

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to input to the Network Rail Long Term Planning Process for CP6 and beyond. There are a number of initiatives which need to be taken into account arising from the projects in the Strategic Economic Plan and higher population growth numbers. In the South the 4,300 troops and 3,300 family members returning from Germany were not included in forecasts.

This response is dividing the County, into Western routes and Wessex routes to reflect the approach in the Network Rail Consultation. This immediately highlights **the importance of considering cross route border issues** when route planning for the County of Wiltshire to deliver the connectivity of communities. In the past, too many route timings in the mid and southern County have been determined by the source and end destination timetable through Wiltshire with insufficient regard to the resulting service connections inside the County. For this reason this whole response is being provided to both Western and Wessex routing consultations.

The growth and scale of Wiltshire urban communities is often not recognised. This response includes reference to the 2011 census population extrapolated to 2016 using latest published predictions.

The Western Consultation refers to **Conditional Output 3.6.5** "Connectivity and capacity for tourist attractions outside urban centres" yet there is no evidence that the international tourist attraction Stonehenge has been considered in the draft.

Background

Wiltshire is linked internally and externally through four interchange stations Swindon, Chippenham, Westbury and Salisbury. The **connectivity and frequency of the services** to them and through them are extremely important to the overall economic wellbeing of the Wiltshire populations, the interaction between communities, access to services and to the wider UK destinations.

A background to the response is to emphasize the **growth in the size of Wiltshire's population** during the consultation period. The 2011 census population was 680,000 with Swindon representing 32% of the total.

Wiltshire has a high growth rate, using the latest population forecasts will grow to 775,000 by 2026. The end of the period CP6 in 2024 makes a convenient milestone reference point to compare the rail infrastructure proposals with the needs of Wiltshire's economy and communities. Fifty percent of the population is located in the north of the County, between Swindon and Corsham, forecast to be 395,000 by 2026 - comparable in size to Bristol's population forecast of 438,000 by 2026.

Chippenham provides the eastward facing interchange point linking north-south TransWilts services and the main line Swindon to London direction.

Mid Wiltshire's population will be 195,000 by 2026, 25% of the total, it's rail services are in the Western region linked by the Westbury interchange to other communities inside and outside the region. Principle populations are located in Trowbridge, Melksham, Westbury

and Devizes. Bedwyn and Pewsey are reliant on the London service to Exeter. Although electrification by 2019 is only scheduled as far West as Newbury.

South Wiltshire's population is in the Wessex region, forecast 176,000 by 2026, 24% of the Wiltshire total. Its rail service is provided via the Westbury interchange to the north and to and from Salisbury in the south. Southampton airport is reached via Salisbury.

The UNESCO World Heritage tourist destination Stonehenge is just 7 miles from Wilton, with current visitor numbers reaching 1.25 million per annum and growth rates currently nearing 19% per annum. A modest 5% pa growth will mean 2.25 million visitors by 2026 with daily summer peaks of 5000 per day in 2013 potentially growing to 9000 per day in 2026.

WESTERN ROUTES

1.0 North Wilts

1.1 The Bristol to London northern M4 corridor with a forecast population of 400,000 by 2026, comparable to Bristol, including Swindon with a 248,000 population (higher than Bath)

1.2 Chippenham with a population of 50,000 by 2026 and Corsham with a population of 24,000 by 2026 together will comprise 10% of Wiltshire's total population. Corsham is the site of the new Digital Institute and a priority in the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP Strategic Plan which includes **reinstatement of Corsham station**. The growth funding awarded in 2014 supports the development of Chippenham Station as an important main line interchange and gateway in the second largest town (after Swindon) in Wiltshire. The passenger figures forecast for Chippenham do not include the significant growth from the 2014 TransWilts services.

1.3 The MetroWest Phase 2 proposals include a service for Corsham. Phase 1 includes a turn back at Bathampton. Our preference is for a turn back at Chippenham which has a number of advantages;

1.3.1 Land at Bathampton for the turn back station has planning conflicts with a local developer and some political opposition.

1.3.2 **A turn back at Chippenham** enables Corsham Station to be delivered in MetroWest Phase 1 timescale serving the new Corsham Institute and its commuters from Bristol and Bath.

1.3.3 Chippenham has a 3rd platform available which could provide regional service stops for TransWilts and MetroWest services.

1.3.4 A Community Station heritage site can be developed at the 3rd platform.

1.3.5 Chippenham will provide an interchange with main line services.

1.3.6 Chippenham regional stop will be off the main line, providing a passing point for IEP services and freight.

In the longer term a through service from Oxford via Swindon to Bristol could provide a viable service for Corsham. However the timescale, timetabling and route resilience would make a passing loop at Chippenham a gateway to both the South and West and an interchange to the connections East of Reading.

