

## REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **GREAT WESTERN ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY**

Date: **26 November, 2009**

Member Reporting: **Cllr C Rayner – Lead Member for Highways and Streetcare**

Contact Officer(s): **Gail Kenyon – Planning Infrastructure and Transport Policy Manager (01628 796157)**

Wards affected: **Belmont, Bisham and Cookham, Boyn Hill, Castle Without, Cox Green, Eton and Castle, Furze Platt, Hurley and the Walthams, Maidenhead Riverside, Oldfield**

### 1. SUMMARY

#### **What is the Consultation about?**

- 1.1.1 Network Rail has produced the Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) Draft for Consultation. This sets out the proposed strategy for the Great Western Main Line and surrounding rail network over the coming 10 year period, with an indicative strategy to 2030, (link to full document:

[http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse\\_documents/rus\\_documents/route\\_utilisation\\_strategies/great\\_western/greatwesternrus.pdf](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse_documents/rus_documents/route_utilisation_strategies/great_western/greatwesternrus.pdf)

- 1.1.2 The area affected by the Great Western RUS is about to undergo a period of considerable change, with several large, high-profile investments planned such as the Intercity Express Programme, Redevelopment of Reading Station, Electrification and Crossrail. Benefits would also be accrued if proposals such as AirTrack and Heathrow Western Access are taken forward.
- 1.1.3 The RUS identifies “gaps” between existing and future rail capacity and demand, together with “options” proposed to address these gaps. While the above schemes address the majority of these gaps, a few remain unaddressed. Locally, these affect branch line services to Windsor and Eton Central and Bourne End/Marlow, and platform capacity at Windsor and Eton Central, as well as car parking and interchange facilities at key stations throughout the RUS area. Comments are invited on the draft RUS by 27 November 2009. This report seeks to agree a formal response to the RUS on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

#### ***What is the Borough’s Response to this Consultation?***

- 1.1.4 In general, the Borough is in support of the RUS because it greatly enhances rail capacity and connectivity. However the following points have been identified as key to the Borough:
- The RUS must support the electrification of the branch lines to Windsor and Eton Central and to Bourne End/Marlow to ensure that these services remain attractive

and efficient to operate. At present these services carry significant passenger numbers, see para. 3.1.3;

- Any loss of service is not one that the Borough supports and the existing through services between Marlow and Paddington must be protected;
- The RUS must include a policy for Network Rail, Crossrail, AirTrack, train operating companies, local authorities and third parties to work together to address “gaps” relating to Heathrow access, car parking and interchange between rail and other forms of transport at appropriate railway stations;
- Network Rail be requested to work with the Royal Borough and private sector partners to find a cost effective solution to the crowding issues at Windsor and Eton Riverside and to properly explore the development opportunities arising from the Maidenhead rejuvenation initiative including the need for sufficient parking and public transport.
- We would like the introduction of a route through from Windsor Central Station direct to Paddington especially in the peak times and also a direct train from Windsor to Maidenhead.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

- a) **That the Lead Member for Highways and Streetcare respond to the consultation as outlined in this report with the key concerns identified in paragraph 1.1.4**
- b) **The Lead Member for Highways and Streetcare seek meetings with Network Rail Chief Executive and Duncan Bonfield, Director, External Communications, Network Rail, to discuss key issues for the Borough to improve services for our residents and businesses.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
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Residents will have a better rail service with more capacity, improved reliability and better connectivity with local, regional and national destinations.
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## 3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 3.1 Background

#### ***What is the Route Utilisation Strategy and The Importance of Rail to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead***

- 3.1.1 The Great Western RUS focuses on the 10 year period to 2019, but has considered the implications of growth over the longer term. Despite current economic conditions, overall passenger and freight demand are still expected to increase significantly over the lifetime of the RUS.
- 3.1.2 The railway network is critical to the success of the Royal Borough’s economy and is key to meeting local transport needs as evidenced by the following statistics:

- According to the 2001 Census, rail accounted for 6.1% of commuting journeys for Borough residents, which is higher than both the regional and national averages;
- **Maidenhead alone handled 3.7 million passengers in 2007/08 making it the seventh most used rail station within the Great Western RUS area (ahead of Ealing Broadway and Swindon);**
- Within the Great Westerns RUS area, Maidenhead ranks second in terms of rail journeys to or from London Paddington on the suburban network, while Windsor and Eton Central ranks tenth;
- Slough to Windsor and Eton Central, and Reading to Maidenhead are the second and third most significant non-London flows within the Great Western RUS area.

