

# English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

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<a href="https://ertarail.co.uk/">https://ertarail.co.uk/</a>	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta">www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta</a>	<a href="https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/">https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/</a>
Amphill Parkway Station	September 2022	£1.50

## Support a new Amphill Parkway Railway Station and help rebalance traffic growth in Central Mid Beds areas:



**Caption Above:** About 5 Thameslink's each way, per hour serve the Bedford-London corridor calling at local stations and outlets. In addition, there are regular Corby-London electric trains which do not currently call at Central Bedfordshire area, despite a growth market, tourism and leisure markets abounding. Plenty of scope for a new Amphill Parkway Station to tap into.



**Caption Above:** The charm of Amphill Town Centre and ambiance is obvious, yet traffic volumes on narrow roads can cause a conflict and problem as well as land-use allocation for more parking demand. The new Amphill Parkway Station could inform more walking and safe cycling options from train to local areas and more sustainable footfall and spend in small-medium businesses boosting market share!

### **Background and History:**

There was an Ampthill Station located on the Midland Main Line until 1959 when as part of the 1955 Modernisation Plan which gave direction on where the railways were to go, it was decided to speed and focus on faster services; cutting seeming minor stations was perversely seen as a way to do that. Closures included Chiltern Green, Ampthill, Oakley, Sharnbrook and others between Luton and Leicester. The post-war period was not kind to the railways and a programme of closures were in context pitted alongside of political switch in priorities from rail to a new-dawn of road building expansion and focus on road vehicles (cars and lorries of various sizes). That meant not only was a new market and trend developed progressively, but with the cull of the railways in the 1960's especially, that trend was locked-in, making railways a minor player compared to road land-based transport, which was trendingly locked-in. These patterns have persisted being normalised to assume will always go on. This, in a context of a 3-fold population, development and associated traffic across the regions, of which railways are unable to compete because they either don't have a presence anymore; the lines to reach the corners of the realm they once did or the stations to enable rail-access within say a 5-mile drive of a population centre or both is withdrawn.

### **The coming of electrification in the late 1970's brought the following to the fore:**

1. House prices grew more rapidly
2. Des-res kicked in with commuting to the capital a trend which has year-on-year mostly grown in the following decades
3. Many new houses and estates have been built and that is a work in progress. The South-East is overheating with land a premium and high demand for occupancy. Spreading out north of London with a quick commute by rail has expanded with ever-more distance, speed and time considerations so that 100-mile commutes are not uncommon or unknown.
4. In local terms the absence of an Ampthill Station has inevitably made Flitwick the principal outlet for local rail access. The towns have grown to almost merger homogenisation inbuilt terms, both retaining a distinct and different character and landscape. Flitwick has courted a wider audience of commute from home to rail. Milton Keynes has expanded and is now a city. M1-A507 corridors are lured to Flitwick because the frequent and long houred Thameslink services link fast to the City of London, but also the principal airports of Luton, Gatwick and one change now to Heathrow. In addition, Thameslink also with one change links to Kent and the Eurostar services at St Pancras International. Thus, the local to the global and vice versa by rail means from M1/Milton Keynes-A6/Clophill/Silsoe and all in between plus the northern arc of the infill developed Marston Vale area, drive to Flitwick for the commute. This makes a substantial population reach and catchment. Here's what it was a few years ago, it is growing all the time and in the scope of our endeavour say 2030, will be even more demand-supply need and associated impact whether met by another station to share demand or solo land-development locked-in Flitwick with associated parking, on-off rail issues abounding and nowhere to go in management terms. Yes, since the pandemic many work more from home, but that is not the panacea everyone has of choice or nature of work itself.

Place	Population	Place	Population
Flitwick	12,700	Ridgmont	410
Westoning, Flitton and Greenfield	4,700	Brogborough	343
Harlington	2260	Hulcote and Salford	210
Steppingley	233	Cranfield	4909
Eversholt	420	Lidlington	1350
Silsoe	1729	Clophill	1750
Woburn	933	Marston Moretaine Area	4560
Shefford Area	9330	Stewartby	1212
Haynes and Houghton Conquest	2710	Maulden	2900
Campton and Chicksands	2510	Wilstead	1980
Pulloxhill	850	Gravenhurst	600
Wavendon	787	Woburn Sands	2916
		Amphill	7500
Sub Totals	39,162		30,640
Totals	69,802		
10% Take up usage figure:	6980		
Divide by a 20 hour operating day = 349 people per hour		Divide by 4 trains each way per hour = Approximately 87.25 each way boarding per train.	
Population sources	Wikipedia and Central Beds Council Website		
Taken as an approximately 5 mile radius of Amphill Station catchment potential area.			

