

Devizes Development Partnership

**Response to Public Consultation  
GWR Franchise**

20 February 2018

**Devizes Parkway**

## **Response to Public Consultation**

This document is a response to the Department for Transport's Public Consultation about the Great Western Railway franchise, submitted by the Devizes Development Partnership ("DDP").

**Response to question 17:** *"Are you promoting a scheme for a new station or line which has a realistic prospect of being funded?"*

DDP is promoting a new parkway station serving Devizes. Our plans indicate that the development cost, including works undertaken by Network Rail, will be substantially self funded. The station will generate economic benefits with a GVA value in excess of £200m. Additional funds, if required, may be available via the LEP, the New Station Fund or other sources.

**Response to question 18:** *"What actions would you like the franchise to undertake in order to support the development of this scheme?"*

DDP want the franchise requirements to encourage the Train Operating Companies to plan for the creation of Devizes Parkway, by anticipating services on the Berks & Hants Line stopping at the new station between Westbury to the west and Reading to the east.

**Response to question 23:** *"Do you agree or disagree with reducing journey times to destinations in the South West by reducing stops at intermediate stations?"*

We wish to increase the number of journeys undertaken in Wiltshire, which will encourage economic growth. Westbury provides a junction where east/west traffic along the Wiltshire Corridor between Bedwyn and Frome intersects with the north/south routes connecting with Swindon, the south coast, Bristol and South Wales. If ambitions to speed services to the south west peninsula stations would be achieved at the expense of poorer service to Westbury, we would be strongly opposed.

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## **1. The Devizes Development Partnership**

DDP (Trading) Limited (t/a Devizes Development Partnership or DDP) is a “not for profit” company, limited by guarantee. It exists to support the regeneration and economic development of Devizes in Wiltshire. It has led a number of successful projects in the town, most recently the establishment and management of a CCTV system that has considerably reduced crime and anti-social behaviour.

According to the 2011 Census, the population of Devizes’ built-up area was over 18,000, with a further 14,000 residents in the immediate vicinity of the town. The population is greater today.

DDP operates as a partnership with:

- private sector businesses with interest in Devizes,
- the public sector supported by Wiltshire Council and Devizes Town Council, and
- community groups.

It also has effective relationships with the police, the Devizes Area Board of Wiltshire Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Member of Parliament.

DDP has formed a dedicated working group charged with pursuing the development of better access to rail transport, to secure the town’s economic, social and cultural development. The membership of the working group is detailed at Appendix 1.

## **2. Devizes’ Proximity to Rail**

Devizes has not had a railway station since the 1960s, when its branch line closed.

Of all the principal settlements in Wiltshire, Devizes is now the furthest from a railway station. Pewsey Station is 12 miles (25 mins), Chippenham Station is 13 miles (29 mins), Westbury Station is 14 miles (29 mins), Salisbury Station is 25 miles (44 mins).

Current services between the South West and London pass along the Berks & Hants line, within 3 miles of Devizes. At this closest point there is available trackside land, where we plan to build a parkway station to service the town.

To the west, travel time to Westbury’s junction will be 10 minutes, connecting travellers with Wiltshire’s increasingly popular north/south services. A little further, it will connect with the Somerset towns including Frome, Taunton and Yeovil.

To the east, the service to Newbury will take 25 minutes and Reading 40 minutes. This connects Devizes to the busy economy of Berkshire, and to the numerous rail services through Reading, including Crossrail.

(Current services to Great Bedwyn run on the same line, but stop 17 miles short of Devizes Parkway.)

### 3. The Case for Devizes Parkway Station

#### 3.1. Economic Development

The economic disparity between Wiltshire and its neighbours to the north and east is portrayed in the Gross Value Added per Capita statistics <sup>1</sup> :

Berkshire	£40,077
Swindon	£31,986
Wiltshire (excl. Swindon)	£22,260

This is corroborated when looking at education verses income. The Devizes parliamentary constituency has a higher than average level of educational achievement, but a lower than average level of average earnings:

	Devizes	South West	UK
Proportion of working population with NVQ4 or above qualification <sup>2</sup>	42.8%	37.8%	38.2%
Median average hourly wage <sup>3</sup>	£12.34	£14.00	£14.00

(1. Data for 2016, ONS release December 2017)

(2. Data for 2016, ONS annual population survey)

(3. Data for 2017, ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis)

