

SUBJECT:	Western Rail Access to Heathrow WRAtH	
REPORT OF:	Officer Management Team- Prepared by	Director of Services - Head of Sustainable Development

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide information to Members on this project.

2. Links to Council Policy Objectives

2.1 Sustainable environment and thriving local economy.

3. Background

3.1 This project will provide a new rail service (four times an hour) from Reading and Slough directly to Heathrow Terminal Five. The service will not stop at Taplow or Iver.

3.2 The project is mentioned in the National Infrastructure Plan, the Rail High Level Output Specification (HLOS) for 2014-2019 and is in the Department for Transport's Aviation Policy Framework.

3.3 The project will be progressed via a development consent order (DCO) which will encompass CPO powers. This will involve a government Minister approving what is termed a *Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP)*. There are also special procedures relating to cases such as those involving land protected under the Green Belt (London & Home Counties) Act 1938. The DCO will combine a grant of planning permission with a range of other separate consents. It is intended that construction will start after 2017 (the Crossrail completion date) and be completed by 2021.

3.4 Core Policy 7 Accessibility and Transport supports the greater use of rail services, including improvements to parking at train stations. Local Plan Policy TR12 safeguards the West Drayton to Poyle Railway line - a single track rail freight siding identified as having potential for improving public transport access to Heathrow. The scheme was a key project in the former South East Plan (para 21.23).

4. Benefits

4.1 The project will provide benefits in terms of:

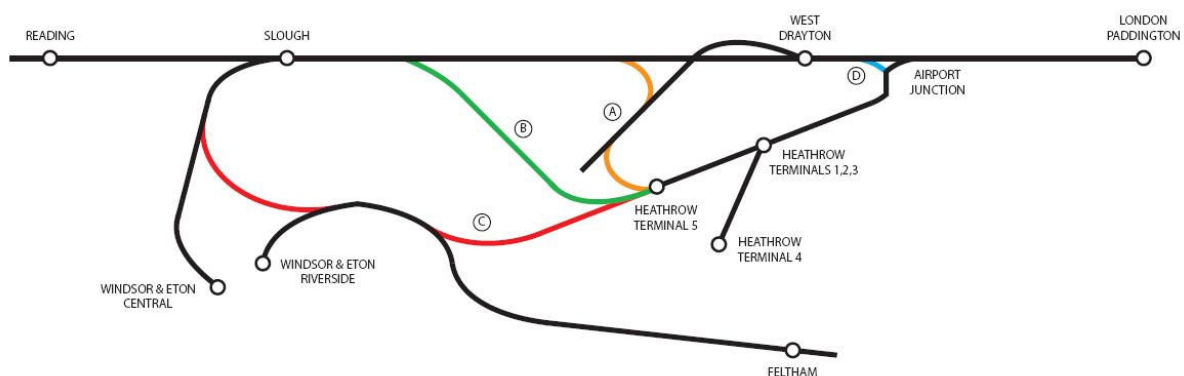
- Quicker, more reliable, access to Heathrow; journey time from Slough to Heathrow will be six minutes giving a reduction of 35 minutes from the current timing.
- It will also provide improved access to those travelling from the West who can interchange at Reading and avoid the need to change trains in London.
- The project is supported by businesses, including BAA Heathrow and local authorities and is being promoted by the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP.
- Making the Thames Valley and South Bucks more attractive as a business location (potentially creating 6,000 jobs)
- Reduced congestion (estimated at 20,000 fewer journeys a day), particularly on the motorways and thus reduced CO2 emissions;

- The scheme will use existing tracks (Option A) or will be in tunnel for the majority of the journey, (Option B) therefore reducing the impact on the environment.
- Two spare platforms already exist at T5 Heathrow built in anticipation of the now defunct Airtrack scheme.

