

Extract from the Teignbridge District Council Local Plan, 1993

Rail Transport

The main line railway route to Torbay, Plymouth and Cornwall passes through the Plan Area with stations at Starcross, Dawlish Warren, Dawlish, Teignmouth and Newton Abbot. The system plays an important role in linking the South West to other parts of Britain. It is considered essential to sustain the existing level of local and inter-city services.

POLICY T20 THE COUNCIL SUPPORT THE RETENTION OF EXISTING RAILWAY SERVICES IN THE PLAN AREA.

Within the Exeter Sub-Region, local authorities, including Teignbridge, and British Rail have agreed to consider options to exploit the potential of the local rail network, the aim being to develop a phased programme of measures to enhance and encourage the use of the local rail services. This could include new stations or reopening of former stations.

POLICY T21 IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE COUNTY COUNCIL, OTHER DISTRICT COUNCILS AND BRITISH RAIL, IT IS PROPOSED TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF LOCAL RAIL SERVICES.

There is one freight-only branch line within the area between Newton Abbot and Heathfield Industrial Estate. This also serves the clay industry. Rail freight can play an important role in the movement of bulk commodities and particularly for those premises which adjoin the line. Rail infrastructure grants are available to encourage road/rail freight transfers. If proposals generating increased rail traffic were adopted, account would however be taken of the importance of protecting the amenities of the area surrounding the railway route.

POLICY T22 THE COUNCIL SUPPORT AND WILL ENCOURAGE THE RETENTION OF THE BRITISH RAIL BRANCH LINK BETWEEN NEWTON ABBOT AND HEATHFIELD.

British Rail are currently seeking road/rail freight interchange facilities within the south west region in preparation for the opening of the Channel Tunnel. It has been suggested that a potential site within the Plan Area might be at Heathfield.

POLICY T23 THE COUNCIL SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE A PROPOSED ROAD/RAIL INTERCHANGE FACILITY AT HEATHFIELD.

EXETER & TEIGN VALLEY RAILWAY

Telephone:-
Christow (01647) 253108

G.W.R. (Christow),
Sheldon Lane,
Doddiscombsleigh,
EXETER,
Devonshire
EX6 7YT

Your reference:-

Please quote this reference:- 189
20th. November, 1995

Mr. S. Robinson,
Principal Planner (Local Plan),
Planning Department,
Teignbridge District Council,
Forde House,
Brunel Road,
Newton Abbot
TQ12 4XX

Dear Mr. Robinson,

Moretonhampstead Branch Railway

The policies contained in the Teignbridge Local Plan specific to this freight-only branch line have very little substance, and I think were included more to appear in-keeping with a trend than out of any genuine motive. It is, after all, the only branch completely within the Council's district and it would have been remiss not to have mentioned it in the Local Plan, even if the policy commitments are impracticable and meaningless.

However, cynicism aside, I should be thankful that the subject is raised and that the Council has committed itself to support the retention of the amputated branch which once led to Moretonhampstead; evidence perhaps that the railway has some friends within the Council.

When the policies were ratified, no doubt it was assumed that the Branch would continue to exist unobtrusively, much as it has done for so many years - as long as Teignbridge, in fact - and that any old bunkum could be stated in safety, because nothing would change and therefore nothing would ever need doing; rather like the Council supporting the retention of sunrise and sunset. It is now likely that events will put the Council's attitude to the test.

Although I am not privy to any official information, I have it on good authority that the last remaining traffic on the Branch - fuel from Waterston to the Heathfield dump - is to cease in December, the reason being that rail transport is too inflexible. If the actions of its predecessor are anything to go by, I imagine that Railtrack will quickly set about disposing of its assets and putting lands up for sale.

One officer at Forde House, whom I spoke to on the telephone, rather fancied taking over the railway formation

for use as a cyclepath, part of the Templer Way. This is an idea which might garner support, allowing the Council to renege on its published policies by substituting another item from the *green* catalogue. It is an idea that I am anxious to suppress.