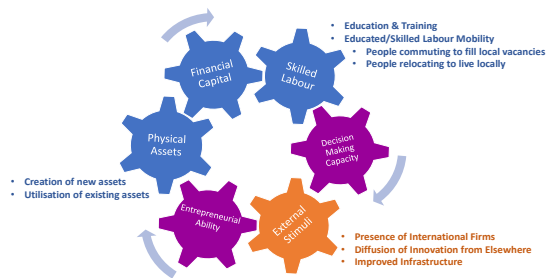
One might expect these gaps to be closed by people travelling in pursuit of self-interest, as happens on the M4 corridor. However, in common with many Wiltshire towns, Devizes is too far from the M4 to benefit. Poor transport links prevent meaningful economic synergy or equalization.

Devizes Parkway Station will provide east/west travel, and a quick link to Westbury for north/south communication. This is the key foundation on which a plan for economic development will be built.

In order to describe how the local economic performance of Devizes and surrounding districts will be brought in line with prosperous neighbours, we use a model derived

from academic study of Regional Economics <sup>4</sup>.

Regional Economic Development Model



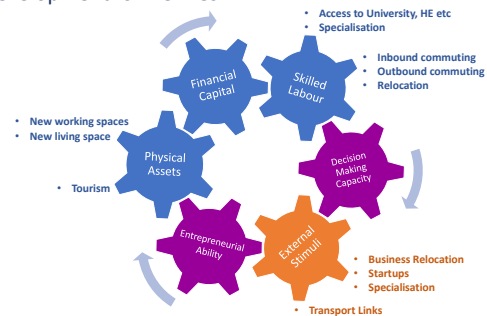
This starts with an understanding of the core elements of economic activity, considers the role of private enterprise and public policy in utilising these elements, and then looks at externalities that can trigger significant change.

(4. Regional Growth and Local Development Theories: Conceptual Evolution Over 50 Years of Regional Science. Roberta Capello. Géographie, économie, société Vol. 11 pages 9 to 21)

We then look at the specific circumstances of Devizes today, to identify opportunities.

In the modern world, development will come by creating a virtuous circle; developing a skilled workforce that feeds into a growing number of high value jobs. We believe Devizes offers a quality of life that will be attractive to workers in this knowledge economy, once we trigger that feedback loop.

Development for Devizes



In addition, we see synergy in encouraging tourism. Whilst jobs in tourism create less value than those in the knowledge economy, they encourage development of local assets and services that will be appreciated by knowledge workers.

### 3.1.1. Business Development

The creation of improved east/west communications will support the development of local businesses, who can take advantage of a geographically broader labour market than currently available, including the existing knowledge workers in the Thames Valley and the growing academic community in Frome. Coupled with modest business overheads relative to locations further east, this will create the economic conditions for business start up and incubation, as well as helping existing businesses.

The connection to Westbury creates a north/south link with Swindon and the south coast ports. Again, this should create opportunities for business growth.

We believe that the GVA/capita gap between Devizes and Swindon, for the existing working population, will be closed by 10% by the new station. However, for our economic justification of the station we have assumed a much more modest gain, eliminating the gap for just 400 people out of the 16,000 economically active residents recorded in the 2011 Census.

The Devizes Town Council coordinates a forum of the significant employers in Devizes, who have discussed the issues that impede their growth, identifying the attraction of skilled staff as the most significant factor. They support the plans to build the Parkway station, believing it will make a significant contribution to relieving this impediment. An example of this support, highlighting the difficulty in attracting knowledge workers, can be found at Appendix 2.

### 3.1.2. Commercial Connectivity

Existing enterprises in Devizes have highlighted current problems when travelling for business as an impediment to growth, often involving car journeys to Chippenham, Pewsey or Hungerford in order to board a train. By the same token, they believe poor communication deters potential business partners from engaging with them.

The creation of Devizes Parkway will provide practical travel along the Wiltshire corridor, as well as to Reading, Newbury and Frome. Viable rail travel to and from work in Swindon will replace existing road traffic, relieving the congestion on the Beckhampton commuter route. The new possibility of journeys to Berkshire's commercial centers, coupled with modest house prices and the attractive lifestyle



offered by Devizes, will encourage people to take on professional/managerial work in Berkshire while building family life in Devizes.

There is synergy between this outward travel and the business development considered at 3.1.1. above. The development of a pool of knowledge workers resident in Devizes will assist recruitment by businesses in Devizes and demonstrates the attractions of Devizes to business owners considering relocation.

