

Eco-towns: Living a Greener Future

Joint report by Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

Weston Otmoor Eco-town Initial Analysis of Railway Proposals

May 2008

Version 1



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1. Purpose

In response to the Eco-towns Prospectus issued by the Government alongside the Housing Green Paper in July 2007, Parkridge Holdings submitted proposals to build a new Eco-town adjoining the M40 motorway and the Oxford-Bicester railway, 3 miles SW of Bicester and 7 miles from Oxford, to be known as Weston Otmoor.

The eco-town proposal is for 10-15,000 homes and the developer believes the site would achieve exceptional standards of sustainability, particularly in relation to transport, through a major package of investment in rail including restoring services on the Oxford to Milton Keynes line, an intensive free tram-train shuttle to Oxford, direct trains to London, a major Park and Ride facility, improvements to the A34/M40 junction and stringent controls on car access from the site.

A review of the information and documents made available to the County Council has been undertaken. Most information has been provided in confidence and very little has been put into the public domain. This causes some problems in dealing with enquiries from the public and media, especially about the relationship with East West Rail, now that this standalone project has reached a significant development milestone.

This document deals with the railway elements of the eco-town proposal and is intended to inform and stimulate further discussion on these major investment commitments and look at whether they are in fact achievable, or consistent with the wider railway network.

2. East West Rail

East West Rail has been under development since the mid 1990's and has been subject to numerous feasibility studies and economic appraisals. In recent years the project has been given new momentum by the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan and emergence of proposals for major new housing in the Milton Keynes South Midlands sub-region. The project is identified as being of regional significance in the draft South East Plan and was well-supported at the Examination in Public. The Inspector's Report recommended changes to strengthen further the justification for the project, and we are waiting to see if these have been carried through into the proposed modifications when they are published in summer 2008.

The project is about to begin GRIP Stage 4 (single option development) in the rail industry project development process, having already completed GRIP Stage 2 (pre-feasibility) and Stage 3 (option selection). During these stages there has been extensive feasibility work by rail industry specialists to assess the infrastructure and this has taken the form of numerous on-site inspections of the track, signalling and structures, as well as timetable, rolling stock, operating regime, train performance modelling and business case justification.

The GRIP Stage 3 Report was issued in February 2008. It proposes double-track between Wolvercot Tunnel (north portal) and Bletchley High Level. There would be a new dedicated single track into one bay platform at Oxford as East West Rail has to remain independent of the existing tracks and signalling. North of Bletchley, trains would use the West Coast Main Line to reach Milton Keynes. Trains would run at up to 100mph.

There are currently two options being supported by the East West Rail Consortium. As far as Oxfordshire is concerned the difference between the options is in the destination of the two trains, either both go to Milton Keynes or they are split between Bedford and Milton Keynes and incur a slightly longer journey time. The infrastructure west of Claydon Junction will remain the same.

The Regional Rail option, preferred by Oxfordshire stakeholders, has a journey time from Oxford to Milton Keynes of 35 minutes (12 minutes to Bicester Town), a strong business case with a benefit to cost ratio of 2.1. The Local Rail option has an extended journey time of 45 minutes and a much weaker business case.

The capital cost estimate for the Regional Rail option is £190 million, and the Local Rail option costs £228, the extra £38 million being primarily for upgrading the Aylesbury spur and the additional operating costs. All these estimates have been validated by the train operating companies and Network Rail.

East West Rail is not delivering W10 (9'6") gauge clearance or the capability to have more than two passenger trains per hour at Oxford or Milton Keynes. If additional train services or a change in infrastructure capability is required this will increase these cost estimates.

Parkridge (document ref A8, A17) have stated an intention to implement East West Rail at their own cost between Oxford and Milton Keynes, and they have set aside £150 million to do so (document ref E8). In light of the extensive work done already to identify costs, this amount does seem woefully inadequate, especially as extra infrastructure is required.

East West Rail discussions are now at an advanced stage with DfT and Network Rail on their longer-term vision for this section of railway. They include:

- an increasing use by north-south freight traffic from Southampton (avoiding the congested rail network around the West Midlands) which might also help release capacity for a new station at Kidlington;
- greater use of the Midland Main Line for freight (accessed from EWR at Bedford) instead of the West Coast Main Line;
- routing some north-south Cross Country passenger trains via Bicester and Milton Keynes to reduce journey times.

Once these have been clarified, tendering for GRIP Stage 4 is expected to commence in July 2008 with the contract award by September. The development work will take around one year to complete and will lead to procurement of the scheme in 2010. A re-opening in 2012/13 is still thought to be realistic.

There is presently an opportunity to include the additionality being suggested by Parkridge as 'costed' options in the GRIP4 workscope. The cost of the additional feasibility work will need to be borne by Parkridge but it will ensure that both their aspirations and those of the East West Rail Consortium are aligned. Should Weston Otmoor not make the final ten Eco-towns in October 2008, these options can be removed from the workscope

Parkridge (document ref C1) has said they will reinstate two tracks between Oxford and Milton Keynes, including the Wolvercot Tunnel, before the first house is occupied, and that signalling would be improved to accommodate 12 East West Rail paths per hour in each direction (document re E32). However, it is not clear whether this applies to the whole route or just the section between the eco-town and Oxford.

Network Rail is also starting work on the Great Western Main Line and Chilterns & West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategies which will inform investment plans for the fifth five-yearly control period beginning in 2015.

The East West Rail timetable has to be based on the timetable agreed for the West Coast Main Line once the modernisation scheme is complete. This will be introduced in December 2008. The number of East West Rail trains that can run north of Bletchley to Milton Keynes will thereafter be restricted by the capability of the infrastructure.

The GRIP Stage 2 work carried out by Laing Rail identified that to increase paths to Milton Keynes would need an additional dedicated track alongside the West Coast Main Line slow lines. This would mean land acquisition and alterations to a number of bridge structures, including abutment work and widening. One of the bridges is listed and another carries the railway over the A5 dual carriageway road. The work required to accommodate an extra track was estimated to cost around £73 million in 2006, and this cost adversely affected the business case for a more intensive level of service over this section. As a result a decision was made to assume no more than two trains per hour in each direction.

The final stage of the West Coast Modernisation involves the remodelling of Bletchley. At Denbigh Hall South Junction, this will see the existing double track junction replaced with a single track, which further constrains future capacity north of Bletchley to two trains an hour in each direction. Parkridge have assumed that the two track configuration remains.

