



## **PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE**

### **INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES AND TRANSPORT**

#### **TOPIC – WESSEX ROUTE STUDY DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**

#### **PROCEDURAL INFORMATION**

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

Five or more of these consulted Members can require that the matter be referred to Cabinet for determination.

#### **Contact Officers:**

**Case Officer:** Dan Massey, Tel: 01962 848534, Email: [dmassey@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:dmassey@winchester.gov.uk)

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#### **SUMMARY**

Network Rail has published the Wessex Route Study Draft for consultation. The scope of the Route Study covers the South West Main Line and connecting routes to the Hampshire and Dorset Coast and the dense inner and outer suburban network of radial routes in south west London, Surrey and Berkshire.

The Study Draft sets out the strategic vision for the future of this vital part of the rail network over the next 30 years. It was published in November 2014 for public consultation, and the consultation period closes on 18 February 2015.

The Route Study seeks to establish the required capacity and capability of the railway, from a systematic analysis of the future requirements of the network. Network Rail is developing a programme of Route Studies, in conjunction with rail industry partners and other stakeholders. This programme of geographic Route Studies runs alongside development of Network-wide Route Utilisation Strategies. These review national issues such as stations, depots, rolling stock and electrification.

Full details of the draft strategy and consultation details are found at  
[www.networkrail.co.uk](http://www.networkrail.co.uk)

**DECISION**

That the proposed response, as attached to this Notice, to the consultation be agreed for submission to Network Rail.

**REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The provision and maintenance of an effective rail network for Southern England will have an impact on transport and other infrastructure in the Winchester District, and it is therefore important that the City Council's views are taken into account when this Strategy is adopted. The comments take into account current and potential future issues which have been identified.

**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

None.

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION**

Portfolio Holder for Communities and Transport.

**FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE**

N/A

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED**

n/a

**DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

n/a

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision 16.02.15

**Councillor Mike Southgate – Portfolio Holder for Communities and Transport**

**Wessex Route Study Draft for Consultation published by Network Rail**

**Response by Winchester City Council**

This is Winchester City Council's response to the consultation on the draft Wessex Route Study, published by Network Rail in November 2014.

Winchester City Council's geographic covers a large area of 250 square miles. Whilst it is centered on the City of Winchester, the District borders Basingstoke and Deane in the north, Portsmouth, Fareham, Havant and Eastleigh in the south, and Test Valley to the west and East Hampshire to the east. 40% of the District falls within the South Downs National Park.

We are committed to supporting the enhancement of rail capacity and reliability across the District. We are also fully supportive of the development of public transport from an environmental perspective. We are delighted to see the amount of freight using rail through our area, rather than the roads, and support this vital contribution to local economic growth whilst reducing motorway traffic and carbon emissions.

We were one of the first authorities to have our local plan judged as 'sound' following the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework. Our Local Plan Part 1 (Joint Core Strategy 2013) recognises the importance of good transport links for the development of commerce, tourism, and employment. Winchester is a designated heritage city attracting millions of visitors every year and a gateway for the South Downs National Park.

Winchester Town itself is a major employment, educational, retail and leisure centre for both its residents and those in nearby settlements. There are significant patterns of in and out commuting for workers and residents. The mobile nature of the local population adds a further complexity as residents travel to alternative destinations, whether by necessity or desire. We have a broad demographic population mix, including a large element who commute to higher paid employment elsewhere, notably in London. Winchester has a flourishing University, and well respected colleges of further and higher education with a very large local catchment area that rely heavily on public transport. The County Council is based in Winchester close to the railway station: development in the area around the station is planned and we hope to attract businesses to this location. There are a number of housing and other development projects about to come on stream including Pitt Manor (200 homes), Barton Farm (2000 homes) and Silver Hill (a major mixed use regeneration project in the city centre) This, together with other developments planned for the town (4000 homes in total up to 2031), will only increase demand on the rail system.

The nature of the District and the way it functions depends upon a variety of inter-relationships with its neighbours for employment, leisure, shopping and housing needs. As a result we work closely with the County Council as well as neighbouring district and unitary councils and, also through the Partnership for

Urban South Hampshire, the Solent and Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnerships on many areas of mutual interest including transport.

A vibrant and successful rail network is a vital part of the attraction of Winchester for residents, employers, visitors and businesses. There has been significant increase in demand for rail which has produced a number of capacity challenges. We have a strong working relationship with rail operators in this area, particularly Stagecoach and South West Trains. Therefore, we welcome the Wessex Route Study consultation and broadly support its analysis and aspirations to tackle growth and rail capacity. We are working in partnership with Hampshire County Council who we understand will be responding in more detail to specific cross-County issues.