### 3.1.3. Tourism

Improved rail links to the airports at Heathrow, Gatwick and Southampton, as well as reduced journey times from London, will increase tourism. Devizes is located between the “world heritage” attractions of Bath, Stonehenge and Avebury. It is also home to the Caen Hill locks, an exceptional attraction on the Kennet and Avon Canal, and the county’s museum. Currently Avebury and Caen Hill underperform as tourist attractions, relative to the pressured facilities at Stonehenge and Bath. Improved east/west communications will trigger the creation of coordinated tours of all four sites, based on overnight accommodation in the relatively low cost charm of Devizes. Our financial model supposes an increase of 2,500 individual overnight stays, limited by the capacity of accommodation. We believe the potential for growth in tourism is much higher, but should not be encouraged at the expense of Business Development.

### 3.1.4. House Building

Currently, house building in Devizes is predominantly on the east of the town, due in part to the geography. Since 2006 there is a statutory target to build 2,500 new homes by 2026. The town has already made good progress toward this target, but identification of new opportunities is being hampered by perceptions of the risk associated with “seriously overloading the infrastructure” (Devizes Town Council, 2015).

The new station will provide one element of the infrastructure needed to support further housing development on the east of the town.

### 3.1.5. Transport Synergy

The site of the new station is a short walk from a privately operated airfield. Close proximity of rail and air travel is unusual, and could provide incremental economic opportunities, although these have not been factored into our financial planning.

## **3.2. Social Mobility**

### **3.2.1. Education**

Daily travel to tertiary education by public transport is difficult for Devizes residents.

For Further Education, Wiltshire College's Chippenham and Trowbridge sites can be reached within an hour, providing access to certain courses. However, the new station will create access to Wiltshire College's Salisbury site and to Newbury College, greatly increasing the breadth of courses accessible from Devizes without a car.

Bath University and the Swindon campus of Oxford Brookes are both at least 80 minutes away. Swindon offers a limited range of vocational courses, Bath offers broader courses, but targets candidates with the highest grades. So Devizes' children must generally live away from home or forego university education. For those from less privileged backgrounds, the cost implications limit opportunity. Devizes Parkway will bring the broad range of courses at Reading University within a one hour journey time.

### **3.2.2. Economic Security**

Economic insecurity has the greatest impact on those who cannot fall back on family wealth, disrupting long term economic commitments like housing and personal development. The new station will provide residents with access to a larger pool of employment opportunities, reducing the financial impact of unplanned job loss in our community.

## **3.3. Cultural Access**

### **3.3.1. Access to London**

London is the home of many national cultural assets, such as museums and theatres. The only public transport between Devizes and London is a daily coach service, which takes three hours. Anyone wishing to take advantage of the national cultural resources in London by public transport must fund an overnight stay. The new station will provide the ability to make day trips.

### **3.3.2. Sport**

The new station will facilitate travel east to Newbury Races and the Madejski Stadium within 1 hour. This is good news for fans of horse racing and Championship football. It

will allow travel south, to Southampton's football and cricket grounds, to the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff and to Taunton, the home of Somerset County Cricket.

### 3.3.3. International Travel (Holidays and Business)

Access to regional airports by public transport is currently difficult, the only option is a coach service to Heathrow. The new station will provide a route to Southampton Airport via Westbury, and to Heathrow and Gatwick via Reading.

## 3.4. Environmental Impact

### 3.4.1. Traffic Congestion

Car volumes in Devizes lead to regular and predictable congestion between the Bath Road and the London Road, from the town center to the edge of town, where the main trading estate is located. Improved public transport via the station will contribute to reducing traffic in the town. Traffic to and from the town will use Nursteed Road, which is currently the least congested and most spacious of the town's main roads. Traffic between the station and the trading estate will avoid the town by using the Eastern bypass.

### 3.4.2. Air Quality

Large sections of the main roads through the town have been declared as Air Quality Management Zones. Unfortunately, the medieval character of the street layout, coupled with geographic constraints to road construction around the town, mean that credible options for improving air quality have not previously been identified.

Devizes Parkway is far enough from the town that pollution from trains or cars visiting the station will have no effect on air quality in the town center. By substitution of some journeys from road to rail, other things being equal, the new station will produce a net improvement.

### 3.4.3. CO<sup>2</sup>

Train services to Devizes Parkway will be hauled by diesel or bi-mode locomotives. In general, diesel trains produce less CO<sup>2</sup> than cars for similar passenger miles travelled, largely because of greater passenger occupancy levels.