5. Options

5.1 Four options for proposed routes to Heathrow from the Great Western Main Line (GWML) were considered. (See map in Appendix 1)

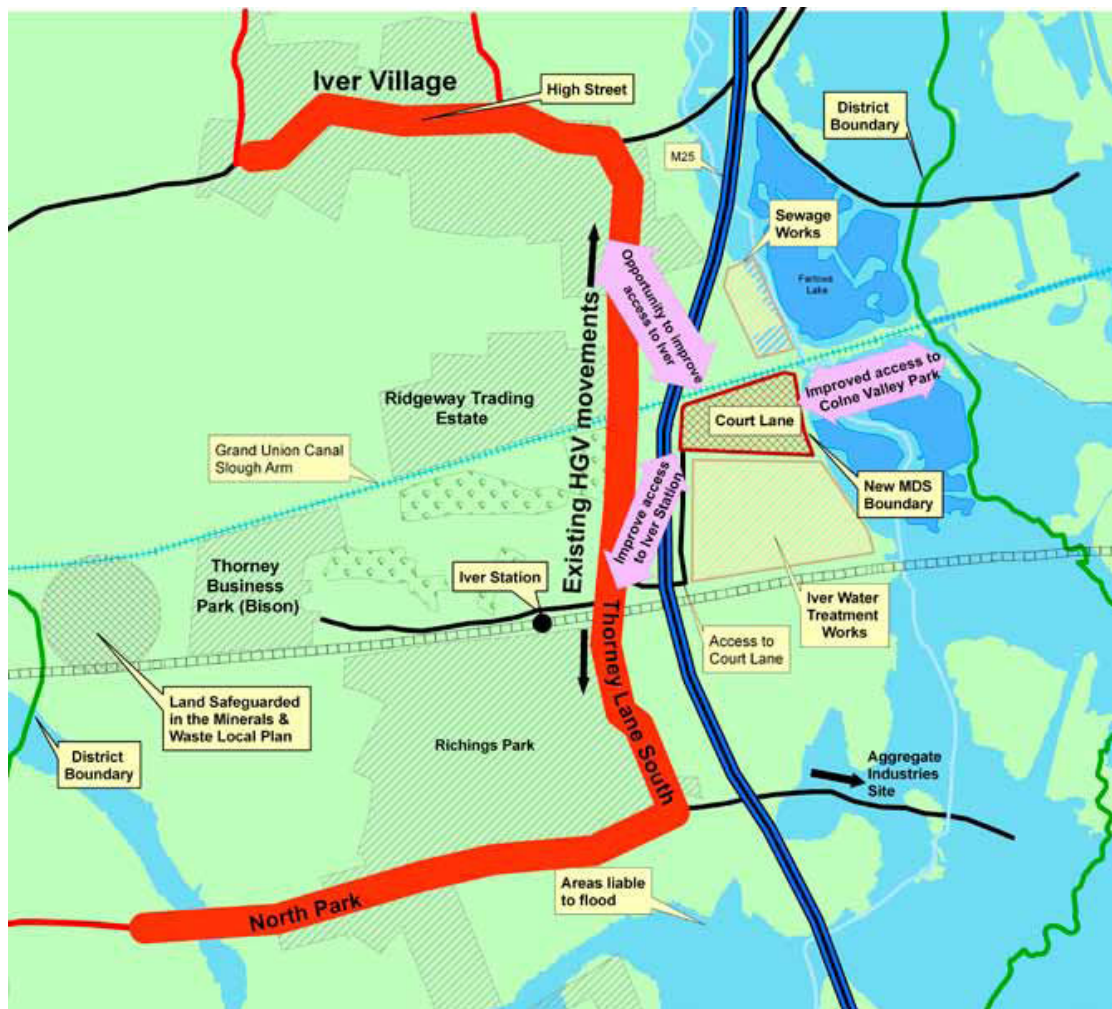
- A Via the Colnbrook freight branch
- B Via tunnel from south of the track between Langley and Iwer
- C Via Datchet
- D Via the Heathrow Branch



- 5.2 Options C and D have now been discarded. Option C is too difficult to construct and would have a major impact on Windsor and Eton. Option D joins the easterly end of the GWML increasing journey times and there is insufficient capacity on the existing branch rail line into Heathrow (Heathrow Connect and Express services). The two remaining options both affect Green Belt land within our district.
- 5.3 Option A uses the freight line safeguarded in the Local Plan. However it has severe limitations in terms of only being single track -and it is not west facing when it joins the GWML so a new west facing chord (thus reducing the line speed) on a viaduct would need to be built over the River Colne, and be contained in a tight box under the M4/M25 junction.
- 5.4 Option B is a 5km tunnel coming up south of the GWML halfway between Langley and Iwer stations. It provides the best journey time but has the highest capital cost. It also has considerable implications for a safeguarded minerals and waste site to the north of the track and potentially to the residents of Richings Park to the east. This option is seen as the most likely option to be selected.
- 5.5 Network Rail has announced that it will decide on the preferred option by the end of January 2014 and will make a public announcement about the scheme in February. Network Rail will make a presentation on the scheme to the next Council Meeting on 25th February.

