1 Neighbourhood plan issue

What are the implications for the village if a new train station is opened at Grove?

2 Evidence

2.1 Extract from wikipedia

Wantage Road station was opened in 1846. The tramway closed to passengers on 1 August 1925, and to goods on 22 December 1945.

On 7 December 1964 British Railways withdrew passenger services from Wantage Road and all other intermediate stations between Didcot and Swindon; the goods yard survived a little longer, closing on 29 March 1965. The station buildings have been demolished but the platforms survive.

In June 2009 the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) produced a report called 'Connecting Communities' in which it was suggested that Wantage Road Station would be a viable station to re-open during any expansion of the rail network. If a proposed service from Oxford to Westbury is given the green light, it is hoped that a new station entitled either Wantage & Grove or Wantage Parkway can be built as part of the introduction of this service.

On 24 June 2014 Oxfordshire County Council posted potential plans for a new Wantage & Grove railway station as part of the Connecting Oxfordshire scheme. The proposed station will remain in the same location as the old station however Network Rail have stated that they would not want trains stopping here as it would have an impact on the rest of the line. Oxfordshire County Council held a public meeting in Wantage about this proposal in July 2014 where council leader Ian Hudspeth said the new station could become a tram hub if plans are rejected by Network Rail to re-open the station to trains.

In September 2014 it was reported that Ed Vaizey (MP for Wantage) was backing a campaign to introduce a direct link between Oxford and Bristol which, if the plans are accepted, could see Wantage Road re-opened to trains.

A new station for Wantage and Grove has been included in Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and it is hoped that the station could be opened and operational within the 16-year lifespan of the plan. Plans for a new station have also been included in the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan which was published in January 2015, but is not a Wantage neighbourhood plan policy.
2.2  Report in the Oxfordshire Guardian, October 2, 2014

Lawmakers marked a major step towards re-opening Grove Station this week by joining forces to bid to resurrect the Oxford to Bristol train line.

Wantage MP Ed Vaizey and Abingdon MP Nicola Blackwood were among the group of 10 MPs supporting the campaign to re-launch the direct Oxford to Bristol rail service.

If successful it would take trains past Grove Station which shut in 1964 – making a strong case for it being re-opened.

They wrote to Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, to arrange a meeting and support the plan earlier this week.

Mr Vaizey said: “It seems like a feasible project that can make a real difference.

“The beauty of the scheme is that by reopening the line you can potentially reopen stations along the way.

“So not only does it give a new link, but if you can show it is part of a bigger scheme to relieve congestion we have a better case.”

Plans to re-open the station – next to the Volunteer pub in Wantage Road – were also included in the Vale of White Horse’s District Council’s updated Local Plan 2031, to be published on November 7.

The document’s Core Policy 19 sets out the council’s “commitment to support the ambition to re-open the station at Grove, ideally within the lifespan of the plan.”

Chairman of Grove Parish Council June Stock said: “The last time I heard the station plans raised a few months ago it was a question of ‘it would be nice, but no.’

“So for it now to have the backing of these MPs and also be included in the plan is brilliant.

“We have been fighting for this since before I moved here in 1974.

“Every time we get a planning application we say ‘this is more fuel for the fire’ to reopen the station.

“It would certainly help people who have to go to Oxford or Didcot to get the train, and if it took cars off the road that would be wonderful.”

Costs would likely run into the multi-millions – which Mr Vaizey said is not a lot for the type of project it is.

He added: “It would be a huge step towards enabling the re-opening of the Wantage Road Station near Grove, which I have campaigned for over a number of years.

“Instead of being a lone voice on this, I am part of a cross-party group of MPs – and other Government ministers – working to maximise chance of success.”

Residents proved their support for the scheme in July when many called for the station to re-open during a meeting at the Beacon in Portway.
They made the plea to Oxfordshire County Council leader Ian Hudspeth during a discussion on Oxfordshire’s transport future.

2.3 Planning application
Oxfordshire County were granted outline planning application (P05/V0738/O) for a new station on 11th January 2008.

Figure 1 Planning application layout
2.4 New A338 bridge
A new railway bridge is currently being constructed to take into account the height requirements for main line electrification.

