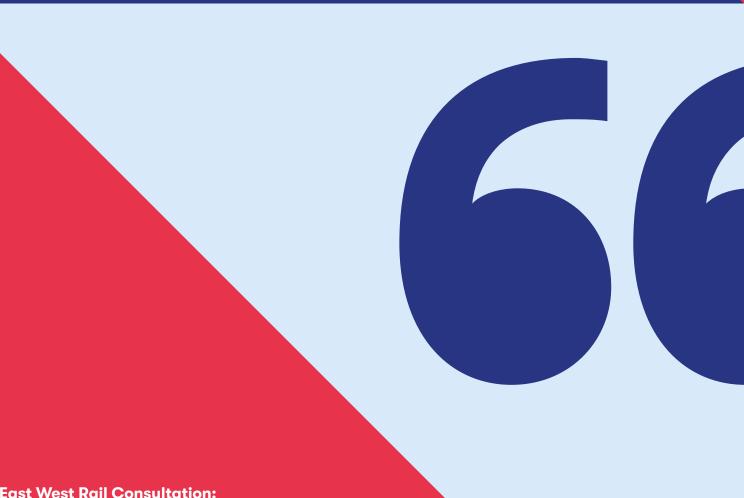


Making Meaningful Connections

You Said, We Did



East West Rail Consultation: 31 March – 9 June 2021



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Introduction

About East West Rail

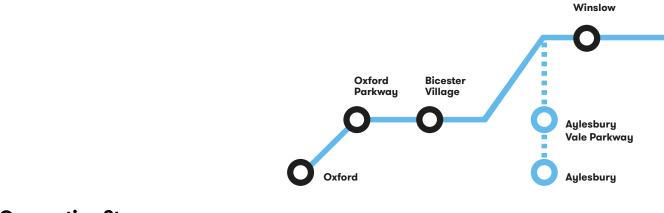
East West Rail is a proposed new rail link, which would connect communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. By making it cheaper and quicker to get around, supporting new homes and communities and by boosting local economies, the new railway line aims to create a range of opportunities for people right across the area and to help spread prosperity for towns and cities outside London.

The project is being delivered in stages. Trains are already running between Oxford and Bicester, and we aim to have trains running the full length of the line between Oxford and Cambridge by the end of the decade.

Preferred Route Option Announcement Event, 2020



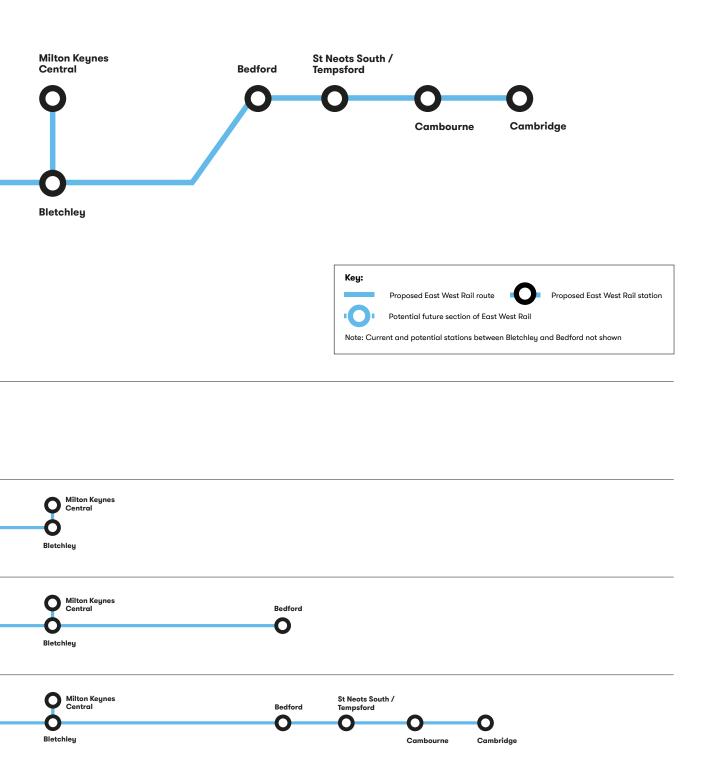
The Three Connection Stages



Connection Stages



EWR services



In order to run the services shown on this map and build the associated infrastructure, we must first go through a detailed planning, consultation and approvals process. To learn more about this process, please refer to the supporting Consultation Document.

