

# AUDLEY END GATEWAY STATION & GREAT CHESTERFORD STATION PROJECT

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This report is about the railway stations at Audley End and Great Chesterford near Saffron Walden in Uttlesford, Essex. The report looks at the current layout and operation of the two stations and makes recommendations for improvements. Mouchel Parkman were commissioned by Essex County Council to prepare the report.

The report highlights the problems with public transport, cycling and walking between Audley End station and Saffron Walden town centre. Particular mention is made of the proposed cycle route and the park and rail bus service between the town and the station and options to enhance the existing bus service. At Great Chesterford station the report includes the provision of a new car park.

The improvements recommended at each station include three new designs for the station layout at Audley End and one for Great Chesterford.

Audley End is the gateway station to Saffron Walden and serves the major commuter routes into London and Cambridge. The recommendations have been tailored with this in mind and the need to improve station access, encourage sustainable modes of transport, and improve the environment and ambience of the travelling public.



Great Chesterford is a local village station with the potential to attract greater passenger numbers by the provision of a new car park. This could ease the pressure on parking at Audley End.



## 2 PROBLEMS AT AUDLEY END

Each method of travel to and from the station has its own particular problems both on the journey and at the station. Some problems are common to more than one mode of transport.

### 2.1 The main problems at the station are experienced by the bus operators and their passengers and these are listed below.

1. Buses have to perform a three point turn which is dangerous for pedestrians and other vehicles in the vicinity and also delays the service.
2. There is no official bus stop for setting down and picking up passengers which causes considerable confusion for travellers.
3. There is no travel information for passengers.
4. There is no shelter or seating for passengers waiting for buses and taxis
5. There is no provision for disabled passengers to access the buses
6. There is no segregation of buses from other traffic negotiating the station forecourt
7. The speed hump is unpleasant for drivers and passengers and could be dangerous to those not familiar with its presence. There is inadequate warning, signing and illumination of the speed hump.



### 2.2 Other station users also experience problems to some degree, particularly cyclists and pedestrians

1. At peak times the taxi rank is over subscribed
2. The station forecourt is congested at peak times
3. The cycle racks are fragmented around the station and in various states of repair and condition. The cycle racks are exposed to the weather except those in the old passenger shelter
4. The old passenger shelter is used as an unofficial toilet which discourages cycle storage.

5. Cycle storage on the northbound platform is inaccessible
6. Provision for motorcycles is cramped with no provision for securing machines which are exposed to the weather
7. The motor cycle parking area is bounded on one side by the edge of the old platform with a dangerous drop.



8. There is no separate route for pedestrians to reach the station.
9. There is no dropped kerb at end of existing footway to the station
10. There is no provision for disabled passengers to access northbound platform
11. The station signs do not indicate that this is the station serving Saffron Walden
12. The toilets are not open 24 hours because of risk of vandalism
13. The Help Point is inconspicuous
14. The waiting room was closed due to vandalism
15. There is a lack of litter bins and complaints of litter around station
16. The unofficial access to Bearwalden Business Park needs to be made formal
17. The pedestrian access through Wendens Garage is overgrown
18. The car park tends to be oversubscribed at times making it difficult for users to find spaces and encourage on street parking and unofficial commuter parking in nearby businesses.
19. The car parking layout has not been amended to take account of new waiting room
20. Some car parking spaces are too small to use resulting in a loss of capacity.
21. The size of many parking spaces has been reduced by encroaching vegetation.
22. The car parking charges are too high

### **2.3 Further problems are experienced on journeys to and from the station particularly by bus and cycle.**

1. Some buses out dated discouraging use by commuters
2. Small buses are sometimes used at peak times resulting in passengers having to stand
3. Buses do not run in the evenings and on Sundays
4. Some buses failing to display proper destinations and service numbers.
5. There is inadequate provision for passengers at the main bus stops throughout the town in terms of shelter, seating and information
6. Station services do not serve outlying residential areas of the town
7. Town centre service is complex and does not always connect with station services
8. Surrounding villages poorly served by bus services
9. There is no purpose built cycle route between the town and the station
10. Cyclists have to share the route with other traffic. The route is hilly, twisting, exposed and unlit.
11. There are no facilities for cyclists to cycle to town centre, store cycles securely and use buses to the station.
12. There is no footway for pedestrians along sections of the route between the town and the station and some of the existing footway is in poor condition.
13. There is inadequate signing from the town to the station
14. There are no dropped kerbs or tactile paving for pedestrians at the junction of Station Road, Royston Road and the station access road
15. The station access road is in poor condition