This population table was produced circa 2015. Catchment now easily exceeds 70,000 and is growing apace. What will the road-traffic impact and demand for more parking-land-use be by 2030 without a relief railway station to share that market and demand?



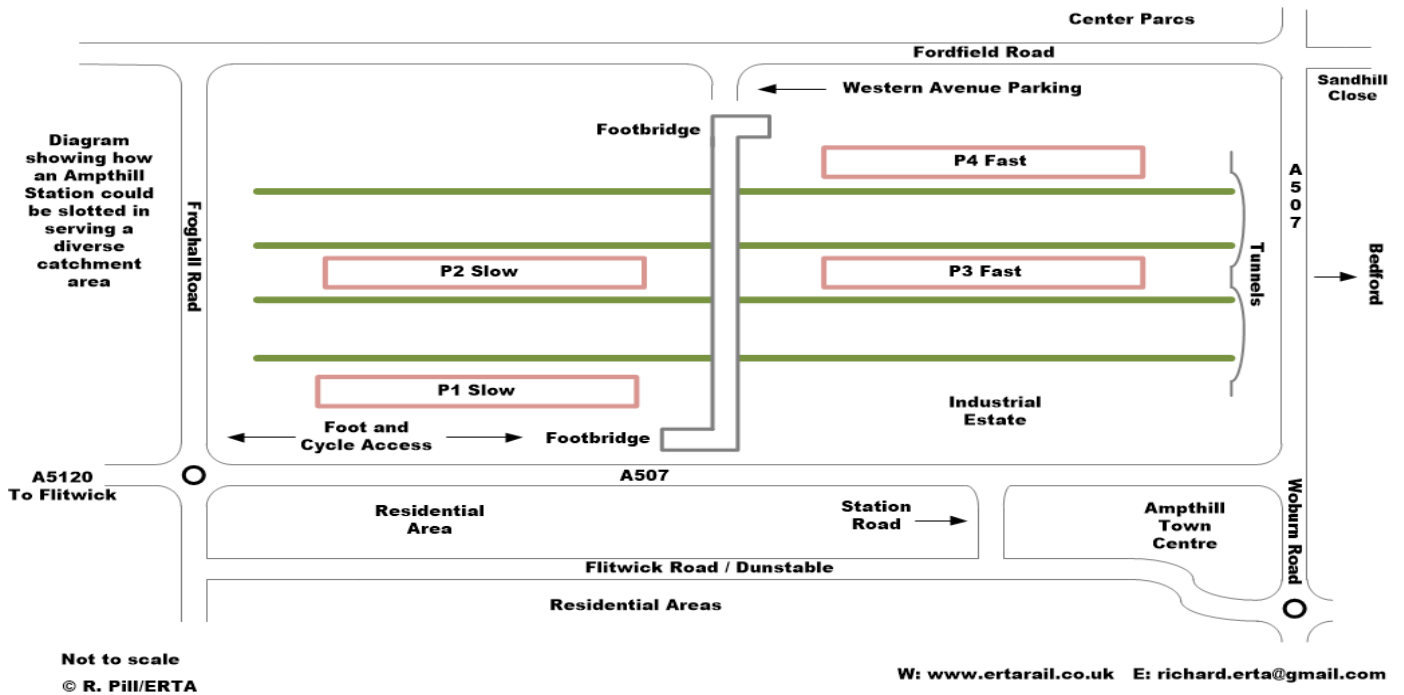
**Caption Left:** The old station site east-side is occupied by small-medium industrial units. This would mean, that in the event of a new railway station, some units would need relocation to accommodate it. But think of the gains! These businesses are versatile and need good and better access and the station would bring wider gains potentially. The station does need everyone on board and some flexibility in planning and nurturing the conditions for delivery in a timely manner as possible.



### **The ERTA View:**

1. Our predecessor association the Bedfordshire Railway and Transport Association (BRTA) (1997-2008) called for a station at Ampthill to be considered for a very long time and indeed there were calls before that. This resulted circa 2004 in Ampthill Town Council kindly funding a pre-study report by Scott Handley Consultancy which found there was some scope and that a stop at an extra station was feasible to slot into existing (then) timetables.
2. We support a new 'Ampthill Parkway Station' because:
  - a. The plight of Flitwick overcrowding: The Flitwick Station is land-locked with development of residential areas all around it. It has expanded and apart from going upwards, is going to reach its capacity limit. Then what? There has been a history of battles for and against on-street parking to avoid costs, queues or sheer get-away anon convenience for drive-time economy. Growth means these trends could be exacerbated. Moreover, unless we get support and joined-up help with the aspiration for a relief railway station, options will be few and far between. People don't tend to abandon the car for scant rural bus services; however, they do tend to use rail where accessible, convenient and affordable.
  - b. For Ampthill Town, with a decent footbridge or crossing on the A507, walking and cycling options to and from the nearer (slightly) railway station to the rest of the town, the town centre and parklands for example, gives options currently not available. It also means choice in which railway station to use and more parking capacity means convenience. Likewise, local buses could call boosting their feeder role and also footfall usage, stemming decline or cuts. The new station, ushers marketing potential. The kudos of being listed on national railway maps, the weekend and events footfall and maybe weekend staycation potential could bring new inward spend to the whole area and economy in a sustainable fashion. Ampthill has a proud history with links with the panoramic view of the former Bedford Vale, now Marston Vale, the history of a Castle associated with Royalty, the Georgian Town architecture and ambiance, marred only by constant traffic like many places these days. In short for Ampthill Town, there's nothing to fear, there's a very positive input available to be grasped and worked constructively with.
  - c. The wider area from Woburn in the West to Wrest Park in the East and all in between including Center Parcs which is virtually top of Fordfield Road, giving workers and more sustainable transport visitors easy walking, cycle as well as other connectivity with the railway station, which has Thameslink services about 22 out of 24 hours per day on a regular basis. What is not to like?
  - d. Wixams Station has been given go-ahead status and by 2026 will be with us. South Bedford is about 36,000 population and Kempston Town is another 18,000+ upwards and the whole area is a growth-development zone churning out and attracting mixed traffic and high growth density on the roads, which have been expanded, taking land. A point is, as far as London commuting is concerned, people tend to drive south from where they live (drive-time) and so whilst north and Wixams will use Wixams, south and west, will go towards Flitwick (current) and could be creamed off to use an Ampthill Parkway Station.
  - e. For more resources around Ampthill Parkway Station and previous inputs, please peruse our website publications page: <https://ertarail.co.uk/publicity/>

# Amphill Station Proposal



## Station Designs:

Although this sketch seeks to give a flavour, like Wixams, a new station initially would be 2 platforms on the fast line with a booking hall, coffee shop, safe pedestrian and cycle access to Station Road Amphill and kiss and ride parking east side of the railway. With a connecting foot and disabled bridge, west-side would have more substantive parking off Fordfield Road for easy dispersion and avoiding queues at the Industrial Park. Some land west-side could be used for relocation packages for some industrial units whose space we need for the station access land. It is interesting to note that an objection was remoteness to housing, since 2004 infill development has meant housing now laps the sides of the former A507 Bypass and so immediate access and use as well as a southern walk and cycle access for Flitwick East, Redborne School area via Froghall Road and associated development which are still on-going. Indeed a few years ago a planning authority told us that by 2030 development would occupy west of the railway tracks. Far better the land is used for a Parkway Station facility benefiting all, than more housing locking in haemorrhaging at Flitwick Station and stretching rail access to the wider catchment in a context of growth.

It is now or never, as by 2030 the window of opportunity will be lost and at this stage, Greenbelt aspirations have to be pitted with traffic management and reduction strategies and balancing the onslaught of development with civilised infrastructure namely the new station. To say 'Flitwick is adequate' is again head-in-sand if one looks at the trends, the landscape and where things are likely to be for up-coming generations by 2030, let alone any 2050 scenes which seem hard to envisage at the rate of warnings about Global Warming, Climate Change, Climate Emergency and the perils of pollution from excessive use and dependency of tyres and exhausts. Electric Vehicles (EVs) may cut fossil fuel use, but do not remove the growing volume of traffic and that should be in everyone's mind.



**Caption Above:** Could this be the scene of a 'busy' Ampthill Parkway in conjunction with the existing Flitwick Station sharing the load on and off the rails? A freer of traffic Flitwick and surrounding roads between the two towns and a lot more people able to park and ride by rail to places further afield? This 'vision' has about less-than 10 years before development sweeps it away and any claims for 'greenbelt' are just pipe-dreams in an unfolding context. Therefore, we do need decisive support and actions commensurate to an Ampthill Parkway Station be done.



**Caption left above:** Typical peak time congestion is a nationwide problem based on historical transport and planning decisions which are out of sync with what is required; putting people and places before profit and ensuring balance in our transport and environmental infrastructure. Buses get caught and delayed in congestion. **Above right:** The railway crosses Froghall Road, sending large lorries via Flitwick over a single double-barrelled roundabout configuration, causing mayhem at the best of times with bus users, cyclists and pedestrians facing a hazardous layout.

## What sorts of things need doing?

As lay people, we can but advise from other schemes. Wixams was protracted bound up with developer whim. We therefore can learn the successful outcome and also avoid pitfalls.