1.1. This report

We are committed to engaging early to ensure local knowledge and experience can influence decision making throughout the planning and design of the new railway. In 2019 we invited people to participate in a consultation and to respond to proposals relating to the Bedford to Cambridge section of the line.

We received feedback from members of the public, community leaders and other stakeholders. This document provides a summary of the main themes contained in the responses to the 2019 consultation. It also explains how people's comments have shaped the latest proposals for the route alignment between Bedford and Cambridge which we are consulting on in 2021.

1.2. Consultation to date

Having identified five broad options for the route between Bedford and Cambridge, we held a consultation in 2019 to understand initial views from communities and stakeholders. We received over 7,000 responses.

We read and considered every response to the 2019 consultation. All the issues raised, along with our response, are presented in the 2019 Bedford to Cambridge Route Option Consultation Public Feedback Report and its appendices which are available on our website:

www.eastwestrail.co.uk/library/documents

The feedback received was particularly helpful in providing us with additional detail and local knowledge about each of the route options. Your responses also provided us with views on the project in general as well as feedback on how trains approach Cambridge.

Following consideration of the responses to the consultation and further work to develop the design of the new railway, we identified a Preferred Route Option. You can read more about how consultation feedback was considered during the process of selecting a route corridor in the Route Option Report which is available on our website: www.eastwestrail.co.uk/library/documents

During 2020 our team of engineers, designers, environmental scientists and other specialists have been working to identify potential options for the best alignment for the new railway between Bedford and Cambridge. We are now seeking your feedback on these proposals as well as proposals relating to customer experience and other areas of the railway. To access the 2021 consultation materials, please go to our website:

www.eastwestrail.co.uk



Preferred Route Option Announcement Event, 2020

Selecting a route

2.1 You said: these are the criteria that are important to us

During the 2019 consultation, we asked you to rank the following factors to help us to decide which route option between Bedford and Cambridge should be selected. We asked: on a scale from one to five, where five is most important and one is least important, how important do you believe each of the following factors should be in deciding on a preferred route?

The average rating and order of importance expressed by participants was as follows:

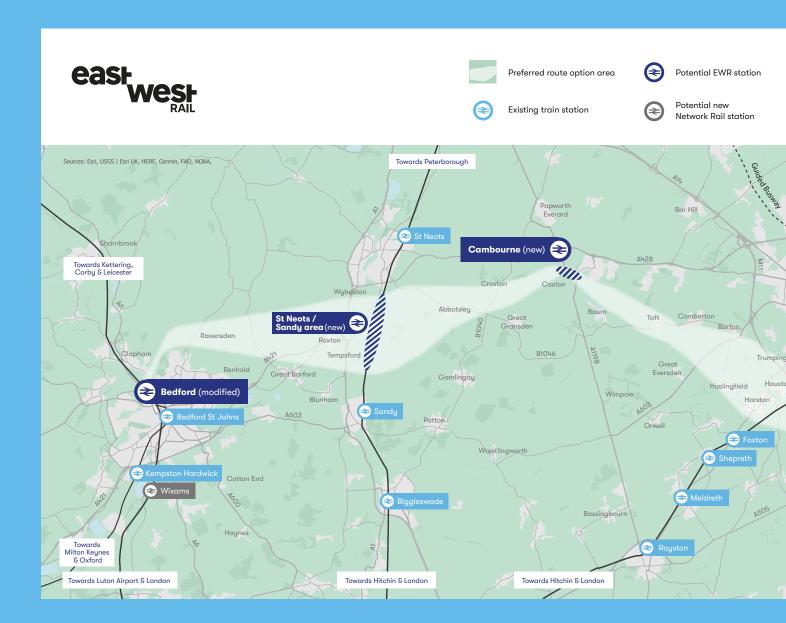
Factor	Importance	Average rating
Environmental impacts and opportunities	Most important	4.29
Benefits for transport users	\	4.28
Supporting economic growth	\	3.65
Cost and overall affordability	\	3.23
Supporting delivery of new homes	Least important	2.96

2.2 We did:

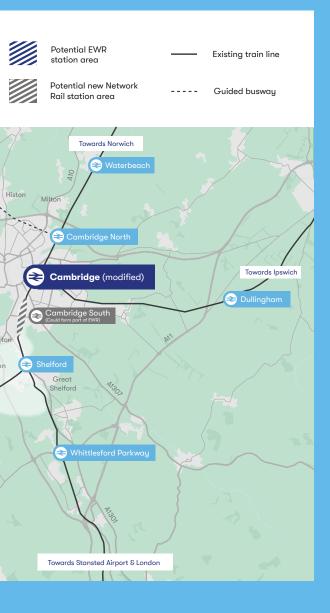
Following the 2019 consultation we used this ranking as one of the considerations when evaluating the different route options. When we assessed the five route options, option E scored higher than all other options on four of the five factors, including the three factors that were most important to you: environmental impacts and opportunities, benefits for transport users and supporting economic growth.