## **3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUDLEY END**

The recommendations are divided into three groups, Short Term, Medium Term, and Long Term. The recommendations for the station layout are shown on three plans no. TM 733062/003, TM 733062/004, and TM 733062/005. Each plan shows a different proposed layout with the bus stop located on the north side of the station, the north east corner and the east side respectively. The recommendations are as follows:

### 3.1 Short Term

1. To take steps to set up the Saffron Walden Gateway Station Partnership, secure funding for and appoint a Project Officer to seek funding and prepare a programme and action plan of works.
2. Add the railways station symbol together with the word "Station" and the distance to all the appropriate directional signs around the town centre and towards Audley End. The signs including tourist signing from the station towards the town should also be reviewed and upgraded where necessary.
3. Negotiate an official pedestrian access to the Bearwalden Business Park
4. Make the Help Point more conspicuous
5. Remove vegetation from the pedestrian access by Wendens Garage through to the station forecourt and maintain
6. Increase the provision of litter bins
7. Change platform signs from "Audley End" to "Audley End for Saffron Walden"
8. As an experiment with the existing toilets being kept open, provide Mosquito Ultrasonic Teenage Youth Deterrent
9. Reorganise the station forecourt and surrounding car park to provide the following major improvements (see the three plans showing the optional layouts proposed):
  - Provide a proper designated bus stop marked out in a white with the words 'BUS STOP'
  - Provide 3m minimum paved area with kerbed surround for waiting bus passengers with raised footway for low floor buses.
  - Provide overhead canopies with weather protection, lighting and vandal proof seats for the bus stop and taxi rank.
  - Provide illuminated bus stop sign with service numbers
  - Provide a circulatory system so that buses do not have to reverse when negotiating the station forecourt
  - Bring all cycle parking together at one location adjacent to the station building and the southbound platform with new secure Sheffield Stands or an agreed alternative and overhead weather protection.

- Establish a secure parking area for motorcycles with locking posts and overhead weather protection adjacent to the station building and the southbound platform
  - Provide a segregated pedestrian route from the station access road to the station building and southbound platform.
  - Widen footway and provide tactile paving and dropped kerb where existing footway alongside the station access road terminates alongside speed hump
  - Seek architectural advice on surface finishes for paved pedestrian areas, signing, bollards, seating, lighting and overhead canopies
  - Remove speed hump and repair street lamp alongside
  - Rearrange car parking bays alongside the southbound platform waiting room and in the lower level car park due east from the station to increase car park capacity.
  - Maintain and enlarge the taxi rank to six spaces
  - Maintain the two disabled parking bays
  - Maintain and in some options increase the short term waiting bays
  - Maintain and in some options increase the premium permit holder parking bays
10. Provide Real Time Passenger Information Displays for bus passengers.
  11. Provide static bus timetables, bus operator information and town map.
  12. Investigate feasibility of combined car park and rail tickets with reductions for car sharing.
  13. Renew white and yellow lines on station access road and repair pot holes.
  14. Erect signs to advertise spare capacity at Newport Station car park.
  15. Spray car park surface with bitumen and remark parking bays where width is less than 2.2m.
  16. Cut back overhanging vegetation and clear ground level vegetation to restore parking bays to full size.
  17. Remove and, or cut back trees whose sap damages vehicle paintwork

18. Remove cycle rack on northbound platform until formal access for cyclists is negotiated through Bearwalden Business Park
19. Provide prominent sign indicating location of cycle parking and motor cycle parking
20. Provide robust secure lockers for cyclists and motorcyclists at the back of the southbound platform under cover.
21. As an interim measure provide a safety barrier along the edge of the platform bordering the motorcycle parking area
22. Consult the various disabled groups on the demand for disabled parking spaces

### **3.2 Medium Term**

1. That a Demand Responsive Transport network is introduced to Saffron Walden, Audley End and the surrounding villages.
2. Provide free pocket size timetables at Audley End Station showing all bus and rail services that operate from that station (if not already available)
3. Install a Free Standing Automatic Toilet in the style of the toilet at Swan Meadow car park
4. One Railway to work towards the Secure Stations Scheme Accreditation
5. One Railway to work towards the Secure Parking Scheme Status. The improvements proposed at Audley End should be vetted by the Police
6. Option to widen segregated footway to provide shared pedestrian, cycle route across station forecourt with loss of some parking spaces
7. Review station, car park, and access road street lighting and upgrade if required
8. Investigate possibility of passengers and staff being able to see buses arriving from inside the station building by altering ticket office layout and windows if necessary. Provide a Passenger Information Display for buses inside the ticket office.
9. Provide intelligent bus destination panels on buses to show service number, destination, and "Rail Link".
10. Operators should be encouraged to use modern vehicles and larger vehicles at peak times.

