



Mr Joe Kay
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Please reply to:
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Dear Mr Kay

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL TRANSPORT & CONNECTIVITY PLAN 5 CONSULTATION

I am writing on behalf of Railfuture* Thames Valley and thank you for the opportunity to comment on the latest LTCP5 document.

We welcome the broad visions and principles set out. However, we remain concerned that the document does not make it clear that sustainable land use planning must be considered along with transport if the targets relating to reduced car use etc. are to be met. Currently too many housing and commercial developments are located away from public transport or active travel routes. Quite simply you should be taking the houses to the trains and not playing catch-up by trying to get the trains and buses to the houses after they are built. Design and layout standards as covered in Policy 13 will be insufficient if the development's location is wrong.

We will concentrate our other comments on Policies relating to Public Transport and the Freight Strategy.

Policy 1 We support the principle of a hierarchy. However, to future proof the technology adopted, we request that "tram/light rail" be added to the list in brackets relating to Public Transport.

Policy 26 We welcome the items a-h in this policy to encourage bus use and reduce the carbon footprint of vehicles. Although mentioned in Policy 35 relating to Mobility Hubs, we believe that the need for bus routes to serve all railway stations across the County should be added as an item in Policy 26. Also because of the serious cutbacks to bus services over recent years, connections between surrounding towns and villages is very poor. Every effort should be made to create transport interchanges at the railway stations on the radial routes so buses can serve all the settlements in between.

Policy 27 We support Community Transport where it really is impossible for conventional buses to meet the specific local need. However, it is important that these do more than just provide a weekly "shopping service" otherwise they will not encourage transfer from the private car.

Polices 28 & 29 We support establishing an up-dating of the approach to P&R. We believe that it is appropriate to have the sites much nearer to the starting point of drivers' journeys because once behind the wheel it is very tempting to keep driving to the destination. P&R policy needs to take into account disincentives to drive all the way, including high parking charges at the destination and much cheaper at the P&R including discounts for EV charging. It is also important to establish P&Train at railway stations again with appropriate incentives. These should be considered during the studies for a new rail link to Witney and Carterton.

Policy 30 We are concerned that it is seen as necessary to develop a further Rail Strategy. The priority projects are all well established in the Corridor Study and maximum effort should now be put into making the case to DfT and Network Rail for the necessary funding for immediate implementation. The re-opened line to Okehampton is an example of how this can be done in months, not years. Specifically, re-opening the line to Cowley, expansion of Oxford station, expansion of Hanborough station and associated doubling of the line from Wolvercot Junction and Grove/Wantage Parkway. In the medium term, effort should be put into finalising the route and case for a heavy or light rail to Witney and Carterton. We are pleased to see the 2022/23 budget allocation of £250K to that end.

Policies 33/34/35 We welcome the policies on Multi-Modal Travel, in particular the links to stations.

Policies 36/37 We welcome the ideas of establishing Mobility Hubs.

Freight Strategy

We support the broad principles behind the establishment of this strategy. However, we are concerned about how this will be funded in view of the current ownerships of facilities and the low margins available to operators. It will be vital that central government is lobbied strongly to provide funding if low carbon and air quality targets are to be met.

Actions 16/17/18 We welcome these proposed actions, particularly the establishment of rail freight interchanges. Major effort must be put into increasing overall rail line capacity so that the demand for passenger trains does not put back expansion of rail freight. Attention must also be paid to international freight movements. Currently there are too many foreign HGVs making through journeys across the County carrying food products. Railways on the continent are developing trains to carry chilled and frozen products and Tesco have recently announced in the UK that they are expanding their existing rail distribution to include refrigerated containers.

Actions 34/35 We welcome these actions as they relate to Freight Consolidation Centres. When identifying sites it is vital that as many as possible are located to provide rail access and are not in rural areas where the associated connecting vehicle movements would be on unsuitable narrow roads or through town centres.

Action 48 We welcome this action to encourage transfer of freight from road to rail.

However, we are generally concerned about the delays to many of the actions until after 2025. Many of the actions may be long term but that means that it is even more vital that a start is made now on the evaluation work if carbon reduction and air quality improvements are to be met on time.

We should be pleased if you would take on board our comments and incorporate them into the final Plan.

Please come back to us if you need further clarification on the points we have raised.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Rose,

Vice-Chairman

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** 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.*