As Devizes Parkway will be serviced by train movements between Westbury and Reading, the incremental production of CO<sup>2</sup> is limited to:

- the fuel burn associated with the stop and dwell time, which is marginal,
- the fuel burn associated with getting travelers to and from the station.

This will be more than offset by the substitution of:

- car journeys to London and Reading, and
- travel to railway stations such as Chippenham, Pewsey and Hungerford.

## **4. Commissioning Devizes Parkway**

### **4.1. Political Alignment**

#### Devizes

Devizes Town Council is represented on the DDP working group, and has provided initial financial support. A letter explaining the basis of their support was sent by the Town Clerk, and is included as Appendix 3 to this report.

The Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan, a document supported by 90% of those residents who voted, says:

“Consideration is to be given to employment locations with good access to potential new rail access points, such as the former branch line junction with the main line at Lydeaway.”

(Note: Lydeaway is the proposed location of Devizes Parkway Station.)

#### Wiltshire

Three Wiltshire councillors are participants on the DDP working group. They have established that our plans are consistent with Wiltshire’s published Transport Strategy document and are ensuring alignment of plans as we move forward.

We have submitted a pre-planning submission for comment, and have obtained both advice from senior officers and financial support for the development of a full planning application.

#### National

Our local MP has expressed support for our activity.

## 4.2. Organisational Alignment

### Local Enterprise Partnership

DDP is in regular contact with Swindon and Wiltshire Enterprise Partnership, who are supportive.

### TransWilts

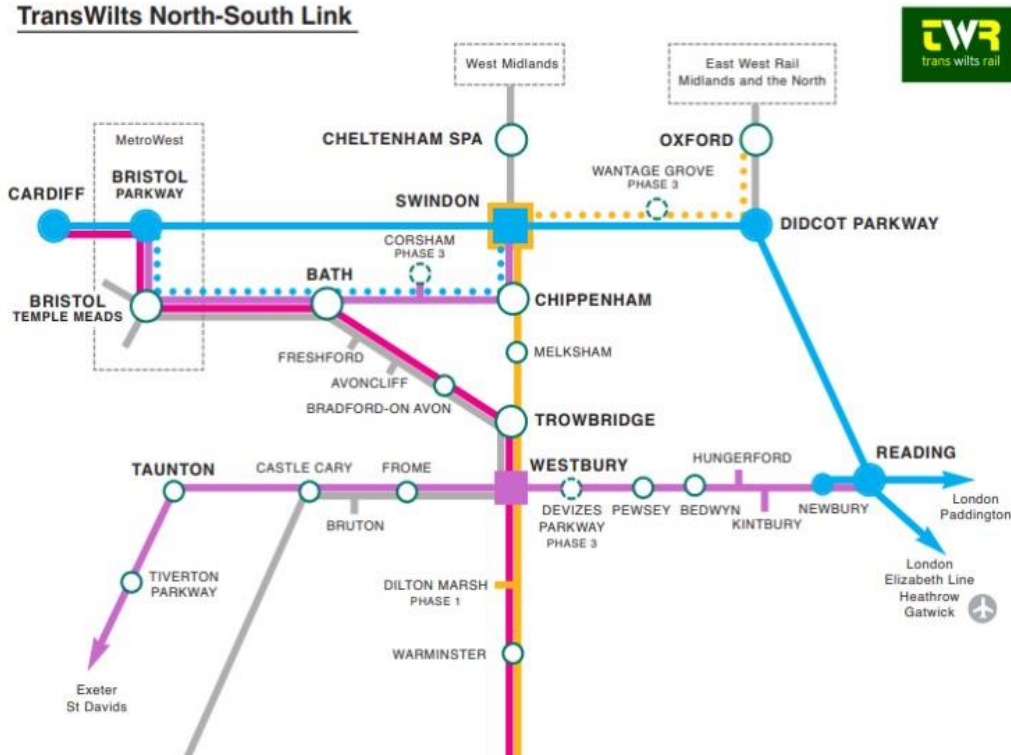
DDP is a member of TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, who are represented on the Working Group.