Figure 2 - New A338 railway bridge layout

2.5 Business case for train line

A business plan is to be put together backing a campaign to re-open the Oxford to Bristol train line and Grove Station.

It was agreed at last week’s full council meeting that Vale of White Horse District Council officers would compile commercial evidence supporting the plan.

Wantage MP Ed Vaizey and Abingdon MP Nicola Blackwood joined forces with 8 other MPs this month in a bid to resurrect the train line – which would take trains past Grove meaning the old station could be reopened.

Matthew Barber said: “There is already a lot of activity on this so this is just an extra little bit to see the Vale can do to support it.”

The motion agreed last Wednesday was put forward by councillor Bob Johnston, seconded by councillor Jenney Hannaby, for Wantage.
Cllr Hannaby added: “I am extremely pleased it is recognised at long last that it is essential to have the station with all the houses being built. Wantage and Grove are taking all the pain with the houses – as well as Harwell which has been bashed.”

2.6 Station Location

![Figure 3 - Location of possible railway station](image)

3 Issues for consideration

Opening a railway station may require a larger car park than originally anticipated and a possible location is north of the railway which is within Grove Parish Boundary. There could also be demand for support services and light industry which again could be on the northern side of the railway. The parish boundaries are shown in Figure 2.
To protect the East Hanney from joining up with Grove a 15-20m wide green boundary could be established. This would provide the following function:

- Physical demarcation between grove and East Hanney
- Provide a noise attenuation feature between East Hanney and the station
- Provide a wildlife corridor.
- Reduce the effect of light pollution from the station

Footpath and cycle access to a possible station is currently available via Cow Lane and a footpath to West Hanney. These are shown in solid red in figure 3. Access from the Eastern side of East Hanney, particularly the housing to the East of the A338 could be improved by a footpath and cycle path running alongside the A338 on either the East or West Side,
4 District Council Policy

POLICY TR7

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL NOT PERMIT DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD BE CONSIDERED LIKELY TO PREJUDICE THE RE-OPENING OF THE WANTAGE ROAD STATION, GROVE, ON THE SITE IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, AND WILL WORK WITH OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ON PROPOSALS FOR ITS RE-OPENING.

5 Other discussed stations between Didcot and Swindon

5.1 Uffington

Uffington railway station (sometimes marked as Uffington Junction) is a former station on the Great Western Main Line. The station was about 0.75 miles (1.21 km) northeast of the village of Uffington, a village in what was then part of Berkshire, on the west side of the road between Uffington and Baulking. In 1864 Uffington became a junction as the Faringdon Railway opened between there and the town of Faringdon. In 1886 the GWR took over the Faringdon Railway.
In 1951 British Railways withdrew passenger services from the Faringdon Railway. In 1964 BR withdrew freight traffic from the Faringdon Railway, and closed all passenger stations between Didcot and Swindon including Uffington, and Uffington's station buildings were subsequently demolished.

5.2 Challow station
Challow railway station is a former railway station about 2 miles (3 km) south of Stanford in the Vale on the A417 road between Wantage and Faringdon. It is named after the villages of West Challow and East Challow, which are 1.5 miles (2.4 km) and 2.5 miles (4 km) southeast respectively of the former station.

When the Great Western Railway extended its main line from Reading through the Vale of White Horse in 1840 it opened the station as Faringdon Road station. After the Faringdon Railway between Uffington and Faringdon opened in 1864, the GWR renamed Faringdon Road "Challow" to avoid confusion. On 7 December 1964 British Railways withdrew passenger services from Challow and all other intermediate stations between Didcot and Swindon. Few parts of the station survive. The northern platform has almost disappeared completely and the southern platform is used by Network Rail, although no buildings remain and the buildings used by Network Rail are only small portable cabins. New buildings have been built around the site. The most noticeable is the bail depot on the site of the northern platform. One nearby public house, the Prince of Wales, was burnt down in 1999 and the site has been levelled.

Freight trains now use a passing loop on the site of the station to wait for High Speed Trains to overtake them.

6 Proposed policies
Land for a 15-20m green corridor shall be reserved which is inside the East Hanney Parish Boundary in the location shown in Figure 5.

Land for a cycle and footpath shall be reserved adjacent to the A338.