

3 Rail strategy

This paper sets down Cambridgeshire's rail strategy and key objectives for improvements in rail infrastructure and services to 2011. The background to this document are the key transport objectives contained in the Local Transport Plan and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Draft Structure Plan. These are:

- to increase safety
- to promote sustainable and integrated transport, and
- to operate efficient transport networks.

Improved railway infrastructure and services will play a key role in achieving these objectives. They will also be important in achieving wider Council objectives such as reducing social exclusion by increasing accessibility and promoting sustainable development. This is particularly important given the significant development pressures now facing Cambridgeshire and the increased demand for mobility that will result.

Railway schemes are usually complex to plan, take a long time to deliver and are reliant on joint working and partnerships. The Transport Act 2000 requires the rail industry to consult with local authorities to develop railways. Local authorities also have an important role to play in planning and delivery of schemes, particularly in terms of encouraging integration with other transport infrastructure through the LTPs and with land use decisions to promote sustainable development through the Structure Plan. The purpose of this strategy is to clearly establish the aspirations for rail improvements, within and outside Cambridgeshire, to allow the council to play its full role in the process of delivery and improvement.

The SRA Strategic Plan

In developing this Strategy, due regard is taken of the Strategic Plan published, in January 2003, by the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA). This sets out how the SRA intends to tackle the rail industry's problems and priorities in the short, medium and long term. Key objectives are:

- to restore stability in the industry, allowing performance to improve
- to deliver growth to meet the 10 Year Plan core targets of:
 - 50% increase in passenger-kilometres
 - 80% increase in freight tonne-kilometres, and
 - a reduction in London overcrowding which breaches the SRA's standards.

This strategy also meets, where possible, SRA's other priorities, as set by government, including better integration with other transport modes to expansion of capacity to promote the use of the railway network and encourage its use.

The Council supports the development of proposals that seek to improve the efficiency, safety and reliability of the national rail network for both passengers and freight.

Development Pressures and the role of rail

The Cambridgeshire Structure Plan, which is currently being rolled forward to cover the period to 2016, sets the strategic land use and transport context across the county. Cambridgeshire faces intense development pressures over the coming years and this is evidenced by the scale of development envisaged in the Structure Plan. This development will be focused principally on the Cambridge Sub Region and will give rise to significant demand for travel.

To meet this demand, major infrastructure improvements are required across the county. Rail schemes will form an important part of this. To move this forward, the Council has already prepared a long-term transport strategy to tie in with the Structure Plan period to 2016. The key objective of this is to identify the nature of transport provision that will be required to ease the long-established infrastructure deficit and accommodate the growing development pressures across the county. Improved rail services are an important element of this and will have an important role in providing travel opportunities to both new and existing settlements.

Background and context

The County Council is both the Strategic Planning Authority and Highway Authority for Cambridgeshire. The strategy and overall land-use transportation framework and its co-ordination with other policy issues is contained within the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan.

The Structure Plan policy SP8/7 states:

Local Authorities will work closely with the rail industry to bring forward service enhancements and new infrastructure to increase rail use and the proportion of freight moved by rail. Priority will be given to improvements which are feasible to serve existing and planned developments of which will effect a significant transfer from road based travel.

Objectives

The principal objectives of Cambridgeshire's rail strategy seek to expand upon the national context of the SRA's Strategic Plan and give local focus. These are to:

- continue to work with the Strategic Rail Authority and with the rail companies to provide improvements to rail services. We will also continue to promote the introduction of new rail services and greater frequencies on existing routes
- promote the use of rail through travel awareness schemes and through involving people in rail groups
- integrate rail with other transport modes through the Market Town Strategies and specific schemes in Cambridge, including a new interchange at Chesterton and improved pedestrian and cycle access to Cambridge Station, and

- continue with a programme of minor improvements through LTP funding including better signing and cycle stands at stations.

To bring these about will require improvements to the railways network at national, regional and local levels. The objectives can only be achieved by working closely with the rail industry – the Strategic Rail Authority; Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Railtrack/Network Rail – to deliver the shared aspirations.

Rail development proposals

To increase the role of rail within the county and meet the objectives established as part of this strategy, the County Council will pursue the implementation of a series of major schemes and support the development of others. The following sections identify the key improvements that will be sought over the next five years, focusing on:

- regional and national schemes that will have local benefits schemes for the Cambridge area
- schemes in the Cambridge area, and
- other rail-related schemes.

Regional/National schemes

Improvements to the regional and national rail network have the potential to significantly benefit the county by providing improved access to national and international destinations. The SRA and any Special Purpose Vehicles that the SRA forms to deliver the projects will set the prioritisation of major schemes. The following schemes are of regional and national importance and although implementation will be led by the rail industry, the council will provide support and input to scheme development as necessary.

East-West Rail: This scheme will significantly enhance links to the national network without the need to travel via London and improve service opportunities to adjacent centres of regional importance. A Rail Passenger Partnership bid was awarded for a new service on the Cambridge-Norwich route, which started in September 2002.

