

# WINDSOR LINK RAILWAY ISSUES PAPER

## Version 2.5f: 30 September 2015

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### **Introduction**

*This Paper sets out questions which have been raised by a number of concerned Windsor residents and for which no, or no clear, answers have been provided.*

*Many assumptions and claims have been made without proper/firm detail and without the requisite independent analysis, research and advice to support them.*

*Satisfactory answers to these questions - based on proper, independent, expert inquiry, research, analysis and advice - are essential to deciding whether or not to support the project. In any consultation of Windsor residents it must be the Council's responsibility to provide them with proper information on the issues raised. Although information of varying degrees of precision and certainty is offered on the WLR website on some issues, only the Council is in a position to obtain and/or provide the necessary independent clarification, verification, analysis and advice.*

*Note: this paper brings together questions raised by a number of people and a degree of duplication has been unavoidable.*

## **A. The Rail link (Phase 1) and developments**

### *Conceptual and general issues*

- 1.1 What if any independent expert assessment has been obtained as to the technical feasibility of linking up Windsor's two railway lines at anything faintly approaching reasonable cost or at all, without which consideration of the details of the project and its potential effects and consequences is a waste of time and effort?
- 1.2 What is the established travel need to which the WLR proposal (especially Phase 1) is demonstrably the answer?
- 1.3 We currently have two stations and are able to travel anywhere we wish without much difficulty; how will the proposed link change that?
- 1.4 Could it be that the beneficiaries will only or mainly be people who wish to pass through Windsor without stopping?
- 1.5 How can we gauge the potential number of travellers who would seek to use this service to get off the train in Windsor?
- 1.6 Many people feel Windsor has pretty good links with London and have never found any difficulty in getting to chosen destinations there; what evidence (such as scientifically designed and executed passenger surveys) is there that significant numbers of residents are concerned about routes, connections and/or journey times?
- 1.7 Some train journeys to other parts of Berkshire or to Surrey or Wokingham are problematic, but how many Windsor residents are significantly inconvenienced by that, and how would the WLR as currently proposed overcome any such difficulties?
- 1.8 What evidence is there that, rather than bringing businesses into (or back into) Windsor, improved rail services won't just encourage businesses whose staff live locally to relocate to cheaper premises elsewhere?
- 1.9 Is there a risk that the only or main effect of the rail link might actually be to make the "dormitification" worse if its effect is to improve commuting times into London?

1.10 How can we be at all confident that, rather than bringing shoppers from elsewhere into Windsor, improved rail services won't just encourage local residents to do more of their shopping elsewhere?

1.11 How would the link entice shoppers and other people into Windsor?

1.12 How can people be sure that the whole exercise isn't just a ploy for developers to make huge profits out of luxury housing at the cost of serious harm to the amenity of existing Windsor residents (council tax payers) and tourists who bring essential revenue to the town?

1.13 How, given especially the existing rate of conversions from business to residential use, will a new railway project which is supposed to be operational in 7 years, stop offices being converted into flats and bring jobs to the community?

1.14 Have members of the Windsor business community who have reportedly come out in support of the WLR obtained sufficient and reliable (as yet unpublished) detail of what the project in its completed form would actually consist of for the purposes of making an informed judgement?

1.15 Have they obtained any (as yet unpublished) expert advice on the likely impact of the project in its completed form sufficient for that purpose?

1.16 Which if any particular businesses have already confirmed their support for the project and which if any have expressed doubts about or opposition to it?

1.17 How, if at all, will businesses - eg, retail businesses in the central shopping area - permanently affected, directly or indirectly, by the completed project be compensated for any loss of earnings which might arise from of any consequential reduction in footfall resulting from the project (eg, because of changes in the routes by which tourists walk to and from the Castle and the central shopping area)?

1.18 What level of interest and commitment has been expressed by Network Rail and other relevant national bodies, and on the basis of what details of the project and what cost/benefit analysis?

1.19 What evidence is there that Network Rail has the capacity to support and become involved in the WLR project given its ongoing commitments and priorities and the current Government investigations into severe delays and difficulties which NR is

currently experiencing in relation to its delivery of existing major infrastructure projects such as HS2?

1.20 What rail business would be generated by the addition of the WLR which would justify the financial investment, time and disruption on the scale involved in undertaking this project?

1.21 Who would actually end up owning and running the link section of the railway line and the new station, bearing in mind that at:

[windsorlink.co.uk/mrs-thatcher-and-the-jubilee-line/](http://windsorlink.co.uk/mrs-thatcher-and-the-jubilee-line/)

it says that "WLR .... proposes a private railway", and if someone other than Network Rail how will its rights and responsibilities dovetail into those of Network Rail?

