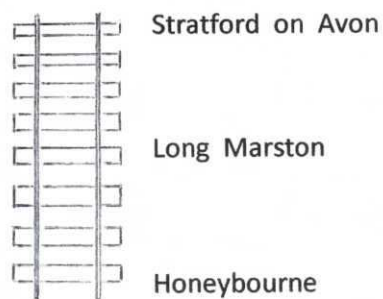


# The Case for an Avon Rail Link



Published by the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group and the 'Avon Rail Link' Committee. August 2010

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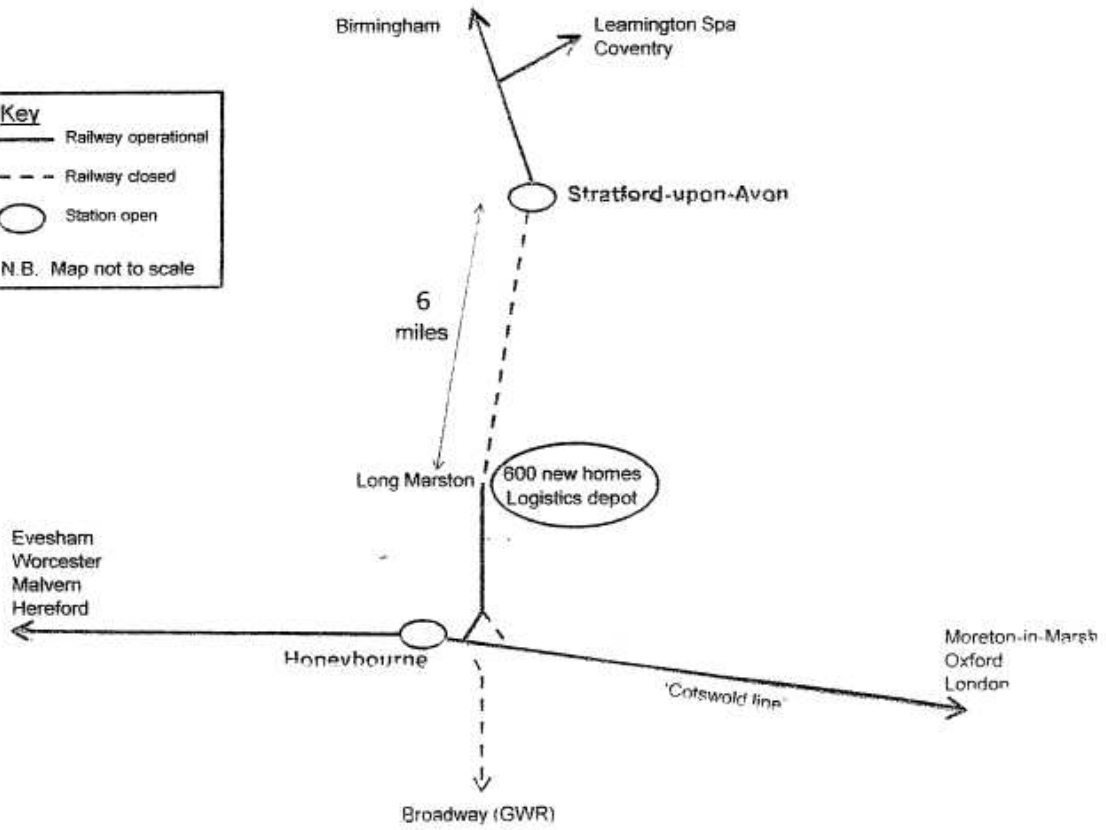
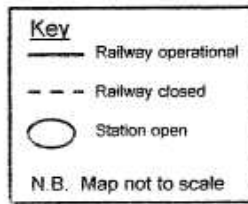
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	CONTENTS	PAGE
1.	Objectives	3
2.	Support	5
3.	Plans and strategies	7
4.	Passenger services	11
5.	Rail freight	13
6.	Route engineering and feasibility	14
7.	Costs and funding	22
8.	Summary	27

We welcome any views or observations on 'The Case for an Avon Rail Link' either via email to [webmaster@avonrailink.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@avonrailink.co.uk) or to 11 Dodwell Park, Evesham Road, Stratford on Avon. CV37 9SR.

## 1. OBJECTIVES

- 1.1.** Reinstatement of the railway southwards from Stratford-upon-Avon is sought in order to
- remedy the fall in visitor numbers to Stratford-upon-Avon, especially from the London and Thames Valley areas, due to slower, less frequent services and the impediment of changing trains;
  - address the need for more direct train services from the south (avoiding time consuming journeys and changing trains at Birmingham New St) for visitors to and from such as Malvern, Gloucester, Bristol, Bath, the Cotswolds, and Oxford;
  - help cater for the 40% growth in rail travel nationally and assist the strategic objectives of modal shift and sustainable travel;
  - serve the residents of and visitors to the planned 700 home development on the Long Marston depot site; and help minimise resultant undue road traffic flows via local villages;
  - benefit the development of local rail journeys for Evesham and Moreton-in-Marsh, and to Honeybourne where planned GWSR steam trains will offer vintage travel along the Cotswold edge to attractions at Broadway, Toddington and Cheltenham Racecourse.
- 1.2.** These improvements and benefits in rail travel are possible by utilising the 6 mile trackbed of the former rail route between Stratford-upon-Avon and Long Marston to link-up with existing rail lines north and south, and the wider network. The term ‘Avon Rail Link’ seems appropriate and is illustrated in the following route diagram :



## 2. SUPPORT FOR AN AVON RAIL LINK

2.1. In promoting and lobbying for reopening of the rail line between Stratford-upon-Avon and Long Marston over the last two years:

- lots of groups, Councillors, and residents have said they fully support the scheme;
- a few people have said they would like to see the line reopened, but don't think it will happen;
- virtually no-one has expressed outright opposition.

