

Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

Date of meeting: 28th July 2016	AGENDA ITEM NO: 8
Report title: Update note on London Road level crossing	
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1. Background

- 1.1. The first phase of East-West Rail has resulted in four passenger trains per hour using Bicester London Road level crossing and the second phase will then deliver a further four passenger trains per hour and includes the entire rail infrastructure from east of Bicester out to Bedford and Milton Keynes. Completion of Phase 2 will also facilitate extra freight trains and longer-distance passenger services. The Hendy Report reassessed how rail enhancements, including East-West Rail Western Section Phase 2, will be delivered and was published in November 2015. It states that there will be 'significant delivery' by March 2019 and completion in the next five-year period; however completion dates cannot be confirmed at this stage.
- 1.2. Phase 2 of the East-West Rail project includes a highway solution for Charbridge Lane level crossing in Bicester, but not London Road level crossing. The infrastructure, land requirements etc. will be part of a Transport & Works Act (T&WA) submission for Phase 2, but does not include London Road as an Inspector's Report (2011) stated that neither East-West Rail Phase 1 (now open) or Phase 2 required any significant works to London Road i.e. it could continue to operate as a level crossing even with the extra train services. Network Rail are planning to consult further on the Phase 2 scheme and then submit the new T&WA order in the new year.
- 1.3. However, in addition to East West Rail, electrification between Oxford and Bedford could also result in more freight trains being routed through Bicester, as will development of Graven Hill as a freight terminal. London Road is a key link between Bicester town centre and the town's south-eastern suburbs, including key development sites (Graven Hill, Wretchwick Green, Akeman Park and Gavray Drive) which will deliver about 4000 new dwellings and 5000 new jobs. London Road is also a direct link between Bicester town centre and Ambrosden/Arncott, settlements that have a very close commercial and cultural relationship with Bicester. As a result, increasing rail traffic and growth targets can be seen to be two competing national agendas in Bicester and if this issue is not resolved the town will be less integrated and less efficient and therefore not as attractive to investors.

2. Update

- 2.1. A high level engineering and network effectiveness assessment of potential highway solutions has already been undertaken and has focused the study down to a few remaining options. Network Rail have agreed jointly (with Oxfordshire County Council) to fund some further scheme design/development work on options for the crossing, using their consultants, as part of their development work on future phases of East-West Rail. This assessment work is due to be completed in July and public consultation on the remaining options is expected to be undertaken later this year. In progressing further work now, we can be clear as to what the requirements for a new crossing are as the national rail programme continues to benefit but also impact on Bicester.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1. Members are asked to note the programme and proposed consultation.