There are four rail stations within the Winchester District, Winchester itself being the largest with 4.7 million passenger movements in 2013/14 according to Office for Rail Regulation data. It is an important destination, departure and interchange station.

The three other stations are smaller village stations at Micheldever, Shawford and Botley. All show significant growth over the last few years as illustrated by the ORR data with passenger numbers likely to exceed 200,000 per station in the next year or two. These smaller stations provide feeders into longer distance services but also vital and valued local links, keeping traffic outside city centres. We believe there is an opportunity for further modal shift if capacity, reliability and passenger comfort can be improved. Rail is a key contributor to other forms of sustainable transport, feeding in and out of bus services, walking and cycling.

We have set out below the key points we would wish to emphasise:-

### **1) London commuting**

As your report identifies there are significant capacity problems which need addressing both short and long term. It is unacceptable that an increasing number of regular passengers have to stand to and from Winchester in peak hours, or choose alternative slower services which reduce capacity on these services. We would support the majority of the options that the report puts forward to tackle this. The one we cannot support is the option to replace 2 + 2 seating with 2+ 3 seating for these lengths of journey. Regrettably, the UK population is getting larger but also many commuters use their train service productively to work or pursue leisure pursuits. These can not be undertaken cramped into 2 +3 seating. In the short term we believe more seating capacity could be provided on the class 444s notably in the vestibules and the buffet/disabled/guards coach.

### **2) Service pattern**

- a) **Winchester** - we support the work undertaken. The current arrangement broadly works well although we would welcome at least

one hourly fast Waterloo 'only' service, as every fast Waterloo 'only' service would add value. We welcome the aspirations for additional cross boundary services, including direct services to Paddington, the new East/West link for connection into Crossrail and London Heathrow airport. We would also like to see improved services from Winchester to the eastern South Coast towards Brighton.

b) **Botley** - we would support the comments and aspirations made by Eastleigh Borough Council for this service and for the one train per hour to be increased to two.

c) **Micheldever and Shawford** - we are aware and supportive of the the local rail support groups which exists at these two stations. The local groups have worked closely with the rail operator to provide enhancements to services at these stations which have been welcome and helped to grow passenger usage and awareness. We would welcome additional peak and non peak services to these stations as capacity, demand and services develop.

### **3) Local services**

We believe that more focus needs to be given to local transport opportunities both peak and off peak. There is a natural transport “metro” in the South Hampshire area but it is not fully exploited. For example, it is not possible outside peak to travel from local Southampton stations such as St Denys direct to Winchester, the county town, without a lengthy change at Eastleigh. We note that Winchester has a little used turn back facility at Baltic sidings which could be utilised for such 'Metro' services. Redoubling of single track sections, or the provision of passing places, needs to be planned to increase capacity for local services particularly in the South Hampshire area where further housing growth to 2036 and beyond is being planned. Increasing congestion on the M27 and M3, which also serve short local journeys, will make local rail more attractive for commuting and other journeys if the services can be improved.

### **4) Rolling stock**

Passengers now expect a certain level of comfort including air conditioning, suitable toilets, areas to work, and tables for refreshments. As stated we cannot support 2 + 3 seating for longer distance services but would have no issue with these for local metro services.

### **5) Infrastructure -**

a) We welcome the various options put forward to improve reliability and capacity, notably at the approaches to London Waterloo and the junctions at Woking and Basingstoke.

b) Noting our support for rail freight we would strongly support the proposal to electrify the Southampton to Basingstoke via Laverstock route to free up passenger opportunities via Winchester and to provide a sensible diversionary route.

c) We question whether further improvements could be made of the existing infrastructure including:-

i) Better use of two way signalling on the main line between Eastleigh and Basingstoke.

ii) Moving the signal on the up slow line at Shawford closer to the junction would create an additional mile or so of slow line capacity.

iii) Line speed improvements as have been achieved elsewhere taking the 100 mph maximum to 110 or 125mph.

d) We would hope the proposals to extend the Wallers Ash loop will have no detrimental impact on services or the station infrastructure at Micheldever.

e) Shawford station platform lengthening was not included last time and now needs to be implemented. The continued increase in peak time passengers is causing problems and the yet to be introduced automatic selective door opening will only provide a short term solution.

f) The rail industry in this area has been very supportive of the switch to other sustainable modes of transport such as cycling. We would hope that future investment continues to support this change including better integration with other forms of public transport.

## **6) Other major projects**

We would hope that Winchester will gain from other major infrastructure projects such as HS2. It has to be noted that there still is no direct high speed freight or passenger link between the South Coast and the Midlands/North.

In conclusion we support and welcome this consultation; rail has been in many respects a great success story. We welcome any proposals which improve the attractiveness and comfort of the vital services provided by the rail network to our residents and businesses. We look forward to seeing and participating in how future investment decision evolves