2.2. Over 7 days (20-26<sup>th</sup> September 2009), we staged a display illustrating and explaining the Avon Rail Link scheme at Stratford-upon-Avon library and invited attendees to complete a comments form. Of the 45 completed forms 37 declared themselves in favour (80%); 3 expressed concern about the Greenway; and 5 were not in favour, -but gave no reason, name or postcode.

2.3. Letters and expressions of support for an Avon Rail Link have been received from

The Rt. Hon. David Cameron MP;

Teresa Villiers MP;

Peter Luff MP;

Liz Lynne MEP;

Brian Simpson MEP;

Phil Bradbourn MEP.

County Councillor Richard Hobbs;

County Councillor Peter Barnes;

County Councillor Peter Balaam;

County Councillor Chris Saint.

2.4. Four train operators have expressed support for the rail link and interest in the provision of train services:

First Great Western;

London Midland;

DB Schenker;

GloucestershireWarwickshire Steam Railway.

2.5. Local rail promotion groups supporting the rail link include:

Railfuture;

Stratford and Broadway Railway Society;

Shakespeare Line Promotion Group;

CPRE Warwickshire;

Stratford Rail Transport Group;

Cotswold Line Promotion Group.

**2.6.** Some official views :

“Reopening of the line is an essential element in a Transport Strategy and for a World Class Stratford” - Stratford Town Management Partnership, 2007

"The absence of plans to reinstate the Honeybourne–Stratford–upon–Avon Railway represents a missed opportunity to deliver a step change in rail service provision in the local area” - Warwickshire C C report Feb 2009

### 3. PLANS AND STRATEGIES

- 3.1. Regional Plans. The West Midlands Regional Rail Development Plan of June 2009, drafted by Centro, identifies all rail services, route and station developments over CP4 and CP5 (i.e. 2010 – 2019), and in addition to such as possible car park extensions at Henley & Earlswood; new fast services; a new Stratford Parkway; and new Class 172 trains on the Stratford -upon -Avon route, page 12 of the West Midlands Rail Plan says : “Preserve the option for long term route reinstatement south of Stratford -upon -Avon to Honeybourne”. The Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011 also supports reinstatement of the Long Marston – Honeybourne – Broadway railway.
- 3.2. Network Rail. As part of the Cotswold line redoubling work, Network Rail is providing a new crossover east of Honeybourne and making passive provision for a new North – East chord line. In addition, two new platforms and tracks are being installed at Honeybourne station with a footbridge to facilitate both main line services and the future extension of the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway from Broadway.
- 3.3. Route Utilisation Strategy. The Network Rail Great Western R.U.S. of 2010 acknowledges in para 9.9 and Appendix G that “There are also aspirations to reopen the former rail route from Stratford-upon-Avon through Long Marston and Honeybourne” and comments that there is “capacity for through passenger services on the route”. The R.U.S. adds “the reinstatement of the former (south) curve near Honeybourne would allow access to/from the Cotswold Line in the direction of Oxford”. Redoubling of the Cotswold Line through Moreton –in- Marsh and Honeybourne “will increase capacity on this line (para 4.2.2.7) and in conjunction with a link to Stratford-upon-Avon will (para 9.9) enable the occasional diversion of services between the Midlands and the Thames Valley. The R.U.S. primarily focuses on the next 10 years to 2019 and also considers the implications of growth over the next 30 years.
- 3.4. Warwickshire. A study in 1996 by Halcrow Fox reported that reopening of the Stratford-upon-Avon – Long Marston rail line was entirely feasible. However the draft 2011 Local Transport Plan for Warwickshire merely reiterates (in 7.5.27) the reservations given in the 2006 LTP as to the potential environmental and road traffic effects (in respect of the 500m section) within Stratford–upon-Avon and declares that “unless there are local benefits to the scheme it is unlikely that the County Council would be able to support a rail link”. These aspects have been fully addressed and the following clarifications put to County officials :
  - Some 90% of dwellings alongside the rail route south of Alcester Road were already in situ prior to the cessation of through trains in 1976, and the dozen or so post-1976 homes south of Sanctus Rd, which already encounter an ambient noise level dominated by 24 hour road traffic, are actually positioned side-on to Seven Meadows Rd with screen fencing and planting precluding any ground floor vision. New trains and continuous welded track provide a relatively quiet passage and it is relevant that the residents of 50 new homes facing the railway just 15m forward in Bishopton have little or no problems with passing trains.
  - In addition to enhancing Stratford upon Avon’s tourist economy , a rail link would help reduce undue road traffic generated by the planned Long Marston development, and generally secure social and environmental benefits, as well as generally increasing property values in the town.

- Adoption of a rail dive-under at Evesham Place would remove any adverse traffic queues or delays and minimise any visual intrusion that might otherwise arise with a level crossing.

Thus there are no remaining grounds for concerns about road traffic or nearby homes, and the rail link would indeed generate considerable long term benefits for Stratford –upon- Avon.