Transwilts have stated their support for our objectives:

*“Devizes Parkway*

*Devizes is three miles from the Berks and Hants line between Pewsey and Westbury. Devizes area population is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in Swindon and Wiltshire*

### TransWilts North-South Link



*31,030 in 2011 census and forecast 37,000 by 2026. Existing road infrastructure is poor and providing a rail link will have a large impact on the local economy. The station would together with Pewsey and Bedwyn provide mid-Wilts connectivity for a population corridor poorly served by road and connecting bus services. The town is close to the other WHS site at Avebury and Devizes Museum contains the prehistoric relics associated with the WHS sites in Wiltshire. The train service for the station would connect to Reading in the east, and Westbury-Frome-Taunton-Exeter to the west. A suitable station site has been identified at Lydeaway where the old GWR railway connected to the Berks and Hants line. A 3<sup>rd</sup> party development group Devizes Development Partnership (DDP) has acquired options on the land for a park and ride and some housing.”*

The image above is a segment of a TransWilts schematic.

#### **4.3. Public Engagement**

The project has recently been publicized using local print media and radio. The response has been overwhelmingly supportive.

[http://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/15910801.Devizes\\_52\\_year\\_wait\\_for\\_train\\_station\\_could\\_end/](http://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/15910801.Devizes_52_year_wait_for_train_station_could_end/)

#### **4.4. Legal and Practical Capacity**

DDP has the legal capacity to commission the building of the new station. Practical issues of constitution and routine banking facilities are in place. We have existing relationships with potential lenders.

#### **4.5. Access to Land Purchase**

We have identified and contacted all the land owners with an interest close to the new station. They have all expressed a willingness to sell the land required and/or provide access. We are actively arranging legally binding purchase options.

#### **4.6. Transport Links**

We understand the need to provide car parking, bus links to the town center and trading estates, and cycle access. We are developing all three:

- We have identified parking for 400 cars, which is built into our plans.
- There are already buses that pass near the site of the new station, the frequency and timing of which could be expanded and orchestrated to service train services. The town bus service could be revised to link with the station.

- There is a viable cycle route utilizing the closed branch line, and we are investigating options both for development of the track and the provision of shared ownership cycles and in the longer term the use of autonomous vehicles.

We have initiated planning of adjustment to the highway at the point where the access to the station would intersect with the A342. The required changes are feasible, and consistent with the aspirations of adjacent landowners.

## Appendix 1: Members of the Devizes Development Partnership Working Group

Name	Role/Representation	Brief Biography
Peter Ley	Chair of Working Group	Peter has led a diverse range of successful business ventures including, but not limited to, the operation of public transport and the development of commercial property. His strong ties to the local community include 8 years Chairing the Governors of a large secondary school and leading the Devizes Development Partnership in its formative years.
Other Members:		
Roger Croft MBA	Chair of DDP	Roger has been chair of the DDP for 10 years. He is a specialist in Entrepreneurship and some aspects of regeneration, currently working within the Renewables market. His activities have included experience with Bath University, and practicing as a DTI consultant for innovation.
Peter Evans	Wiltshire Council Devizes Town Council	Peter represents the Devizes East Division on Wiltshire Council, and is a Devizes Town Councillor. He sits on the Eastern Area Planning Committee, the Environment Select Committee and the Standards Committee. In 2015/16 he Chaired Public Transport Review Task Group. Peter has been resident in Devizes since 1977 and was previously employed as Purchasing Manager at Hinchley Engineering. He was elected to Devizes Town council in 2002, to Kennet District Council in 2003 and in 2013 he was elected to Wiltshire Unitary council.
Simon Fisher	Devizes Town Council	Simon is the acting Town Clerk for Devizes Town Council and is responsible for delivering Town Council initiatives and projects which benefit the local community. A Local Government Officer in Devizes for over 20 years, he has wide knowledge of local issues and community expectations, which can help shape the future growth of the town, both economically and its attractiveness of as a place to live, work and visit. He has extensive experience at project management, securing external funding and delivery local services that contribute to the character and appeal of Devizes.