1.22 What level of interest and commitment has been expressed by First Great Western and South West Trains, and on the basis of what details of the project and what cost/benefit analysis?

1.23 In what ways are the railway, housing, non-transport business, parking and riverside rejuvenation components of the project financially interdependent or can they be selectively implemented, and if so how?

1.24 Is the project designed to (and if so in what ways would it) take any cars off the road and/or increase the number and/or proportion of tourists, shoppers and other visitors travelling by train to Windsor and what evidence on these supposed effects is available?

1.25 In what ways, exactly, would the WLR achieve each of its professed social aims:

- 1) Preserving our heritage;
- 2) Improving our environment;
- 3) Improving standards of living for local residents;
- 4) Increasing social mobility;
- 5) Creating economic growth and employment.

1.26 If (see further below) support for the WLR project should end up being included in the draft Business Neighbourhood Plan, is there any way in which, given its

wide-area strategic implications for the whole of Windsor (and also, perhaps, Eton, Datchet and south Slough), residents throughout Windsor (and, perhaps, those other areas) can be assured of a say in the adoption of the plan?

### *Detailed and functional issues*

2.1 Has Network Rail been consulted on the need to reinstate and operate a double track throughout the proposed revised viaduct trackway?

2.2 How and where would the WLR project be arranged so as to ensure that rail and coach passengers continue to be channelled into the central shopping area to maintain/enhance footfall?

2.3 Would Network Rail be prepared to fund the required strengthening and increased maintenance of the track and arches throughout their length?

2.4 If they would not be prepared to undertake this, by what alternative means if any is it envisaged that this aspect would proceed?

2.5 Exactly where would there be cut and cover and where would there be tunnelling, and what engineering surveys have been undertaken to determine this?

2.6 What would be the effect on existing foundations of adjacent office blocks (eg, Farm Yard), where no provision was made for a future tunnel?

2.7 How deep must the tunnelling go to avoid adverse effect on existing buildings and what engineering surveys have been undertaken to determine this?

2.8 How will it be possible to improve the speed and/or frequency of service given that the line to Waterloo (with seemingly insuperable constraints on increasing service levels/frequencies) will remain the same?

2.9 Won't unifying the two lines (and stations) deprive residents and visitors of the current discrete alternative options for rail travel into and out of Windsor so that disruption which would currently affect services on only one of two lines would in future

affect all services serving Windsor?

#### 2.10 Given that

- the Waterloo-bound trains (Southwest Trains) from W&E Riverside Station use a "third rail" system whereas the Slough-bound trains (GWR/First Group) from W&E Central are diesel-powered;
- the lines through Slough and from Slough to Windsor are/will soon be undergoing overhead electrification;
- the WLR tracks in Windsor leaving station platforms below ground would rise to the level of the Brunel Bridge on a very steep gradient which would have operational implications;

in attempting to link the two lines, how would the WLR address these considerations and their attendant implications, including the cost of reconciling

- a) two different rail operators;
- b) two different electric systems;
- c) two different power companies;
- d) two different frequencies (two trains per hour to Waterloo versus three trains hourly to Slough);
- e) the possibility of crossing sets of tracks (eg. DOWN Fast, UP Fast, DOWN Slow) to access UP Fast line to Paddington ?

2.11 (a) If there is any proposal to run "through" trains from Waterloo/Windsor to Paddington: given that such a proposal would require traversing several sets of track, including "Fast" lines (something which at Reading, for example, has involved building a "Fly-over" enabling freight trains to achieve this and avoid disrupting passenger services on existing lines), if WLR were to attempt to link the routes from Waterloo at one end through to Paddington, how would the WLR overcome the same complex situation at Slough?

(b) How would the required investment to achieve such a solution be provided and justified?

2.12 (a) As regards the change at Slough, if a "Windsor/Waterloo - Paddington" link is not intended or were to prove beyond the scope achievable by the WLR and a terminus

retained at Slough, this would mean no alteration to the present arrangements; given what people currently do very effectively on foot between the existing stations in Windsor in order to access routes to London with no adverse implications for either the listed buildings or the town's environment and amenity, how would WLR justify the huge costs and disruption in Windsor to reproduce this through its proposals?

(b) What additional business would be generated by WLR in this scenario?

(c) In these circumstances, what would be the reasons for joining the stations in Windsor and given the implications of Crossrail for passengers changing at Slough and continuing to London, in what way would WLR be advantageous to travelers wishing to access Slough and Paddington Stations over what happens at the moment?