Issues

- Why is Parkridge allocating only £150 million to build significantly more infrastructure?
- At what Network Rail GRIP Stage are the Parkridge cost estimates?
- What assumptions have been made about signalling?
- How will the Parkridge proposal be compatible with the West Coast Main Line Strategy?
- How will Parkridge provide more than 2tph to Milton Keynes?
- How will the Parkridge proposal allow for DfT strategic passenger and freight movement?
- Will the Parkridge proposal allow inclusion of Aylesbury?

3. Rolling Stock

3.1 Tram-train

Parkridge will introduce a tram network serving the development on a 5 minute frequency and running into Oxford Station every 15 minutes (document ref B1, C1) sharing the track with the conventional heavy rail services (document ref D3). If tram-trains cannot be used, then Parkridge would provide an additional 4 conventional trains per hour (document ref C1).

The tram service would be franchised by the Weston Otmoor Management Company along with the heavy rail service (document ref B3) – see also section 5.3.

There would be a new stop at either Water Eaton or Peartree to serve the existing park & ride sites (document ref F20) and Parkridge has said it will seek to extend the tram system (document ref D3). A number of potential destinations was identified in the initial transport assessment (document ref F21), including along the northern bypass to BMW and Oxford Science Park, to the JR Hospital, to the Oxford Business Park. In the longer term the trams could penetrate into the city centre with street-running along Hythe Bridge and Park End Streets, and could also be extended to Didcot

However, the use of this new technology is as yet untested and not approved for use on Britain's rail network, although they operate successfully in other parts of Europe, notably Germany (Bremen, Karlsruhe, Kassel and Saarbrücken).

Tram-trains are lighter and greener than conventional trains. They use less fuel and weigh less which reduces wear and tear on tracks therefore decreasing the need for maintenance. Tram-trains have faster acceleration and deceleration and therefore offer passengers a faster journey time.

On 18 March 2008, the Department for Transport and Network Rail announced that a two-year trial will begin in 2010 to look at the environmental benefits, operating costs and the technical suitability of introducing tram-trains in the United Kingdom. They have said that it may be four years before the DfT makes a decision on where tram-trains will be introduced, but Leeds and York are likely frontrunners.

The trial is taking place on the 37-mile Penistone Line between Huddersfield and Sheffield, and requires five new tram-trains to provide the hourly service. Network Rail will spend £15 million to modify all the station platforms on the line to accommodate the low low-entrance vehicles and £9 million will be provided by the Department for Transport to fund operation of the trial. Northern Rail, which is owned by Serco-Ned Railways, will run a competition for manufacturers to build the tram-trains.

The comparison being made between the Parkridge proposal and the Nottingham Express Transit is misleading as the latter system uses low floor vehicles on dedicated tracks that are alongside a heavy rail corridor and through the city centre. The different types of rolling stock are not mixed on the same track.

3.2 Double Deck Trains

Parkridge intend to introduce double-deck trains onto East West Rail services between Oxford and Milton Keynes (document ref C1) to provide capacity for the forecast 5000 people an hour on the rail routes (document ref A9, A17).

This is new technology and has not been used in Britain since unsuccessful trials between 1949 and 1971 when double-deck trains were used on inner-suburban commuter services from Kent into the City of London. The trains were ditched because passengers found them cramped and uncomfortable, while boarding and disembarking at stations was too slow.

In late-2005 the Government asked Network Rail to reconsider the use of double-deck trains in an attempt to solve overcrowding on services into London. One of the four lines they considered was Reading to Paddington.

However, double-deck trains are typically about 3ft taller than normal trains which means there would need to be extensive re-engineering work to raise bridges, build new tunnels or lower the track level. All of this would be expensive and disruptive. Even in 2005, the best estimate for introducing this type of train was at least 10 years.

In an attempt to reduce the cost of any rebuilding work, the Department for Transport asked manufacturers to look at building a 13ft high version (lower than the lowest height double-deck train in Europe of 14'1" or 4.3 metres). However, it was found that designing a double-deck train shorter than those used on the continent which would not be cramped would be a major challenge.

In September 2007, Network Rail concluded ergonomic tests and concluded that low height double deck trains are thought to be unsuitable because people are getting wider and taller. According to University College London, since the 1970's Britons have grown about an inch and a half taller, female waistlines have grown by about six inches and men's by around four inches.

This has scotched plans for double-deck trains less than 13ft in height. Network Rail's study found that they would not provide "acceptable" headroom for passengers. Their study also warned that future calculations will have to provide for a population that "is taller than it has been historically and is forecast to have an increasing body mass index". Even the slightest increase in train height would add millions of pounds to the cost of modifying bridges and tunnels or lowering the track level.

DfT policy is now to extend the length of trains as it is seen as a cheaper option, even though it will mean building longer platforms (where space allows) to accommodate them. As a contingency, Parkridge has suggested they will use longer trains (document ref D2).

3.3 Rolling Stock Procurement

Parkridge say that they will invest £25 million in providing the tram-trains (document ref E8) but there is no mention of how the other 'conventional' rolling stock will be funded or procured.

Rolling stock, especially if it is new technology, can often have a lengthy delivery-time and a higher price tag. The UK rolling stock industry may be in the midst of delivering the 1300 new vehicles specified by the Government in the White Paper "*Delivering a Sustainable Railway*" (DfT, 2007) at around the same time as Parkridge will require it's new trains, and this may delay delivery and therefore impact on the start up of services.

Based on recent orders for new rolling stock by Angel Trains Ltd (a leasing company) for London Overground and Chiltern Railways, the purchase price for a new-generation Class 172 diesel multiple unit can be extrapolated. Each vehicle would cost around £1.37 million, so a four-car diesel unit will cost in the region of £5.5 million.

Assuming there is a requirement for 12 of these trains to provide 4tph to London (with a journey time of around 70 minutes), would cost £66 million. The East West Rail services are likely to need another 10 units costing £55 million. Allowing for 2 maintenance spares gives a fleet requirement of 24x 4-car units and a capital outlay on new heavy rail trains in the region of £132 million, not allowing for a double-deck design which is likely to have a higher price tag. Longer trains will also require more vehicles increasing the cost further.

Leasing charges could be £120,000 per annum per vehicle, or £480,000/year for a four-car unit. Again assuming there is a need for 24 units, this equates to an annual leasing cost of approximately £11.5 million.

Parkridge suggest they need a mix of 8-car DMUs (for London) and 4-car DMUs (for East West Rail) but a single fleet of 4-car units would give greater operational flexibility.

