

English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

~ A voluntary unincorporated membership based association seeking to restore strategic missing rail links and improve the environment as a result. ~

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<p>ERTA... the voluntary association which likes to help others, as well as <u>just</u> ourselves!</p>		
<p>ERTA Newsletter No. 9</p>	<p>September – October 2016</p>	<p>Price where sold 90p</p>

Meltdown for rail link campaign? The advocacy continues!

This has been a very busy summer both for ERTA and the rail scene generally. The fiascos over Govia Thameslink and Southern, the above inflation rail fares and an array of issues bedevilling the existing rail network and its operations informs a backdrop of public impression and attitude matched only by the dismal alternatives of traffic congestion, parking issues and mayhem informing more cost, stress and limitation. So the two sides meet and then dilemma as more development sweeps across the English Regions (our chief focus) is what can give?



Caption Above: Looking east along Lavendon Road, Olney. To the right is where developers wished to build houses, to the left the field where a Sainsbury's wanted to develop. The site is under pressure. As it was the Appellant withdrew at the last minute averting a Planning Inspectorate Informal Hearing.

ERTA's answer to that question is that we believe that expansion of the rail network gives people more choice and options in commute and general travel terms. So for example Bedford-Cambridge would give options of commuting from Bedford to another

prestigious hot spot of employment like London, but whereas London costs of housing and living are relatively high, as is Oxford the other way; compared to Bedford, which is a little less stringent making commuting out of town a more viable option than the prohibitive of moving nearer to these places. However the recently produced Network Rail 'East West Rail Central Section' booklet says a Bedford-Cambridge railway will not be delivered until the 2030's! Development is going in now, congestion is happening now, there is a need for the choice now, and these trends and patterns arc across and replicate on Bedford-Olney-Northampton too x many other strategic missing rail links across the country, the legacy of the closures of the 1960's and which throws everything onto the roads, the costs of which cannot be met to properly maintain let alone rebuild or expand beyond token gestures. So we have a real concoffiny of problems and dilemmas which are not going to be resolved soon. Meanwhile ERTA's still small voice plugs away to any who will listen.

<p>Bedford-Olney-Northampton Rail Link and Corridor</p> <p>The day before the Informal Hearing (23rd August) we learnt that the Appellant (developer) for houses south of Lavendon Road, Olney was withdrawing and that subsequently the Informal Hearing was cancelled. This means another stay of execution both sides of the Lavendon Road, having seen Sainsbury's withdraw earlier this year. Highways issues abounded and we put our oar in advocating the lands be kept a green belt until such times as a railway was a firm proposition in official quarters. This is what we're working towards!</p>	<p>Milton Keynes</p> <p>On 4th August we saw in the MK Citizen Newspaper that a proposal for 20, 000 houses east of the M1 Junction 14 meaning development of up to at least the Bedfordshire Border. However no new rail infrastructure nor even highway widening was forthcoming and given the average household has 2.5 cars each, that's 60, 000 vehicles to the currently busy and congested junction causing delays peak time of up to 20 minutes. The nearest station for commuting is Milton Keynes Central but overflowing demand for parking means parking in estates or driving to catch a train elsewhere highly likely, Bedford, Flitwick and Harlington taking the brunt. However if we have an Olney Parkway Station commuters could contra-commute to it and catch a train with a seat cutting drive time and stress.</p>
<p>London, Watford and St Albans</p> <p>Our new website done by our new volunteer Lorraine Heyworth (https://ertarail.com/) has information on our stance and attitude namely that a new station at Napsbury should be built and the Abbey Branch extended to it to link the Midland Main Line with the Abbey Line into Watford and integration. Day to day issues we leave to the local rail user group and the Community Rail Partnership. However a new north-east curve off the West Coast slow lines would make more-of for this railway with a beefed up station and twin track platform arrangement at the Abbey Station, rather than splendid isolation!</p>	<p>Northampton</p> <p>Northampton-Bedford is the campaign we fight west of Olney. Northampton is the largest town on the route and really the most significant. Bedford has good rail links to London (albeit services vary) and with East-West coming along is preoccupied with these. Northampton is out of it, on a limb and so it is much in every way Northampton's interests are best served by supporting the rail link which would plug it into so muchbeit Luton/Airport, East-West Links and yes Bedford too as a neighbouring town for mutual two way trade, footfall and spend – a daily boost which could tip the balance between shops closing or staying open. Yet it seems switched off, stubborn and resistant to recognising the role the rail link offers. Northampton is a hard nut to crack on every front, so we're doubling efforts, as a 10% swing in our favour is gain.</p>
<p>Association News</p> <p>We welcome new volunteers to the association helping us with admin, website and Bedford-Northampton rail link matters. We are seeking to grow a team of volunteers for the Cobbler Line Project to tackle parishes, district and larger bodies by making the case, protecting the route and engaging with the wider community to bring them on-side across the spectrum that the Bedford-Northampton rail link covers. Ideally we'd have people for Bedford, Northampton, Olney, A428 villages and so on; we're not there yet. Jobs from putting a power point talk together, background support, leafleting, fund raising and building links with all tiers of councils, MP's and yes, quangos like the Local Enterprise Partnerships is where a team is needed.</p>	 <p>Caption: The sole single width for a track to link West Coast Northampton and Bedford in the urban area of Northampton. It is under threat from a road link which would link one congestion hot spot with another making for mayhem.</p>

Diary

Saturday 10th September 1pm Costa Coffee (upstairs) Abingdon Street, Northampton: Northampton Area Forum. Open to all. Contact 0208 940 4399 to let us know you wish to attend for numbers.