2.13 How will the interchange with Slough work, in particular:

(a) In Phase 1, how will twin track operation into and out of Slough Station be arranged from a single platform '0'?

(b) In Phase Two, what will the effects be on GWR 'fast' line operations through Slough while WLR trains cross to the 'slow' lines to and from the west?

(c) Will the 'Royal Curve' be reinstated as a twin track operation?

(d) If so, what new platform provisions are envisaged, and where, for 'up' and 'down' line access west of Slough Station?

2.14 Since the new station and tracks towards Slough would be at or below ground level instead of elevated as at present, how could services between Windsor and Slough be kept going during periods of river flooding (which many experts believe likely to become more frequent)?

2.15 What are the implications for Datchet with the doubling of level crossing closed-times and the consequences on road traffic build up?

2.16 What exactly would be the consequences of building an underground car park at Alexandra Gardens as regards, eg, the increase in traffic flow, congestion and pollution in Windsor, the risk to established trees, and the risk of flooding?

2.17 Which (designated and non-designated) heritage assets, buildings and protected views (most importantly of course, views of the Castle from the riverside, the Goswells and Alexandra Gardens) might be at risk from the various different aspects of the project and in what ways?

2.18 How many and which buildings in particular would the project result in being lost permanently?

2.19 How many and which trees in particular would be lost permanently (see further below)?

2.20 Exactly what new office, industrial, retail, residential, community, leisure and other buildings, structures and facilities would be constructed and in which locations and by whom and over what period?

2.21 What would be the height of railway and other new buildings and structures, and how would sight lines of the Castle be affected at River Street, Jennings Yard site, former Riverside Station site (Hotel?) plus all other locations where new buildings and structures are proposed?

2.22 Would the project impact on Crown lands, if so how, and have the Crown's views been obtained?

2.23 What plans do the promoters of the project propose to put in place to investigate and catalogue, and where possible preserve and protect, the archaeological discoveries which would inevitably arise from their tunnel-digging and other excavations?

2.24 Where exactly would the new station and accesses, flood protection works and other associated facilities be built, and to what extent would they be built above and/or below surface level?

2.25 Where would new car park and tunnel accesses, ventilation shafts and flood protection works and other associated facilities be built, and to what extent would they be built above and/or below surface level?

2.26 Are any, and if so what, permanent physical works proposed at surface level within The Goswells?

2.27 What if any permanent effects might there be on the amenity of users of The Goswells (especially if the cut-and-cover approach is adopted) for example by way of disturbing noise and vibration?

2.28 Would the coach park be relocated, if so where to, and what would be the effect on tourist footfall through the central shopping area?

### *Construction phase disruption*

*Note : In the absence of essential information, there has been some worrying speculation as to the nature and extent of the road and rail disruption likely to be caused during the construction phase and the period over which it might last. Clarification is needed as to the likely disruption to road and rail travel into, out of and within, and pedestrian circulation within, Windsor and its inevitable impact on inhabitants and businesses.*

*One wonders whether Windsor business supporters may have focussed too closely on the hypothetical outcome of the completed project without adequately assessing the risk of irreversible harm to trade during the construction phase.*

3.1 Have members of the Windsor business community who have reportedly come out in support of the WLR obtained sufficient and reliable (as yet unpublished) detail of the nature and extent of the disruption likely to be caused by the construction phase for the purposes of making an informed judgement?

3.2 Have they obtained any (as yet unpublished) expert advice on the likely impact of the construction phase sufficient for that purpose?

3.3 Where and how would people access trains in Windsor during the construction phase?

3.4 Would there be any periods during the construction phase when there would be no railway station open in Windsor, and if so for how long?

3.5 Would there be any periods during the construction phase when any roads into and out of Windsor would be closed, and if so which and for how long?

3.6 How will the construction phase be arranged so as to ensure that rail and coach passengers continue to be channelled into the central shopping area to minimise loss of custom to retail businesses?

3.7 To which specific access routes and points will arriving passengers be directed, and how will these be signposted?

3.8 How, if at all, will businesses - eg, retail businesses in the central shopping area - not directly or indirectly impacted by and during the execution of the works be compensated for any loss of earnings which might arise from of any consequential reduction in footfall resulting from the project (eg, because of changes in the routes by which tourists walk to and from the Castle and the central shopping area) at different times during the construction phase?

3.9 Presumably the promoters would have to provide for and compensate the businesses in the Arches, the Gardens, the Coach Park and possibly indeed in town for loss of their earnings or their entire businesses; as regards businesses which are not necessarily permanently closed, but only temporarily closed or disrupted, what is to stop them taking the compensation and leaving with no certainty that they will ever be replaced?