- 3.5.** Council plans. The full 9 mile Stratford-upon-Avon – Long Marston – Honeybourne rail route is protected from prejudicial development in both the Stratford-upon-Avon and Wychavon District Council Local Plans. The draft Stratford-upon-Avon Core Strategy reiterates safeguarding land for “reinstatement of the railway southwards from Stratford railway station”. Proposal RBS2 regarding the redevelopment of the Long Marston Depot site, declares a requirement for “an effective public transport service linking the site with Stratford-upon-Avon including the possible utilisation of the former rail line”.
- 3.6.** Town management. The Stratford Town Management Partnership advised Stratford District Council in 2007 that it regards the reopening of the Stratford-upon-Avon – Honeybourne railway as an essential element in plans for the future transport strategy for the town, as part of the ‘World Class Stratford’ initiative.
- 3.7.** Economy & Environment. The Stratford on Avon District Council Draft Core Strategy of February 2010 rightly identifies, under Policy CS8, a need for “particular emphasis on encouraging modal shift and the greater use of more sustainable forms of transport”. Not least para 5.4.7. recognises “that road traffic is the main source of air pollution in Stratford-upon-Avon”, and that “measures must be taken to mitigate the impact of traffic and encourage modal shift away from the private car”. Transport provision must also provide mobility and connectivity (particularly for employment) as well as social inclusion.
- 3.8.** It is also relevant to have regard to the Department for Transport’s recent national policy on Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS) which establishes five national goals for transport
- support economic growth by delivering reliable & efficient transport networks;
  - reduce transport emission of carbon dioxide (CO2) towards tackling climate change;
  - contribute to better safety, security and health by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;
  - promote greater equality of opportunity for all; and:
  - improve quality of life for transport users and non-users and secure a healthy natural environment.

From the foregoing it is overwhelmingly evident that rail transport ticks ALL the boxes for DaSTS, particularly in promoting modal shift, reduced congestion & lowering CO2 emissions. The case for regaining a through rail link is therefore compelling.



## 4. PASSENGER SERVICES

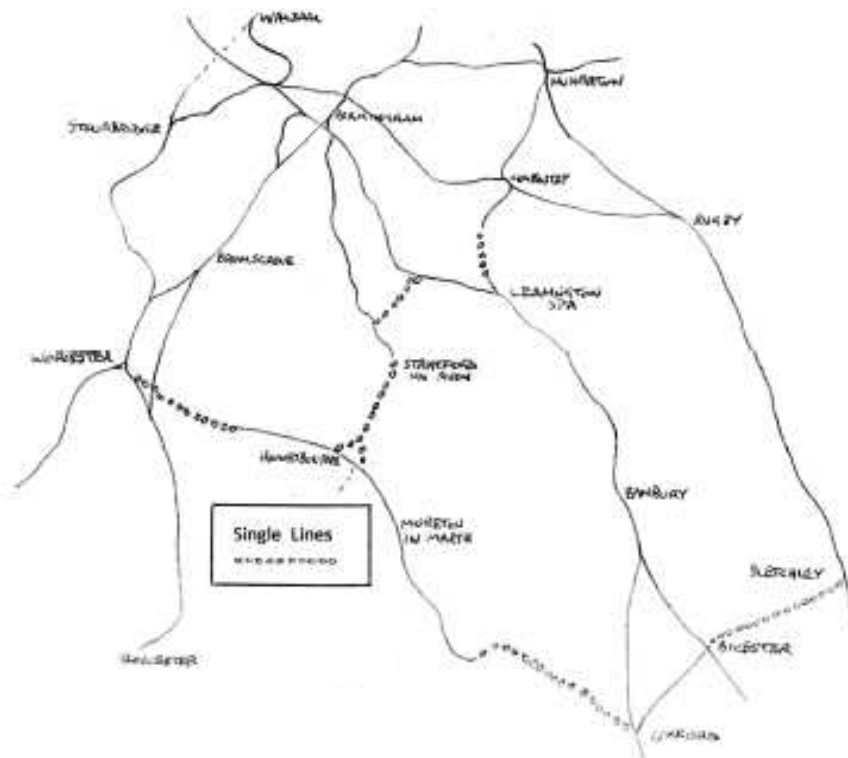
- 4.1.** Several travel and traffic flow objectives exist for a reopened Stratford-upon-Avon - Long Marston – Honeybourne rail route linking with the existing West Midlands and Cotswold rail network. Approval of 700 new homes on the Long Marston depot site presents a need to cater for commuters, students, shoppers, visitors, and many others travelling to the Birmingham area, Henley-in-Arden, Leamington Spa, and Stratford-upon-Avon itself,- plus journeys to such as Evesham and Moreton-in-Marsh. Not all new residents will favour bus travel, especially for longer journeys and there is a serious prospect of undue road traffic flows congesting and impairing the environmental ambience of such villages as Long Marston itself, Clifford Chambers and Welford on Avon and adding to the constrained movements across the River Avon bridge at Binton. A fast rail link could offer easier peak hour travel and help minimise the extent of everyday road traffic flows through these sensitive rural locations. A map indicating the direct rail route in relation to local roads and villages follows on page 7. Train operator London Midland has expressed an interest in extending its existing Stratford-upon-Avon services to serve Long Marston and the opening of a new Stratford Parkway station could also benefit new travel opportunities via a Long Marston rail link.
- 4.2.** Following the introduction of Chiltern train services between Stratford-upon-Avon – Bicester – Marylebone, the through Thames Trains services via Oxford to Stratford-upon-Avon were removed in 2004. This resulted in large numbers of visitors from Heathrow, Windsor, the Thames Valley, and Oxford no longer making rail journeys to Stratford-upon-Avon<sup>1</sup>. This loss is particularly felt by the local taxi association. Rail travel from Oxford now entails an average 1 hour 35 minute journey, including a 25 minute wait changing trains at Banbury and/or Leamington Spa. Infrequent (2-3 hourly) connections with the Marylebone - Leamington – Stratford-upon-Avon trains further exacerbates travel via Oxford. Journeys to and from Oxford by bus usually take nearly 2 hours and involve the use of two buses. Thus, instead of a northerly route to/from Stratford-upon-Avon, a direct rail service between Stratford upon Avon and Oxford via Moreton-in-Marsh would save over 30 minutes and afford through journey opportunities. Stratford-upon-Avon – Oxford is 11 miles shorter via Moreton. Such a fast through train service is advocated by First Great Western who are keen to secure reinstatement of the Long Marston – Stratford-upon-Avon rail link. Network Rail are providing a new crossover at Honeybourne to facilitate direct journeys between Long Marston and Moreton-in-Marsh. A new rail service via Moreton and Oxford would gain many more visitors for Stratford-upon- Avon’s vital tourist industry.
- 4.3.** In conjunction with Network Rail’s current redoubling of the North Cotswold line, two new platforms are being provided at Honeybourne along with trackwork to facilitate the planned extension of the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway. Thus a new Stratford upon Avon – Long Marston – Honeybourne rail link would enable off-peak trains to connect with FGW trains to Moreton; Evesham & Worcester ; and also with GWSR steam trains to Broadway and Cheltenham Racecourse. At week-ends additional excursions would be able to increase visitors to Stratford on Avon as would the current steam trains. A new Long Marston station could also enable a reduction of local road congestion during nearby music festivals and other events at Long Marston airfield, attract crowds of over 50,000.

