



Thames Valley Branch

Secretary
Andrew McCallum
38 Lapsley Drive
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX16 1EW

Tel 01295 272606
thamesvalley@railfuture.org.uk

Oxfordshire Growth Deal
Speedwell House
Speedwell Street
Oxford OX1 1NE

email to: info@oxfordshireplan.org

30th December 2020

Dear Sirs

OXFORDSHIRE OPEN THOUGHT

I am writing on behalf of Railfuture* Thames Valley and thank you for the opportunity to comment on the latest vision document for Oxfordshire 2050

We broadly welcome the general approach being taken across the board to achieve a zero or negative zero carbon county. However, we will restrict our comments to the transport and connectivity issues.

To achieve fully sustainable housing and commercial developments it cannot just be an issue of building technology. They must be located adjacent to sustainable transport and therefore land use planning and transport must be in complete lock step. Many sites which landowners and developers would dearly like to develop but which cannot contribute to reductions in private car use, for example, must be removed from local development plans. This could help to reduce expenditure on transport infrastructure. With the exception of Witney, we should not be taking the trains to the houses, we should be taking the houses to the trains. Nevertheless, linking infrastructure must be financially committed up front by developers, using council borrowing powers, and paid back by them over time.

Maximum use should be made of the existing rail network along with planned extensions and new stations thereon (e.g. East West Rail, Cowley branch, Wantage/Grove Parkway, Begbroke) with new developments always located nearby in preference. In view of the existing and planned major growth, Witney and Carterton should be connected to Oxford either by rail or other mass transit. Electrification should be completed on East West Rail, Cowley branch and at least as far as Hanborough on the North Cotswold line even if other propulsion systems (battery or hydrogen) prove more viable for services to stations beyond.

We have noted with interest the suggestions of a Metro system using trackless technology. However, we are not convinced that a metro, tracked or trackless, should be underground across the City. Other than

London Crossrail and Newcastle, no other cities across the UK have opted for new underground lines, finding that surface systems are more attractive to users and simpler to implement and to extend. In addition account would need to be taken of Oxford's geology and the dense concentration of Grade 1 listed buildings. Trackless vehicles would also be damaging to air quality because of particles from tyres. More conventional trams with contactless running in the centre, if not all the way, would be more appropriate. The funding method adopted by Nottingham for their tram system should be given serious consideration.

Transport interchanges are vital – as suggested these should permit easy switching between modes – train to bus, tram, cycle, pedestrian route. Consideration should be given to self-guiding on demand “pods” from mass transits to and through housing and commercial developments where electric buses would be too large or inflexible.

We are concerned about the assumptions made in the section on rural areas. Although home working may lead to some reduction in office worker commuting, it is not the solution for all jobs. Health & Care, manufacturing, warehousing and retail require staff to travel to work and these jobs must be easily accessible for people living in rural areas and not subjected to limited timetables. Flexible links to transport interchanges are key.

The vision is correct in wishing to see a reduction in HGVs, particularly because of their impact on air quality. The solution is to have significantly more rail connections to distribution centres where goods can be sorted and composited for “final mile” delivery by small electric goods vehicles “owned” by all the parcels delivery companies, supermarkets, etc to avoid multiple individual journeys to the same final destination.

We should be pleased if you would take our comments into account but come back to us if you need further clarification on the points we have raised. We look forward to seeing the proposals for the next stage of development of the Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Stow

Richard Stow, Chairman
Railfuture Thames Valley Branch

** 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.*

Railfuture Ltd is a (not for profit) Company
Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No 05011634.
Registered Office: Edinburgh House, 1-5 Bellevue Road, Clevedon, North Somerset, BS21 7NP (for legal correspondence only)

GDPR privacy statement: www.railfuture.org.uk/Privacy

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk>