

Wisbech Town Centre Station

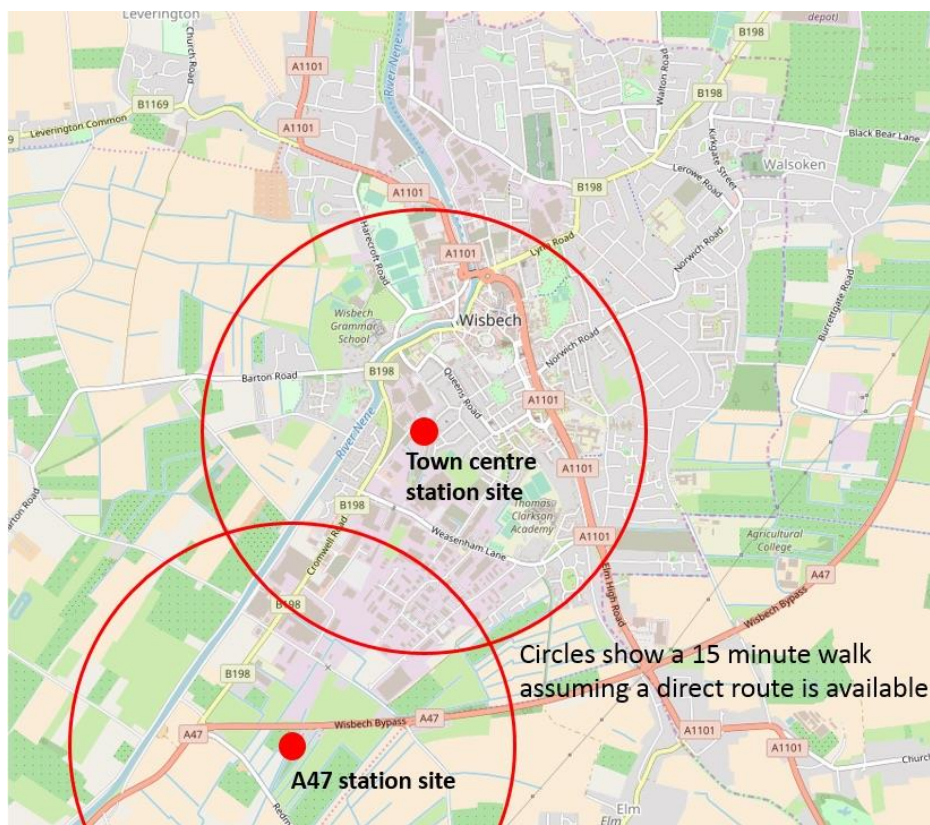
Don't short change us on the location of the site of a new Wisbech railway station, so says the Wisbech Rail Consultative Group a newly formed group with the key objective of stepping up the public lobby for the Wisbech -March railway to be reopened, to make the case for the establishment of a town centre station in Wisbech and to expertly inform debate with the public about how to achieve these objectives. Railfuture East Anglia - Wisbechrail is part of this group.

Railway stations are the beating heart of urban regeneration.

Where will Wisbech railway station be re-established? The best business case recommends a town centre site but a Fenland District Council consultation held three months ago suggested a site south of the A47 bypass where the railway crosses the road. The inferred reason was that a series of new roads crossing the rail line to the north of the level crossing to a development site would be better value than the rail station in the town centre.

We say this site would not achieve most of the benefits that the railway will bring to the Wisbech.

A station at the A47 would be 1.8 miles from the Town Bridge. This map clearly shows how far most people would walk within 15 minutes!



What are the benefits of a town centre station?

The map says it all.

- Many residents could walk to the station within 15 minutes.
- All residents could cycle to it if they so wished well within 15 minutes.
- Visitors to the town would be within 5 minutes walk of the iconic Georgian centre with its retail, businesses.

The business case of the railway restoration shows a high benefit cost ratio (BCR) of 4.41. It says unemployment will be alleviated, house prices will be positively impacted, local development will be improved.

The area around the town centre site could be developed into housing, workshops for business startups more than likely linked to IT industries along the rail corridor to Cambridge.

Paul Webster, operations manager for the Association of Community Rail Partnerships summarises it thus: ‘Every railway station has a unique role to play and not just at the point passengers access the railway network. Many have also become places where the local community has reconnected to its railway station developing cafes including for people with learning difficulties, art venues and shared meeting spaces.