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<sup>1</sup> Just one train now departs Stratford-upon-Avon at 23.00 hours to Oxford, Monday-Friday

## 5. RAIL FREIGHT

- 5.1.** Regular use of the 9 mile Stratford –upon–Avon – Honeybourne route for freight trains seems unlikely given the availability of two existing and two more future north – south main routes. For Gloucester – Birmingham – North East flows of generally coal, oil and steel the current Bromsgrove – Castle Bromwich route and the Worcester – Bescot routes are expected to be augmented by a reopened Stourbridge – Walsall line under plans declared by Centro and Network Rail. To divert SW-NE freight trains off these routes would involve reversal at Worcester and a circuitous route via Evesham, Stratford-upon-Avon and Tyseley, as well as encountering the pathing constraints of three single line sections of 10 miles, 9 miles, and 5 miles via Pershore, Long Marston, and Claverdon respectively. These routes are indicated on the map below.
- 5.2.** For the Southampton – Reading – Birmingham deep-sea container trains, the requirement for an increased (W10) gauge to accommodate 9'6" boxes is the subject of a strategic route enhancement by Network Rail to raise bridges, etc. As both the Cotswold and Stratford-on-Avon routes have the lesser W6 gauge tolerance and also have the pathing constraints of 3 single line sections of 14 miles via Charlbury, Long Marston and Claverdon, the diversion of the increasing container freight flows would not be possible via Moreton and Stratford-upon-Avon. It is expected that NR and a consortium of local authorities will, in the near future , also secure reopening of the Oxford – Bletchley line to enable rerouting of some W10 gauge trains to the WCML. Thus a reopened Stratford-upon-Avon – Long Marston line would not facilitate regular freight flows and is only likely to carry occasional stock movements to & from Long Marston depot and infrequent maintenance trains.



## 6. ROUTE ENGINEERING AND FEASIBILITY

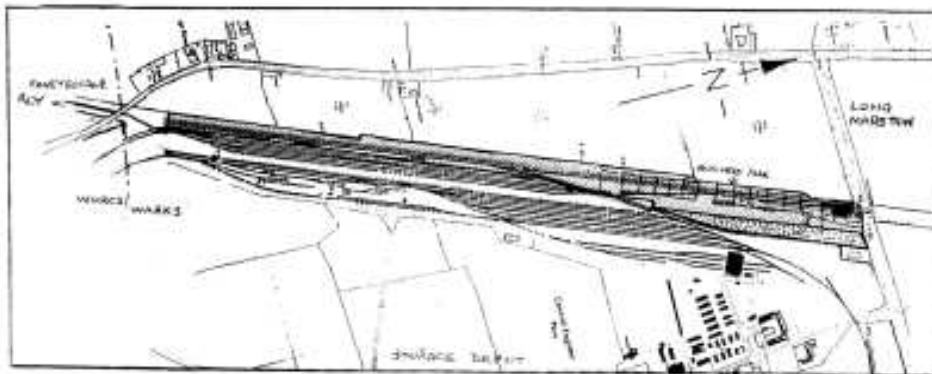
- 6.1. A detailed study by consultants Halcrow Fox in 1996 into the possibility of reopening the full 9 mile Long Marston route concluded that:

"It would be physically feasible to reinstate the rail link between Honeybourne and Stratford-upon-Avon stations"

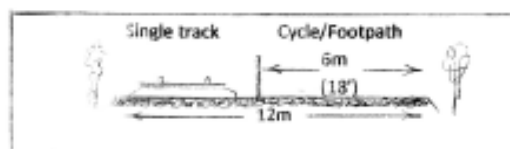
"The section from Seven Meadows roundabout to Stratford-upon-Avon station poses some physical constraints notably at Sanctus Rd bridge and Evesham Place roundabout which can be overcome"

"There would be few physical constraints over the rest of the route although a new alignment at Long Marston would be required".

- 6.2. From the Oxford - Worcester (North Cotswold) main line at Honeybourne, which is now being redoubled and provided with additional platforms by Network Rail, a 3 mile single track branch line continues to be in operational use to serve the sidings, works, and extensive storage depot facilities at Long Marston. The line is used to deliver a variety of coaches, wagon, and locomotives for repair, conversion or storage, and their return for use by rail operators. As the former Long Marston station site is now occupied by business units, the direct trackbed and former level crossing, still visible in the surface of Station Road, cannot be used. A short linear deviation could however be established together with a new level crossing here and at Milcote. The twin-span Stannels Bridge over the River Avon will require some remedial work.



- 6.3. For most of the 6 mile Long Marston - Stratford -upon-Avon rail route the 5% mile 'Greenway' provides a popular footpath and cycleway. The generous 12 metre/39' width of this former double track railway formation readily enables the Greenway path to remain throughout parallel to a single track line, each occupying a 6m width separated by suitable fencing.



The following photographs illustrate various examples of public footpaths alongside operational railway lines.



A replica 'Rocket' passes walkers on the 3 mile/5 Km Avon Valley heritage route at Bitton, Nr Bath, Somerset on 4.2.10. (Railway Magazine)



Ex-GWR locomotive 6024 hauls the Torbay Express alongside Dawlish sea wall promenade in Devon on 29.9.10 (Heritage Railway)



Diesel charter excursion alongside local road and sea front at Llanfairfechan, North Wales. August 2009. (Rail magazine)

**Other examples**

- 1.25 mile/2 km footpath alongside the Barmouth estuary bridge
- Public footpath alongside the Paignton-Goodrington railway



Sea front promenade alongside the 25kV electrified railway at Leigh on Sea, Essex. 1.1.09



Footpath to South Croydon rail station alongside the busy Southern electric railway. 21.2.10



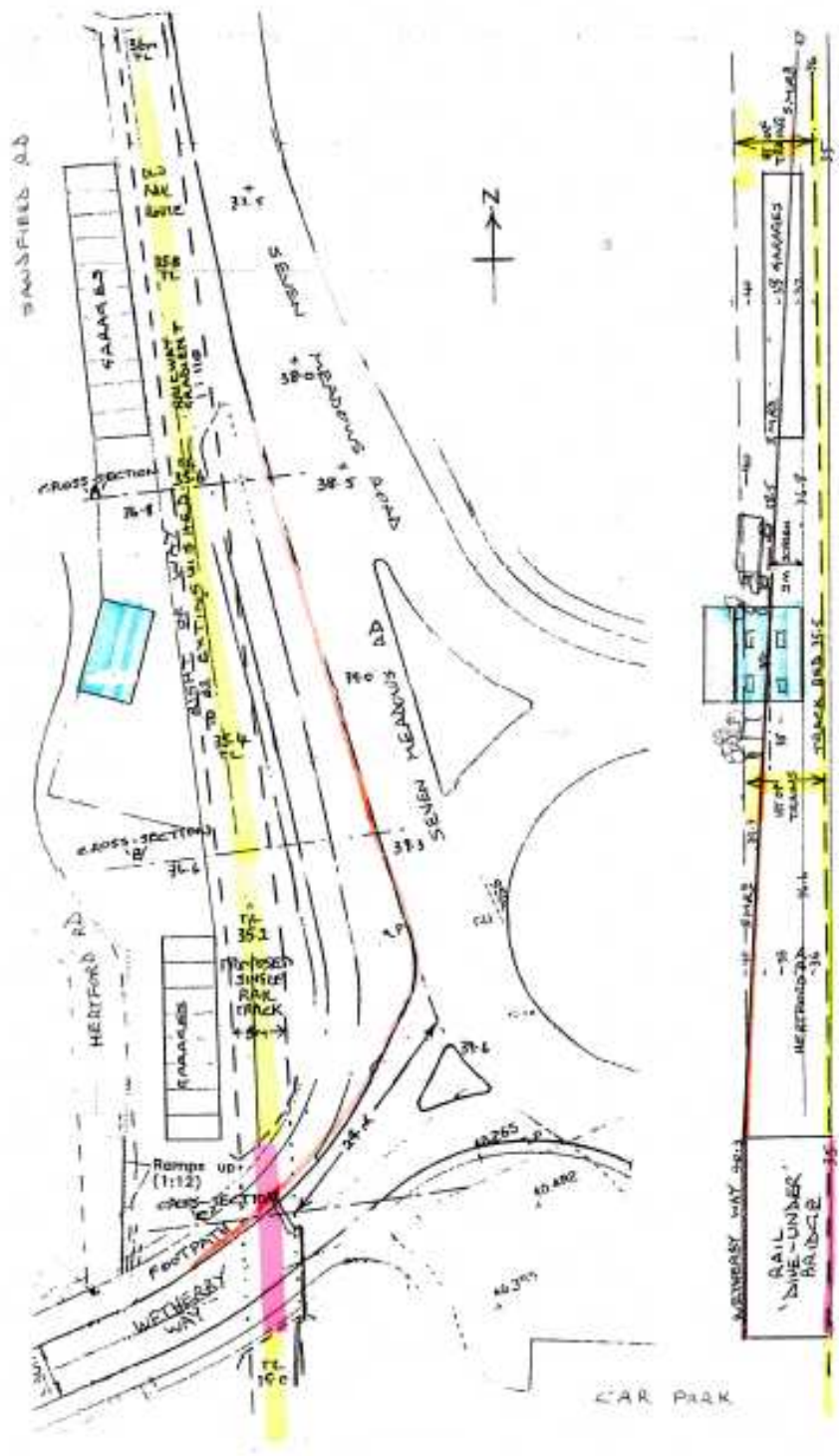
Twin access footpaths at Wylde Green station Sutton Coldfield alongside the 25kV electrified railway.

- Other examples:
- Station access footpath alongside railway at Langley Green, Smethwick.
  - Canal towpath parallel for 3 Km with the 25kV electrified main line railway between Five Ways and Edgbaston, Birmingham.

**6.4.** At the Seven Meadows Road elbow/roundabout the Greenway car park area would remain with the single line, being on the racecourse side, at a lower level to pass underneath Wetherby Way and rear of two blocks of garages. Here Seven Meadows Road rises to the 40m level whilst the trackbed would be at 35m. Thus the trains would be only partially visible north and south of Wetherby Way, whilst road traffic would remain the dominant visible intrusion at a higher level. A plan and section of this area is shown on page 13.

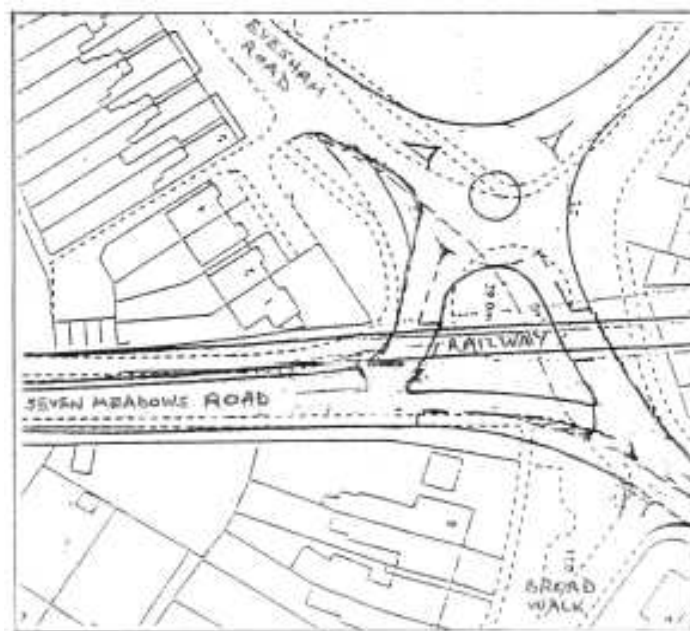
- 6.5.** The single track would reoccupy the course of the path along the west side of Seven Meadows Rd and become level with the road north of the garages. The flats across Sandfield Rd would be an ample 20 metres (65') from the rail route and would still benefit from the parallel earth bund, screen planting and fencing. A dozen or so houses in Old Town Mews are generally positioned 'side-on' to Seven Meadows Rd with close-board fencing and plant screening. The trains would be 15 metres distant across Seven Meadows Rd and only visible from some first floor windows. In a direct comparison some 50 new houses along Lloyds Way, Bishopton, face full-on to the existing busy railway just 15 metres away, yet as declared in response to a survey residents have little or no problems with the passing trains. The following photograph is a view of the Lloyds Way houses facing the rail line.





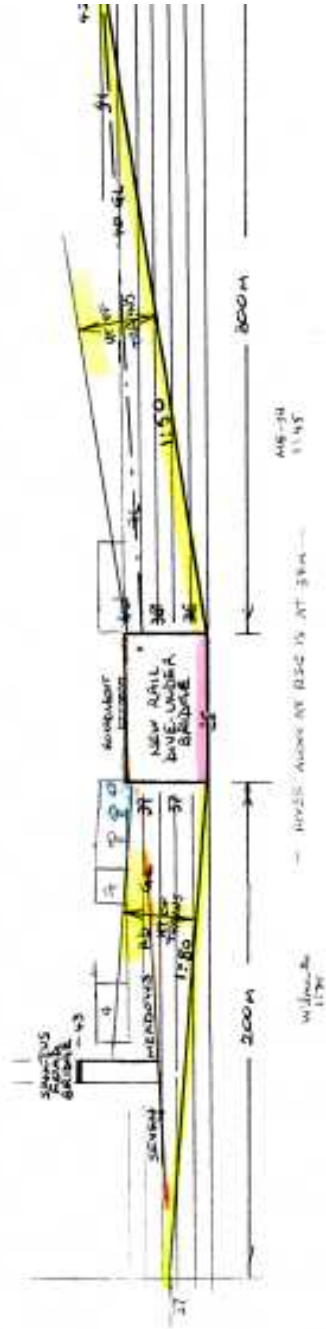
PROPOSED SINGLE LINE RAILWAY ALIGNMENT  
WITH ONE UNDER OF WETHERBY WAY

6.6. Continuing along the west side footpath under Sanctus Rd bridge the rail line might require the slight relocation of seven garages in Sanctus Court. The former twin track railway originally formed a level crossing (as pictured below) of Evesham Road now reclassified from A46 to B439. Given the subsequent construction of Seven Meadows Rd Halcrow Fox suggested the installation of a twin set of level crossing barriers with traffic lights as illustrated below. However their report acknowledges that peak hour traffic queues and delays may prove unacceptable.