Bedford station





Preferred route option E



2.3 You said: we should serve Bedford town centre and Cambourne

During the previous consultation there was general support for a route in the northern part of our route corridor, where more people live, and where there are other transport projects. Route options via Cambourne (Routes B and E) were favoured more than routes via Bassingbourn (Routes A, C and D). Route E received the most support in responses to the consultation for having less of an environmental impact and serving more existing communities compared to other routes. Route E was also the preferred option amongst most local authorities in the Bedford to Cambridge area, including: Huntingdonshire Council, South Cambridgeshire Council, Cambridge City Council and Bedford Borough Council.

2.4. We did

We selected route option E as our Preferred Route Option. Route option E would link existing stations in Bedford and Cambridge with proposed new stations for communities in Cambourne and the St Neots/Tempsford area. By taking a route via Cambourne we can **avoid direct impacts on the most environmentally challenging areas** and reduce potential direct impacts on irreplaceable or sensitive environmental features.

Detailed analysis of the options also showed that route option E would **deliver the best transport user benefits** with new links to Thameslink and Midland Main Line at Bedford, the East Coast Main Line at Tempsford/St Neots and the West Anglia Main Line in Cambridge. It would also make it easier for people living in the Oxford to Cambridge arc to get to towns like Kettering, Leeds, Norwich and Nottingham.

We have also considered representations that have been made to us about the merits of approaching Cambridge from the north of the city. More information is provided on the left.

Environment

3.1 You said:

"We are concerned about the impact of this project on the environment."

You told us for all routes there is the potential for our proposals to impact on wildlife and biodiversity, the rural countryside, heritage assets and landscape character.

3.2 We did:

We're committed to protecting the environment by finding ways to deliver the railway that avoid, minimise or mitigate negative environmental impacts. As part of this, we have committed to delivering biodiversity net gain - leaving the environment in a better state than we find it. For instance, we are committed to enhancing habitats for wildlife where possible. We are considering the impact on all environmental factors including agricultural resources, heritage assets, communities, water courses, environmentally significant sites and species.

To help local communities learn more about the many environmental features that we consider when developing proposals, we took the unprecedented step of publishing an interactive environment map. This map was built using open source environmental information from independent organisations and identifies features such as flood plains and key wildlife habitats. We have also begun an extensive series of land surveys to help us better understand environmental factors that need to be considered. You can view the map on our website.

"Route E has the least impact on biodiversity and specific species."

Many of you told us that route option E is preferred as it avoids important environmental assets.

Route option E, which we subsequently identified as our Preferred Route Option, gives us the greatest opportunity to avoid the most environmentally challenging areas and potential direct impacts on irreplaceable or sensitive environmental features, including heritage assets, with good opportunities to achieve biodiversity net gain. This route allows us to avoid environmentally significant sites, especially areas of ancient woodland, sites of special scientific interest and registered parks and gardens. This allows us to mitigate potential impacts in a more straightforward and cost-effective way.

3.1 You said:

"We are concerned about specific locations along the route"

Concern was expressed by local residents about the impact on the environment in specific areas, including, among others, Caxton, Bourn, Caldecote, Kingston, Toft, Comberton, Great Gransden, Tempsford, Woodbury Park, Blunham, The Hazells and Croxton Park.

"Beware of drainage issues and flooding."

You told us that we need to demonstrate greater consideration of flood risks. You highlighted concerns about drainage and waterlogging issues which may lead to higher engineering costs. You highlighted that route option E would need a new crossing over the Great Ouse near.

3.2 We did:

We recognise that development of the railway will have an impact on the environment. We have considered these impacts very carefully in identifying a number of a proposed route alignment options and you can find out more detail about these in the Consultation Document. As a result of feedback from stakeholders, we have considered the possibility of developing alignments outside the preferred route option E, but within the same general area, in order to reduce impacts where reasonably possible. You can view the interactive environment map to see the many environmental features we're considering when developing proposals.