Whatever rolling stock is employed on the direct service to London will probably need to be compatible with existing conventional rolling stock used by Chiltern Railways so that in case of a failure away from the immediate area two trains can be coupled together to clear the line. Blocking the commuter line into London is unlikely to be acceptable to Network Rail or other train operating companies.

3.4 Depot Strategy, Stabling and Servicing

The rolling stock will have to be maintained at a depot, and will have to be serviced every few days on a cyclical basis, for items such as emptying toilets, fuel, washing and cleaning. Most depots are designed specifically for one particular type of rolling stock, and the use of rolling stock that could be significantly different from anything already in service does point towards the need for a new purpose-built depot. No mention has been made of this in any of the Parkridge documentation.

The land required to provide stabling sidings, toilet emptying and carriage washing facilities for 24 4-car trains and several train-tram vehicles each night will be extensive as it will need to include undercover facilities to carry out the routine light maintenance on the fleet. There is no reference to a rolling stock strategy in the Parkridge documents we've seen so far.

We do know that work carried out for East West Rail has shown there to be very few sites that are suitable for a new train depot in the area that minimise 'out of service' mileage. It is important to consider ease of access at unsocial hours for staff, availability of a workforce, land and the environment. A new depot will require planning consent. Would a facility like this be permitted close to the eco-town site? Overnight stabling of rolling stock is also an issue as the existing sidings at Aylesbury and Oxford do not have any spare capacity.

The removal of the Turbo Sidings at Oxford in Phase 1 of the Parkridge proposal (document ref D2) is unlikely to be acceptable to the rail industry. The sidings are used every night to stable First Great Western trains and prepare them for service the following morning. With 30% of morning peak services from the Thames Valley to London starting at Oxford this is a key facility and the site of a main traincrew depot. An alternative site at Weston Otmoor will probably be too remote and unsuitable for services originating at, and heading south of, Oxford.

Issues

- Will the new technology (tram-train and double deck trains) really be achievable?
- What timescales are known about the approval of new rolling stock by the rail authorities?
- Does Parkridge have any contractual arrangement with a rolling stock manufacturer?
- Who will fund the new heavy rail rolling stock (for East West Rail and London services)?
- What discussions have been held with the Department for Transport?
- Where will the new rolling stock be maintained?
- Why has the masterplan not allocated land for the relocation of the sidings?
- What agreement is there to the removal/relocation of the stabling sidings at Oxford?

4. Infrastructure

In the Parkridge Eco-town proposal, the rail elements are to be delivered in four separate phases (document ref E32). The scope of work in each phase is described differently but is believed to be as follows:

Phase 0 (the baseline) requires the implementation of East West Rail plus the double track through the Wolvercot Tunnel. Parkridge say this will be in place and operational before the first house is occupied (document ref B4), and will allow:

- 4 trams/hour (Oxford-Weston Otmoor)
- 2 trains/hour (Oxford-Milton Keynes)
- New Weston Otmoor Station (document ref E32)

The infrastructure for East West Rail is not envisaged to allow more than 2 trains per hour at Oxford due to the need to use a single bi-directional line. The 6 movements shown here are split between a new platform (4 trams/hour) accessed by the bi-directional line and the existing bay platform (2 trains/hour) accessed by using the up main line, on which there are known capacity constraints.

Phase 1 requires completion of a Bicester Chord and use of the existing Turbo Sidings at Oxford (erroneously referred to as 'Network Rail Sidings') together with their replacement at Weston Otmoor. This will allow:

- 4 trams/hour (Oxford-Weston Otmoor)
- 4 trains/hour (Oxford-Milton Keynes)
- 2 trains/hour (Weston Otmoor- London Marylebone)

The 10 movements are split between a new island platform (8 trains/hour) served by a new double track from the north end of the Turbo Sidings accessed by the bi-directional line and

the existing bay platform (2 trains/hour) accessed by using the up main line, on which there are known capacity constraints.

Phase 2 requires demolition of the traincrew depot, store rooms and old Red Star building at Oxford. This will allow:

- 4 trams/hour (Oxford-Weston Otmoor)
- 4 trains/hour (Oxford-Milton Keynes)
- 2 trains/hour (Oxford-London Marylebone)

The 10 movements are split between the existing platform 3 (2 trains/hour) accessed from the up main line, a new platform on the site of the existing parcels dock (4 trains/hour) and two new platforms in the car park (4 trams/hour) with the ability to be extended into the city centre. The latter 8 movements are all accessed from the single bi-directional line.

Phase 3 requires Oxford to be resignalled (currently expected around 2017) and will allow a 5 minute frequency service as follows:

- 4 trams/hour (Oxford-Weston Otmoor)
- 4 trains/hour (Oxford-Milton Keynes)
- 4 trains/hour (Oxford-London Marylebone)

The 12 movements access the station on a new double track through the area currently occupied by the Turbo Sidings, although a track layout provided by Parkridge (document ref E30) shows the London Marylebone terminating services using the main through platforms which will cause significant problems for through capacity.

4.1 Incompatible Requirements

The mixed type of rolling stock being suggested by Parkridge leads to potential problems in providing the right kind of infrastructure. The tram-train trial being piloted on the Penistone Line will use low-floor vehicles and the platforms at the existing railway stations are being rebuilt so they are lower and allow level access onto the trams. It will be almost impossible to provide dedicated platforms like these at the main stations like Oxford and Milton Keynes where the platforms will also need to be used by other types of conventional rolling stock.

The platforms needed for low-floor tram-trains are not compatible with conventional rolling stock that needs a platform around 4 feet above ground level. The Manchester Metrolink uses high-floor vehicles that utilises former heavy rail lines and has on-street running with the city centre platforms built to the same height as conventional heavy rail platforms.

Railway stations will need to be converted to accept double deck trains, by, for example, raising or removing platform canopies and signage, but they will still need to be usable by conventional rolling stock as well. The layout of each station will need to be reconfigured to cater for a larger number of passengers arriving at the same time.

These fundamental requirements will need to be confirmed by Parkridge as a matter of urgency so appropriate planning can take place with Network Rail and others.

4.2 Gauge Clearance

Parkridge has said they would lay 'slab track' in Wolvercot Tunnel (see 4.5) to provide W10 gauge clearance. In isolation this is unlikely to be of value, and similar clearance would be needed elsewhere as it is intended to use double-deck trains. Nothing further is said about how gauge clearance will be provided along the remainder of the route, but there are many arch bridges that will need to be modified or rebuilt and the current estimate for East West Rail does not allow for this. The rail industry is suggesting that European gauge clearance (W12) is their preference.

