

15 April 2024

Marylebone Station
Great Central House
Melcombe Place
London NW1 6JJ

Zach Bailey
Regional Growth Manager

RE: Chiltern Railways response to Oxford United Stadium Proposal at Stratford Brake

Planning REF: 24/00539/F

Dear Cherwell District Planning Authority,

On behalf of Chiltern Railways, who operate services to London and Oxford via Oxford Parkway Station we wanted to express our support for the proposed application for a new Oxford United Stadium on land to the East of Stratford Brake. We recognise the significant efforts the club have gone to ensure that transport to the stadium can be delivered by sustainable means including via the local rail link at Oxford Parkway which current offers a 2 trains per hour service to both Oxford and London Marylebone.

We also recognise that from 2025 additional services (2 further trains per hour) will operate through Oxford Parkway on the proposed East West Rail link between Oxford and Milton Keynes. Whilst the government has currently committed to funding the next stage of this project to connect Oxford and Bedford, this section and additional services are not likely to be open before the proposed stadium development as outlined in the planning documentation.

In relation to ES Volume 1 Chapter 10 – Traffic and Transport:

Chiltern Railways Rail Capacity:

As the station facility operator of Oxford Parkway Station, we want to be clear that we currently do not have enough rail capacity to serve customers for the proposed Oxford United Stadium on match days. Initial conversations with Ridge and Partners LLP who are acting on behalf of Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) indicate that they would expect up to a 1/3 of fans to use rail as their source of transport to the Stadium. Assuming a maximum crowd of 16,000, this would indicate that approximately 5000 fans would need to use local rail services at peak times.

At present we run a 2 trains per hour service between Oxford and London Marylebone, which would offer approximately 600 seats per hour (assuming a standard 3 car train). Whilst this will rise by up to another 500 seats per hour with the upcoming East West Rail connection, it shows there is a significant gap between available rail capacity and potential rail demand (Demand of up to 5000 fans vs capacity of 1100 seats per hour).

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As such Chiltern Railways will need to add additional rolling stock to our fleet, to enable us to run more frequent and longer trains on match days. We have currently engaged the Department for Transport and Local Authorities including Oxfordshire County Council on this issue and have a live procurement process in place for additional rolling stock.

Subject to Department for Transport and Treasury signoff we could have additional rolling stock in place by late 2025, which would allow Chiltern to increase our service specification for future Oxford United match days. It must be made clear that without this additional rolling stock Chiltern Railways has a limited scope to deliver enough rail capacity for 5000 fans on OUFC match days.

Oxford Parkway Station Design:

Whilst Oxford Parkway is a relatively new station opening alongside the second rail line to Oxford in 2015, it is not designed to accommodate up to 5000 customers over a short period of time. Whilst we have started initial conversations with Ridge and Partners LLP on behalf of OUFC about potential modifications we need a commitment that these changes will be fully funded by either OUFC or the planning authority granting planning permission via a **Section 106 agreement**.

Suggested design changes which will need to be funded by OUFC or the Local Authority:

- 1.) The implementation of infrastructure to enable a **match day queuing system** at the front of the entrance of Oxford Parkway Station to separate the Oxford/London/Milton Keynes bound traffic. This would enable us to safely load customers onto trains once matches have finished.
- 2.) **Improved walking infrastructure** to ensure thousands of fans can walk down from the A4165 to the station entrance in safe and accessible manner. For example, a widened footpath from the A4165 down the embankment to the main entrance of Oxford Parkway Station.
- 3.) **A review of options to understand how fans could safely access the London bound platform at Oxford Parkway.** Currently fans must go via the main entrance and over a bridge. This is unlikely to be a feasible model for future match days as the station ticket hall will become significantly congested. Suggestions could include building a direct footbridge between the A4165 and the London bound platform at Oxford Parkway to provide direct access to the platform on match days.
- 4.) Funding for additional **customer facilities at Oxford Parkway** for match day usage. This could include but is not limited to additional customer toilets, customer seating and shelters on both platforms as they are not currently covered by a canopy.

