

Amphill Parkway – A Narrative in brief 21-06-2023

Opening summary: ERTA and predecessors have long advocated a study and consideration of the merits for a new station within the vicinity of Amphill to serve the adjacent town which has and is growing and wider local areas, north-south and east-west.

Amphill – what's in a name: It is not just about 'Amphill' but the wider area stretching from Woburn in the west to Wrest Park in the East. M1-A1 via A507 corridors and B530 (Bedford-Amphill) and A5120 (Amphill-Flitwick-M1/Toddington Junction) and all in between. This represents a much wider area and currently only has Harlington and Flitwick Stations in a context of growth and wanting/demand for model shift.

Population: In 2015 Amphill had an immediate population of 7500, but the wider cordon area was upwards of 70, 000 considering how many would turn to the A507 off the M1 and from the eastern side of Milton Keynes to get direct to the city for example than Euston and change. This in a context of incremental growth across the board including Wixams and associated clustered villages, Milton Keynes eastern side, Marston Vale (Bedford-Bletchley does east-west travel when operational) which tends to commuter via Millbrook to Fordfield Road to Flitwick for Thameslink access. Other plans for expansion of development between A6/Pulloxhill and Amphill-Flitwick conjoined conurbations means Central Beds-wide impacts unless we ensure the rail links like east-west rails and access to stations are optimised now.

Principal Roads: M1, A507, B530, A5120, Flitwick Road (Amphill) and associated rat-run across country and affecting unwitting neighbourhoods.

What goes in, must come out: Amphill Parkway, serving a much wider area than just Amphill Town, would both deliver footfall and spend to the immediate area but also enable more capacity for wider travel and connectives.

Flitwick Situation going forwards: Flitwick Station is the principal station. Amphill Parkway would complement that by creating more access to/from rail and capacity for parking, demand for integrated bus links and more choice for rail users, existing and new. Flitwick Station is partly in a valley and apart from high-sided walls, is land-locked with development which means a triple stack car park 'going up' is the only real solution in a context of growth. The town has one overbridge road with dual roundabout either side 'east' and 'west.' It gets congested and looks likely to get worse than better. Amphill would share the load and enable more by rail overall.

Wixams: It has been a long time but the new twin platform station on the slow lines – exact same model we wish for Amphill Parkway. Thameslink trains run at 4 per hour and stations can always be upgraded and expanded. It will mop up immediate Wixams and south Bedford, a combined approximate 36, 000 population but it is unlikely people will drive from north of Bedford or west of Bedford. Instead, people commuting to London tend to drive south for drive-time and to save money. That means a large and growing population like Marston Moretaine areas, will gravitate to Flitwick, Amphill could share that load.

Marston Vale: The current (absent!) Bedford-Bletchley rail link serves east-west, not north-south majoritively. Therefore, Ampthill would offer different services, different rails, and markets. The idea of conflict is bogus, and in walking and cycling terms, they could well feed each other enjoying what is left of the countryside.

MK and M1: Milton Keynes City seeks to develop east of its current borders and uses the A507 for Flitwick-based London commuting. Ampthill could stem that trend and check and balance future growth so more by rail can be achieved without the congestion, pollution, delays, waste, and time-cost of overloading everything onto Flitwick. Likewise, further-afield commuting to and from the Thameslink Rail Network off the M1-A507. Calls have been for this trunk road to be upgraded, but turning off at Fordfield Road for a western access to 100 parking spaces and foot-disabled access bridge to a new Ampthill Parkway ticket could restore balance, joy, and benefit many sustainably.

Leisure audiences: The access gateway Ampthill Parkway could be to a wider area for leisure purposes from visiting the town itself, weekend breaks, Centre Parcs a stone's throw and the wider interim areas between and including Woburn and Wrest Park, Ampthill Parklands and Flitwick Moors makes the areas the station would serve of interest. A circular connecting bus-link between Ampthill Parkway and the town centre and places like the Flying Horse at Clophill via Maulden could spread the visitor and spend potential and boost local bus interlinks/through ticketing to sustain buses which have faced cuts over recent years.

London weekend breaks: London 8 million plus people, 40 minutes Thameslink away, the area and location which hosts concerts, could have a new market dynamic appeal fuelling bed and breakfast jobs and spread and possibly hostelry for people walking and cycling across the Greensands arc of which Ampthill Parkway would be an integral location.

Centre Parcs: Large populous attraction would benefit customers and staff by a closer proximity station with Fordfield Road walking, cycling and bus access. The station and complex would boost each other and rail's share of the visitorship attraction.

Better Public Transport: Bus-Rail integration is key and serves a wider area than just town and train relationship.

Where we are at now:

Ampthill Town Council – write/email them! <https://www.ampthill-tc.gov.uk/contact>

Central Beds Council – write/email them! <https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/contact>

Access, parking and fields west-side – keeping option open amidst demand for development, makes a mockery of greenbelt claims as wistful thinking unless we buy-into a station concept at the heart of a plan? Rejection of the station sits awkwardly in a context of growth. Ampthill Town Council seems hostile, but the gains seem to be under-estimated.

Timetable, TOC, Network Rail and wider rail context: These are quoted as hostile 'yet another stop, slowing end-to-end' down? Yet, that is what Thameslink does, feeds into faster principal services and destinations and distributes back to local places. Just one more station would be all of 5 minutes delay, consider the additional receipts such an audience could bring.

Costs: Soham Station is 8 coaches long and cost £20 million, so with a second platform and modest booking hall, coffee shop and toilets, £70 million could be around the sum, but that needs attesting and weighing as a medium to long term investment.