The concept of East-West Rail is fully supported by Cambridgeshire County Council and endorsed by the Regional Transport Strategy. The County Council, along with South Cambridgeshire District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, participates in the consortium of 37 local authorities advocating the provision of an east-west railway linking Oxford and the west, via Milton Keynes and Cambridge to Norwich and Ipswich. The route is based entirely on existing lines within Cambridgeshire, although new construction is required elsewhere.

Thameslink 2000: This scheme provides for increased passenger capacity (twelve car trains), and provides opportunities for cross-London services and better distribution of passengers within London. Trains currently on lines between Peterborough, King's Lynn/Cambridge and Kings Cross will be incorporated into the Thameslink 2000 network served through a new London station (underneath St Pancras).

Subject to a Transport & Works Act Order being issued, opening of the Thameslink 2000 is expected in 2008. Nationally, the project will make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives set out in the SRA Ten-Year Plan and improve integration with Trans-European networks (at St Pancras and

Ashford). Regionally, the project will contribute to achievement of policy objectives set out in Regional Planning Guidance.

Upgrade of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton Rail Line: This will facilitate increased movement of modern container traffic from the ports to the industrial heartlands and will avoid the need for freight traffic to be routed via London. The effect will be modal shift from road to rail with associated benefits. The scheme is contained within CHUMMS, please refer to Chapter 2 for information on this.

Regional Services: Intra-regional service enhancements will be supported. Additional trains have been secured on the Peterborough-Ipswich, Cambridge-Ipswich services, and Cambridgeshire will support schemes to obtain regular hourly frequencies, with higher quality rolling stock, on each of these routes. A new Cambridge-Norwich service started in autumn 2002.

Other improvements to be sought include: improved frequencies on the 'Fen Line', extended operating hours of the Stansted-Cambridge-'to the north' service and, ultimately, a half-hourly service through to Stansted Airport.

Cambridge Area

The bulk of development pressure over the Structure Plan period will be focused on the Cambridge area. A series of measures is proposed that will provide improved accessibility over this period. Implementation of these schemes will be led by the railway industry, but the County Council will seek involvement through planning, funding and delivery partnerships. These measures are as follows.

Improvements To Cambridge Station: Lack of platform capacity currently prevents provision of the additional through trains that are necessary to develop extra services to Stansted and extending to a new station at Chesterton sidings. A new island platform is currently being developed by Railtrack and the SRA, and would solve both existing capacity constraints and create extra capacity for a development of services.

The above issues have been discussed in the context of Railtrack's Cambridge Capacity Study. The platform capacity at Cambridge will be considered in the West Anglia Route Modernisation (WARM) enhancement programme, for which the SRA is acting as client with the project being considered by Network Rail.

Chesterton Interchange: A station on the site of Chesterton sidings, to the north of Cambridge close to the Science Park and A14 trunk road, has significant benefits for wider transport policies of Cambridge while opening opportunities to train operators to grow their business. Such a station could:

- give better access arrangements to existing users and remove car trips through congested areas of the city
- encourage new passengers to the railway-encouraging modal shift, and
- provide significant new transport interchange opportunities between modes when linked to rapid transit proposals and improved bus services.

The station could significantly reduce cross-city car traffic, with consequent air quality benefits. The supplementary information to the Thameslink 2000 inquiry indicated a growth of almost 14% in demand for car access to Cambridge station, generated by the network effect of the project. If the city is to accommodate the growth in train usage without significant detriment to the central area environment, an additional alternative station location is essential.

The station would be an important accompaniment to developing a major brownfield site. South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City councils have reviewed their planning policies for the Cambridge ‘Northern Fringe’, which will include this site.

The Cowley Road Park and Ride is located on a leased site less than 1 kilometre from the proposed station. There is an opportunity to bring the facilities together to share parking spaces and to bring the benefits of connecting high quality, frequent bus services directly to the city centre.

Capacity Enhancements: Improved and increased services depend upon there being adequate capacity on the rail network. Specific areas where capacity enhancements are needed to maximise the role of rail are as follows.

- Cambridge-Shepreth Branch Junction: track and junction capacity limits the number of trains over this section and this is a primary reason why a station at Addenbrooke’s is not supported by the rail industry.
- Cambridge-Coldhams Lane Junction: track and junction capacity is restrictive – a new track layout that gives opportunities to terminate Ipswich services on the east side of the station would ease this situation.

Station Access Improvements: Improvements to all stations to improve access (particularly for the mobility impaired) will be supported to make them compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Addenbrooke’s Station: The Local Authorities’ aspiration for a railway station at Addenbrooke’s is not supported by the railway industry on the grounds that there is limited track capacity between Cambridge and Shepreth Branch Junction. It is therefore not being pursued any further.

Integration

Interchanges: Interchange opportunities will be supported at all stations. This may include quality enhancements to stations such as at Ely, St Neots, March, Huntingdon and Whittlesea, development of Chesterton as a parkway station and improved public transport interchange at Cambridge station.

