the Science Park. A Bristol- Oxford service could call at this station and at Royal Wootton Bassett.

Planning for Devizes

Railfuture strongly supports the proposed Devizes Parkway station at Lydeaway and is pleased that the Council has made a successful bid for Restoring Your Railway funding towards a feasibility study.

We note under the topic of Housing needs, a forecast decrease in the population of working age. If this is in absolute numbers, as distinct from a percentage of the overall population, it would suggest a need for better connectivity with larger centres of employment. We believe the proposed station would increase access to job opportunities.

Planning for Malmesbury

Malmesbury, like Devizes, is about three miles from a main line railway but has no station. Given the town's favourable economic situation and its tourist potential, consideration should be given to opening a station on the South Wales- London main line, either at Little Somerford, accessed via the B4042; or where the A429 passes under the line. As this line is electrified, a semi-fast service could be provided using Class 387 electric multiple units.

Our preferred station site would be Little Somerford because all the required land appears to be railway owned and within Network Rail fences; there is parking space in the former goods yard on the up side of the line; the site is marginally nearer to Malmesbury than is the A429 road bridge and there is space to relocate the former up platform slightly westward to avoid a lineside structure.

By contrast the A429 site would require platforms to be built on an embankment and acquisition of farmland for parking.

Planning for Marlborough

Although Marlborough has bus links to Bedwyn and Pewsey stations, the town's importance as a tourist destination makes a case in the longer term for reopening one of the two former rail lines from Savernake. We would ask the Council to safeguard the more westerly GWR formation, as it would avoid the tunnel on the former Midland & South Western Junction route.

Planning for Melksham

We support the work being undertaken by TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, GWR, Network Rail and Wiltshire Council to improve the environment and facilities at Melksham station, as well as the walking routes towards the station.

We agree that the TransWilts route needs more frequent train services. Its capacity is constrained by the 8½ mile single track section between Thingley Junction and Bradford Junction. The TransWilts service tends to be reduced whenever the line is used for diversion of InterCity and freight trains. When funding permits, a passing loop or loops should be created on the present single track. Additional signaling would also enable trains to follow more closely in one direction.

Planning for Royal Wootton Bassett

Whilst we support the need for a railway station, we would query the stated cost of £30m to £50m. This amount would be way above anything being quoted elsewhere for new stations at towns of comparable size and would suggest that a massive Parkway station with platforms on both the Bristol and South Wales lines is being contemplated.

By way of comparison, Worcestershire Parkway station, which opened in 2020 with three platforms on two different levels, a 500-space car park and a large covered booking hall, was estimated in 2016 to cost £22m.

We would suggest that a two-platform station with adequate access, signage and weather protection would be more appropriate for Royal Wootton Bassett, although additional signalling may be required. A Bristol- Oxford service would not require platforms on the South Wales line.

Planning for Trowbridge

The railway station was improved with additional waiting accommodation and a second entrance in 2015. Redevelopment of the Bowyers site presents an opportunity to build on those improvements by creating a transport hub including a relocated bus station.

Planning for Warminster

We support extension of TransWilts services to Salisbury and Southampton. The railway station has a sizeable rural catchment area to its south and there is a case for improving connectivity between train and bus services.

Planning for Westbury

We agree that Westbury station is an important rail hub with train services in six directions. It needs improved connectivity with buses and between east-west and north-south train services. Reinstatement of the fourth platform would allow more trains to connect at any one time and improve the opportunities for cross-platform interchange, which is essential for less able passengers.