Richard Gamble	Wiltshire Council	Richard Gamble represents the Lavingtons and Earlstoke Division on Wiltshire Council, Portfolio Holder for Arts, Heritage & Tourism and formerly Portfolio Holder for Public Transport. He is a Director of TravelWatch SouthWest and a Trustee of Wiltshire Museum.
Robert Gordon		Bob trained as an Accountant. He has worked in many different countries at MD/CEO level in various industries such as Hotels, Manufacturing, Retail Motors, Vehicle Leasing, Supermarkets, Shipping and Railways. Since leaving the Inchcape Group in 1999 after 22 years service Bob has predominantly worked as a Management Consultant specialising in Managing Change, Profit Improvement and Company Start ups.
Ceri Gosling		Ceri is a Chartered Accountant, with a MSc in Public Policy. He spent 30 years managing Manufacturing and Engineering businesses with BTR, Invensys Rail and Siemens. At different times he had leadership responsibility for Finance, IT, Research & Development and Project Management. He played a significant part in defining the growth strategy for Invensys Rail that realized €2 Billion for stakeholders.
Simon Jacobs	Wiltshire Council	Simon represents the Devizes and Roundway South Division on Wiltshire Council. He has been chair of the Devizes Area Board since 2013. Wiltshire businessman and resident since 1993, he has extensive knowledge of land usage, market conditions and business needs in and around Devizes.
Paul Johnson	TransWilts	Paul is Chair of the TransWilts CRP, a role he has held since 2013. In 2012 he retired as Chair of Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK) Ltd, after 12 years as an Executive. He was previously Chair of; the Railway Industry Association, Wiltshire Strategic Economic Partnership and Founding Chair of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership. He was also a Director of the SW Board of the Engineering Employers Federation.

## **Appendix 2: Illustrative Example of Business Support**



Oakford Internet Services  
9 Prince Maurice Court  
Devizes, Wiltshire  
SN10 2RT

03302 230 230  
[info@oakfordis.com](mailto:info@oakfordis.com)  
[www.oakfordis.com](http://www.oakfordis.com)

Simon Fisher  
Devizes Town Council  
Town Hall  
St John's Street  
Devizes  
SN10 1BN

29th January 2018

Reference: Train station in Devizes.

Dear Simon,

Thank you for the information about the possible train station being built in Devizes.

We are a local Internet Service Provider (ISP) that service a national audience. This is a high tech business which relies on attracting talent from across the South of England. Currently we find this extremely hard due to the fact that it is much harder to commute to Devizes than other towns such as Chippenham and Westbury. I believe that a main line railway station connecting us to Reading and London will help us significantly.

Yours sincerely,

Peregrine Sharples  
Managing Director

## Appendix 3: Letter of Support from Devizes Town Council



Please Ask for: Simon Fisher  
Direct Line: 01380 722346  
Email: SimonFisher@devizes-tc.gov.uk

SDF/L4634

8 February 2018

Ceri Gosling  
Devizes Development Partnership

Via Email [ceri.gosling@gmail.com](mailto:ceri.gosling@gmail.com)

Dear Ceri

### **Proposed Devizes Parkway Station**

At its meeting on the 16 January 2018, Devizes Town Council formally agreed in minute number 514 that the town would benefit from enhanced access to the rail network with the building of Devizes Parkway Station.

It coming to that conclusion it is clear to the Town Council that whilst Devizes is one of the larger towns within Wiltshire, with a population of in excess of 31,000, access to the town by rail services for visitors or as efficient form of transport for our growing business sector, is one of the poorest in the county.

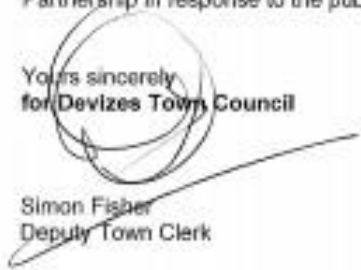
The town has wealth of history, not only within its boundary with attractions such as the Caen Hill locks, which is a scheduled ancient monument and Wiltshire Museum, which houses collections of national significance but also within a very short distance there are the world heritage sites of Avebury and Stonehenge, making Devizes a significant tourist destination. Poor connectivity means that access to the rich cultural heritage for many without private transport is extremely difficult.

Whilst Devizes has a vibrant business community, it is clear through our discussion with both large and small companies, there is a general view that the town is at a significant economic disadvantage through its lack of a connection to easily accessible rail services. Wiltshire Core Strategy identifies Devizes as a location for strategic employment growth, however whilst the town has much to offer potential new employers coming the town, through a skilled work force, good quality housing stock and an attractive quality of life, its isolation from the rail network is a significant barrier.

The Town Council recognises that it will not be possible to reinstate a new railway access directly from within the town, the proposed location of the Parkway station fits within the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan, as it will seek to removed traffic from the overly congested A361.

Devizes Town Council fully supports the submission put forward by the Devizes Development Partnership in response to the public consultation on the GWR franchise.

Yours sincerely  
for Devizes Town Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right, positioned over the typed name and title.

Simon Fisher  
Deputy Town Clerk