One of the reasons we chose route option E is because of the reduced interaction with flood zones and low-lying areas compared to the other route options.

We will continue to develop our approach to understanding and mitigating any Project-related risks linked to climate change. We will consider changes to climatic conditions and extreme events within the design of the Project where relevant. We will also develop flood risk assessments as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment. We will provide further information during our statutory consultation in winter 2021/2022.

As people suggested in the 2019 consultation in relation to route option E, we have set out proposals that include plans for a new crossing over the Great Ouse near Clapham. You can read more about the proposals for this area in Section D of the consultation materials on our website.

3.1 You said: 3.2 We did: "Railways divide human and We understand these concerns. Our proposals have wildlife communities." been developed with environmental considerations at the forefront. You told us about your concerns that a railway can divide communities and deter or prevent free Wimpole and Eversden Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located within the movement of wildlife, in addition to inflicting direct route option area and within 3-4km of the physical damage on fauna, flora and habitat. emerging route alignments around route option E. The protection afforded to this site due to the presence of a colony of barbastelle bats means we are thinking carefully about how the construction and operation of the railway may interact with the bats and their use of the area. To help our understanding, we undertook a programme of surveys focusing on protected species, including barbastelle bats, in 2020 and will build on this in 2021. We expect to include mitigation in our proposals for bats inhabiting this SAC. We are also considering where the new railway may encounter habitats used by other protected species, such as badgers or great crested newts, and what mitigation we may need to provide. To help ensure we understand where species are in the landscape, we undertook initial habitat surveys in 2020. We will continue to build on these and carry out species specific surveys in 2021. "We expect to see noise included in the list of We are aware that noise from both the construction potential risk factors." and operation of a railway is an important issue for local communities. We will look for ways to avoid and reduce noise and vibration effects to avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as far as possible.

Examples of work already done along the route between Oxford and Milton Keynes to protect the natural environment and meet our commitments on biodiversity net gain.

New badger setts

- 18 artificial badger setts have been established
- These will help offset the project's environmental impact and create a 10% biodiversity net gain
- The setts have been established over the last two years, well in advance of any of the existing setts being discontinued. Many of the setts were used for breeding in 2020.

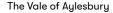
A new bat house for the perfect roost

 The old Swanbourne Station has been disused since the Varsity Line was closed in the 1960s. The station building had become a roost for seven species of bats

- A bespoke 'bat house' was placed in a nearby location for the bats to use
- The bat house contains bat boxes and other features which make it a perfect roost.

Thousands of new trees

- More than 100 hectares of new habitats have been created in our Ecological Compensation Sites
- This includes planting approximately 136,000 trees so far
- We have also replanted grasslands and plants such as orchids
- Blackthorn scrub has been cut back to allow the eggs of hairstreak butterflies to hatch.