6. Implications for South Bucks

- 6.1 If Option B is selected, the concerns that are immediately apparent are principally to do with construction impacts in the Iver and Richings Park area, including HGV traffic, the impact on the safeguarded waste transfer station and noise and vibration during the tunnelling works. In the longer term there may be visual impacts from Richings Park. Network Rail state that the tunnel waste will be largely removed by train but due to capacity pressure on the WCML is likely to be stored before removal. These issues will be covered in the Environmental Statement which will accompany the DCO process. These issues are examined in more detail below.
- 6.2 **HGV traffic.** Core Policy 16 details five sites in proximity to Iver Village that collectively generate a significant number of HGV movements - Court Lane, Thorney Business Park (formerly the Bison Estate), the Ridgeway Trading Estate, the Aggregate Industries Site and the Cape Boards Site in Uxbridge. The HGV vehicles travelling to and from these sites have limited routing options, using either Iver High Street heading north or Richings Park heading south. There are two options for resolving the impacts on Iver and Richings Park, either a relief road or seeking a reduction in HGV numbers (most likely through change of use). Network Rail in discussions has said that it will need to replace Hollow Hill Lane railway bridge (just to the west in Slough Borough) which is currently too narrow and too low for HGV's to pass through safely. This could facilitate a new route south towards the A4/M4 and potentially a new route to the north (M40) bypassing Iver Village for some HGV traffic.



Map 6 from Core Strategy

- 6.3 Safeguarded Waste transfer station.** The Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy safeguards land immediately to the west of Thorney Business Park for use as a rail transfer facility to serve the Strategic Waste Complex at Calvert, by despatching collected household wastes by rail. This site would be used as part of the arrangements for management of household waste agreed between the Districts and County Council. The new rail line would involve land take to the north of the GWML (impacting on this safeguarded site) and it is likely that material from the tunnelling will be stored (and possibly sorted) on the site before removal. The owner of the Thorney Business Park also owns this land and has had discussions with Network Rail. His land could be acquired by compulsory purchase thus putting the safeguarded allocation into jeopardy. Buckinghamshire County Council has expressed a desire to retain the site for the allocated use, since it would assist in the management of municipal waste. The loss of the waste transfer facility in this location would mean that the opportunity to shift the transport of municipal waste from road to rail would be lost. It is also the development of this site which has the potential to provide the new relief road and without it that opportunity would also be lost.
- 6.4 Impacts on Richings Park.** In the short term there could be construction impacts on the residents in Richings Park, including noise and vibration from tunnelling works and visual intrusion depending on the location of the tunnel portal. Unless the HGV routing is resolved there could also be an increase in HGV traffic. In the longer term there will be additional train noise in addition to the new Crossrail services. There could also be additional pressure on parking in the vicinity of Iver station as local people start to use the new service (involving a change at Slough) in addition to new Crossrail passengers. Consideration could be given to the provision of a new car park, although clearly this could raise Green Belt issues.
- 6.5 Loss of Green Belt.** Some Green Belt will be lost as a result of this proposal. The promoters are likely to argue that due to its national significance the project will most likely demonstrate the Very Special Circumstances that are needed to overcome the objection to the loss of Green Belt.
- 6.6** Officers from this Council and Bucks County Council will pursue these issues in negotiations with the scheme promoters in the interests of residents and businesses of South Bucks.

7. Resources, Risk and Other Implications

- 7.1** This project could have considerable implications in terms of Member and officer time as the scheme progresses.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1** To note concerns and to support continued negotiations with appropriate parties to achieve the best outcome for the District.

Officer Contact:	Jane Griffin, 01895 837315, jane.griffin@southbucks.gov.uk
Background Papers:	None.