3.1.3 In recent years, there has been a significant increase in both passenger and freight demand on the portion of the rail network covered by the RUS. This increase has been particularly noticeable at Maidenhead and Windsor and Eton Central, which have both experienced growth of more than 10%. Table 3.1 provides details of rail passenger numbers at each of the Borough's stations within the RUS area.

**Table 3.1: Rail Passenger Numbers (Entries and Exits)**

	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
<b>Maidenhead</b>	3,272,122	3,380,173	3,609,303	3,681,827
<b>Windsor &amp; Eton Central</b>	1,352,234	1,309,356	1,423,329	1,508,501
<b>Cookham</b>	180,647	186,701	195,044	189,804
<b>Furze Platt</b>	157,562	170,757	154,163	146,176
<b>Marlow</b>	292,516	302,398	299,882	293,367
<b>Bourne End</b>	253,787	240,163	238,018	233,195

### ***Current Rail Capabilities and Future Requirements***

3.1.4 The RUS analysis identifies key gaps between current capabilities and future requirements of the railway including the following, which are relevant to the Royal Borough:

- Peak hour capacity issues at Paddington and Reading Stations;
- Paddington to Reading line capacity and performance;
- Freight capacity and capability in and around London;
- Slough to Windsor capacity;
- Station crowding (including at Windsor and Eton Central);
- The impact of Heathrow Airport expansion and western access.

### ***What are the key points in the RUS?***

3.1.5 Known commitments have been incorporated into future planning. These include:

- *Electrification of the Great Western Main Line* – It was recently announced that the Great Western Main Line will be subject to electrification, with services operating between Paddington and Newbury, Oxford, and Swindon and intermediate stations benefitting from 2016.

- *Crossrail* – This new electrified rail service will provide a direct link from Maidenhead and Heathrow to the heart of London and through to Kent. The RUS is working on the basis that Maidenhead is still the agreed western terminus, although the RUS recognises that this may change to Reading following the electrification announcement.
- *The Intercity Express Programme (IEP)* – Starting in 2016, the existing 30 year old High Speed Train (HST) fleet will be replaced with 10 car electric trains for inter-city services and five car diesel / electric trains for outer suburban services (operating as 10 car units in peak times). These new trains will be cleaner, quieter, faster and more reliable, with significantly more capacity.
- *European Rail Traffic Management System* – New signalling and control systems are being introduced, which will be able to recognise the unique braking characteristics of each train and use on-board computers to calculate and enforce the maximum safe operating speed at any given time, thus improving line capacity and safety.
- *Redevelopment of Reading Station* – Increasing capacity at this key interchange will address what is currently a major bottleneck in the regional rail network. The scheme will include five new platforms (four serving east-west trains and one new southern platform) and an elevated railway to the west of the station to improve capacity for freight and passenger trains on the Great Western Main Line.

3.1.6 The RUS also considers the likely impacts of proposals for AirTrack and for Western Access to Heathrow Airport (via the Great Western Main Line). However, these are not yet committed schemes and in the case of the Western Access scheme, delivery may be beyond this RUS period.

#### ***What are the RUS Conclusions and Recommendations?***

3.1.7 The RUS concluded that delivery of the above schemes as a comprehensive package would result in considerable improvements to capacity, journey times and connectivity. These projects will address many of the gaps identified above and will deliver a rail service on the Great Western Main Line that would be capable of meeting passenger demand for the coming 10 year period and beyond.

3.1.8 In terms of freight capacity, the latest Crossrail service specification indicates that the Great Western Main Line will be able to accommodate the growth forecasts, handling the anticipated 25 train paths per day by 2019 and 36 train paths per day by 2030, thus addressing the identified gap.

3.1.9 Issues affecting capacity on the Slough to Windsor branch line have largely been addressed by the recent increase in service to three trains per hour throughout the day. This is considered to be sufficient to cope with projected demand to 2019. In the longer term, additional capacity could be provided by increasing the service to a four-car train and / or increasing line speed to achieve a higher frequency service.

3.1.10 Platform crowding at Windsor and Eton Central station was identified through passenger surveys. As well as catering for passengers, the platform also serves as a pedestrian route from the coach park to the town centre. A fence divides the platform

into two sections, one for passengers alighting and boarding trains and the other for the through pedestrians. This limits the space available for passengers. Network Rail considered a variety of solutions, including provision of ticket gates, widening the current platform, and constructing a second platform. The second platform option was discounted due to land ownership issues, while the other options failed to achieve the necessary Benefit Cost Ratios and so no further work is currently proposed to address this gap through the RUS.