- 6.7.** To address potential conflicts with road users the alternative of a railway 'dive-under' has been explored. This appears feasible adopting 'cut & cover'<sup>7</sup> works to create a rail underpass below a slightly raised Evesham Place roundabout, which would retain its present junction layout and road space. The excavation and bridge construction could be undertaken in two halves to minimise interruptions to road traffic. The section plan on page 16 illustrates the southward fall of the rail track from 42 metres near the present buffer stop to 35m under an Evesham Place bridge and returning to a 37.5 level following the natural slope of the land. The gradients indicated of 1:50 and 1:80 are relatively easy and compare with the 1:45 gradient in the Moor St tunnel or the 1:75 gradient on Wilmcote bank. Being sub-surface the passing trains would not be readily visible to traffic or residents adjacent to Evesham Place. Thus any sound or visual intrusion would be minimised by the 5m deep cutting together with surface screen fencing and planting.
- 6.8.** Along the route past Sandfield Road and Evesham Place to Alcester Road residents were well accustomed to the rumble of slow goods trains and occasional passenger trains until the line closed in 1976. A new railway would have continuous rather than jointed track, and modern quieter diesel trains at slow speed would sound similar to passing road vehicles. The trains would be relatively infrequent and the underpasses, fencing, planting and other measures

would minimise visibility and any disturbance. North of Evesham Place the single line would continue on the west side of the wide formation parallel to a 6m wide cycleway/footpath and would rejoin the existing railway south of Alcester Road bridge at the present buffer stop.



## 7. COSTS AND FUNDING

- 7.1.** Reinstatement of a 6 mile Stratford –upon-Avon – Long Marston single track railway would cost between £25m - £50m dependant on such variables as use of contract or volunteer resources and infrastructure alternatives at such as Evesham Place level crossing. This estimate is based not least on earlier data and current comparisons.
- 7.2.** In 1996 Halcrow Fox undertook a study on reopening the Long Marston – Stratford-upon-Avon route and concluded that reinstatement would cost £5.88m (including £1.51m for works alongside Seven Meadows Road). (See costings listed on page 18). Further works and signalling towards Honeybourne would increase the total to £10.25m. With subsequent inflation this would now equate to nearer £17m.
- 7.3.** Reopening of the 11½ mile Skipton – Colne line with a single track, a passing loop, and two intermediate stations was investigated by consultants Steer, Davies, Gleave in 2007 was forecast to cost £42.6m. (See report on page 19). This cost also included replacement of two bridges, reacquisition of various parcels of land, a route deviation and establishment of a new level crossing across a new highway. The current notional half of this cost for a 6 mile route would be about £24m.
- 7.4.** A housing developer in Tavistock, Devon, is to contribute to reinstatement of the 5½ mile single line to Bere Alston to connect with trains for Plymouth at a cost of £19m including a new station; reconversion of a 200 yard length of ploughed field; provision of a parallel cycleway and a replacement bridge. (An article on this project is reproduced on page 20)
- 7.5.** The following table summarises this cost information :

Route	Source	Cost
Long Marston – Stratford-upon-Avon	Halcrow Fox	£17m
Skipton – Colne (Lancashire)	Steer Davies Gleave	£24 m
Tavistock – Bere Alston (Devon)	Kilbride Group	£19 m
	Average	£20 m

- 7.6.** Additional works such as a deviation at Long Marston Depot; a new level crossing or dive-under at Evesham Place, and repairs to Stannels Bridge could increase the notional £20m to say £30m. (Government rules on an ‘optimism bias’ would raise this to £50m).
- 7.7.** Funding options include adoption of Chiltern Railway’s Bicester – Oxford arrangement for Network Rail asset-based funding repaid via track access charges or a levy on nearby new housing development as for the 750 properties planned for Tavistock. Regional funding contributions, as granted for Stratford Parkway, and other Local Transport Plan funding is also possible.

- 7.8.** Arising from the approval of plans in December 2009 for some 700 permanent and leisure homes, plus commercial and business development on the Long Marston depot site, agreement was also made to undertake a business plan study on reinstatement of the railway south of Stratford upon Avon. This is clearly an essential next step, supplementing the earlier Halcrow Fox study and other evidence on reopening the rail link.

Table 3.4: Civil Engineering and Highways Works Estimates,  
Honeybourne to Stratford-upon-Avon

Item	Location	Cost (£'000)
Earthworks	Honeybourne - Racecourse	30
Drainage	Honeybourne - Racecourse	35
Fencing	Whole length	50
Bridge	River Avon	340
Bridge	River Stour	180
Bridges	Elsewhere on route	185
Track	Station-Racecourse	225
Track	Racecourse-Long Marston	1,425
Track	Long Marston - Honeybourne	675
Track	Long Marston Depot Diversion	200
Track	Long Marston Exchange Sidings Layout	150
Level Crossings	Long Marston - Racecourse	120
Level Crossing	Evesham Place	300
CCTV Link	Evesham Place	350
Highway Works	Racecourse - Evesham Place (opt 2)	650
Environmental Measures	Racecourse - Evesham Place (opt 2)	75
Land acquisition, services	Whole route	500
Design Fees etc.	Whole route	489
Total estimated cost, basic reinstatement		5,879
Honeybourne, South Curve option re-instatement		1,375
Signalling costs associated with above		3,000
Total estimated cost, enhanced reinstatement		10,254

## CAPITAL AND ANNUAL COSTS

Estimates of the cost of constructing and operating a railway between Skipton and Colne were originally made by consultants in 2003 and have been updated in 2007. Additional annual costs have been estimated for a number of rail passenger service options - all operated by diesel multiple units and serving re-instated stations at Earby and Foulridge.

