

promoting quality public transport.....

Manchester Oxford Road Remodelling
Network Rail
(Freepost)

3rd March 2025

Dear Remodelling Team,

Manchester Oxford Road Remodelling

1. TravelWatch NorthWest is an independent Community Interest Company representing the interests of public transport users throughout North West England. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Please accept our apologies for this slightly late submission.

Accessibility and Ambience

2. Oxford Road is Manchester's 3rd busiest station, yet poor accessibility and facilities have been a feature for many years. The station lacks essential facilities, such as being fully DDA compliant, adequate and welcoming catering and retail outlets, and comfortable waiting rooms. We welcome proposed improvements to the lifts and the widening of platforms. A decent welcoming refreshment facility/ coffee shop would also be an improvement.

Timescales

3. The lengthy timescales are mind boggling. 5 years for the total construction and 2 years of complete closure are verging on the unacceptable. Passengers will suffer enormously. While trains can still run through without stopping, the disruption for passengers will be considerable, and anything to speed up the reconstruction should be investigated. We need to see more detail on how passenger journeys will be dealt with.

Station layout and platform provision.

4. We support the views of others including OPSTA, the Lakes Line Rail Users Group and Mr Roy Chapman. The major flaw in the plans is that it will not deal adequately with the heavy demand for services on this corridor. The proposed new layout at Oxford Road does not provide adequate flexibility nor additional capacity to deal with perturbed operations. Longer platforms will

allow longer trains to run but in future a minority of trains are likely to be less than the 8 coaches referred to in the plans. Many will be 2, 3 or 4 coaches in length.

5. The reduction in through platforms is just not acceptable. Three through platforms at least must be provided. The proposed middle (turnback) platform is short-sighted and counterproductive, neither meeting the rail user/ line-of-route requirements of easy access to Piccadilly and the airport nor enhancing operational resilience over current arrangements.

6. This platform must be a through one, to maximise the operational flexibility of the station and better allow recovery from perturbations, inevitable on the Castlefield corridor. For example, whenever there is a train failure, an issue with an ill passenger or a staffing issue in one of the two remaining through platforms, the corridor will be impassable in the affected direction.

7. Trains could still terminate in the middle platform if necessary (as they do in the current platform 3) but a through platform would enable one service to overtake another when required, and provide much improved flexibility, this especially at times of late running and at peak travel times.

8. We believe this decision has been made simply to save money. There appears to be a lack of vision and a pessimistic view of a thriving section of railway which has enormous potential for passenger growth in the future.

Track and Signalling

9. Resignalling and bi-directional operation are both needed. To improve operational flexibility, bi-direction working should extend even further west, possibly as far as Old Trafford Junction and Salford Crescent. We share some concerns that Network Rail does not appear to be looking at improved signalling and track (crossover) configurations now, in preparation for station re-modelling.

Wider context

10. This consultation could be said to present an over-simplified view of the issues at Oxford Road and the Castlefield Corridor. We are not convinced that adequate consideration has been devoted to the issues of capacity and reliability, not just at Oxford Road, but along the full Castlefield Corridor and beyond.

11. Adding to the comments in 4 above regarding the inadequate provision for the heavy demand for services on this corridor, the operational problems between Salford Crescent, Ordsall Lane Junction to Piccadilly and beyond have been made worse by:

- The premature opening of the Ordsall chord before the required investment at Oxford Road and Piccadilly. In the original Network Rail planning for the Castlefield Corridor (2012-2014), investment in these two stations was to precede the Ordsall Chord

- Excessive demands for access to Manchester Airport.
- The diversion of services from/to Yorkshire that originally used the train shed at Piccadilly to run via Oxford Road, the Ordsall Chord and Manchester Victoria.

12. In summary, we strongly support the need for Oxford Road station to be redeveloped and welcome improvements to passenger facilities and accessibility. However the operational proposals are untenable and should be revisited.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely,

John

John A Moorhouse
Director and Company Secretary