



1st November 2016

Dear Penelope

Re: Princes Risborough Town Plan – Rail Transportation Issues

Further to my previous letter of 17th October 2016 this letter is sent to you to outline some of the concerns identified by RARA relating to your plans, particularly with regard to the implications of your plans on local rail transportation services.

Capacity and Timetable

WDC's plans for additional 2600+ homes in Princes Risborough puts the ability of rail services to deliver sufficient capacity at risk, particularly in the southbound direction towards High Wycombe and London. Indeed, some southbound services from Princes Risborough are already approaching crowding-off levels, particularly during rush-hour and at the weekends.

Infrastructure investment by Chiltern Railways on platform lengthening, extra tracks and increased operating speeds has already brought welcome capacity and journey time improvements to the line. However, any further significant investment of this magnitude is now unlikely for some time. There has been reference made to the East West Rail project that should deliver increased capacity on the railway, notably double-tracking on the Princes Risborough to Aylesbury line. It is now understood that Network Rail's funding is restricted, and that the double-tracking investment will be significantly delayed.

In recent years timetable changes made by Chiltern Railways to improve their revenues have favoured long distance 'Mainline' services between London and Birmingham, reducing the services to intermediate stations including Princes Risborough. Furthermore, recent timetable amendments made by Chiltern Railway have impaired the times of services departing Monks Risborough in the morning peak for those wishing get to London to start work for 9am.

The significant increase in housing at Banbury, Bicester and now potentially Haddenham will inevitably result in greater crowding on south bound trains for commuters to High Wycombe and London etc., if indeed they call at Princes Risborough at all.

Car Parking

Car park space at Princes Risborough is full during many days of the working week, and it is unclear whether there are plans to provide more capacity in a manner that is sympathetic to views and sightlines of surrounding residents, as well as the views from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Influencing the Franchise Specification

We remain concerned because WDC appear to believe that decisions on the delivery of additional train services (at both Princes Risborough and Monks Risborough) and car parking capacity is entirely in the hands of a private company (Chiltern Railways) and that WDC has no influence. This is not the case. The current Chiltern Railway franchise is due to end in 2021. The Department for Transport (DfT) are the procuring entity of passenger rail franchises in the UK and will be preparing plans for the procurement of the subsequent rail franchise operator over the next few years. It is imperative that WDC speak to the DfT Passenger Services Directorate to ensure any additional capacity required for Princes Risborough rail services is captured in the specification for the subsequent Chiltern Railways franchise.

Q) How has WDC assessed the anticipated increase in demand for passenger services from Princes Risborough?

Q) What investment will be secured to deliver the increased rail capacity required in timescales to support the additional homes you propose, taking into account the increased demand for services due to more housing near the rail line further north of Princes Risborough?

Q) How will WDC influence the DfT to ensure their specifications for the rail franchise includes the need for increased capacity and parking?

Road and Rail

WDC's latest proposal for the relief road through Princes Risborough indicates a route that passes in front of Princes Risborough station. This route will result in convergence of through traffic with local traffic using the station and will result in congestion and intolerable risk to commuters, pedestrians and cyclists.

Q) When will WDC assess the implications of the latest road route option on congestion and pedestrian/ commuter safety near the station, as well as the safety of local cyclists?

We remain concerned that building more homes is the only priority for WDC. This concern is further reinforced by the apparent disregard for the implications on rail service, another example of not securing all the necessary infrastructure to enable the proposed increase in housing and population. We fear that WDC does not show sufficient regard for the resulting quality of the town and quality of life of the residents, many of whom will have to commute distances to work because there is no clear plan for increased local employment, and the strategic road capacity plans remain unclear.

Q) How will WDC demonstrate that their proposals for 2600+ housing will be supported by sufficient strategic road and rail connectivity and capacity, to enable employment of the additional residents, given that very little local employment is planned?

We are deeply concerned that without access to sufficient local employment, nor sufficient strategic transport links, your proposal for near doubling the local population will be a social and economic disaster for the current and future residents of Princes Risborough and surrounding areas.

I look forward to your reply and receiving your responses to these questions.

On behalf of the RARA committee and membership

Yours sincerely

Linda

Linda Cannon Clegg

Chairman RARA

Copied to:

Rt. Hon. John Bercow Member of Parliament

Rt. Hon. David Liddington Member of Parliament

Karen Satterford Chief Executive WDC

David Johncock Cabinet Member for Planning WDC

Alan Turner District Councillor The Risboroughs and Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning WDC

David Knights District Councillor The Risboroughs

Bill Bendyshe-Brown County Councillor

Carl Etholen County Councillor

Graham Peart District Councillor Lacey Green, Speen and The Hampdens

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