Wednesday 14th September 1pm The Swan, Flitwick, adjacent to rail station: Amptill Station Forum. Open to all. Contact 0208 940 4399 to let us know you wish to attend for numbers.

Saturday 24th September 1pm Green Man (Annex if possible) Cobbler Line Forum - - open to all. High Street, Lavendon, Buckinghamshire MK46 4HA
<https://www.oldenglishinns.co.uk/our-locations/the-green-man-lavendon>

Saturday 15th October – Great Central Forum, The Saracens Head, 1 Brook St, Daventry NN11 4GG 01327 314800 venue to be decided, Daventry D1, 2 and 3 buses go from the Drapery, Northampton. Telephone David Ferguson if coming T. 020-8876-3340

Caption Right: A Class 104 DMU waits to depart for Bletchley from the old Bedford St John's remnant of a station. It is ERTA's view that traditional means 'old route' and we insist that the translation is that rails are returned to enter Bedford urban area via this very station again. They can still run into and out of Bedford Midland and a basic Bedford-Cambridge service should not be used to rule out other variations such as Stevenage-Bedford (part of Thameslink) via East Bedfordshire and maybe, if a curve at Sandy is restored, Peterborough-Bedford. Meanwhile we want the 2030's date brought forward to 2025. It is a matter of lobbying and priorities, roads have had their turn!

ERTA National Reopenings Forum

Thursday 6th October

19:30-21:30pm

**The Upstairs Room,
The Calthorpe Arms
252 Grays Inn Road, London,
WC1X 8JR***

*** Served from Kings Cross by a number 45 bus.**

Speaker Nick Bethune on the Campaign for Borders Rail (CBR) and the success of the reopening.
<http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/>

All welcome, admission free on a first come, first served basis.

Meeting will then go into committee style to discuss reopenings generally and revise lists to whittle down to a top 100 in the English Regions. Offers to help coordinate these lists are welcome to contact us. You must be email contactable.



Part of what would have been said if the Milton Keynes Council hearing had gone ahead

1. What we would want to see is that the land should be retained and is required for a station, a railway and commuter all day parking and until such times as that is the case, the land should be a pastoral green belt and retained in the farming tradition as such. Otherwise I consider this development will reignite more and that will put pay to the prospect of a railway ever serving Olney in our lifetimes

2. The railway would require these lands for.... the railway, a station and commuter parking.

3. The original railway was closed 1962. In the 1980's however onwards the old route was blocked by the removal of Olney old station and backfilling with new housing. Thus when ERTA's predecessor took to pro-actively campaigning for the reopening of the line, one of the first things we did was raise funds to pre-feasibility study the case and engineering and one of these was a new route around the blockages to the west and east of the A509 and so was drawn for the railway, what was dubbed the Handley Alignment. Thus the lands need to be protected not just for this railway course which requires the field adjacent to the north side of Lavendon Road, but spaces for the parking, bus interchange stops and better pedestrian and cycle access. These developments represent a smut in the eye of this goal and as a wedge to green light more developer applications, goes against our direct interest at the outset, which is as stated already to protect the land as a greenbelt and landscape feature until such time as the railway is being pursued. That could happen within the next 10 years. The push for development means that our railway hopes will be lost and that denied Olney as a community the chance of a railway.

4. This development would be the thin end of the wedge for other developments we recently saw off a Sainsbury's and the theatre of lands remains under threat from seemingly disconnected development vying for the land we wish for the railway.

5. Olney only has a population of about 6500 but within a 5 miles population you have 33, 000+ people and with development that is growing all the time. Traffic on the roads is growing. The nearest railway station is a 12 mile drive and as commuting is a main stay employment, better public transport links seems prudent in such a development push.

6. The benefits for Olney of the railway:

- More inflows of people minus the cars for the High Street and town centre
- More commuting and work opportunities; Northampton, Bedford, Luton and the West Midlands
- Better access to other towns, airports and general travel
- More parking spaces for others to use/Town centre regeneration/inward investment
- Underscore the strategic position of Olney as a thriving rural hub for public transport
- Buses could feed and be fed linking A428 with faster transits in and out of the corridor
- Support lands around Lavendon Road being protected as a greenbelt until such times as the railway, a station and car parking return to serve Olney and a 5 mile catchment population of over 30, 000 people.

7. The railway is a local and strategic link... Northampton-Bedford-Luton Thameslink extension and Birmingham-Cambridge South Midlands Link.

_____ **Fill In, Tear Off and Send with Your Subscription. Please help us recruit more members!** _____

ERTA, come to our local Forums and offer time and talent as you may?

Tick if a New Member: _____ Tick if renewing as an existing member: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ **Tel/Mobile:** _____

If you wish to renew your membership, please indicate category:

New Member: £5 for the first year _____

Business/Corporate/Sponsor/Benefactor: £20.00 _____

Fully Waged Adult/Family/Individual £10.00 _____

Concessions: £5.00* _____

(*Students, Low Income Households, or on any kind of Benefit/Pension or Disability)

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____