It might seem all very fine constructing dedicated routes for pedestrians and cyclists as a solution to the problem of unsafe and unpleasant conditions on the roads, but really it is the wrong approach. Why should walkers and cyclists be removed to separate routes, or merely places where they can exercise, in order effectively to improve the freedom of the motorist, the origin of the problem? I am a cyclist, but I am also a railwayman; I have no conflict of interest here. All railway routes should be reserved; cyclists and pedestrians belong - in fact, have a lawful right to be - on the public roads, and if these are unsafe, then action should be taken to remove the danger. Road transport will have to be wound down at some stage, as it cannot possibly be sustained at anything like the present level, so where is the sense in providing more road mileage in the form of cyclepaths? Especially if these are made at the expense of the system which is bound to find favour when road motor transport goes into decline. Cyclepaths are not a satisfactory means of preserving the integrity of dismantled railways, as users even now tend to object to the loss of the new facility (e.g. Boscarne Junction to Wenford Bridge in Cornwall).

Modern thinking, as expressed in the novel *Hierarchy of Modes* (Draft Devon County Structure Plan Policy TR3), classes walking and cycling as preferable to public and private motor transport. More than anything else, surely, the purpose is to encourage walking and cycling as part of the daily routine, and thereby bring about less use of powered transport. The County Council has no interest in simply encouraging more walking and cycling; the same as it has no interest in getting me to play golf. Providing spaces for people to walk and cycle as part of their leisure is not enough: people have to be persuaded to walk or cycle instead of using cars - or even the 'bus - and along the same route, if that is the shortest. The *Hierarchy of Modes* will be a nonsense if walkers and cyclists have to make lengthy detours in order to be safe from transport which is supposed to be inferior.

As a cyclepath, the railway route would be insufficient as an amenity alone and would advantage nobody, since there are minor roads parallel for most of the way. And it would do nothing to meet the real challenge, that of removing motor traffic from the roads and letting people walk and cycle in safety along existing routes, whether in the ordinary round or as part of their leisure.

No, what is left of the once useful and delightful Moreton Branch should remain as a railway, even if the metals are lifted. The Council should uphold its Local Plan policies and not be tempted to look for an easy escape in the form of a proposal to convert the railway to a cyclepath, using the claim that this conforms to modern thinking. To destroy this

branch railway, running through a mineral-producing area and leading to the edge of the National Park, would be an outstanding folly.

Global warming and ozone depletion; an Earth Summit and a report from a Royal Commission: how much more is needed to impress upon people the urgent need for change? Not one more railway can be lost now without future generations being given reason to curse our times. We may just redeem ourselves by saving what is left of the railway network and adopting measures to protect what has been lost. In the absence of any planning by an industry in chaos (never noted for its forward thinking anyway), it must fall to the local authorities to take whatever action is needed to safeguard for the future lines which are now in jeopardy.

The least ambitious method of doing this, in the case of the Moretonhampstead Branch, would be for Teignbridge to resist any development that would disintegrate the railway corridor, in accordance with Draft Structure Plan Policy TR8, Clause Six, so that reinstatement at a later date would be possible, whether or not the track is lifted. This embargo would have to include the land adjoining the railway at Newton Abbot New Yard (Goods Shed and Gorman's), Teignbridge Crossing and Heathfield. An authority with foresight would also make provision for reconstruction of the line at least as far as Bovey, even though huge damage has been caused to the route by the County's roadworks.

But the most positive course would be for the Council to confirm its support for a private company intent on purchasing the line from Railtrack and operating it under a Light Railway Order, as applies to the South Devon and Paignton & Dartmouth railways. The prominent difference in this case would be the company's determination to reactivate the freight traffic, principally of course clay, and to operate a year-round passenger service, assuming that the Department of Transport's road access requirements could be satisfied at Heathfield. So this would not be yet another *preserved* railway, though it would make sense to indulge in nostalgia for the sake of producing better returns.

It has to be seen as pitiful failure, whatever the reason, that B.R. lost the clay traffic from the Branch. Costly loading plant stands idle at Heathfield and alongside Kingsteignton Road, while the trains that once conveyed the product away still thunder through Newton Abbot. And a railway industry meaning business - and, importantly, free to do business - would have reinstated the junction at Old Quay, Teignmouth, and would have removed hundreds of heavy lorry movements from local roads.

Under the present regime, there is no hope at all that a passenger service can be instituted between Newton Abbot and Heathfield, even if a new station were to be built with public funds. Recent embarrassing news coverage revealed that Regional Railways has not even the resources to handle the demand on the main line. In the short term, a passenger

service to Heathfield, and its necessary associated works, could only be provided by a private company using re-engineered equipment, an element of volunteer labour and, inevitably, other methods of earning revenue, such as occasional steam specials.