## 11. Public Transport Options between Saffron Walden and Audley End

- That a car sharing scheme should be promoted.
- That a cycle park and ride scheme should be introduced
- That Option B from the Wendens Road Cycle Feasibility Report is adopted along with the restoration of the existing footways at each end and a new footway in between together with new street lighting and appropriate tree and hedge planting.
- Consider introducing a Raillink service using buses to replicate an extension of the railway network into Saffron Walden town centre.
- Consider simplifying the 34 town service to make it consistent throughout the day.
- Consider extending the following bus services to Audley End Station: - 18, 313, and Village Link.
- Consider preparing a Rural Transport Plan for Saffron Walden and the surrounding villages.
- Consider introducing an additional town centre bus service which includes Audley End station
- Extend bus services to run late at night and on Sundays
- At major bus stops in Saffron Walden High Street, the Council Offices, and County High School provide bus stop signs and road markings, service numbers and timetables, real time Passenger Information Displays, bus shelters and seating.
- Review the style and format of the timetables.
- Make the County Council web site for travellers easier to find from the home page and more user friendly on the lines of the Intalink model.

### 3.3 Long Term

1. To introduce the PLUSBUS through ticketing availability from Saffron Walden to all rail destinations from Audley End.
2. Provide dropped kerbs and tactile paving for pedestrians at the junction of B1039, Station Road, Royston Road, and the station access road, Robinson Lane.
3. Repair and resurface the access road, Robinson Lane

4. Negotiate and provide disabled access to the northbound platform through Bearwalden Business Park
5. Demolish redundant branch line waiting room and if necessary reconstruct in a new location possibly on Great Chesterford northbound platform
6. Provide covered walkway from bus stop and taxi rank to station building and southbound platform.
7. Major scheme to increase car parking capacity -
  - Highest priority - to develop land for car parking or industrial, business development between the station and Bearwalden Business Park
  - Lower priority - to use grazing land east of the station to expand the car park subject to planning and environmental constraints.
  - Lowest priority - construct an upper deck over the existing low level car park to the east of the station.
8. Promote the introduction of a taxi car link scheme similar to the one operated by Virgin Trains.
9. Look to developers for future contributions towards improvements to Audley End Station
10. Investigate possibility of creating a public right of way from Rookery Lane to the northbound station platform and upgrading the path to provide a reasonable all weather route to the station.
11. Major scheme to provide passenger lifts on both platforms linked to the existing footbridge or connected by a new bridge.
12. Set up an experimental park and rail scheme and if successful make the scheme permanent by carrying out the works detailed in the full report
13. Take steps to set up a Community Rail Partnership and a Quality Bus Partnership.
14. Research and submit funding applications. It may be helpful to employ consultants to carry out this task.

## 4 THE PARK AND RAIL SCHEME

This is a proposal to provide commuter car parking in Saffron Walden town centre and a bus service to take commuters to the station. The Swan Meadow car park, a few minutes walk from the town centre, has been identified as a suitable park and rail site because it has about 50% spare capacity. The new service could also pick up passengers at other important stops along the way such as the High Street, Council Offices and the High School subject to spare capacity and would supplement the existing services.

The majority of cars park at the end of the car park nearest the town centre leaving the other end of the car park virtually empty. This would make it easier to create a separate parking area for the park and rail if required. There is also an existing coach stop, parking and turning facilities which could be adopted by the park and rail.

There are indications that the Audley End station is at capacity and there may be a suppressed demand. Commuters could be using their cars for longer journeys because the station car park is full.



The park and rail would provide extra parking capacity without the need to extend the station car park. Nearly half the commuters using the station originate from the town. It has been calculated that if the bus ran every 10 minutes throughout the peak periods it could potentially carry up to 20 passengers per trip.

The service is envisaged to [operate](#) during peak periods to begin with but this could be extended throughout the day subject to demand.

Minimal civil works would be required to adopt Swan Meadow for the park and rail. Provision of passenger waiting and seating areas with lighting and weather protection would be required along with real time information signs to indicate bus departures. Static signs to indicate operating times and charges would also be needed. Cycle parking and storage should be considered for cyclists who wished to use the park and rail service. The park and rail could be introduced on an experimental basis initially with a suitable charging structure to attract customers.