As noted, we need a firm commitment that should these plans go ahead, OUFC and/or the relevant Local Authorities will provide suitable funding to deliver these capacity enhancements at Oxford Parkway Station as well as the relevant resources required to deliver such as project (e.g. A Project Manager or similar resource).

Parking:

Another area of concern from Chiltern Railways is the lack of parking provision within the proposed OUFC Stadium plans, with just 78 parking spaces available on site for disabled supporters on match days. As the closest public parking location, we currently have 776 car parking spaces at Oxford Parkway Station, which complements the availability of parking at the Water Eaton Park and Ride site. We are concerned that our station car park will become significantly overcrowded on match days and

that match day restrictions or price disincentives may have to be used to protect parking for our business-as-usual rail customers. We would also ask that Traffic Officers or similar are funded and included in the OUFC transport plan for match day operations, to ensure cars can safely access and egress the car parks at Oxford Parkway from the A4165.

At present car park capacity is at the following levels at Oxford Parkway Station:

Weekday capacity – Ranges from 30% to 80% capacity (Tue – Thur)

Weekend capacity – Ranges from 20% - 60% capacity

As shown above whilst we currently do have some spare capacity for both weekday and weekend fixtures, work will need to be done to protect parking availability for Chiltern Railways business as usual customers on match days.

Operational Expenditure:

To increase our service levels and deliver a safe and reliable match day operation Chiltern Railways will need to increase our operational expenditure which is currently fixed in an annual budget agreed with the Department for Transport. We are also asking if OUFC will seek to cover these additional expenses as part of their commercial model for delivering match day operations. This would include but is not limited to:

- Matchday security guards (x4) to help support the safe movement of football traffic. We assume that local police resources would also be in place for match day fixtures.
- Additional cleaning colleagues (x2) to pick up litter, clean up spillages and waste on match days.
- Event planning support. Each event will require a dedicated event plan put together by Chiltern's Events Team. The events will then need to be supported by rostering additional station colleagues (x4) to enable us to safely manage crowding and congestion.
- These numbers are estimates and subject to analysis of pedestrian flows on match days.

Summary:

To summarise whilst Chiltern Railways supports the OUFC stadium plans and the potential positive impact this will have for rail revenue, to successfully deliver rail transport in the required numbers for OUFC fans Chiltern Railways would require the following in priority order:

- 1.) Additional rolling stock to be approved by the Department for Transport to enable us to deliver more frequent and longer trains for OUFC match day operations.
- 2.) Section 106 or direct funding from OUFC and the Local Authorities to be made available to make Oxford Parkway Station suitable for match day operations.
- 3.) Funding is made available to support Chiltern Railways delivery of train planning and station enhancements for the new OUFC Stadium. For example, a Project Manager on a fixed term contract to manage the planning of the proposed station upgrades, timetable changes and operational planning for match day operations.

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- 4.) Funding is considered for the additional operational expenditure for running a train service on match days. This includes but is not limited to additional station colleagues, security guards and cleaners for match days.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch should you require any further information or clarification on the above points. We look forward to discussing the application for Section 106 funding.

Yours sincerely,

Zach Bailey
Regional Growth Manager
On behalf of Chiltern Railways

The logo for Chilternrailways, featuring the word "Chilternrailways" in a blue, sans-serif font. The "C" is significantly larger and bolder than the other letters.

CC:

Denise Wetton – Route Director, Network Rail Central Route

Cllr Judy Roberts – Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development, Oxfordshire County Council

Pete Brunskill – Principal Rail Development Planner, Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr George Reynolds – Chair of the Planning Committee, Cherwell District Council

Layla Moran MP – Oxford West and Abigdon

Jon Clarke – Development Direct at Oxford United Football Club

Ridge and Partners LLP – Acting on behalf of Oxford United