4.3 Network Capacity

There are bound to be limits on the availability of timetable paths on sections of track used by other services, for example the line south of Oxford North Junction, between Denbigh Hall South Junction and Milton Keynes and on the Chiltern line south of the Bicester Chord. To demonstrate that services can be achieved Parkridge should have done performance and timetable modelling and have had some detailed discussions with Network Rail and DfT to prove the operating viability of their rail proposals.

We know from the Route Utilisation Strategy and the Regional Planning Assessment for the Railway that the railway between Didcot and Oxford is operating at maximum capacity as a result of the mix in freight and passenger services along with lightly-used stations. Network Rail is investing in schemes that will increase capacity for train passing through, or calling at Oxford station and is working with the County Council on some of these. Their schemes include the upgrading the freight-only goods loops north of the station so they can be used for passenger trains, and the creation of a new bay platform facing south on land used as the station car park. No further changes are possible until resignalling takes place in 2017.

Parkridge proposals (document ref E25-E27, E29-E30) will add additional services to the already congested main lines between Oxford North Junction and Oxford station and will have a negative impact on reliability of trains passing through Oxford. In particular, if trains terminate in the through main line platforms it will use up scarce capacity for Cross Country trains to the midlands, the north and the south coast, for freight and for services between London Paddington and the Cotswolds Line. It may not be possible to put extra trains onto the main lines until resignalling takes place. The County Council would not want to see any deterioration in performance of existing services. An allowance will also have to be made for future improvements in train frequency on the Cotswold Line and on the line to Banbury.

Intensive use of a single bi-directional track has some inherent operating problems, and is likely to be a major cause of poor reliability for all services using the line from Bicester. The sectional running time for an existing two-car train between Oxford North Junction and the station is 3:07 minutes (DeltaRail, 2007) which leaves very little flexibility for any service perturbation if high frequency five minute headways are to be maintained.

Trains can run at these headways so long as they have the same operating characteristics and follow the same pattern of service. However, calling at stations uses up capacity and station dwell times can make a high frequency service difficult to operate reliably on a two-track railway when trains cannot pass one another. There is an intermediate station at Islip and we will need to know how that station will be served in future. A high frequency service could rule out any extra station(s) along the route.

Parkridge acknowledge there may be timetabling constraints (document ref E23) but have taken a rather simplistic approach to overcoming them in their favour. To overcome a lack of timetable paths into Milton Keynes they suggest running to Birmingham or retiming of long-distance freight paths. In practice doing either will have far reaching consequences that we suspect have not been analysed or agreed with the parties involved.

Due to space limitations, the new bay platform being built at Milton Keynes is only about 100 metres long and therefore only capable of accommodating a 4-car train. Trains longer than this will be restricted or have to run through the station to destinations further north, or terminate in the through slow line platforms. These two scenarios are undesirable and likely to have a negative impact on performance on the West Coast Main Line, as more trains will be serving Milton Keynes from December 2008.

4.4 Weston Otmoor Station

A new station would be built to serve the eco-town (document ref A9, A17). This would consist of six platforms (document ref F), two 240m through platforms for East West Rail, two 180m platforms for the local tram-train shuttle and two 80m bay platforms for the internal site tram service. No other details about the station have been given.

4.5 Wolvercote Tunnel

It is technically possible to give greater vertical clearance through the 132 yard (121 metre) tunnel by the use of 'slab track' (i.e. track fixed to a concrete bed rather than conventional ballast) and this method has been used extensively on recent projects, such as high-speed one into St. Pancras International and the Heathrow Terminal 5 extension. However, the current single track was moved to the centre of the trackbed to provide sufficient horizontal clearance for the containerised waste trains. The ability to provide twin-track and still allow clearance within the arched sides of the tunnel so two trains can pass needs to be proven. Network Rail aspires to a European W12 gauge along the whole East West Rail route and that will be investigated as part of further project work to see whether it is practical to do so.

4.6 Oxford Station

Oxford Station is a recognised pinchpoint on the strategic rail network, and Network Rail is planning and delivering a number of improvement schemes focused on performance and increasing capacity. The County Council is working with them on a scheme for a new bay platform that is designed to reduce conflicting train movements and thereby improve the reliability of services. It would be used by trains terminating from the south.

The County Council has a development agreement with Network Rail to design a scheme that will improve and expand the station as part of the £62 million transport package called Access to Oxford. An important consideration is ensuring that short-term works do not rule out the potential for longer term expansion. The package is to be delivered by 2015, with the station element being 'fast-tracked' for delivery by 2011. The Parkridge proposals will have to fit around the ongoing redesign of the station. None of the Parkridge documents provide a cost for rebuilding work at the station.

The current bay platform facing north is 124 metres long and can accommodate a 5-car train, but the disused parcel dock platforms are less than half that length. Parkridge has proposed lengthening these platforms (document ref D2, E23) to allow longer for 8-car trains but there appears to be insufficient land available to do so.

They also propose remodelling the layout at the north end of the station, partially to allow the tram-trains to be extended into the city centre. Any change will have a major impact on the layout of the station and Parkridge have said (document ref D2) that they will relocate Network Rail buildings to Weston Otmoor. In fact they are not used by Network Rail but are an integral part of the station and used for office, train crew and storage facilities. Changes would also result in the loss of short-stay car parking, pick up and set down areas, disabled and staff parking and the area used by rail replacement bus services. The indicative layout shown (document ref E31) appears to sterilise a large area of the existing station forecourt and does not look a good use of the space available. It is critical that design work continues on options for expanding the station under the Access to Oxford project. This must remain a priority for Network Rail and the County Council.

There is no acknowledgement in any of the Parkridge documents that existing use of the bay platforms which will need to continue, and as a result they will not have sole use of the platforms for their own services. The existing bay platforms facing north are used by trains from Bicester, Banbury and the Cotswolds, as well as a means of transferring rolling stock

between the Down Carriage Sidings and the Turbo Sidings for cleaning and maintenance during the day.

Parkridge say they will provide “additional stabling for Network Rail maintenance trains at Weston Otmoor” and also say that the internal layout of the goods yard will be amended (both document ref D2). Assuming they actually mean the sidings north of the station, then these are not used by Network Rail but are the Turbo Sidings used to prepare and stable trains terminating or starting at Oxford. It is unlikely they can easily be relocated to Weston Otmoor and to do so will incur higher operating costs (staff and fuel) that should not be borne by the existing train operator, but will need to be funded as a consequence of the eco-town development.