Cambridge to Huntingdon Rapid Transit: The Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi- Modal Study (CHUMMS) recommended the route of the former Cambridge to St Ives and Cambridge to Trumpington railway for Rapid Transit use. This will also serve the proposed new settlement at Longstanton/Oakington as proposed by the Structure Plan.

Existing rail trackbed can be used between St Ives and Chesterton with onward sections to Cambridge city centre and Huntingdon being on street. Investigations need to determine the longer-term use of the A14 north of St Ives by Rapid Transit and the potential for direct links into Cambridge Station alongside the rail line. There are also significant potential benefits from linking Rapid Transit services into an interchange at Chesterton sidings.

The southerly extension to the Trumpington Park and Ride site reuses part of the former Cambridge-Bedford railway line plus a link to Addenbrooke’s Hospital.

Bus Links: The Lowestoft-Norwich-King’s Lynn-Wisbech-Peterborough bus service operates as an integral part of the railway network, accepting train tickets and appearing on the national timetable database. It offers a high quality link for places without a train service and is consequently of importance to the people of Wisbech. Scope for further integrated bus-rail schemes will be investigated.

Integration Of Tickets/Information: The objective is to provide the passenger with as seamless a journey as possible, and means of integrating ticketing and information will be pursued.

Freight

The government’s ten-year Plan seeks to grow railfreight by 80% (from 1998/9 levels) over the plan period. The Strategic Rail Authority’s Freight Strategy outlines the need to do the following.

- Build new or rebuilt structures to accommodate ‘piggyback’ clearances where practical.
- Train lengths of 775m should be assumed (750m + haulage).
- Build for 75mph operation (125mph for mail and specific flows).
- Build for 25.5t axle loadings.

The County Council has set up a group of relevant bodies in ‘The Cambridgeshire Partnership for Freight’ considering all aspects of freight by all modes. The Partnership meets regularly with a remit to consider freight issues in a multi- modal context. As an example, discussions around access to railfreight terminals can encompass both the rail benefits and issues of local road access.

Membership of the Cambridgeshire Partnership for Freight currently comprises:

Table A3.1 Existing Operational Freight Sites

Location	User(s)
Cambridge, Chesterton Inc.	Lafarge/EWS
Cambridge Station, Up Sidings	EWS
Ely (Intermodal terminal)	Potter Group
Foxton (exchange sidings for the Barrington line)	Rugby Cement
March, Down Sidings	Infrastructure Co. Site/EWS
March, Up Sidings	EWS
Snailwell	Mayer Newman

Abbreviations: EWS = English, Welsh & Scottish Railway

Table A3.2 Other connections, not currently in use

Location	Former User(s)
Cambridge, Coldhams Lane	Esso
Duxford	Ciba-Geigy
Fulbourn Grain Terminal	SC Banks
Little Barford (site in Beds, but access road in Cambs)	Ash Resources
Whittlesey, north side	Anglia Industrial Merchants/UKF
Whittlesey, south side	Strategic Freight Site
Whittlesford	Myhill
Wisbech (including the March-Wisbech branch)	Friskies Pet Food
Barnwell Inc., Cambridge	BP Oil/EWS

- Cambridgeshire Constabulary
- Cambridgeshire County Council – Highways Division, Planning Division, Trading Standards
- English Welsh & Scottish Railway
- Freight Transport Association
- Government Office-Eastern Region (Go-East)
- Highways Agency
- Potter Group (Ely) Ltd
- Railtrack (East Anglia Zone)
- Representatives of Cambridgeshire’s district councils, and
- Road Haulage Association.

The freight operating companies are keen to expand their bulk business but also by expanding into use of more localised sites or private sidings.

Tables A3.1 and A3.2 show that should be considered for protection, as far as possible, through the Structure Plan and Local Plan process, and included in the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan. Table A3.1 indicates the current operational sites. Table A3.2 lists recently used sites that are currently ‘mothballed’ and subject to consultation by members of the Partnership. Two of these sites (Whittlesey and Whittlesford) are taken forward as a having a potential for future use along with a possible ‘new’ site at Fordham.

The above sites have existing connections to the network, which is a significant step towards them being brought back into economic use.

Turners of Soham, based at Fordham has, in the past, had discussions with EWS regarding a direct rail connection into their site. This would be a new connection to the network and costs are currently unattractive. However, should the financial climate favour rail more in the future, or road congestion reach the predicted levels, the company may wish to reconsider its position. The alignment of the proposed Fordham bypass has taken this future possibility into account.

Delivery

Delivery of any of these rail schemes will need to be through close partnership working between the Council, all elements of the rail industry and government. To drive these projects forward, a number of approaches are being taken. For key projects such as Cambridge Station, Chesterton and the St Ives line, detailed business cases will be prepared for inclusion in the Local Transport Plan. Other schemes will be built up through ongoing liaison between the Council and the rail industry.