

# English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

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**ERTA believes rebuilding the Brackmills Branch and associated rail tracks would inform an asset for multiple on and off rail benefits. Please have a read and give us your support.**

The English Regional Transport Association (ERTA) is a voluntary association whose prime income is via membership. We advocate local, conventional, accessible rail reopenings, rebuilds, select new-builds with people and communities at the centre of planning. We want less congestion, cleaner air, land-use properly stewarded and a balance between urban sprawl, sustainable transport choices



and not assuming all must go by road for want of a rail alternative. The Brackmills Branch is the former stub of the Bedford-Northampton rail link. We want it re-railed to provide an example of the rail choice which could be made available. Choice extended as a business opportunity for people and goods to use rail and connect with the main station at Northampton. Brackmills Industrial Estate is a growing employment hub and many people wish to get to it and congestion on local roads is hampering operations and in logistics delays, time and congestion can be costly.

We see a phased incremental approach to the project:

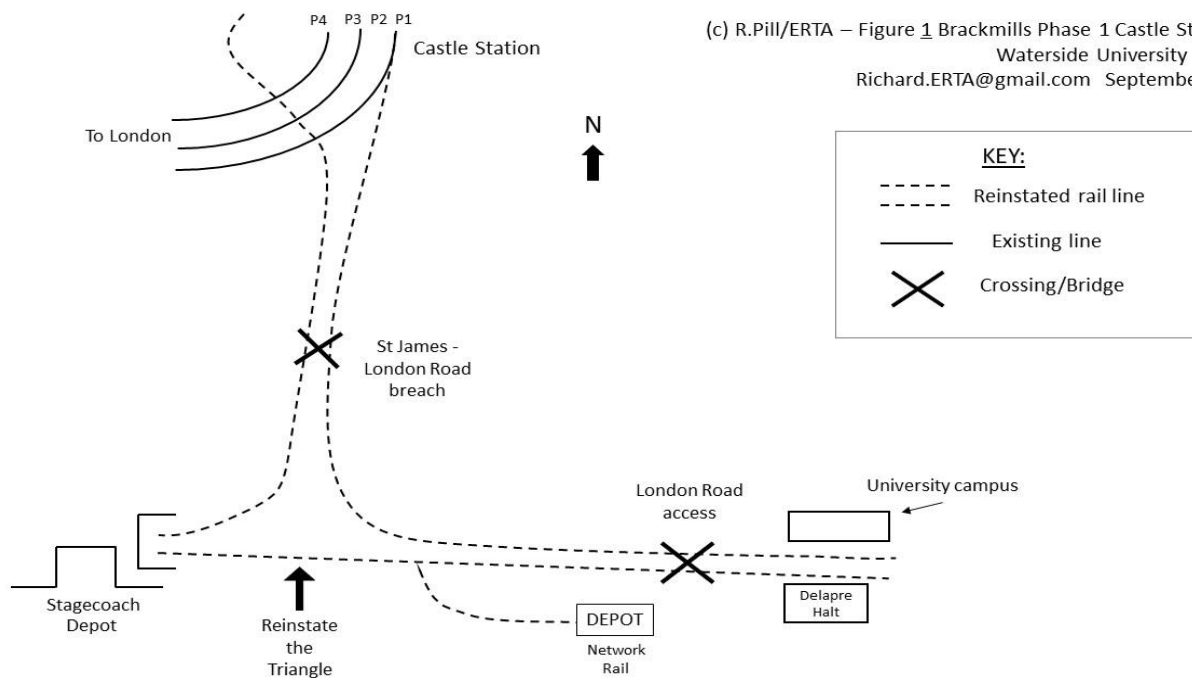
Phase 1 to re-rail between Northampton Castle Station and Great Houghton Village with a shuttle passenger service using lightweight trains and basic halt-style station provision.

Phase 2 could see the project extended to the Brayfield Racecourse.

Phase 3 would require about 10 miles of new-build local, conventional railway to the north of Olney as the old route as it is seriously blocked at Olney.