To provide for a high frequency service, Parkridge have said they will provide an additional canal crossing at Oxford station to allow East West Rail trains and the tram-trains to be fully integrated into the existing station but segregated from the main lines (document ref D2). Because of the topographical differences, structure of the existing rail bridges over the Sheepwash Canal, and horizontal clearances, it looks as if this will require removal of the LNWR swingbridge in Rewley Road. This structure is a scheduled ancient monument and the subject of renovation efforts by the Oxford Preservation Trust.

4.7 Signalling

Notwithstanding what has been said already about delivering East West Rail, double track through Wolvercot Tunnel and changes to the track layout on the northern approaches to Oxford station, a major issue that hasn't been mentioned in any great detail by Parkridge is the signalling. This will be a crucial part of the operation, especially if services are going to operate at such a high frequency.

It is possible for the signalling to be designed in such a way that trains could run at 5 minute headways, but this specification is best designed from the outset even if some signal heads remain out of use until needed in later stages of the project.

Signalling in the Oxford area is controlled by Oxford Power Signal Box (PSB) and consists of colour light signalling. Signalling between Oxford North Junction and Bicester London Road Crossing takes the form of a tokenless block, supervised by Oxford PSB, and this allows one train onto the branch at any time. Ground frames, released by Oxford PSB, are provided for access to the MOD at Bicester and the aggregates siding at Banbury Road.

We know from extensive feasibility work and site visits already, that changes or additions to Oxford PSB are not possible due to the age and condition of the equipment used. The work planned for the Oxford area over the next two years makes use of redundant capacity in the system rather than adding new signals or control. Network Rail has said that no further signalling alterations will be possible at Oxford once the goods loops are upgraded and the new south facing bay platform has been introduced, prior to a full ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System) resignalling scheme in 2017. ERTMS is effectively in-cab signalling without the need for line side equipment.

Parkridge have said that “*with new signalling and platform provisions at Oxford*” (document ref C1) their level of service could be accommodated on twin track, although the ability to deliver this will be determined by Network Rail resignalling. Many of the infrastructure options (document ref document ref E25-E27, E29-E30) rely on using bi-directional single track, and that many not be possible until resignalling in 2017.

Parkridge has said they will not need to touch the existing signalling to deliver the Phase 0 (baseline) services capable of serving the first 10,000 dwellings (document ref D2). The rail services will need to be self-contained and use just one platform, as stated in the East West Rail GRIP Stage 3 Report, but can they be operated off just one platform?

The East West Rail scheme has identified that the signalling north of the Wolvercot Tunnel could be controlled from the Marston Vale Signalling Centre at Ridgmont, between Bedford and Bletchley. This modern facility can be expanded with additional workstations to control the level crossings and signalling west towards Oxford. South of Wolvercot, interlocking to Oxford PSB could be used to provide a tokenless block allowing one train in section on the single bi-directional line into the bay platform.

There is no evidence to suggest that Parkridge has discussed signalling in any detail with Network Rail, despite also saying that any upgrading of the signalling would be carried out by the infrastructure provider (document ref E23). Oxford is provisionally programmed to be resignalled in 2017.

The Parkridge documents do not go into any detail about managing the signalling for their combined tram and train services, and how this will fit with the wider national rail network.

The cost of operating the infrastructure is funded through variable and fixed track access charges paid by the train operating companies to Network Rail. A high frequency service will increase the amount of equipment needed, its maintenance and frequency of renewal and the number of staff needed to operate and maintain the signalling system. In normal circumstances, Network Rail would recoup these from train operators. As the rail services will be franchised by the Weston Otmoor Management Company (document ref B3) it is unclear how the infrastructure operating costs will be met on what will be a privately built railway, with services offering free public transport generating minimal revenue using the infrastructure operated by Network Rail.

4.8 Gavray Drive Chord

Parkridge have said they will build a new south-facing chord between the Oxford-Bletchley line and the existing Chiltern line as this will be needed to introduce a service from Weston Otmoor (eventually from Oxford) to London Marylebone (document ref A9, A17, B1).

Leaving aside the issue of the service itself (see Section 5.2), Parkridge has said that the new chord has planning support in the Cherwell Local Plan (document ref B). Policy TR29 of the Non-Statutory Local Plan 2011 reads "*The Council will reserve land for a connecting railway and a rail based public transport interchange at Gavray Drive that will integrate all modes of transport serving Bicester and Commuter links*". However, the Non Statutory Local Plan 2011 is not part of the statutory development plan and has only been approved as interim planning policy for development control purposes pending adoption of the Local Development Framework. The full paragraph reads: "*Chiltern Railways has asked for the land for a connecting railway line to be safeguarded. The connecting railway line is not dependent on the East-West rail project but would complement it and greatly facilitate the business and economic case for it and would facilitate the introduction of services between London Marylebone and Oxford.*"

We are aware that Chiltern Railways reached agreement with Gallaghers, the developer of the Gavray Drive site, to safeguard land for a new chord for a period of up to fifteen years, after which the set-aside land will revert to other uses. As transport authority, the County Council has previously ruled out a transport interchange at the same location as the road network would make it difficult to serve by public transport from most residential areas of the town. The relationship of the site with the town centre is also poor for pedestrians and cyclists as the site is located on the far side of the proposed East West Rail line.

The cost of works to deliver the Bicester chord was estimated by Chiltern Railways to be in the region of £45 million in February 2003, but a firm figure cannot be extrapolated from the details given to the county council at the time.

4.9 Bicester Eastern Perimeter Road

The Bicester Eastern Perimeter Road was built in 1995, and the agreement to construct the road level crossing between British Railways Board and the County Council was signed on 18th March 1994. Clause 20 of the Agreement places an obligation on the local authorities to reimburse the Board (now Network Rail) for any “*adaptions or improvements necessary as a result of volume change in speed limits or type of traffic on either the road or the railway, or to meet the requirements of the Railway Inspectorate...*”. But it does not set out what constitutes a volume change (x trains per hour, for example). The cost of any upgrade to the crossing will need to be borne by the East West Rail project.