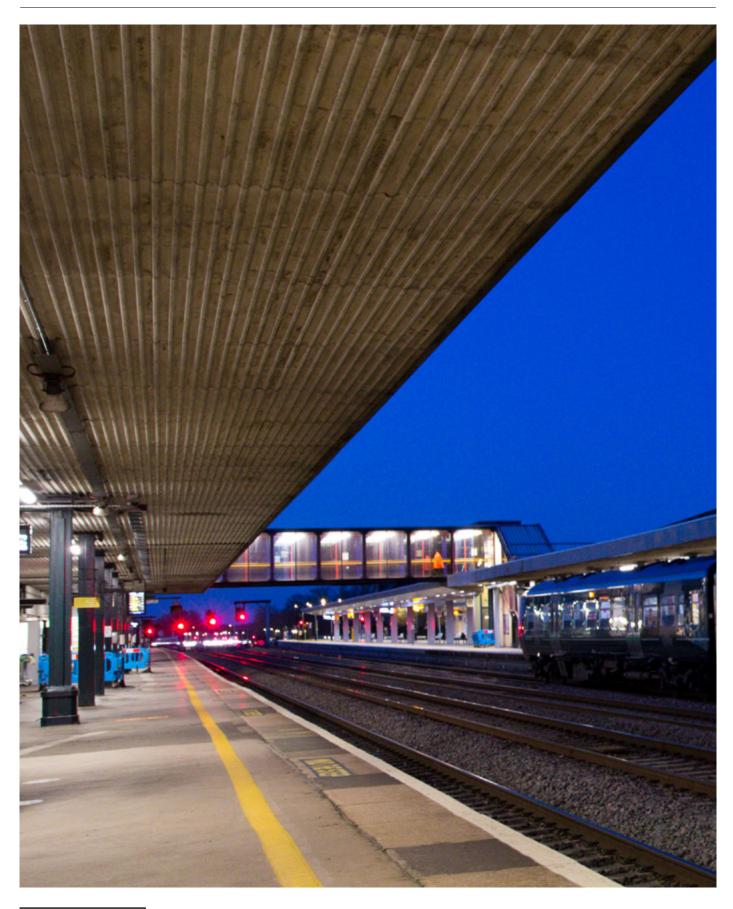




Benefits for transport users

4.1 You said:	4.2 We did:
"Benefits for transport users is the second most critical factor in deciding a route."	The selection of a preferred route option following the previous public consultation was based on a combination of fifteen assessment factors, which included transport user benefits, capital and operating costs and performance against the overall programme objectives for East West Rail.
	Route option E performed best in terms of securing transport user benefits, including:
	 Benefits experienced by passengers from faster journeys and lower fares Benefits to road users associated with more people choosing to travel by train rather than driving Benefits of reduced environmental impacts due to modal shift where users change the mode of transport they use to make a journey, such as taking the train instead of using a private car
	You can find further information in the Consultation Document and in Appendix C of the Technical Report.
"Route E delivers many transport positives." There was support for Route E because it provides better public transport connections to support existing and committed housing and employment growth at Cambourne, West Cambourne and Bourn Airfield. You also told us that this route provides growth potential for new settlements (rather than extensions to existing towns) in the area near the ECML, East West Rail, A1, and A428/A421 between St Neots and Sandy.	 We carried out detailed economic modelling which identified that Route E provides the greatest benefits for transport users because: Route E provides direct connectivity to Bedford town centre and serves the most households when taking account of the catchment area around Bedford Midland station and the growing population at Cambourne. Route E provides better connectivity by providing for a single interchange with services to and from destinations in the East Midlands (e.g. Kettering and Corby). The modelling suggests a considerable proportion of passengers who would use a new station to the south of Bedford would use it to access north-south Thameslink services to and from London, rather than east-west services.

4.1 You said:	4.2 We did:
"The route should complement but not duplicate the proposed Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro and guided busway."	One of the reasons for selecting Route Option E is that it would connect the growing population of Cambourne with environmentally sustainable transport and could integrate with proposed improvements to the local transport network in south Cambridgeshire such as the busway extension and Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro, without duplicating existing public transport links.
"Align with and be aware of cumulative impacts of the A428 improvements." Highways England's A428 works west of Cambourne provide an opportunity to collaborate and share routes/ infrastructure; doing so would reduce environmental damage.	East West Rail and the A428 Improvement are being delivered along the same broad corridor between St Neot's and Cambridge. We are working with Highways England to ensure that our respective projects are designed and delivered in a way that best connects communities, takes account of environmental factors and supports greater economic growth. A number of the route alignment options, including our emerging preferences, would run broadly parallel with the proposed A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement Scheme. You can read more about the proposals for this area in Section D of the consultation materials on our website.
 "The benefits and potential impact of freight using this route should be considered." You told us to: * Consider freight movements to reduce road traffic and associated carbon emissions * Have regard for noise during the night from freight trains * Consider the impact of night freight movement from Felixstowe – including how this might reduce road traffic 	At EWR Co we are responsible for passenger services. However, East West Rail (EWR) is being designed to carry both passenger and freight services in line with the objectives set for us by government. As we develop our proposals, we need to factor in both the existing freight services that are already running on the EWR network, as well as planning for future freight capacity. We are mindful of the need to balance this requirement with careful consideration of the local communities who may be affected by freight services. Further information will be provided on the freight strategy and our approach to avoiding or reducing potential impacts from freight trains which may run on EWR, at the statutory consultation, which is planned for winter 2021/22.



Oxford station

4.1 You said:

"Is this project needed?"

A number of comments queried whether new transport links are necessary as new technology means there is less need to travel to work meetings.

4.2 We did:

Over the last 12 months the COVID-19 outbreak has significantly cut demand for rail travel, but the long-term impact on rail travel is uncertain.

While no consensus has been formed about longterm rail demand in the UK, we have started to consider the possible impact more people working from home may have on the route and we will take account of any changes as a result of COVID-19.