These hubs provide a vital space for the local community and enhance the travelling experience for passengers.’

Stephen Joseph of the Campaign for Better Transport adds “Well-run rail services help cut carbon, improve air quality, support local economies and can make stations a hub for the community. While franchise competitions are rightly judged primarily on timetabling, fleet and performance, the wider benefits from rail are significant and need to be given proper consideration. We need to move to how franchising can actively support objectives like a low carbon economy, integrated public transport, air quality targets and sustainable housing growth.”

Stations: a sense of place and a place to be

The importance of stations has been recognised in the government’s housing white paper which cites railway stations as key anchors for the next generation of urban housing developments.

As the UK’s population grows and urbanisation continues at a pace, they’re at the epicentre of growth and regeneration and destinations in their own for shopping, working and socialising.

The latest National Rail passenger satisfaction scores reinforces how station regeneration quickly translates into not just improved passenger experience but improved communities.

So a gateway to Wisbech that us leads quickly to the wonderful historic townscape, or a dreary place nearly 2 miles out of town?

We say

- it must be sited where we can all walk to and from, cycle to and from as well as drive if we wish.
- It must be accessible to all and be totally socially inclusive.

Stations drive job creation and the innovative use of existing space can unlock land previously thought to be inaccessible.

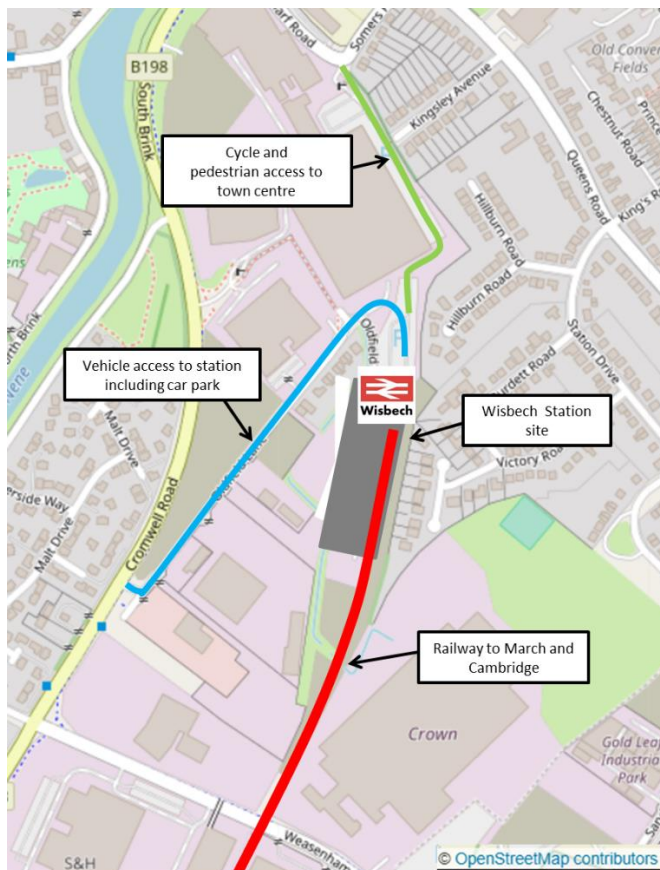
Today, the impact of stations goes far beyond architecture and aesthetics – stations can genuinely transform local economies and communities.

The aim of Wisbechrail must

- Improve transport connectivity for Wisbech and Cambridgeshire
- enhance the quality of life of Wisbech and Cambridgeshire
- Improve transport opportunities
- enable sustainable housing development
- enable the development of a mixed economy
- improve safety and security with linkage to a transport hub that includes a green wheel of safe cycleways and pathways to all parts of the town
- reduce transport's contribution to climate change and improve resilience

These can only be optimised by building the railway back to a town centre station.

Don't short change us on the location of the site of a new Wisbech railway station.



Wisbechrail background

There is a long history of efforts to restore passenger train services to Wisbech since withdrawal of service in 1968. Freight services continued until 2000. The railway from Wisbech to March has never been formally closed and is officially “mothballed” and is a part of the national regulated network. The original act of Parliament still obtains right up to the town centre site available for a station.

We welcome ideas and suggestions. There is more information on our website www.wisbechrail.org.uk and on Facebook www.facebook.com/WisbechRail with contact information here www.wisbechrail.org.uk/contact

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