The signalling system for East West Rail will work on the basis of the level crossing barriers at the Perimeter Road and London Road working together due to the line speed. The exact strike in and strike out points for these crossings has not yet been designed, but to ensure that approaching trains do not see a restrictive signal aspect, the barriers are likely to be lowered several minutes before a train arrives at the crossing. Increasing the number of trains passing through the area will cause this main road to be closed for longer, perhaps up to 25 minutes in every hour, which will adversely affect traffic flows through and around Bicester town centre. As a result, maybe Parkridge ought to fund some mitigating measures in other parts of Bicester to help alleviate the impact of their rail services

Issues

- How will the different infrastructure requirements be achieved in practice?
- How will Parkridge achieve W12 gauge clearance to meet industry requirements?
- What timetable and performance modelling has been done to prove a high frequency service is possible?
- How will a single bi-directional line function with such a high intensity service?
- How will Parkridge ensure that existing services do not suffer as a result of introducing more trains, particularly those from London, onto the network?
- If the platform at Milton Keynes Central is too short, how will capacity be provided?
- Will Parkridge provide W12 gauge clearance between Oxford and Milton Keynes?
- How much money is Parkridge allowing for rebuilding Oxford station?
- Has Network Rail or First Great Western agreed to relocate the Turbo Sidings and/or offices to Weston Otmoor?
- Why has the masterplan not allocated land for the relocation of the sidings?
- When will Parkridge have a detailed layout for the revised Oxford station?
- How much money is Parkridge allowing for changes to Oxford station?
- Will existing train services still be able to use the bay platforms facing north?
- Is Parkridge prepared to pay for higher operating costs incurred by existing train operators?
- Who will operate the signalling, and from where will it be controlled?
- How can the required level of service be provided ahead of Oxford resignalling?
- Is there any contractual relationship between Parkridge and Chiltern Railways for use of the Gavray Drive Chord?
- How can the required level of service be provided ahead of Oxford resignalling?
- Will Parkridge compensate Network Rail for the cost of operating the signalling?
- How will an intensive train service affect traffic using the Bicester road network?

5. Services

5.1 Pattern and Frequency

The Parkridge eco-town proposal assumes there will be a maximum of 12 tram/trains per hour in each direction between the eco-town and Oxford (document ref A9, A17). They will comprise four double-deck East West Rail services between Oxford and Milton Keynes and four Oxford-London Marylebone services and four shuttle tram-trains that will also serve the Park & Ride and the eco-town (document ref B1).

In their original expression of interest (document ref A9, A17) it states that the journey time from Weston Otmoor to Oxford would take just 6 minutes, to Milton Keynes in 30 minutes, and to London Marylebone in about an hour. The first two journey times are not consistent with the validated draft timetable, that has been performance tested for East West Rail and shows a fastest Bicester to Oxford journey time of 12 minutes and Oxford to Milton Keynes journey time of 35 minutes. It is difficult to see how the journey time from Weston Otmoor can be reduced to just six minutes!

With such a high frequency service, introducing trains (or tram-trains) that have a number of different origins and destinations or have different operating characteristics is likely to cause difficulties if they are delayed en-route for whatever reason and do not arrive on the common section of track at their scheduled time. The problem will be exacerbated by using single-track on the approach to Oxford station, especially if some of the trains need a quick turnaround to maintain a workable timetable, or to optimise platform occupancy. We know only too well from experience of the Cotswold Line how timekeeping and pathing problems lead to poor reliability. It is easy to see how this kind of delay can quickly build and have a knock-on effect across the wider rail network. Unreliability could then become a deterrent to the use of public transport.

Parkridge has said it will seek to extend the tram system, or a bus alternative (document ref D3) to other areas around Oxford, including BMW, Oxford Science Park and JR Hospital. It would use the northern perimeter roads or the freight line from Kennington Junction to the BMW factory at Cowley. With so little evidence to support their core rail proposal, it is hard to know if these are serious propositions or just aspirations that have not been investigated. They may grab the headlines and raise local expectation or cause blight, but do they have a realistic chance of being implemented?

5.2 London Services

The Department for Communities and Local Government has not yet published guidelines on what makes an eco-town, but they are expected to appear in a draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) during the summer.

Parkridge are proposing a direct train service from the development to London Marylebone via a new Bicester Chord (document ref A9, A17, B1). This seems contrary to the objective of creating a sustainable community where local employment is provided for residents and commuting is minimised. The London service will provide 4 trains per hour in each direction (document ref B1) with a journey time of about an hour (document ref A9, A17).

Whilst initially the service will terminate at Weston Otmoor, it will eventually serve Oxford and a second London service, if both continue, brings with it a number of concerns. Oxford is already adequately served by four trains per hour to London Paddington – two 'fast with a journey time of around 60 minutes and two 'stopping' trains for intermediate stations. The alternative service to Marylebone is a slightly longer distance and has a longer end-to-end journey time unless joining the train en-route. However, that is of little relevance to the very high number of passengers who access Oxford station by foot or cycling (almost 50%)

It is perhaps not a coincidence that Chiltern Railways is working up a business case for an Oxford to London Marylebone service as one of the secondary aspirations in their franchise agreement signed in 2002. The company has until December 2009 to submit a proposition to the Department for Transport for consideration.

Much has been said about an alternative London service reducing the number of trains that pass through Reading at a time when the station is undergoing remodeling (2009 onwards), and in reducing the number of trains during, and after, Crossrail is constructed to match the capacity into Paddington. However, that is all speculation and the Department for Transport has not yet finalised contingency arrangements for these two major schemes.

Any reduction in train services between Oxford and London Paddington will have an impact on local intermediate stations which could lose some of their existing services, and also on key linkages such as those between Oxford, Didcot and Reading. Didcot is a major growth area, serving a wide area including the economically important 'Quadrant' and the eco-town might actually lead to a decrease rail provision in other parts of the county at a time when the demand for travel by train locally is growing year-on-year at almost every station.

The cost of operating the London Marylebone service has not been given, but we would expect this to be quite high in light of the mileage-based costs and rolling stock required.

It is also important to understand the revenue and demand forecasts for the service as a key factor to consider is abstraction from existing services. A new service could undermine the financial viability of other train services, for example from Bicester North or Oxford by abstracting revenue from them rather than helping to expand the rail market share.

As there is no existing track access rights to operate an Oxford to Marylebone service these will presumably need to be sought from the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR). In doing so, the ORR will look at revenue abstraction and the public interest before deciding whether to grant permission to operate the service.

5.3 Franchising Agreement

Section 26 of the Railways Act 1993 provides the legal authority for the letting of rail passenger franchisees and the Railways Act 2005 gave the Department for Transport responsibility for specifying and letting contracts to train operating companies to run franchised passenger services in England and inter-city services to and from Scotland and Wales. Transport Scotland and the Welsh Assembly Government have their own devolved rail responsibilities, and Transport for London has limited responsibility for railways within the Greater London Authority area.