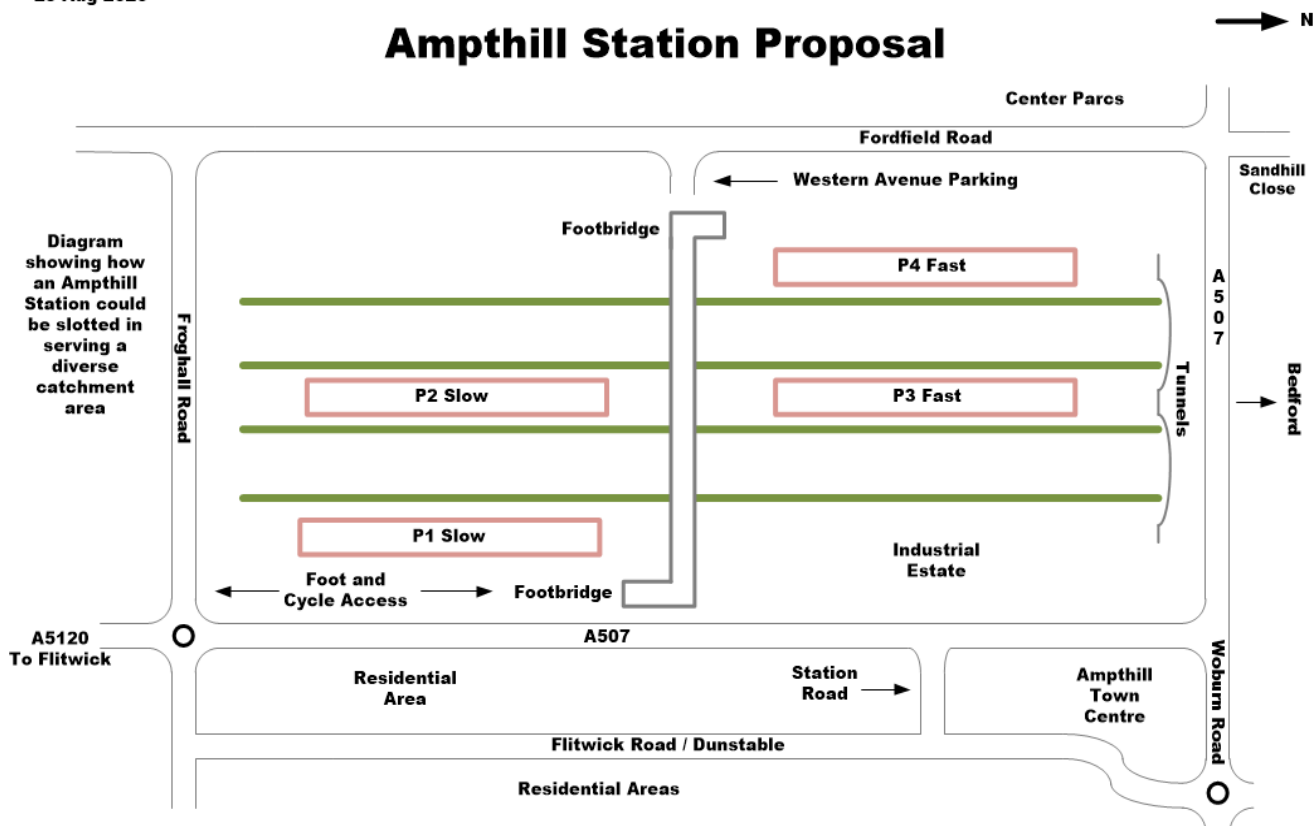
Business Cases: ERTA is a lay people association which plants ideas and advocates them. We don't have the know-how or resources to commission or do complicated business cases. We welcome those so able and willing to volunteer to help us and put them together incrementally, to explore at least the positives and ideally show the objections a head-in-sand nimbyism which is in serious denial as the two towns encroach each other and conjoin development wise. The new station would put the Rufus Centre pivotally between the two stations, optimising potential and paying the bills for all in sustainable terms like conference scope for example.

Local Support, buy-in and people-power for or against: Critically, ERTA and the station idea needs public support. Will you add your name to the call for:

- Land protection to retain the option and establish access off A507 to land-use car parking at the industrial estate for the new station and access from both sides of the main railway?
- Join ERTA and come to our tabled meetings as a starting point.
- Write/email asking for a study to look at what our narrative advocates and attest the merits and gains now and going forward with the status quo which is limited and inadequate?

25-Aug-2020

Amphill Station Proposal



Not to scale
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W: www.ertarail.co.uk E: richard.erta@gmail.com

Diagram shows a rough idea of what the station layout could look like. However initially, only 2 platforms on the slower lines would be done and only if more demand existed would extra stops and platforms be envisaged. Thameslink Trains could be staggered to half-hourly for example as well. The study would look at these workings and benefits.

✂ _____
Please Join ERTA Help us help you! <https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-member/>

Tick if a New Member: _____

Membership of ERTA costs £15 per annum. I/We wish to join _____

I/We wish to explore volunteering opportunities (optional) _____

Name (Please Print): _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Tel/Mobile: _____ **Email** _____

I/We hereby give consent to our data being used and stored for the purposes of communication with ERTA and its purposes compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) _____

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____

Please send completed form and payment to ERTA: c/o

T. 07765977318 tony.houghton@keystonelaw.co.uk

Postal address is still 24c St Michaels Road, Bedford, MK40 2LT

Join our free email loop for news and views:

E. richard.erta@gmail.com and see our website.