## 5 OTHER PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPTIONS

There are a number of other public transport options that could be adopted to enhance the service between Saffron Walden town and Audley End station. Many of these operate successfully in other parts of the Country and may be appropriate here.

### 5.1 Raillink Services

This system simulates the original railway branch line principles where a bus service is provided to replace the branch line service which would have existed historically. The buses connect with the mainline train services and could be an extension of One Railway or Central Railways with their own branded vehicles. There would be through ticketing and radio contact with drivers who would wait for trains that were running late.

### 5.2 Integrate Town Centre Service with station services 59/590 and 301

This has been suggested but on investigation the two are not compatible. The town centre service runs during the day for the benefit of shoppers but does not run through the morning and evening peak periods. Maybe the service could be extended with some benefit. The timetable is very complex with variations in the route throughout the day and would benefit from being simplified.

### 5.3 Extend Existing Bus Services

During consultations it was suggested that the no.18 service from Haverhill could be extended to the station. This would improve the service during the day and slot in between existing services. There may be less benefit at peak times when there is a greater frequency of buses. The public may benefit from other services being extended from the town centre to the station. These are the 313 from Great Dunmow and the Village Link service.

### 5.4 A completely new bus service

Many parts of Saffron Walden do not have easy access to the direct bus services to the station. Some of the existing services have large gaps during the day. If the existing services were diverted to serve other parts of the town this may be to the detriment of existing passengers who would suffer longer journey times. There may be justification for introducing a second town centre service to supplement the 34 service [and serve the station](#). A typical route which avoids narrow congested streets and could provide a rapid service could be High Street, George Street, Common Hill, Ashdon Road, Elizabeth Way, Tesco, Radwinter Road, Thaxted Road, Peaslands Road, Mount Pleasant Road and Borough Lane [to Audley End](#), clockwise in the a.m. and anti clockwise in the p.m.

## 5.5 Run buses early morning, late at night and Sundays

There has been a lot of criticism that the buses do not run late at night or on Sundays. Consideration could be given to extending the services with a subsidy if necessary. Buses on Sundays and Bank Holidays could also serve Audley End House. As an alternative to late night buses maybe some sort of subsidised taxi service could be provided.

## 5.6 Other Benefits

There is scope to upgrade the major bus stops in the town in the High Street, at the Council Offices and at the High School to provide bus stop markings on the road with bus stop signs, shelters and seating. These stops should also display comprehensive passenger information such as timetables and service numbers and ideally real time information on bus departures.

# 6 THE CYCLE ROUTE SCHEME

There is considerable demand for an exclusive cycle route between the town centre and the station. However this would be costly and may not attract large numbers of cyclists.

The existing route is not particularly pleasant for cyclists who have to share the road with fast moving traffic. The road is hilly, twisty, exposed and has no street lighting or footways along its central section. It could be considered dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians.

Essex County Council commissioned Mouchel Parkman to prepare a separate report on the feasibility of providing a safe route for cyclists between Saffron Walden and Audley End. The report produced 8 options which varied in cost and benefits. The most expensive option provided a segregated cycle pedestrian route from end to end but could be considered poor value for money at an estimated cost of £537,460. The most promising option restricts the route via Wenden Road and Walden Road to buses, cyclists and for access only. There are likely to be objections from the public that journey times via the alternative route on Newport Road will be longer but journey time measurements show that the differences in time using the two routes is negligible. The cost of this option was estimated at £29,700 excluding footway works. It is recommended that the existing footway is restored and a new footway provided where none exists at present at additional cost.



## 7 PROBLEMS AT GREAT CHESTERFORD

The main problems at Great Chesterford station are the poor state of the access road, lack of station facilities and the lack of off street parking. Because the station is small the facilities would be expected to be rather limited. Public transport serving this station is poor but **the** most rail passengers live locally and walk to the station. Those arriving by car are not local but take advantage of the free on street parking.

### 7.1 Problems with the Access Road

1. The access road, Station Approach, is in poor condition with an uneven surface, potholes and liable to ponding in wet weather
2. There is no footway for pedestrians
3. The turning bay is too small for buses and is obstructed by commuter parking
4. The turning bay can become congested for short periods at peak times
5. There is lack of off street parking
6. Delivery lorries have difficulty turning in the access road



### 7.2 Lack of Station Facilities

1. The station signing from London Road **is** not very prominent
2. Access to the platforms from the access road is not clearly signed
3. There is no help point
4. There are no toilets
5. There is no waiting room for passengers
6. There is no shelter from the weather for passengers on the northbound platform
7. There is no access to the northbound platform for disabled travellers
8. The ticket office has limited opening hours
9. There is a risk of vandalism to cycles left at the station