There are currently 20 franchised train operators in Great Britain - with the Department for Transport being the awarding body for all except three (Merseyrail, First Scotrail and Arriva Trains Wales). The franchises are normally awarded for periods of up to eight years, which can be extended if certain pre-agreed performance targets are met. The franchises include First Great Western, Chiltern Railways and Cross Country. Chiltern Railways is now unique in being the only franchise awarded for 20 years at a time when the government was trying to incentivise the private sector to invest more in rail infrastructure in exchange for a longer franchise term.

In addition, there are six open access operators, including Heathrow Express, Heathrow Connect, Hull Trains and Wrexham & Shropshire. Open access operators do not have their services specified by the Department for Transport unlike franchised operators. They have to apply for rights to use rail network and stations to the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR).

Rail operations are regulated under two key pieces of legislation. The Railway (Licensing of Railway Undertakings) Regulations 2005 (The Regulations) covers railway companies who provide passenger and/or freight services, and the Railways Act 1993 (The Act) provides for operators of passenger and non-passenger trains, stations, networks and maintenance depots. Section 6 of the Act makes it an offence to be the operator of an asset other than a passenger train or freight train within the scope of the Regulations without holding a licence or a licence exemption granted under the Act.

Parkridge are proposing a much different approach with the Weston Otmoor Management Company franchising the tram and heavy rail services together to a third party (document ref B3,) which clearly suggests they will manage the procurement and award of a single concession rather than the Department for Transport franchising the rail service. The rail services will therefore be very similar to an open access operation, rather than being part of an existing or future franchise.

This raises a number of issues, and the local authorities will need to fully understand the legal position regarding the procurement and award of the rail services to reassure them that the proposed structure for providing these services is possible within current UK legislation. For instance will the Railways Act allow franchising of rail services by Parkridge rather than DfT, or will Parkridge appoint an 'internal' operator who will then apply for open access to the rail network.

Parkridge give the impression it will be their own private railway, funded, built and operated by them and the existing asset owner (i.e. Network Rail) and the freight and passenger train operating companies will be moved aside to make this happen. The existing operators have legally binding rights of access to the rail network that will have to be negotiated away if this is what Parkridge intend to achieve. The framework under which the train and tram services will operate is unclear.

Combining rail services with the tram operations around the eco-town make this a different kind of franchises than any that exist already and it is unclear at this stage who will set the specification and what safeguards will exist to ensure that services continue to operate in the public interest.

As rolling stock is written down over many decades the DfT normally underwrites the cost to the rolling stock companies, ensuring they have a guaranteed income from their initial investment until their costs have been recouped. We therefore wonder what bond or form of security these companies will require if DfT is not underwriting the service.

5.4 Freight

The railway between Oxford and Bicester has been used by freight for decades, and it was freight traffic that kept the railway open throughout the 70's and early 80's. There are daily freight trains using the line but these are not mentioned in any of the Parkridge documents. We are also aware that Network Rail and DfT have future aspirations to increase use of the line by freight trains between Oxford and the West Coast Main Line at Bletchley once East West Rail has been completed.

There are currently six train movements per day, with additional 'as required' paths in the timetable. These comprise a train conveying household waste from Bristol and Bath to a landfill site at Calvert in Buckinghamshire. This train travels along the Great Western Main Line to Oxford and runs on Mondays to Saturdays. A train of aggregates from the Mendip Quarries to Banbury Road (Oxford) operates on weekday mornings, and a military supply train serving the MOD depot at Bicester at weekday lunchtime/afternoon. These trains have level one track access rights giving them protection from changes to their timetable.

Freight trains tend to travel at a slower speed than passenger services, typically 45-75mph, so the existence of these freight trains is likely to impact on the ability to provide a regular five-minute headway passenger service at some times of the day.

Issues

- What are the demand forecasts for each of the rail services?
- What are the income projections for each of the rail services?
- What are the boundaries of the free public transport offer?
- Is Parkridge investing in the London Marylebone service, for example, rolling stock?
- Who is subsidising the operation of the London Marylebone service?
- What timetable development work has taken place with Network Rail to date?
- Can you provide a draft timetable to demonstrate how the different services interact?
- What work has been done to look at future expansion of the tram-train network?
- Have discussions taken place with ORR on new access rights for the train services?
- What framework will exist for timetable, fares and operations management?
- How will existing and future freight be accommodated under the Parkridge proposal?

6. Business Case

6.1 Revenue and Demand

The only demand statistics we have seen indicate an 80% mode split to the railway and 20% to the road network (document ref E20) which does seem very high, but could be achievable if all other constraint measures are in place to deter private car use.

The typical peak hour outbound movements supplied by Parkridge indicate 5,500 rail trips (document ref A9, A17, E20). If we assume there will be twice this number throughout the day (i.e. 11,000 journeys) from the site (no figures have been provided for travel to the station for employment or education purposes, for example), a station at Weston Otmoor will instantly become the 4th busiest station in the greater western franchise portfolio of 210 stations. It would be comparable in terms of annual passenger volume to Bristol Temple Meads and will only be beaten by London Paddington, Reading and Cardiff.

Of these peak hour movements, 3,500 are shown to travel towards Oxford, with 1,000 each to London and Milton Keynes (document ref E20).

Parkridge have made numerous statements about the provision of 'free' public transport in perpetuity:

- Free public transport to Oxford from Weston Otmoor residents (document ref A8)
- Between Bicester and Oxford (document ref A18)
- Between the site and Oxford or Milton Keynes (document ref B1)
- Free for life (B1), from the outset (document ref B3)
- For everyone connected with the development (document ref B1)

What remains unclear is how widely the free travel offer will be available, for example, does it apply to residents only, or to people commuting to employment within the eco-town.

The County Council will need to know how the availability of free travel will impact on the ability to generate revenue to sustain the services. We do not know the assumptions that Parkridge has used when deciding on £5 million to subsidise of public transport services (document ref E8).

The availability of free travel could encourage long distance commuting and could attract significant numbers of people onto the trains. Whilst this, of course, to be welcomed, it does have the potential to fill up the trains which will leave limited capacity for people travelling from elsewhere, such as Oxford, Bicester and Milton Keynes. We will need to know how this demand will be managed for the whole corridor and not just from the eco-town.

