



THAMES VALLEY

Thames Valley Branch Secretary  
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Mr Chris Hargraves  
Planning Policy Manager  
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**By e-mail**

25<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Dear Chris

**East Witney SPD Issues Paper**

- I am writing on behalf of Railfuture\* Thames Valley Branch to give our comments on certain aspects of your proposals. We thank you for the opportunity and would be pleased if you would take our comments into account as you take the SPD forward to the next stage.
- In view of our specific experience we wish to concentrate on transport issues. However, that is not to downplay all the other topics in the document which are so important for the future of Witney and the District and its residents and businesses.
- Although the broad policies in §4.8 and §4.9 to find alternatives to the use of the car may be laudable, the practical implementation proposals in §5.54 and onwards are quite insufficient. We are also concerned about over reliance on the improvements to the Shores Green junction. Additional traffic will enter the already congested A40 – the only option is to provide dedicated infrastructure for buses and, in the longer term, a re-opened railway line.
- No dwelling in the developments should be further than 400m from a bus stop and routes to major employment locations and Hanborough station must be diverted as necessary to achieve this requirement, the developer paying for any costs incurred by the bus operators. All the stops should be provided with shelters, digital information systems, etc as you suggest.
- The roads within the new estates must be designed with sufficient widths and radii to enable access by double deck buses and parking provision, including for visitors, avoiding congestion.

- At over 5 miles distance, Hanborough station (ref §5.59) cannot be considered near enough for cycling access. The only way to ensure no additional cars on the already congested A4095 is to provide bus services connecting direct from the East Witney development to the station. Although the 233 provides a service to and from Witney, it does not connect well with train services. It also does not run into the late evening. Timetables and routing will need to be amended to fully match with the new clock face train timetable to be introduced from December 2019, including later evening and Sunday services. The East Witney developers should also make financial contributions towards the upgrading of the station to enable improved train service frequencies.
- It is suggested in §5.58 that the 213/214 services could be diverted to run through the estates. However, these services are community operated and only run at off peak times. To deliver on the Council's policy aspirations, appropriate developer funding would be necessary to ensure service continuity and extension into peak hours. (WOCT's recent proposals to replace the Stagecoach route 11 could not be achieved because of insufficient financial support).
- The developers should provide a bond so that existing and re-routed services are subsidised as necessary for a minimum of 10 years, the subsidy to be provided from the day the first house is occupied, thereby ensuring that new residents make location choices in the certainty that the buses will always be there and before they make decisions about a second car, etc.
- We wish to see a railway eventually provided between Oxford, Witney and Carterton/Brize Norton to resolve the problems with the A40. The East Witney sites do not in themselves block such a railway as logical plans keep it south of the A40 to a P&R near the junction with the A415 before it goes on towards Carterton. However, no steps should be allowed, for example with construction operations or spoil, that would get in the way of such a railway. The line must be safeguarded.

We should be pleased if you would take all our comments into account but do come back to us if you require any clarification.

Yours sincerely,

*A McCallum*

Andrew McCallum

Branch Secretary

*\* Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation, campaigning for improved rail services and promotion of the contribution rail can make to sustainable transport. In the Thames Valley we have several hundred members, including the affiliation of most local Rail User Groups. We are independent of the industry, political parties and trades unions, and always seek to put rail users first, be they freight or passengers.*