However, it is important to highlight that we are not planning the service for just the next couple of years, but for the decades to come. In this regard, East West Rail is not just about providing rail capacity, but also addressing a lack of connectivity in the region. The new railway will provide passengers with sustainable public transport, making connections easier for people and local communities for the next hundred years.

Supporting economic growth

5.1 You said:

"A new route should bring development benefits and economic growth."

You expressed support for route option E as it:

- Improves east-west connectivity.
- Delivers the best economic benefits.
- Would increase mode shift onto rail for local and long-distance commuting along an existing growth corridor.
- Growth in this corridor supports local authority plans for south Cambridgeshire and Central Bedfordshire.
- Potential to provide benefits to Huntingdonshire through additional development.
- Stations near Cambourne and Tempsford will support new housing.
- A station serving the centre of Bedford would support regeneration in the town centre and provide access to jobs and leisure opportunities for people in existing and expanded settlements served by the railway.
- Facilitates sustainable development across the St Neots/ Cambridge corridor.

5.2 We did:

The National Infrastructure Commission has estimated that creating transport links and supporting the area between Oxford and Cambridge is worth nearly £80bn extra each year for the British economy. The opportunities that route option E provided in terms of facilitating sustainable development and economic growth played a key part in our decision to select it as the preferred route option:

- It achieved the highest score on this key
 Assessment Factor which was ranked as third
 most important based upon responses to our
 2019 consultation.
- New links to Thameslink and the Midland Main Line at Bedford, the East Coast Main Line in the vicinity of Sandy/St Neots and the West Anglia Main Line in Cambridge will provide convenient additional inter-regional connectivity for people, making it easier to get to towns and cities like Kettering, Leeds, Norwich, Ipswich and Nottingham and making rail a more attractive option for local and long-distance journeys.
- By serving Bedford Station it provides easy connectivity into Bedford town centre and provides an opportunity for other bodies such as Bedford Borough Council to bring forward their regeneration plans.
- It also connects the growing population of Cambourne with environmentally sustainable transport and could integrate with proposed improvements to the local transport network in south Cambridgeshire such as the busway extension and Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro.

(continued)

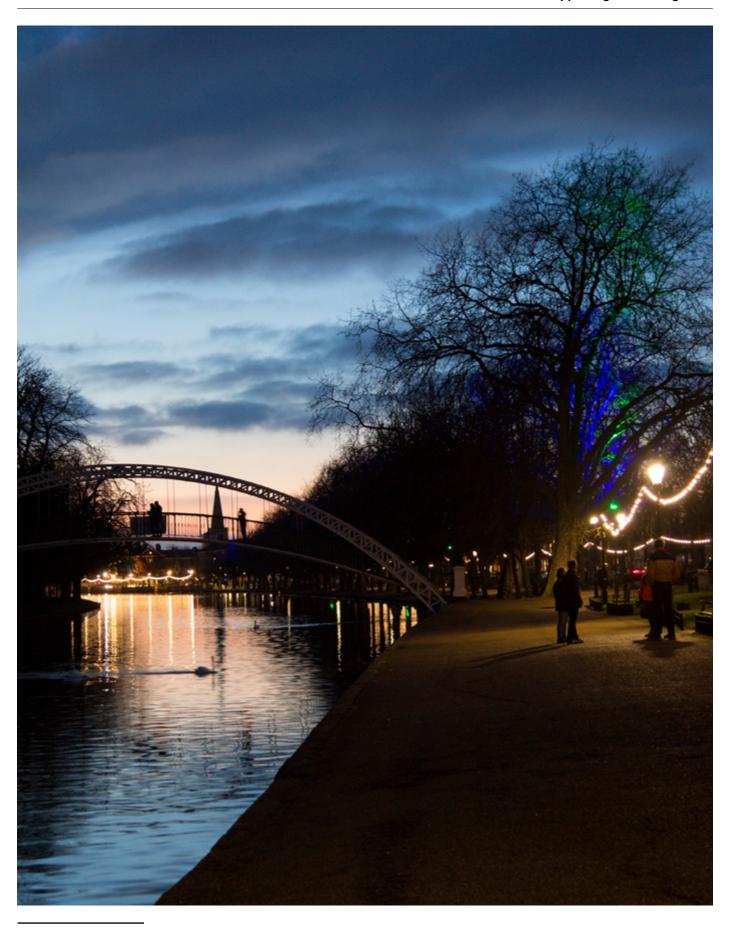
- The Route Option could support much needed development of more affordable housing in areas including Bedford, between Sandy and St Neots and at Cambourne; and
- Most responses from local authorities in the Bedford to Cambridge area supported this route.