Phase 4 would be a new interpretation crossing at height over the Midland Main Line to join the slow lines into Bedford Midland.

**Integration with Thameslink services, East-West Rail and an audience range between Brighton, London, Bedford-Northampton and the West Midlands for example, takes on 3 airports, M1, Eurostar St Pancras and gives key and direct access currently broken because of this missing, strategic link, which was cited in numerous studies done.**

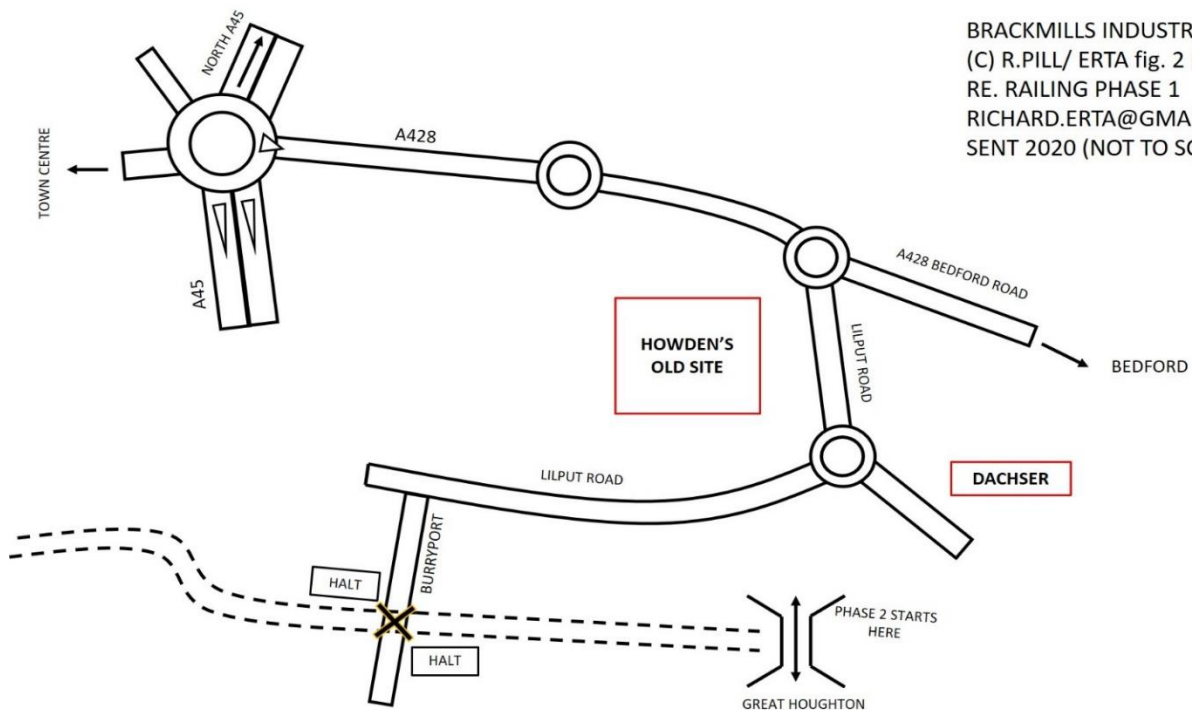


**Fig 1 Diagram above shows part one of Phase 1 'Re-railing the Brackmills Branch'.**

1. Extra Platform at Northampton Castle Station and trackwork to reconnect the junction for through running.
2. Re-railing to the London Road perimeter, reactivating the line as far as London Road.
3. Negotiating the threat of the St James' Road Link Scheme but it to bridge the railway or a Level Crossing to be negotiated.
4. Reinstated a triangle of track at the Towcester Road Bridge area, useful for turning around trains, locomotives and waitover siding facility.
5. Line curves round to the east along former Bridge Street area, now a built environment.
6. If access to the depot is re-railed and credible, the depot building and location could find a new rail role such as a parcel collect and discharge centre for light goods by rail.
7. London Road, be it a bridge or level crossing is a major obstacle and will need a gritty determination to negotiate.