3.10 Are any, and if so what, temporary physical works proposed at surface level within The Goswells?

3.11 What if any effects might there be during the construction phase on the amenity of users of The Goswells (especially if the cut-and-cover approach is adopted)?

3.12 Where, during the construction phase, will contractors' working, parking, manoeuvring and storage areas, and vehicle and plant accesses, be located particularly in central locations such as in the vicinity of Alexandra Gardens and on either side of and/or under the railway viaduct/arches, and how will this impact on car and coach parking for tourists, shoppers and other visitors and with what effect on visitor numbers?

*Collapse of promoter and/or works contractor: The Battersea Power Station problem*

4.1 What if half way through the project the contractor and/or promoter goes bust, or the promoter finds an easier way to make a living?

*Note: The WLR website has a stab at dealing with this issue under the FAQ "What are the mechanisms for ensuring that we don't start this project and then fail to finish?" at:*

*windsorlink.co.uk/why/for-my-area/windsor/*

*but it's not persuasive.*

*As regards the risk of contractor failure, any particular contractor's unblemished track record isn't a guarantee of future performance. But at least as worrying is the risk of client (promoter/funder) failure and the problems of finding a new one. The suggested solution:*

*"3. Arrange a back-stop with the government so if the worst does happen they can step in to help. Given (1) that Network Rail has assessed the project as likely to have a positive business case for government investment and (2) the national importance of Windsor, this should not be too challenging."*

*is implausible. Any appeal which this project might have for the present Government would surely depend on its being privately funded. It seems somewhat unlikely that this Government would be prepared to commit itself to acting as guarantor of completion of the project.*

*Furthermore, this suggested solution appears to be incompatible with the WLR's assertion that "it is proposed that the project risk is with the private investors" on:*

*windsorlink.co.uk/why/business-case/commercial-case/*

*No comfort is (or could be) provided on the problem of the serious delay and disruption that would certainly be caused by getting in a new contractor or client mid-project.*

## **B. Riverside rejuvenation**

5.1 Is there any possibility that, in addition to any part of the viaduct between Central Station and the railway bridge over the river which would necessarily be demolished and/or altered to bring the track down to ground level, all or any of the viaduct might be demolished or, assuming not, how would it be preserved, enhanced and used?

*Note: (subject to confirmation) the viaduct and arches do not appear to be specifically listed, but is there any possibility that they are effectively protected as being a structure fixed to two listed buildings (Central Station and the Brunel Bridge) which are?*

5.2 Assuming the viaduct would be preserved, and bearing in mind the trust restrictions/ stipulations on the use of Alexandra Gardens (see below), where could any new housing between the Gardens and the viaduct be built except on the coach park, in which case where would the coach park be relocated?

5.3 Would/might the project involve incorporating Barry Avenue into the Gardens, terminating vehicular use and providing direct access to the riverside?

5.4 If so, how would that affect the use and enjoyment of and access by car and on foot to the Gardens and leisure facilities, particularly towards the western end?

5.5 Does the proposal involve raising the level of the Gardens to that of the existing riverside flood defences, creating a car park beneath and turning the Gardens into a cut-and-cover underground garage patio roof or parterre?

5.6 If so, how can this be done without fundamentally altering the nature of the Gardens and without, in particular, the removal of all or most large mature trees (see further below)?

5.7 If so, what would be the geophysical, ecological and financial implications of creating a (large) underground car park at this location so close to the river and, potentially, the water table, how would it affect the use and enjoyment of and access to the Gardens and what would be the impact on the small businesses currently operating in and alongside the Gardens and the Goswells?

5.8 Has the possibility of putting the car park under the existing coach and car parks (perhaps beneath any proposed housing development) been explored assuming that there might be space there beside any underground railway works?

5.9 What is the attraction of concentrating access for 3,000 cars with all the attendant traffic generation, pollution and road safety issues, particularly in this section of the town centre in one central spot?

5.10 Wouldn't that potentially turn this into a "Windsor" Park & Ride, and weren't we trying to locate P&Rs away from the town centre?

5.11 How would road routes into and of the town, particularly to serve any new car park, be altered and with what ecological and other impacts on and near those routes?

5.12 If the construction of the car park beneath Alexandra Gardens and the extension of the Gardens across Barry Avenue were to go ahead, where would the current parking provision be relocated, what access arrangements would be made, what would be the anticipated traffic impact of these arrangements and over what period of time would they be operational?

