



Langford Village Community  
Association Langford Village  
Community Hall  
Nightingale Place  
Bicester  
Oxon  
OX26 6XX

Email:

17 April 2019

Network Rail  
c/o Winckworth Sherwood LLP  
Minerva House  
5 Montague House  
London  
SE1 9BB

Dear Sirs

[Reference: TWA/18/APP/04/OBJ/142 Network Rail \(East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements\) Order](#)

I have been made aware of a new study by Network Rail into the Cambridge Corridor and what additional capacity may be required around Cambridge in 2033 and 2043. The study has been developed in consultation with stakeholders:

<https://cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Cambridgeshire-Corridor-Study-2019.pdf>

There is a realisation that EWR needs to be designed to carry a lot of people. The railway is growing quickly (note the 20% growth in Oxford and 51% increase at Bicester in the space of 1 year). Was this level of growth anticipated or planned for?

The study anticipates 6tph from EWR to Cambridge, the use of 4-car trains and also that the additional train service would be approved by stakeholders then formally instructed by the EWR Company. It is not clear where the extra trains from Cambridge would go although presumably something like 4tph would run through to Oxford. This could be extended towards Swindon/Bristol and/or Reading potentially. Similarly, we could assume the proposed Oxford - Bedford service being extended to Cambridge and potentially beyond to Ipswich or Norwich. Thus, an extra 3tph each way through Bicester seems quite likely.

The infrastructure currently proposed for Phase 2, particularly the Marston Vale section between Bedford and Bletchley, would simply not cope. The possibility of 8-car trains for EWR does not fit with the 106m platforms being proposed at Winslow, Woburn Sands and Bletchley High Level (fortunately the stations between Oxford and Bicester already have platforms long enough). In Bicester the London Road Level Crossing will not cope with the planned service from 2023, let alone the extra trains when the route to Cambridge is opened. The modelling for phase 2 is totally based on 3-car trains, however we have longer trains through Bicester already and are challenging this as being an inaccurate base to look at the impact upon Bicester and in particular the London Road Crossing.

We have challenged the modelling of traffic in Bicester and the effects of increased rail traffic in the reports presented to the Inquiry. Modelling does not appear in the report concerning the effects on the town centre

side of the crossing. Traffic southbound over the level crossing has to wait not just for trains but also when someone wishes to turn right into Station Approach in the face of a northbound stream of traffic. The traffic regularly tails back around the Market Square and along the Launton Road. The stationary vehicles then cause additional pollution. The journey times from Langford Village presented in the report are not accurate. A journey to the junction of Queens Avenue and St John's Street is shorter in distance but does not represent the centre of town where people want to go.

At the last public inquiry in 2011 the Inspector concluded "London Road is the only route out of Bicester to the south and the resulting diversion would be at least 2 km long and on roads not suited to accept additional traffic." That analysis is still correct.

A bridge or tunnel was not pursued then in part because of the impact on local businesses. However, in 2019 those businesses that were there in 2010 have mostly gone, whether closed, relocated or wishing to relocate. To provide the bridge or tunnel that is desperately needed, it ought to be possible now to acquire the necessary land more easily, and also to build something on a new alignment more cheaply.

### **Station Access**

There is access from the south side to the station at Bicester Village without needing to cross the level crossing. However, the ticket vending machine on the Langford Village side of the tracks only takes card payments. It only sells tickets for the current day. Anyone requiring to pay using cash, to purchase a future dated ticket or e.g. a Family Travelcard to London needs to use the facilities in the main station building. They also need to use the level crossing but then risk missing the train. If entering the platform from London Road on the Langford side, the existing footbridge does not provide a means of accessing those facilities because the station is barriered!

Bicester is supposedly a Healthy New Town. Had it been designed differently the railway could have provided a pedestrian footbridge / cycleway for more general use benefitting the wider community beyond the paid area of the station. This was a missed opportunity.

We remain of the view that retaining the crossing is simply not sustainable. Network Rail has deemed that all level crossings between Oxford and Bicester and between Bicester and Bletchley should be closed on safety grounds. Yet somehow the busiest crossing here in the middle of Bicester is not required to be closed?

Only 2 weeks ago there was a further incident of misuse. I don't know the full circumstances but trains were proceeding at walking pace because one of the crossing barriers was apparently damaged and only partially closed. As well as the obvious safety risk it causes delays which can rapidly escalate across the network. Unfortunately increasing road and rail traffic in Bicester will not improve level crossing safety. And delaying the implementation of a solution at London Road is only going to cause costs to skyrocket.

Perhaps the Inspector would like to visit Bicester to see for himself?

Yours faithfully

Andrew Smith  
Vice Chairman  
Langford Village Community Association