



GB Rail Freight Capacity Report

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On behalf of
Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited

Prepared by GB Railfreight
March 2026

GB Railfreight

**Capacity Report for Oxfordshire Strategic
Rail Freight Interchange (OxSRFI)**

March 2026

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General Information for this report:

This report has been prepared by Ian Kapur, Head of Strategic Access Planning at GB Railfreight Limited. Ian joined GB Railfreight in 2004, in its early years, and quickly became the main timetable planner for what has now become a very successful Freight Operating Company in the UK, and also into Europe via the Channel Tunnel.

Ian steadily built up GB Railfreight's timetable from just over 300 paths in 2005 to over 2400 paths in 2025, as the company's business has grown in many areas, but particularly the Intermodal, aggregates, biomass and automotive sectors.

Having headed a seventeen-strong timetabling and engineering access team until 2019, Ian is now responsible for ensuring that future railway projects and Government policy takes rail freight timetabling and growth into account and that there is sufficient infrastructure to make it happen.

Ian is also responsible for all of GBRf's Track Access Contracts, with the various infrastructure owners in the UK, and leads on the higher-level contractual side of timetabling between GB Railfreight and Network Rail.

As well as dealing with the company's own growing timetabling requirements every day of the year, Ian Kapur sits on the Network Rail Class Representative Committee, which makes decisions on changes to the rules governing national timetabling, and is a member of the Access Disputes Timetabling Pool of Members which hears detailed timetabling disputes between operators and Infrastructure Managers in front of a professional legal representative. Ian also advises many cross-industry groups on detailed aspects of accommodating rail freight over newly enhanced infrastructure to best effect.

GB Railfreight is one of the rail freight industry's great success stories. Launched in 1999, the business now comprises a team of over 1,400 employees, with a turnover in excess of £300m, and is still one of the few growing companies on the railway.

The company moves a wide range of commodities by rail, including containers, Biomass, steel, cement, aggregates, cars and petroleum to name a few. It also supplies Network Rail with bulk products for engineering work and is a key company involved with the building and renewal of railway lines throughout the country.

The company operates over 2000 trainloads a week, moving 22% of Britain's rail freight with high reliability. GB Railfreight also timetables, plans and runs the Caledonian Sleeper services between London and Scotland and accounts for almost

a quarter of all freight train kilometres in the UK, with the second largest operator share.

The GB Railfreight Timetabling Team specialises in finding capacity on the network for new business, where it may not be immediately obvious, as has been shown in recent examples in establishing brand new container train flows out of London Gateway, cross-London, to a variety of destinations, all at short-notice. GB Railfreight's success rate in establishing newly-bid paths is second to none and has been critical in pushing forward the expansion of the company.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 There are identified spare paths to/from the proposed OxSRFI , on the Chiltern Line, available in the current timetable for the running of additional railfreight services. These can cater for a variety of commodities and have been designed with freight running characteristics in mind.
- 1.2 Four return paths have been identified for services heading northwards to Crewe Basford Hall; two have been identified heading southwards to Wembley Yard and one return path has been identified heading southwards to Eastleigh (for Southampton Docks). Further paths have also been identified, with some in each direction, and there is potential for these to be added to create more “round trips” circuits.
- 1.3 This gives GB Railfreight assurance that there is enough network capacity for a new SRFI in this location, to be, robustly, served by rail.

2.0 “Chiltern Line” Services

- 2.1 The “Chiltern Line”, between London Marylebone and Aynho Junction (nr. Banbury), is primarily a two-track route, however there are some places where trains are able to pass one another. Between Neasden South Junction and Princes Risborough, the route is “mixed traffic” with some freight services running regularly over this section.
- 2.2 The route through the Chilterns has always had freight services running along it, including the section of route between Princes Risborough and Banbury, either as regularly timetabled freight or as freight services diverted over the line during the normal routes being blocked.
- 2.3 The line has signalling that currently allows services to follow each other at 3 minutes intervals between London and Princes Risborough, 4 minutes intervals between Princes Risborough and Bicester North, then 5 minutes intervals beyond Bicester North.
- 2.4 As part of this project, there are, however, plans for additional signalling north of Bicester North that will permit trains to follow each other more closely than the current 5 minutes intervals. This will greatly help with performance, reliability and likely capacity for even more freight services in the future.

3.0 Available Network Capacity

- 3.1 With the work that GB Railfreight and PRA Operations Planning Ltd. has carried out, using the May 2025 Timetable, network capacity has been found along the “Chiltern Line” and all other necessary routes in the south of England, West Midlands and the North of England. As is always the case with developing the timetable, it assumes some small level of amendments to existing services, which is a standard industry practice available to Network Rail when it is developing each new timetable. The detail comprises four return paths heading northwards to Crewe Basford Hall; two heading southwards to Wembley Yard and one return path heading southwards to Eastleigh (for Southampton Docks). The work has identified further paths, with some in each direction, and there is potential for these to be added to create even more “round trips” circuits.

3.2 Also contained in the timetable, there are validated strategic capacity paths, developed very much with new freight traffic in mind. Such strategic capacity paths are available for use, in order to help create additional freight paths, on the following sections:

- i) The Southampton-Oxford-Birmingham corridor
- ii) In and around the West Midlands area
- iii) The West Coast Main Line through to Crewe and beyond
- iv) The Great Western Main Line between London and Reading
- v) The Reading-Southampton corridor

The above “spare” capacity, along these sections of route, help to create more freight capacity for additional services to and from the proposed OxSRFI.

3.3 At certain times of day (e.g. the evening time after 20:00), where the current level of services between Banbury and Bicester (and elsewhere) drops, this gives good opportunities for further freight growth, all in line with the Government’s 2050 Growth Target.

3.4 The “Chiltern Line” has regular weekday night closures broadly between 01:00 and 05:30 however, apart from these hours, the routes to OxSRFI (both from the north and the south) are available for freight services.

4.0 Path Utilisation

4.1 GB Railfreight has been instrumental in pushing forward the Capacity Management Review Group (CMRG), from April 2014 onwards, where every freight path that isn’t used is regularly assessed for whether or not it is:

- a) Not deemed of any further use and is completely removed from the timetable.
- b) Deemed useful for future freight growth and kept intact in the working timetable.
- c) Deemed useful for future freight growth but needs part of the path altering to make it more useful to freight operators and their customers.

There has been a huge amount of work carried out over the last 11 years and the current changes to timetabled freight paths, UK wide, are as follows:

Total number of freight paths examined (as at August 2025) = 9,847

Number of freight paths completely removed = 7,401

Number of freight paths kept and/or altered for strategic capacity = 2,446

This makes it quite clear that freight capacity in the timetable is often removed when no longer needed, giving potential new network capacity for new freight services, or an altered passenger/freight mix.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Taking all of the above detail into account, GB Railfreight is confident that there are at least 4 daily paths (each way) into and out of the proposed OxSRFI and we are confident that further paths could be found in the future. The availability of paths would be a mixture of services using both the north and south connections into OxSRFI.
- 5.2 All the information assessed by GB Railfreight, as summarised in this paper, coupled with PRA Operations Planning Ltd's report [Formulation of new train paths for OxSRFI Project PRA 5172 January 2025 – Appended to the Intermodality Rail Report], gives GB Railfreight assurance that there is, currently, enough network capacity for a new terminal at the OxSRFI site, to be robustly served by rail.

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