- 3.1.11 Rail access to Heathrow Airport from the west is either via bus and coach road services, or by interchange from suburban rail stopping services at Hayes and Harlington to catch the Heathrow Connect services to Terminal 4. If implemented, the proposed AirTrack scheme would improve access to the airport from the south through the construction of a new section of railway line from Heathrow Terminal 5 to Staines. However, there remains an issue with access from the north and west. The current bus route 75 between Maidenhead and Heathrow takes up to 1hr 20m, and clearly does not maximise our economic potential from being so close to the airport. The RUS identifies a possible direct link to the Great Western Main Line via a new chord from the Colnbrook freight line, although this would almost certainly require a fly-under from the eastbound slow lines. If constructed, this could enable a direct train service from Maidenhead to Heathrow. However, the scheme has yet to be fully designed, costed and evaluated and is only identified within the RUS as a potential longer-term aspiration for delivery beyond 2019.

#### ***Issues Not Addressed by the RUS***

- 3.1.12 The following issues are felt to be important to the Borough residents and businesses and need to be addressed:
- 3.1.13 The RUS acknowledges that neither Crossrail nor the electrification proposals for the Great Western Main Line currently propose electrification of the branch lines to Marlow or to Windsor and Eton Central, these would continue to operate diesel-powered trains. Operating and maintaining isolated diesel services such as these, would be unattractive to train operating companies, and there is a concern that service quality would suffer as a result. In addition, all services from the Marlow branch line would terminate at Maidenhead, requiring interchange for onward journeys. The two peak hour through services to London, which operate under the current franchise agreement would be lost, resulting in a deterioration of service for passengers on this line. Any loss of service is not one that the Borough supports and this through route service must be protected.
- 3.1.14 It is noted in the RUS that lack of station car parking capacity is a widespread issue which occurs at many of the main regional centres. Car park occupancy data identifies 18% of car parks within the RUS area as being at 100% utilisation, with a further 41% of car parks with utilisation of over 75%, including Maidenhead, which operates at 90% utilisation. Addressing car parking constraints will be key to delivering desired levels of rail passenger growth. However, the RUS does not suggest any mechanism for addressing this issue. The Council is keen to see parking capacity increased at Maidenhead as part of wider improvements to the rail network, particularly Crossrail, since these will make rail travel significantly more attractive and therefore increase demand for parking.

3.1.15 The RUS identifies interchange opportunities with other modes of transport for all stations across the Great Western area, and indicates that there are many station enhancement projects in development, sponsored by the train operating companies, local authorities and third parties, which aim to address station facilities. However, there is no assessment as to the quality of the interchange facilities and the likely constraints that inadequate facilities may have on future growth of the rail network. Enhancement schemes do not appear to be happening in a co-ordinated manner and are dependent upon the particular priorities and available resources of the train operating company rather than being prioritised according to need across the network as a whole. The Borough is seeking to improve interchange facilities at Maidenhead through the Partnership for the Rejuvenation of Maidenhead (PRoM) and the Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan and would like to see corresponding commitment from other parties.

#### 4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

##### 4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	Do nothing	If the Council were not to respond to the consultation, there would be no further opportunity to raise issues and concerns until the next RUS in 2019.	Revenue: None  Capital: None
2.	Endorse the Draft RUS as written	The RUS identifies most of the key issues relating to the Great Western Main Line and the proposed schemes would address many of these. However, endorsing the strategy as written would mean that the opportunity to raise issues relating to the branch lines and interchange facilities would be lost.	Revenue: None  Capital: None
3.	Endorse the Draft RUS subject to modifications as proposed in this report – <b>Recommended</b>	Seeking amendment of the RUS in line with this report's recommendations would help to ensure that the Borough's needs are fully considered.	Revenue: None  Capital: None

##### 4.2 Risk assessment

4.2.1 None as a result of this report.

#### 5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

5.1.1 Non as a result of this report.

## 6. COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6.1.1 Comments from Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009 to be inserted.

## 7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1.1 The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
N/A	✓ or N/A	✓ or N/A	✓ or N/A	✓ or N/A	✓ or N/A

Background Papers: Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy Consultation Draft