Parkridge has said that there will be through ticketing to enable rapid interchange between the on-site tram system and the rail services (document ref C1). However, will this apply in the reverse direction, and if so, how will tram tickets be sold on the national rail network.

Because the train services will not be franchised by the Department for Transport, it is not clear what control there will be on fare increases and availability, and this will need to be clarified as it will have a bearing on the revenue generation and the economics of running the services.

Every franchise agreement with the Department for Transport requires the train operator to participate in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA). The TSA stipulates how rail fares will be created, how journeys involving several operators are set and distributed between them, as well as ensuring that through-ticketing continues to exist at a nationwide level as it did under British Rail. There are regulated and unregulated fares in the UK.

Regulated fares comprise two types:

- **Commuter Fares**, including:
 - Standard Season tickets (weekly, quarterly, annual) for journeys to, from and within the London Travelcard zone, including all standard season tickets from Oxfordshire;
 - Standard Day Singles and Returns to a station in the Travelcard zones from a defined London suburban area, roughly 35-50 miles from London. The local boundary stations are Haddenham & Thame Parkway and Twyford (incl. Henley branch).
- **Protected Fares**, including:
 - Standard Open Returns (the full-fare return ticket, valid at both peak and off-peak times), for journeys under 50 miles, or wholly within the old Network SouthEast area, other than those which are included in a Commuter Fares basket;
 - Weekly Season tickets, wherever a weekly season ticket existed in February 2003, other than those which are included in a Commuter Fares basket;
 - Saver Returns (off-peak walk-up leisure fare available for journeys over 50 miles) for all journeys where a saver existed in February 2003.

The annual increase for regulated fares is RPI (in July of the previous year) +1% and is applied each January.

Unregulated fares can rise by varying amounts, and are set by each train operator based on the market conditions in which they work. Only around 10% of all tickets sold are full fare 'unregulated' tickets.

- **Unregulated Fares**, include:
 - all First Class fares;
 - all 'Advance Purchase' fares;
 - all tickets (other than Travelcards) which include through travel to destinations served by bus services, light rail services or London Underground;
 - tickets which include a non-rail element such as entrance to a museum, theme park or other attraction;
 - Standard Day Singles and Returns to any station in the Travelcard zones from stations at Banbury, Bicester North and in the Thames Valley, with the exception of the Henley branch;

- Standard Open Returns (the full-fare return ticket, valid at both peak and off-peak times), for journeys under 50 miles outside the old Network SouthEast area;
- Cheap Day Returns and Saver tickets, for journeys where there was no Saver fare in 2003;
- Weekly Season tickets, for journeys where there was no weekly season fare in 2003.

The ability to generate the revenue needed to fund the operation of the services will be restricted by the free travel offer and the cost of travel for non residents, but the County Council would expect fare levels to be comparable with those offered on the national rail network and not act as a deterrent to using the train.

6.2 Operating Costs

The operating cost for East West Rail has been calculated to be £9.44 million per annum by 2031 for 2 trains per hour between Oxford and Milton Keynes, and 1 fast and 1 slow train per hour between Bletchley and Bedford.

Parkridge are anticipating an annual operating cost of £10 million for the total transport offer (document ref E36), which represents a much higher level of service on the East West Rail route plus the tram-train services plus the Oxford to London Marylebone train service. The Parkridge operating costs seem inadequate for the services they aspire to provide.

Parkridge has said (document ref E38) that the annual operating costs would be met from a number of sources, including:

- Rail revenues from the franchise for the Oxford – Milton Keynes (and possibly tram) service, including income from 3rd party use of this route (by freight?) and the Oxford-London Marylebone route;
- Road charges for both parking and arrivals and departures;
- Service charges paid by all employers based on floorspace occupied;
- Advertising within the stations and on-board trains and trams;
- Interest from lump-sum cash endowment, in the order of £100m (document ref C2)

However, in the case of the London services, income (presumably by way of a track access charge) can only be generated for the section of route between Oxford and the junction with the Chiltern line in Bicester as Network Rail will receive track access income for the rest of the route into London. The County Council will need to understand the revenue generation to determine if this is going to be sufficient to meet the actual cost of providing the services, and what the contingency arrangements Parkridge propose if the revenues fall short of the amount required to cover all the operating costs.

Issues

- What are the demand and revenue forecasts for each of the rail services?
- Does the free public transport also apply to people who travel to the eco-town but do not live there?
- What are the boundaries of the free travel schemes, for example, does it extend to all the destinations available on the train and tram network?
- Won't free public transport encourage longer distance commuting?
- How does free travel affect the economics of the operation? What is the benefit:cost ratio of running each of the services?
- What assumptions have Parkridge used to determine the amount of public transport subsidy?
- How will demand be managed along the entire corridor?
- Will through tickets be available to and from the eco –town?
- Does Parkridge intend to participate in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement?

- What fare levels are intended to be used for fare-paying passengers?
- How will revenue be apportioned between the heavy rail and tram-train services?
- What is the breakdown on operating costs as the figure of £10m per annum seems low?
- What will happen if revenues fall short of operating costs?

7. Rail Industry Involvement

7.1 Network Rail

We understand two meetings have been held between Parkridge, their transport consultant, Waterman Civils and Network Rail. For some reason their initial meeting involved Network Rail's London North Western area office despite the site and the Oxford-Bicester line being located in the Western area. A second meeting took place on 21st May but seems to have focused on operating into Oxford rather than all the aspects of the rail offer detailed in this document.

We do not believe that any detailed appraisal has taken place and therefore fail to see how decisions can be made about the sustainability credentials of the development until it has been shown that the rail services, and all that goes with them, can be delivered.

7.2 Department for Transport

We do not know yet if the Department for Transport (Rail Group) has been approached by Parkridge.

7.3 Office of Rail Regulation

We are unaware whether Parkridge have spoken to the Office of Rail Regulation about the operation of the new services or franchising.

7.4 Train Operating Companies

We are unaware what contact and involvement Parkridge has had with any of the freight or passenger train operating companies.

Issues

- Can Parkridge confirm the contact and discussions they have had with the various organisations in the rail industry?
- Are minutes of any these meetings available?

8. Reference Documents

The following Parkridge documents have been used in compiling this paper:

- A. Expression of Interest A3 - October 2007
- B. Additional information - 10 January 2008
- C. Additional information - 21 January 2008
- D. Letter from Roger Sporle to DCLG (Henry Cleary) - 14 March 2008
- E. Document submitted for a cross governmental meeting - 21 February 2008
- F. Initial Transport Assessment (Waterman Civils) - 9 May 2008