5.13 If the project were to involve moving the coach park, where would a new coach park be located, and how and where would these visitors travel to and from the town, where would they arrive in town and how would it impact on footfall in the central shopping area?

5.14 What if any rejuvenation proposals are there for the riverside at the eastern end of town affecting the abandoned Riverside Station and land between it and the river as well as along the edge of the Home Park, and what would be the implications for access to Public Open Space?

5.15 How exactly would River Street Car Park be developed and how would that adversely affect sight lines of the Castle?

## **C. Alexandra Gardens and Planning / Supplementary matters**

*[Charitable?] [trust] [stipulation] open space / recreation ground issues*

*Note: the Gardens are subject to a [charitable] [trust ] [stipulation] laid down in each of the two conveyances of the Gardens and recorded on the Land Register that they should be maintained in perpetuity as open space or recreation grounds for the benefit first and foremost of Windsor's inhabitants (and for the rest, the public). The Council has declined to respond to questions raised about the legal status of Alexandra Gardens in this respect.*

*Note also that various parts of Alexandra Gardens are included in Natural England's Deciduous Woodland Habitat Inventory for England (Priority Habitats Inventory)*

6.1 How could it be compatible with that [trust] [stipulation] to allow the use of the Gardens to be substantially disrupted for an extended period for construction of an underground car park and associated facilities?

6.2 How could it be compatible with that [trust] [stipulation] to allow long-term use of any part for purposes such as car park accesses, ventilation shafts and flood relief work for the benefit of the car park?

### *Strategic/neighbourhood planning*

6.3 How can it be thought rational for a project which is of such huge strategic importance, so all-pervasive across virtually the entire range of the Council's functions and so extensive in its effects across the whole of Windsor and beyond, to be dealt with at neighbourhood planning level?

6.4 Might neighbourhood plans end up being settled before the Borough local plan?

6.5 If so does that mean that any endorsement of the WLR project in, say, the business neighbourhood plan would stand as decisive development plan policy in development control decisions unless and until the borough local plan (or other later material considerations) subsequently included a contradictory policy?

*NOTE: There is an unresolved issue about the nature and extent of the Council's influence on the process by which the Gardens ended up in the business area.*

6.6 Leaving aside whether it could be thought rational for such an obviously strategic project to be dealt with at neighbourhood planning level), assuming that the Council did influence, or could if it wished have influenced, which area Alexandra Gardens went into, how could it be thought rational for the Council as local planning authority to have:

(a) accepted/agreed that the overwhelming majority of the Gardens' principal beneficiaries should, by virtue of their being included in the Business Neighbourhood Plan Area, be excluded from the formation of neighbourhood planning policy regarding the Gardens, and

(b) accepted/agreed that the Gardens should be included in the Business Neighbourhood Plan area where only a tiny proportion of the inhabitants of Windsor reside, thus allowing the formation of such policy to come under the influence or control of people many or most of whom may not even be inhabitants of Windsor?

6.7 Assuming that the Council did influence, or could if it wished have influenced, which area Alexandra Gardens went into, why did it accept/agree that the business community should take over neighbourhood planning policy in relation to open space/recreation ground dedicated to, first and foremost, Windsor's inhabitants.

6.8 Assuming that the Council did influence, or could if it wished have influenced, which area Alexandra Gardens went into, how can it as local planning authority justify accepting/agreeing that the business community should take over neighbourhood planning policy in relation to open space/recreation ground legally dedicated to, first and foremost, Windsor's inhabitants?

6.9 *(Note: the Council has been asked, but declined to answer, this question)* How, as a matter of plain English and common sense, can the WLR, being nothing more than an ill-defined, unofficial proposal, conceivably be categorised, as has been suggested, as a "site" for the purposes of inclusion in the proposed new borough local plan as a "possible development site"?

## **D. The Goswells and the National Trust**

7.1 What are the legal and other implications for the project of the fact that The Goswells is owned by the National Trust as, it appears, inalienable land, given the totality of the reasons for the acquisition as set out in the Trust's annual report for 1909-10, and given the fact that Clause 2 of the 1936 Deed of Agreement between the Trust and (by succession) RBWM provides:

"THE National Trust and the Corporation shall co-operate in maintaining the said heraditaments [ie, The Goswells] unbuilt upon for the benefit of the Nation and shall resist all encroachments on the said heraditaments and all acts tending to injuriously affect the said heraditaments or prevent them continuing for such benefit." ?

7.2 Has anyone sought the National Trust's views on any aspects of the project which would or might involve building or otherwise encroaching on The Goswells?