### Implementation costs

The trackbed is largely intact and could be restored at a relatively low cost. Construction cost estimates have been provided for two options (at 2007 prices):

- A single track option with one intermediate passing loop, intermediate stations at Earby and Foulridge, and no improvement to the section of line between Colne and Gannow Junction Burnley (the junction with the Halifax to Blackburn line) - £42.6 million
- An option involving the provision of a double track railway between Skipton and Gannow Junction, with new stations serving Earby and Foulridge, and second platforms at all the stations on the Colne branch east of Gannow Junction - £80.7 million

### Additional annual costs

- Option 1: An hourly Skipton to Colne shuttle service - £0.86 million
- Option 2: An hourly Skipton to Blackpool South service based on an extension of the existing service from Colne - £0.83 million
- Option 3: An hourly Skipton to Blackburn service operated by only two additional trains resulting in a westbound 'clockface' hourly interval in combination with the existing Colne - Blackpool South service on the section of line between Colne and Blackburn. Eastbound, the services do not co-ordinate as well with intervals between trains alternating between 20 and 40 minutes - £2.41 million
- Option 3: Limited to integrate with the existing Colne to Blackpool South service by deploying three additional trains to achieve a combined half-hourly service in both directions - £3.36 million
- Option 4: An hourly Skipton to Manchester Victoria service in addition to existing services - £6.25 million

### Strategic Context



# Devon councillors vote to extend railway to Tavistock

WEST Devon Borough Council has endorsed the proposal that incorporates the re-opening of the 5.5-mile Tavistock-Bere Alston line, in conjunction with the development of 750 homes at Tavistock, by 22 votes to six.

The strategy, which had been recommended by the council's future planning and



housing committee on April 7, is controversial locally, largely because of the scale of the project.

But Charles Howson, chairman of the Plymouth Area Strategic Council, emphasised the benefits to

commuters and leisure users as well as to the environment, and said it would provide crucial positive focus in the recession-ridden economy.

Council leader James Mahnes said the plans represented a joined-up approach to all aspects of planning in West Devon for the next 20 years, including new links, health facilities and education provision.

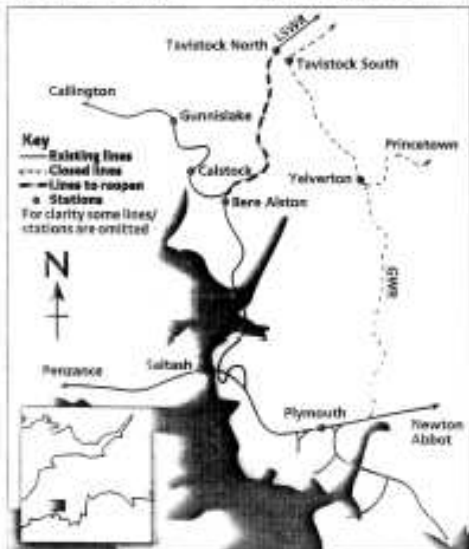
Peter Frost, managing director of Kibode Group, which is promoting the project, hailed the decision as "very good news", adding: "One of the key points of the debate is that there's still flexibility in the proposed strategy, to allow for changes to be made. I think that's a very good idea. People will still be able to have their say."

The next step is for public consultation on the Local

Development Framework during May/June, with this eventually going to the government for final approval.

Frost told RAIL: "Our rail plans and the wider development will now be worked up in detail for the residential planning application, and also the Transport and Works Act Order application which will need the transport secretary's approval. The environmental studies underpinning any application would take at least a year from now."

Kibode is proposing a levy on the new homes to fund a proportion of the rail link's re-building. In a newsletter prepared by the company, the operation of 16 return trains a day between Tavistock and Plymouth, is suggested, with the journey taking 32 minutes.



## Comment: Richard Clinnick, Features Editor, RAIL

Returning trains to Tavistock makes sense. The growing town has a large number of commuters bound for Plymouth, and the roads into the city - especially the A305 - is extremely congested at peak times.

By introducing a train service via the Gunnislake branch, passengers will have an easy, direct link to the heart of Plymouth that should also be quicker. This is also a potentially re-usable blueprint for re-opening schemes elsewhere, so the scheme has importance far beyond Devon.

A new line would also allow more tourists to visit this beautiful part of England, bringing more money into the town. Last year I discovered how well the West Country branches were being used by local communities (RAIL 597) and I suspect the re-opened route into this Dartmoor town would be just as popular.



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## **The Case for an Avon Rail Link**

### **S U M M A R Y**

1. Reinstatement is required to increase visitor numbers, reduce long journeys and serve 700 new homes at Long Marston. (1.1)
2. Reopening of the line is essential for a World Class Stratford, Stratford Town Management Partnership. (2.6)
3. Regional Plans, Network Rail, & Council Strategies acknowledge the potential for a reopened rail link (3.1 – 3.8)
4. A Long Marston rail service could help reduce undue local traffic. (4.1)  
  
A new faster Stratford–upon-Avon – Moreton – Oxford rail service is proposed. (4.2)
5. Regular rail freight is unlikely via the Long Marston route. (5.1 – 5.2)
6. The 5 ½ mile Greenway would remain alongside a single line. (6.3)  
  
New homes next to the railway at Bishopton reveal no problems with passing trains. (6.5)  
  
A rail dive-under of Evesham Place would obviate conflict with road traffic. (6.7)
7. Reinstatement of the 6 mile line would cost between £25m - £50m. (7.1)