1.4 **Royal Wootton Bassett Parkway for Lyneham** is proposed when the TransWilts service is extended to Salisbury and the improvements to M4 Junction 16 to serve Swindon are completed. It is proposed that the station location should be East of the old station site to serve the business park and provide a park and ride at M4 Swindon Junction 16. The station would also serve the new national MOD training centre at Lyneham. An economic case has yet to be prepared.

2.0 Mid Wilts

2.1 **Westbury** - a town with increasing industrial importance, providing connections via Reading to access Crossrail, Heathrow Western Access. The continuation of electrification from Newbury to Westbury will improve services, and with electrification from Westbury to Bath, complete an important diversionary route increasing the resilience of services West.

2.2 **Devizes** with a population of 37,000 by 2024 is the largest town in Wiltshire without any rail access, but it could be served by a Parkway Station at Urchfont where the A342 crosses the line. The acceleration characteristic of electric trains would reduce the impact of an additional stop.

2.3 **TransWilts** service has been an outstanding success in its first year with increasing passenger numbers using the service to Eastern connecting services and providing congestion relief at Bath. - it should be secured as a service in the 2015 franchise with the **service extended to Salisbury**.

2.4 **Electrification** Newbury to Westbury and Westbury to Bath. It is puzzling to see the conclusions for lack of demand West of Newbury not justifying electrification. The relatively small cost to continue electrification to Westbury would substantially improve the connectivity to North-South services from Westbury. The diesel shuttle services to Newbury from Bedwyn and Pewsey are not attractive to develop the service.

3.0 WESSEX ROUTES

The Wessex region serves south Wiltshire from, and including, Warminster extending to Salisbury a Wiltshire population totaling 178,000 by 2026.

3.1 **Extension of the TransWilts service from Swindon-Westbury through to Salisbury** is a priority. It will complete the north-south service without the necessity of a change at Westbury, connecting the majority of Wiltshire's northern 400,000 population and mid-Wilts 190,000 population to the 178,000 population in the south.

The first year of the TransWilts service in 2014 has been exceptionally successful. A comprehensive passenger survey has shown passenger numbers in the first year to be 3 times forecast with around 165,000 journeys. In economic terms the growth of

commuters to Swindon has been significant with Melksham's population growth is already much higher than previously forecast, i.e. 30,000 by 2024. The 2011 census showed just 0.8% commuters traveling by rail, we expect this to rapidly reach the 3+% in adjacent communities with a viable service.

The TransWilts line has an exceptional community line, linking the Wiltshire populations to the wider national network at 4 interchanges, - Swindon, Chippenham, Westbury and Salisbury. Providing important access via Reading, to Crossrail, London Heathrow Western Access from Westbury, Chippenham and Swindon. Salisbury provides an alternative route to London Waterloo and access to Southampton and to Southampton airport. A new station at Wilton Park and Ride would be served by the TransWilts extension to Salisbury.

We welcome the proposal for an hourly service from Brighton to Bristol serving the TransWilts stations Salisbury to Trowbridge and then West via Bath. We do not believe the LTPP to 2043 is early enough for this service. Particularly taking into account the rate of growth on this section and the Wilton station proposal in 3.3.

3.2 Wilton - for Stonehenge

Stonehenge has national and international significance, and with another scheduled national visitor attraction in 2019 will attract **2.25 million visitors per year** by 2024, - unprecedented in a non urban location. This level of visitors will have a substantial impact on the local environment unless public transport by rail provides an important alternative means to access by car. The provision of a **Wilton Parkway station**, at the existing park and ride location off the A36 via The Avenue alongside the TransWilts line and between the Western line from Salisbury. It is just 7 miles south of Stonehenge and the visitor centre can be served by a shuttle bus. It will provide an essential alternative to coaches and cars visiting this limited capacity visitor centre car parking, as well as providing rail park and ride access to Salisbury. There would be good connecting rail services via Bath, Swindon, Westbury, Salisbury from London, Southampton, Southampton airport, Cardiff and Bristol. Just 10% of visitors using rail would average over 600 tourist passengers per day at Wilton Parkway rising to 9,000 per day in the summer peak.

3.3 Porton Science Park Station is proposed to support the new **Porton Science Park** being established alongside the Porton Down. This Science Park is a priority in the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP Strategic Plan. This will be a centre of excellence in life sciences building on Porton Down's international reputation. Reopening a station on the adjacent line will provide a direct stop on the London Waterloo service to Salisbury as well providing a Park and Ride facility for Salisbury commuters.

References

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