10. There is no provision for motor cycle parking

11. There are no litter bins

### **7.3 Limited Bus Provision**

1. Connections between trains and buses are poor especially northbound

2. There is a lack of late night and Sunday bus services.

3. There is no real time bus or train information for passengers

4. Buses do not use the service road to serve the station

5. There are no bus timetables or prominent information for buses and taxis on display at the station

6. There are no directions to the bus stops in Ickleton Road

7. There is no northbound bus stop on Ickleton Road

8. There are no shelters, seating or timetables at the Ickleton Road bus stops

9. The Ickleton Road bus stops are too far from station

10. Some of the buses are rather dated

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS AT GT CHESTERFORD**

The recommendations are divided into three groups, Short Term, Medium Term, and Long Term. The recommendations for the car park and the access road are shown on plan no. TM 733062/012. The recommendations are as follows:

### **8.1 Short Term**

1. Provide details of local taxi operators and contact numbers prominently displayed.

2. Provide an additional cycle storage rack and a sign to indicate cycle storage at the entrance from Station Approach.

3. Make signing from London Road more prominent

4. Clearly sign station ticket office and platforms from the end of Station Approach

5. Provide a Help Point

6. Correct the internet details for the station.

7. Provide litter bins

## 8.2 Medium Term

1. Provide real time bus and train information in the form of Passenger Information Displays
2. Provide a shelter or waiting room on northbound platform
3. Provide comprehensive static rail and bus timetables prominently displayed with a map showing how to get to the bus stops in Ickleton Road.
4. One Railway to work towards the Secure Stations Scheme Accreditation
5. One Railway to work towards the Secure Parking Scheme Status. The improvements proposed at Great Chesterford should be vetted by the Police

## 8.3 Long Term

1. Major Scheme - Provide a new car park on the former goods yard as a staged project, initially with temporary surface and free parking using the existing access to assess potential take up. If successful consider permanent surface, introduction of charging and improved access as necessary.
2. Adopt Station Approach, realign and widen carriageway to 6.0m, lay kerbs, repair and resurface, regrade verge and carryout accommodation works (see layout plan showing major improvements)
3. If Station Approach adopted introduce waiting restrictions to enable delivery vehicles to service premises alongside and also protect turning bay if bus services introduced
4. As part of the major improvement scheme provide two disabled parking bays adjacent to the traffic island in the turning bay at the end of Station Approach.
5. Provide footway on west side of Station Approach for pedestrians (see layout plan showing major improvements)
6. Provide northbound bus stop sign on Ickleton Road and bus stop markings in both directions. Provide bus shelters, seating, timetables and service numbers. Provide bus timetables at station and prominent directions to Ickleton Road bus stops.
7. Upgrade street lighting on Station Approach
- ~~8. Provide new car park on former goods yard land (see layout plan showing major improvements)~~
98. Include 4 motor cycle parking bays with lockable posts in the proposed car park on the former goods yard.

409. Enlarge turning bay at the end of Station Approach and consult with bus operators about the possibility of buses using Station Approach to serve the station (see layout plan showing major improvements)

## 9 PROPOSED CAR PARK

A car park may be provided in the former goods yard at Great Chesterford station to remove the problems with on street parking and reduce the pressure on parking at Audley End station. A car park with 49 car parking spaces and 4 motor cycle spaces is proposed.



Initially the existing ballast surfacing in the goods yard would be utilised for parking and charges would be minimal or free. Should this prove to be successful there would be the option to surface the car park and introduce charges. The charges would be lower than those at neighbouring Audley End because there are no express services from this station.

The existing access road is rather narrow making it difficult for vehicles to pass in places and would rely on an unofficial tidal flow system operating inbound in the a.m. and outbound in the p.m. Should it be necessary it may be possible to purchase or exchange small plots of land to widen the access or reach an agreement for vehicles to pass over the private forecourt of the adjoining building.

It may be necessary to consider alternative means of access to provide a one way system in and out of the proposed car park and some arrangement would have to be reached with adjacent land owners.

## 10 FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

The majority of the funding is expected to come from the Local Transport Plan but there is a possibility of additional funding from Network Rail. Many sources of funding such as the Market Towns Initiative are no longer available because various organisations such as the Countryside Agency and the Strategic Rail Authority have been taken over by Department for Transport, the Regional Development Agencies and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. However new sources of funding do emerge from time to time and applications for funding need to be submitted to the appropriate bodies. The setting up of a partnership may help in taking the recommendations forward