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Railfuture response to the Transport strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire consultation

Attached is Railfuture's response to the Transport strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire consultation.

We welcome the draft strategy and support the planned and potential rail developments described in the document. However there are a number of areas where we would suggest rail could be given a stronger, or more certain role. These are described in more detail in our response.

Regards,

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The Consultation

This document contains Railfuture's response to the draft "Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire" which is being developed by Cambridgeshire County Council in conjunction with South Cambridge District Council and Cambridge City Council, as described here:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/strategies/transport-plans/Transport+Strategy+for+Cambridge+and+South+Cambridgeshire.htm>

The Draft Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (July 2013) is available for download here:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/EB08D121-811E-4DB9-B83D-6987D67F3E31/0/20130721TSCSCv20WebConsultationDraftMain.pdf>

Railfuture Response

We welcome the Draft Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire and support the planned and potential rail developments described in the document. However there are a number of areas where we would suggest rail could be given a stronger, or more certain role. These are described in more detail in the following pages.

High Quality Transport Corridors

We note that Figure 4.1 on page 4-3 lists the main transport corridors and how High Quality public transport could be provided by Rail. The following future services should be expected:

- Ely and Waterbeach to Cambridge. This route already has 3 trains an hour Monday to Saturday giving and metro-like service. Planned service improvements will double service provision though platform extensions are needed at Waterbeach and Littleport to maximise capacity.
- Newmarket to Cambridge has a successful hourly service currently but with track doubling and some new station provision could be used by 4 or 5 services per hour each way which could support a half hourly Cambridge to Ipswich service, and a half hourly Cambridge to Ely via Soham service.
- Saffron Walden (serving Audley End) to Cambridge already has a minimum service of 3 trains per hour with service enhancements already planned. Platforms are already long enough to accommodate expected train lengths.

- Royston to Cambridge already has good service provision and with planned enhancements resulting from the Thameslink upgrade, this line will become metro-like.

Stations on all these routes should be enhanced to become quality rural interchanges.

The strategy suggests the following High Quality Transport Corridor could be serviced using Rail or Guided Bus. In a later section of this response we provide support for using rail for this option:

- Haverhill to Cambridge

The following are identified in the strategy as High Quality Transport Corridors using Guided Bus. We believe there is a case for developing a rail solution in conjunction with the East West rail link from Cambridge to Oxford which is also able to link Cambridge with St Neots, Alconbury and Huntingdon providing a rail alternative for these options.

- St Neots to Cambridge
- Alconbury, Huntingdon, St Ives and Northstowe to Cambridge

Haverhill to Cambridge

The Haverhill to Cambridge transport corridor is described starting on Page 5-12 of the strategy.

The railway is well positioned to provide a high quality service from the important centres on this corridor not only in the Cambridge direction to three of the most important business hubs in the Cambridge region, but also having the potential for line to be reopened beyond Haverhill as a route into Essex. We note that this route branches off the current rail network at Shelford some five miles to the south of Cambridge Science Park railway station, and that along this 5 miles are the increasingly important business hubs around Cambridge station, the Science Park station as well as the hub around Addenbrookes.

To leave all the options above open it is essential that route is reopened as a railway rather than being converted into a section of Guided Busway. Initial stations, also supporting park and ride, must be planned for Haverhill, Linton and Abingdon (for Granta Park).

St Neots to Cambridge Corridor

The St Neots to Cambridge corridor is described starting on Page 5-21 of the strategy.

There is no mention of rail in this section of the strategy, although it was listed earlier in the strategy in Figure 4.1 saying “Potential for rail option, depending on route choice and deliverability of the East West Rail central section between Bedford and Cambridge in the medium to longer term.”

We fully support the idea of exploring this rail based option, and the suggestion in Figure 4.1 should be carried over into the St Neots to Cambridge section on Page 5.21.

Railfuture have recently published their “Railfuture Oxford to Cambridge (East West Rail) campaign - Briefing note on route options for the Central Section from Bedford to Cambridge” which is available here:

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+East+West+Rail+Briefing+for+Cambridgeshire>

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/docs/East-West-Rail-Routes-from-Cambridge-Sept2013.pdf>

This describes various options for the Cambridgeshire section of the East West rail link, including an “Option B1” following the A428 corridor which would be a predominantly new line able to serve not only Cambridge to Oxford, but also Cambridge to St Neots via Cambourne and stations from there to Peterborough.

Alconbury, Huntingdon, St Ives and Northstowe to Cambridge corridor

The Alconbury, Huntingdon, St Ives and Northstowe to Cambridge corridor is described on Page 5-24 of the strategy.

We would like this corridor to be considered in conjunction with the St Neots to Cambridge corridor. A rail option from Cambridge to St Neots (as described in the previous section and associated briefing note) would allow a through rail service to run from Cambridge to St Neots, Alconbury and Huntingdon.

We agree that the busway should have quality bus extension links to Huntingdon and Alconbury as extensions from Cambridge Science Park Railway station via Histon, St Ives. However future capacity for the busway should be concentrated on St Ives, Longstanton Park and Ride and Northstowe. Other capacity should be provided from Alconbury and Huntingdon by the railway.

Railway Stations in Cambridge

We support the aim stated on Page 5-2 to provide three new rail stations on the outskirts of the city, at Addenbrooke’s, Cherry Hinton and Fulbourn to provide new gateways into the city. These should be considered in all future land use planning to reserve appropriate space for the stations and associated additional railway tracks, roads and cycle/footpaths.

Infrastructure Upgrades

We fully support the infrastructure upgrades listed on Page 4-10 of the strategy, namely:

- Capacity improvements in the Ely area.
- Power supply upgrade to allow more electrically powered services to concurrently use the Cambridge to Ely and Kings Lynn route north of Milton.
- Platform lengthening at stations may be needed on the Hitchin to Cambridge and Kings Lynn route, including in Cambridgeshire: Ashwell and Morden, Meldreth, Shepreth. Foxton, Waterbeach, Ely (only if required for 10 car Inter City Express trains), Littleport.

- Double tracking or passing loops on the route between Cambridge and Newmarket.
- Electrification of the Ely to Norwich and Cambridge to Newmarket routes.

We also fully endorse the “Once in a generation – A rail prospectus for East Anglia” which is referenced in the strategy and is available here:

<http://www.newanglia.co.uk/Assets/Files/Content/Rail%20prospectus%20for%20East%20Anglia.pdf>

We also fully support the medium to longer term aspirations of:

- New stations at Cherry Hinton and / or Fulbourn along with line speed improvements between Cambridge and Ipswich to allow trains to stop without prejudicing the provision of the clock face timetable.
- On the corridor to Haverhill, a High Quality Passenger Transport option could be the reopening of the railway, with potential for a number of new stations that might include Sawston, Granta Park and Linton as well as Haverhill itself.
- The East West Rail Consortium proposal to reopen the Varsity Line between Oxford and Cambridge with service continuing East to Norwich and Ipswich with associated investment on these routes.
- The reinstatement of the west curve at Chippenham junction (north of Newmarket) to allow a new service patterns into Cambridge from Ely, Newmarket and Soham.
- The Felixstowe to Nuneaton (F2N) freight capacity scheme

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