



Please reply to:
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1st November 2022

Dear Sirs

DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SPD

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

As an organisation interested in transport issues, we will limit our detailed comments to this aspect whilst supporting the Council's efforts in other areas requiring financial contributions. We are concerned that the Council has so far failed to implement a CIL scheme as this would widen the range of developments liable to make contributions.

Many of the recent and proposed developments across the District are in unsustainable locations requiring the use of the private car to reach employment, education, health and other necessary locations and often leading residents without cars to be unable to reach such facilities and to have any employment. Where there is public transport, it is often restricted in its times of operation which means that shift workers, for example, cannot reach employment in a sustainable way or at all.

We recognise that the County Council is responsible for transport policies but it is vital that WODC take a larger percentage from all developer contributions to make a meaningful impact on transport services. It has to be noted that transport services run across council boundaries and it is often a development in another district which contributes to improvements within WODC. For example, contributions in Cherwell led to improvements to the 488 bus service from Chipping Norton to Banbury providing better access to employment and health services for WODC residents. WODC must take a strategic network view across boundaries when considering contributions towards new bus routes, increased frequencies, etc. Currently bus services in the District are somewhat disjointed and there is a need for better access to and between Banbury, Chipping Norton, the Wychwoods, Burford, Charlbury, Witney and the rail stations.

The most sustainable form of public transport is rail but to make best use of it requires good bus access matching train times as well as safe cycle and pedestrian routes. Priority should also be given to development locations with easy access to rail stations.

We welcome OCC's Rail Strategy which includes re-opening of the Cowley branch line, with intermediate stations at employment locations, and improvements to the south of the County near the centres of science development. These improvements will bring major potential employment benefits to WODC residents with access via Kingham, Charlbury and Hanborough stations. It is particularly important that WODC developer contributions go towards service and capacity improvements at Hanborough and

associated connecting bus services as these will provide vital benefits for the residents of the large housing developments in Witney, Eynsham etc seeking access to the main employment centres in the County.

For similar reasons, in the medium term, providing a reinstated rail link between Carterton, Witney and Oxford will be vital. In the short term therefore WODC contributions should be made towards the preliminary study and design work for this link.

To achieve the above, we request that specific changes are made to the text in the draft SPD. As all developments contribute to the transport problems across the District, contributions should not be limited to developments of more than 10 homes. Similarly they should not necessarily relate directly to the development. In the absence of CIL (and following changes to the provisions for s.106 not limiting them to local provision) and in view of the fact that public transport is a strategic, District, indeed County wide issue, contributions should be placed in a transport "pot" so that a joined up network can be developed and extended. This similarly applies to s.278 – transport infrastructure improvements can have a wider benefit than just the locality of the development. We are concerned that consideration of contributions is to be on a case-by-case basis – contributions should relate to the scale of development so that all developments pay their fair share.

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

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.*