1. We need consensus now and going forward that the station is a good idea and is needed in the context of regional and local growth to provide relief and capacity which just Flitwick will put pressure on and off the roads.
2. We need the councils and public on-board and help identify pots of studies to update and continue what Scott Handley started – making the case, looking at opportunities and optimising getting on-board the Network Rail's GRIP scheme and courting DfT Rail Reopenings Grants for example.
3. Look at the costs involved weighted with benefits and what ifs if we do and don't scenarios. Commuting for many is the only reliable way to court successful employment ladders and make a living. To deny as many as possible that and other rail-based access, is unjust.
4. The studies can be done incrementally. That and a keen advocacy and leadership emergent to keenly take it step-by-step to delivery, not dither and delay. This infrastructure is important.
5. Work with us. We have started tabling a Forum to bring people together, to discuss associated issues, matters AND opportunities. Please conjoin, be represented and support with time, talent and where appropriate expertise. Maybe make a donation or join ERTA. We are only as good as our membership and willing people involved may inform.
6. Obviously if MP and Councils buy into the idea and get a vision and work with us, that would be a tremendous resource of knowledge, connectives and branded-ness to court more support.
7. Lead from the front. This is no time for denialism, nimbyism. The two conurbation towns are almost merging but for one or two fields. Managing with this vital public transport interchange opportunity and servicing the outlets it may benefit like Center Parcs footfall by public transport, boosting local distributive buses and enabling greener transport train-walk/cycle opportunities, is a greener Central Bedfordshire with more flourishing for all.

## Some references and further reading:

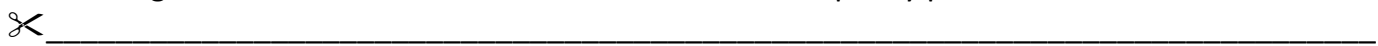
1. ERTA website publications page: <https://ertarail.co.uk/publicity/>
2. ERTA Blogspot, updated regularly: <https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/>
3. Flitwick: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flitwick>
4. Ampthill: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ampthill>
5. Central Bedfordshire Council: [https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/directory/14/your\\_councillors/category/67](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/directory/14/your_councillors/category/67)
6. Nadine Dorries MP Mid Bedfordshire includes Flitwick and Ampthill: [https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/directory\\_record/880/nadine\\_dorries\\_mp\\_-\\_mid\\_bedfordshire](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/directory_record/880/nadine_dorries_mp_-_mid_bedfordshire)
7. The Commuter Guide: <https://www.commuterguide.co.uk/counties/bedfordshire/flitwick> With house prices high, longer distance drive time to live where it is cheaper and travel by rail informs the diverse reaches and ranges of commuting in the area.
8. Benefits of health by commuting by rail: <https://www.globalrailwayreview.com/news/128160/research-ucl-professors-rail-industry-rail-commuting-passenger-workday-improved/>
9. Transport Action Network: <https://transportactionnetwork.org.uk/taking-the-wrong-road-for-climate-change/>
10. Pollution from road vehicles: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/03/car-tyres-produce-more-particle-pollution-than-exhausts-tests-show#:~:text=The%20tyre%20particles%20pollute%20air,early%20deaths%20a%20year%20globally.>



**About the English Regional Transport Association (ERTA):**

ERTA is a voluntary pro-public transport campaign group which relies on people to join, take some shared responsibility and help make the rail network more comprehensive, more affordable and accessible to all. Our meetings help to bring people together and rally support to further our causes. Please join up and give your support for improvements and be willing as a volunteer to be part of the answer of will/can it happen? Every member and volunteer enables that wish to become more of a reality of potential. You can vote with feet, lifestyle, wallet and habit.

We campaign for better and more public transport. We have engaged with countless studies and advocated route protections to enable more local rail reopenings, rebuilds and where blockages exist select new builds. We want development which fits in with serving people, places, communities and the environment. The thorny issues of balancing growth, land use, population and public health or impact needs careful consideration. Likewise, traffic reduction plans are less likely to be successful if we don't share the aspiration and translate to policy and medium-long term planning allocation terms to get that local rail link restored, those critical stations to share and spread the load and give amenable, accessible and attractive usage options to all ages, wallets and audiences. Buses can feed stations from out-lying areas and rail-bus ticketing can also boost bus usage which bodes better than the spiral decline of buses which is not their fault, but rather a lack of vision to design routes, price structures and markets which they can serve. Congestion hampers bus operations! So, getting rails and stations back is in everyone's interest. Please give us your support. Every member enables us to aspire to do more and better and we welcome enquiries for offering to volunteer, assist or serve in some reliable capacity please.



Please Join ERTA Help us help you! <https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-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: \_\_\_\_\_

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