

Issued - 5 November 2018

Secretary of State asked to call in planning applications

A RAIL USER GROUP that speaks up for train passengers and communities along its route between Stratford upon Avon, Birmingham and Leamington Spa has asked James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government to call in planning applications proposing the development of a 3,100 home Garden Village and associated Relief Road to the south west of Stratford upon Avon.

The Shakespeare Line Promotion Group (SLPG) has told Secretary of State Brokenshire that the planning applications seek development at the Long Marston Airfield site without sustainable transport infrastructure and are at variance to the bid made to HM Government by the developer which was endorsed by both the Local Planning Authority (Stratford on Avon District Council) and the Local Transport Authority (Warwickshire County Council).

In the letter to the Minister the Secretary of SLPG has said “Garden Village status has been conferred upon the development from a submission containing elements that played a significant part. It cannot be acceptable that those same elements have subsequently and consciously been ignored and the development retains its Garden Village status. We request that you exercise your powers and call in both the applications as they contain no proposals for sustainable transport and do not reflect the submission that was presented to your department to attract Garden Village status and associated potential funding.”

Fraser Pithie added “No alternatives, in terms of adequate transport infrastructure have been examined. Consequently, Warwickshire County Council as the Local Transport Authority stating that there is no alternative to a South Western Relief Road, that will have a dreadful impact in terms of visual intrusion and will not address transport needs, is misleading and incorrect.”

In their objections to the planning applications SLPG refer repeatedly to the need for an Economic Impact Study (EIS) to be carried out as first step to determine if reopening a disused railway line between Honeybourne (Worcester)<London Paddington Main Line) and Stratford upon Avon is financially viable. The disused line, closed in 1976 following a derailment, goes through Long Marston where some 6,000 new homes are planned to be built by 2031 and which is adjacent to the proposed so called Garden Village development.

If reopened the line could provide a 50 minute direct train service between Long Marston and Birmingham and also, for the first time provide Evesham with direct rail connectivity to and from Birmingham with a journey time of around just one hour. Surveys carried out by SLPG earlier this year with rail users, communities and Stratford upon Avon Town centre businesses indicated support for an EIS from over 90% of those that responded. Notional visitor estimates have suggested that up to £20m additional annual income to the local economy could be possible with greater rail connectivity.