8. Shared Halt east of London Road, maybe accessed via Ransome Road, which serves the Waterside University of Northampton Campus and Delapre Abbey complex.
9. Studies on the overall project and sub-studies or elements looking at 1-8 observations and how they can be done and the fit of infrastructure in relation to the wider community needs to be pursued.
10. The implementation of the new Waterside/Delapre Halt would require a footbridge linking both sides and suitable pedestrian, cycle and road access.
11. Costs of new rail have been mooted at £20 million per mile of double track. It may be the project can inform a single-track option or double track or passive provision for upgrading with a graded-up escalator. That means lands need shoring up to ensure this can be done and the integrity of the route is paramount. Heathfield (South Devon) and Wisbech may be examples of Level Crossings.

BRACKMILLS INDUSTRIAL ESTATE  
 (C) R.PILL/ ERTA fig. 2 BRACKMILLS  
 RE. RAILING PHASE 1  
 RICHARD.ERTA@GMAIL.COM  
 SENT 2020 (NOT TO SCALE)



**Fig 2 Diagram above shows part two of Phase 1 'Re-railing the Brackmills Branch'**

1. The trackbed east of Waterside Campus/Delapre borders industrial and conservation locations, going under the A45 Bypass and proceeding to Brackmills.

2. Buryport Brackmills Industrial Estate:

- a. May need a bridge or duck-under or Level Crossing. Level Crossing would be easier if only permission could be obtained. However, delays on the road to the railway could be an issue.
- b. Halts could be either side of the Buryport Crossing or bestride the crossing as is in some cases like Bow Brickhill on the Bedford-Bletchley Rail Link.
- c. The new interpretation of a conventional track with Parry People Mover (PPM) type lightweight vehicles or a Vivarail Vehicle would enable flexibility.

3. It is about 2/3 of a mile to Great Houghton from Buryport Road and there has been a Linear Park to negotiate.

4. At Great Houghton, a halt and walk-on, walk-off facility could be installed west of the High Street Bridge.

5. Accommodating a Linear Park/Cycle/Walkway alongside part of the railway may require a single-track operation. Economy could be single platform and buffer stop with basic facilities of an unstaffed station – see Bedford-Bletchley local stations like Lidlington for what one may expect/bid for.

6. Given Soham Station was an 8-coach station with booking hall and footbridge came in at £20 million, so half of 8-coach length single platform could be x2 4 coach platforms bestriding double track. This may be taken as a cost-guide on a sliding scale of up or down. If we say 3.5 miles for the whole Brackmills Branch, £100 million all in may be a total sum of costs?

## Conclusions and Recommendations:



The Government's Railway Fund is capped at £500 million and has station and railway match funding potential if an application is successful. Therefore, a pot needs to be established and as much homework to off-set costs is advantageous. MP's should lobby Government to inform a rolling programme, escalator, conveyor belt of railway reopenings, rebuilds, select new pieces and put spades on the ground for delivery in an optimum time-frame.

The new roads budget is £27 billion, and the difference between it and the Reopenings Fund is not lost on us. Rail carries bulk and can alleviate local roads and offer passenger and more freight by rail capability. These income streams should be born in mind plus the gains were the whole Northampton-Bedford rail link concept to be pursued alongside or trumping this scheme. None-the-less a local service and semi-fasts should mean you retain the station accesses we have specified and/or upgrade. South Northampton needs rail access more and this branch could be a catalyst to that modal shift potential and window of opportunity. It must be retained and protected, it must be studied and shored up and submitted to Network Rail's GRIP procedures for taking forward with delivery in mind.

ERTA stands ready to support leadership, good stewardship and direction and welcomes a broad coalition of expertise and interest to take the project forward. Time is of the essence to get the ball rolling. Please give your support by joining our association.

**ERTA would like to acknowledge with thanks, the sponsorship of this pamphlet by:**



**Disclaimer: This pamphlet is designed to give an appetiser as to what could be done.**

Please Join or Renew your Membership of ERTA and help us help you!

<https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-member/>

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