My intention was to prepare a detailed report, elaborating on what I have said here and encompassing much more. But I have not yet commenced this and I thought it best to introduce the matter to you first in this brief form, to enable you to open a file.

It is impossible to make any firm proposals at this early stage, but it would be helpful to know what the authority's general view is, even if it can only be given informally. A constructive attitude would do much to dispel the perception - if not the actuality - of Teignbridge as a strongly pro-road and anti-rail council.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of the letters 'C' and 'B' followed by a horizontal line.

Colin Burges
Owner and operator

Encl. The videotape, *City Transport: The Way Forward*, is not meant primarily for the likes of Teignbridge, but I feel that it may interest you. Please return the tape when you have done with it.

Teignbridge

PLANNING &
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Please ask for: Mr T Peat Ext - 2710

My Reference: TEP/BM/G46

Your Reference: 249

30 January 1996

Mr Colin Burges
Exeter and Teign Valley Railway
GWR (Christow)
Sheldon Lane
Doddiscombsleigh
EXETER
EX6 7YT



Dear Mr Burges

Moretonhampstead Branch Railway

Thank you for your letter dated 22 January 1996.

I note your comments regarding the cessation of the haulage of oil on the Newton Abbot to Heathfield branch railway line.

I was not, however, aware of the intention of the British Rail Property Board to sell its surplus land at Heathfield Station which is a matter I am currently investigating. At the public consultation stage for the Teignbridge Local Plan Deposit Version in 1993, two representations of objection (references F13/D322 and F13/D323) were in fact lodged by the British Rail Property Board in respect of a section of the former Teign Valley railway line adjacent to the Heathfield Station. Whilst representation F13/D323 was later withdrawn, representation F13/D322 sought the allocation of the land for employment uses and its development in conjunction with adjoining land owned by South West Water. In his Report on objections to the Teignbridge Local Plan the Inspector acknowledged difficulties of access by traffic to the land in question, including problems associated with the country lane to the north east and substandard access to the A38 trunk Road. Whilst the Inspector could see no fundamental land use objection to the use of the land for employment purposes he concluded that no modification should be made to the local plan. The Inspector's recommendation has since been accepted by the District Council.

I appreciate that the retention of all surplus British Rail land at Heathfield Station in association with the remaining branch line would be advantageous for its future use as a transport corridor. The recommendation of the Inspector and subsequent decision of the District Council not to allocate this land for employment development would be a material consideration in determining proposals for new uses for this land. At this stage, however, I am not aware of any such planning proposals which may have recently been received by the District Council.



TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL
MV Penn; Director of Planning & Environmental Services
Forde House Brunel Road Newton Abbot TQ12 4XX
DX121075 NEWTON ABBOT 5

S Anderson; Deputy Director of Planning
R Luxton; Assistant Director (Building Control)
H Williams; Chief Environmental Health Officer

2

30 January 1996

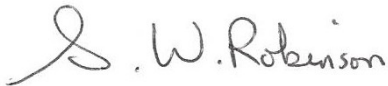
Mr Burges

In my previous letter dated 29 November 1995, I informed you that I had sought the opinions of Mr D Mather, Manager for the West of England Service, and Mr Davies, Transport Co-ordination Centre, Devon County Council concerning the future of the Newton Abbot to Heathfield branch line. Whilst I have since contacted Devon County Council again for its opinion to date I have not yet received a response from either organisation. This is a matter which I am of course pursuing and will notify you accordingly of any future progress.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your loan of the video "City Transport – the way forward", which I have watched with keen interest. Please therefore find this returned with this letter.

Should you have any queries regarding the representations lodged by the British Rail Property Board in respect of the Teignbridge Local Plan Deposit Version and land at Heathfield Station please do not hesitate to contact my assistant, Mr Peat, at this office on telephone extension 2710.

Yours sincerely



S W Robinson
Head of Local Plans

Encl

Copy for Colin Burges

British Railways Board

James Jerram,
Board Member,
Finance and Planning
27 February 1996

G Duddridge Esq
Chairman
Railway Development Society
67 Higher Exwick Hill
Exwick
Exeter EX4 2AW

Dear Mr. Duddridge

PROPERTY BOARD SALES AT HEATHFIELD

Thank you for your letter of 2 February 1996 about your Society's interest in British Rail's land in the Heathfield area.

