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Dear Fiona

As you know from your involvement with our organisation over the last couple of years Network Rail (NR) is in the process of undertaking a number of projects along the railway network including Great Western Electrification to Oxford, Re-signalling and the Oxford Corridor Capacity Improvements. Details of the electrification project have been given directly to the Council through various submissions and my colleague Ian Wheaton has been dealing with these.

Information of the above NR projects that have already started can be found on the NR website including a copy of the Environmental Statement for Oxford City Council (OCC) area.

Future aspirations of the Railway (although none yet formally funded) can be found in the Western Route Study, Long Term Planning Process document; this document sets out the strategic vision for the future of the Western Route.

Following complaints and enquiries by residents surrounding the railway line and sidings to the north of the station NR thought it prudent to write and provide an update with regards to the planned works under a number of individual projects which are being known as Oxford Corridor Phase 1 which NR intend to undertake within the city of Oxford for Control Period 5 (CP5). This work will take place on the DCL between Oxford Station to Oxford North Junction; much of this work will not require planning permission. The aim of this project is to improve capacity, linespeeds and route availability without the need to build new additional railway lines.

Discussions have already taken place at length with residents of William Lucy Way following their concerns about some of our low level vegetation clearance on site a month or so ago following advice we have received from an arboriculture expert who has assessed the condition of the trees in this locality. As a result of these meetings additional work has been commissioned in the form of tree planting, erection of a fence and improved lighting, all of which will improve the surrounding environ.

Future works comprise the following: -

- Oxford Railway Station works include extension to the length of existing north bay platforms, replacement platform canopies, new relocatable rail staff accommodation

building and reconfiguration of short stay and staff car parking - a prior notification application has been submitted and validated by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and details can be found in this application reference number 15/00096/PA11.

- A number of track renewals including renewal of the down Jericho line and renewal of station ladder and track at Oxford Station - this will involve replacement of steel sleepers with concrete sleepers and replacement of existing track for new. The improved track quality will allow faster, quieter trains due to the smoothed alignment design, and track will be continuous welded reducing the noise created by trains on the track; in addition there will be a reduction in future maintenance requirements (less disruption in the long term).
- Due to the weight of the replacement concrete sleepers the underbridge at Castle Mill Stream will be strengthened to accommodate the heavier track.
- Vegetation clearance to the Oxford North siding (east) – an Arboricultural Management Plan has been commissioned which will identify the trees to be removed or pollarded. The management plan will also provide detail of the type, amount and location of new planting as discussed with the residents of William Lucy Way.
- Remodelling of the Oxford North sidings both east and west side. This is to accommodate Electrical Multiple Units (EMU) to the east, Super Express Trains and Intercity Express Programme (IEP) trains to the west. The west siding will be extended to provide space for longer electric trains (2 x 260m sidings) – detailed plans are not yet finalised.
- The existing haul road, used for maintenance vehicles runs along the eastern side of the track and siding. Part of this road will be realigned to allow for the remodelling of the east siding. There will be no alteration to the means of access of this road on to the public highway.
- To improve light overspill the existing high level lamppost lighting at the Oxford North sidings will be replaced with low level bollard lighting columns similar to that recently installed in Reading. This will be a significant improvement on the current situation.
- As requested by the residents of William Lucy Way a new boundary fence with noise attenuation qualities will be erected on the boundary to the Oxford North siding (east).

The work listed above falls under Part 11 Class A to Schedule 2 of the GPDO 1995 as permitted development. It does not require planning permission or any formal notification (accept for the station work already formally notified).

In addition to the work listed above the underbridge (culvert) over Castle Mill Stream will be replaced as its life expired; this is not an enhancement scheme. Again this work will be submitted under Part 11 Class A to Schedule 2 of the GPDO 1995 as permitted development but the bridge replacement will require the LPA to give its approval prior to implementation of the scheme (prior approval).

Part 11 of the GPDO is applicable to developments which were initially authorised by an Act of Parliament. The railway through Oxford was constructed under the Parliamentary powers contained in two enabling acts the Oxford & Rugby Railway Act 1845 and the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway Act 1845. Both of these Acts incorporated the Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845 (the 1845 Act). This Act grants powers to alter

and execute all things necessary for making, maintaining, altering or repairing and using the railway.

This bestows the railway company and its successors the power to make developments necessary to the running and management of the railway; including the erection, construction, alteration or extension of any building and the formation, laying out or alteration of a means of access to any highway used by vehicular traffic.

As outlined in Part 11 Class A of Schedule 2 of the GPDO. Paragraph A.2 sets out the process by which the LPA can give prior approval and comment on the proposals. It states:

The prior approval referred to in paragraph A.1 is not to be refused by the appropriate authority nor are conditions to be imposed unless they are satisfied that –

- the development (other than the provision of or works carried out to a dam) ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land; or
- the design or external appearance of any building, bridge, aqueduct, pier or dam would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury.

The LPA may consider only the design, materials, or siting of the project to ensure that development 'would not injure the amenities of the neighbourhood', and be satisfied that it could not be 'reasonably carried out elsewhere'. A prior approval application is only required for the work to the bridge (culvert) over Castle Mill Stream and the works to the station (already submitted) none of the other work will require any formal application to the council.

NR will however endeavour to keep the Council informed of the ongoing work and provide updates when additional information is available. Detailed design plans and reports are yet to be finalised, at this point NR will be in a position to provide further information.

I hope this letter will help the Council and any interested parties to understand the scope of work and reason why they are necessary for the betterment of the railway and facilitate improved rail services to Oxford.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Bullock MRTPI
Town Planner

CC Fiona Bartholomew

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