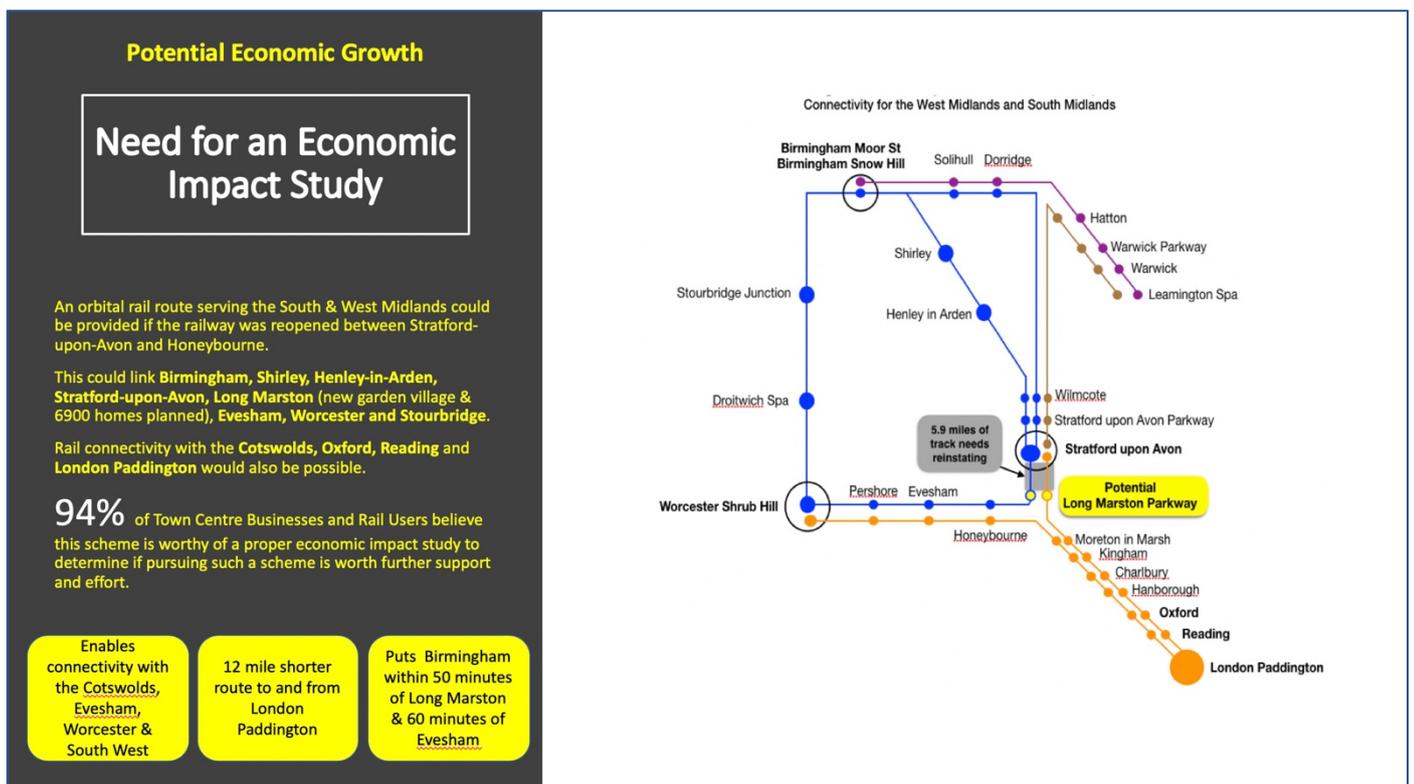
In their objection SLPG point to contradictions on the part of Warwickshire County Council referring to the Core Strategy Statement of Common Ground between Warwickshire County Council and Cala Homes dated 16 January 2015, this confirmed 'that the County Council accepts the reopening of the Greenway to public transport including heavy rail, would increase the modal shift and sustainability of the LMA site.'

Yet, in the 'South Western Relief Road (SWRR) Evidence Report,' 31st July 2017, SDC & WaCC, erroneously stated that:- " Whilst all options to promote sustainable travel should be undertaken, the provision of heavy rail in lieu of a new road will have limited benefit to the existing operation of the highway network within Stratford-upon- Avon."

This statement contradicts comments made previously by the Planning Inspector in his Final Report on SDC's Core Strategy, published in June 2016: "There can be no question that the railway service would provide a sustainable alternative to the use of the private car for many residents and visitors

SLPG say the proposed South Western Relief Road fails to provide sustainable transport infrastructure while causing a severe loss of amenity to the local area by the deleterious effect caused by its significant visual impact. SLPG’s objection to SWRR also says that the proposed road ignores comments by the Planning Inspector in his Final Report on Stratford on Avon’s District Council’s Core Strategy published in June 2016 and moreover contradicts the bid made to HM Government to attain Garden Village status for the Long Marston site which made at least twelve references to environmentally sustainable transport infrastructure, specifically the reinstatement of the railway between Stratford upon Avon and Honeybourne, nothing of which they say is contained within the application.

On the Garden Village proposals, the rail user group are equally critical saying “Development at Long Marston Airfield without sustainable transport infrastructure that is not proposed by this application is at variance to the bid for Garden Village status submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government. We are not prepared to fall into the trap of discussing where a relief road should be situated because we do not believe the need for such a road has been demonstrated” Fraser Pithie added.



Full copies of the objections and letter to the Secretary of State are attached with the email that sent this release.

ENDS.

5 November 2018

For further information please contact the Secretary of SLPG