As you may know, British Rail's property holdings are confined to land which is considered surplus to the needs of the operational railway. Railtrack plc now owns the operational estate including sites considered to be of strategic importance for rail development.

British Rail is under remit to dispose of its surplus property assets as soon as practicable, and at the best available price. The Board is not therefore able to retain sites against possible rail related development, particularly where local authorities and others have no firm acquisition or funding plans.

The land at Heathfield station yard was earmarked for sale some time ago and was sold by our Property Board at an auction held on 14 February. I recognise that this may have disappointed your members, but I hope you will appreciate the Board's position.

Sincerely,

James Jerram

James Jerram

The
BRISTOL
Auction

*A Portfolio of Forty Properties
on behalf of*

⇒ Property Board



YATE STATION CIRCA 1905

2.30 pm, 14th February 1996

The Forte Crest Hotel, Filton Road, Hambrook, Bristol BS16

*Hartnell Taylor Cook
and
Nelson Bakewell*

Lot 13

Freehold Building and Land Investment

HEATHFIELD, Devon, Land in Station Yard

48

LOCATION The site is accessed directly off the A38, approximately 5 miles north of Newton Abbot and 2 miles south-east of Bovey Tracey.

DESCRIPTION The site comprises an access road and large former siding which fans out to form an area of predominantly open land edged with forestry. There is also a brick-built building with metal roller shutter doors at either end, erected by the tenants, which is included in the site.

APPROXIMATE SITE AREA
2.3063 hectares (5.70 acres).

BUILDING AREA
197m² (2,118 sq ft)

TENURE Freehold.

TENANCY The building on site is let to **Geest Industries Ltd** for a term of 42 years from 1st September 1961 at rent of £75 pa.

COSTS The purchaser will contribute £500 plus VAT towards the vendor's surveyors/solicitors costs.

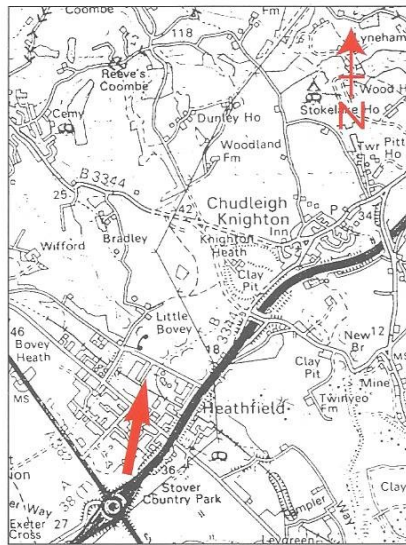
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS The purchaser will be required to erect a 1.8 m high welded mesh fence on concrete posts between points marked A, B, C and D as shown on the plan and to provide a gate at point X.

ACCESS The property has independent access from the public highway. Rail track will require a right of access over the route coloured brown as shown on the plan.

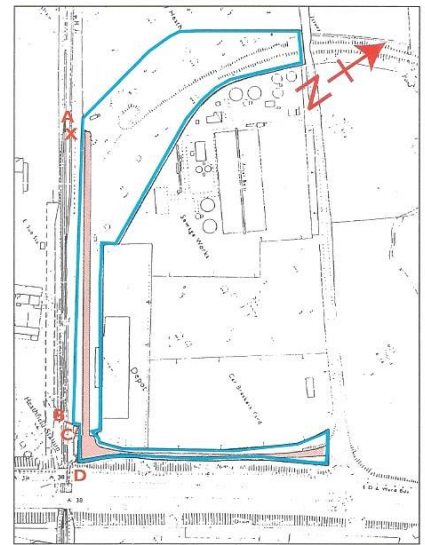
PLANNING There are no outstanding planning applications relating to this site.

LOCAL AUTHORITY Teignbridge District Council, Tel: 01626-611 01.

VAT Value Added Tax is applicable to this lot.



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**Current rent reserved
£75 per annum**

VENDOR'S SOLICITORS
Church Adams Tatham & Co (Roger Martinez)
Chatham Court, Lesbourne Road, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 2FN
Tel: 01737-240 111 Fax: 01737-248 249