Our emerging preferred option for Bedford station would provide passengers with a new and extended station at Bedford, unlocking the potential for further regeneration and supporting the aspirations of Bedford Borough Council. This would be a very exciting and significant development for the town which would act as a catalyst for further regeneration. The larger station would have more facilities for passengers and increase overall capacity by providing more platforms.

Cambridge station



5.1 You said:	5.2 We did:
"The route should support the delivery of new homes"	Following the consultation in March 2019, we further considered the opportunities for each route option to support the delivery of new housing, with particular focus on reviewing responses to the consultation from the relevant local planning authorities. We are not in a position to have a view on the specific number of homes that could be directly supported by EWR because it will depend both on third parties obtaining permission for housing and the choice of the final railway alignment. However, Bedford Borough Council has indicated that by serving the existing Bedford Midland station we could support their plans for development and regeneration within Bedford town centre. The Consultation Document sets out our plans to build a new Bedford St Johns station and redevelop Bedford station. This construction work could be a catalyst for wider regeneration in the town. The Consultation Document also explains our emerging preferences for route alignments between Clapham Green and the Eversdens. The potential to facilitate new homes and communities, including in particular the greater potential north of Cambourne, is a factor we have taken into account when putting forward the emerging preferences. Please see the Consultation Document for more information.
"Have you aligned with local plans?" Concern that East West Rail Co have not had regard for Local Plans in the area.	We appreciate the importance of Local Plans in helping to shape communities and have taken these into account as part of our route alignment development process. We have been working closely with local planning authorities, who are responsible for identifying appropriate locations for a sufficient supply and mix of sustainable housing and employment sites within their areas, through the local planning process and continue to monitor this.



Bedford at night

Costs

6.1 You said:	6.2 We did:
"Cost is important, but should not be the deciding factor"	In the 2019 consultation indicative costs were provided for each route option. Further work has been carried out which has resulted in revised indicative cost projections. The revised cost estimates indicate that Route E would incur the second lowest upfront capital costs. Cost was only one of the factors that were taken into consideration in helping to identify our Preferred Route Option and was ranked as the second least important factor by responses to our 2019 consultation. A factsheet setting out more information on indicative costs is available on our website.

6.1 You said: 6.2 We did: "Will the project costs overrun?" We have included appropriate levels of contingency as some uncertainties on projected costs remain Concerns were raised that project documentation inevitable at this stage of bringing forward a major does not include financial breakdowns of the infrastructure project. different route option construction costs. We're committed to seeking out the most appropriate way to deliver the Project, and for the communities EWR will serve. In the next phase of the Project, our focus will be on designing to ensure effective construction, reliability, maintenance and operations to ensure that so-called whole life costs are minimised and customer experience is maximised. To do this, we also need to consider people's responses to the 2021 consultation on route alignments for the preferred route. Once a route alignment is agreed, further work will be necessary, for instance relating to potential land acquisition, that may affect indicative costs. For further information, please see the factsheet on indicative costs on our website. "Do project costs include land costs or associated Yes. Our original cost estimates included high-level infrastructure and crossing structures including allowances for local infrastructure that would be bridges and road crossings?" required to access East West Rail stations. We have since been working closely with local authorities and other local stakeholders to ensure that the local infrastructure requirements are considered in detail and that appropriate plans are developed.

Route

7.1 You said:

"There is no clear preference to approach Cambridge from the north or south."

There was general support for a new station on the outskirts of Cambridge to reduce traffic into the city and therefore congestion, improving environment outcomes.

Some people supported a southern approach as it would be able to serve the new Cambridge South station directly. The southern route options would support the transport needs for south Cambridge and ease traffic congestion.

Of those who expressed a preference, responses were broadly equally split between people supporting our preferred option to approach Cambridge from the south and people supporting an alternative approach into Cambridge from the north. There were some concerns about the connectivity of the southern approach to eastern destinations such as Norwich and Ipswich.

Some of you expressed support for a northern approach as it might serve more existing settlements and allows for greater potential growth. An alternative route was put forward by the CamBed Road Rail group, taking a northern approach into Cambridge, which was mentioned by a number of respondents.

7.2 We did:

The decision to enter Cambridge from the south was based on engineering, operational, economic, and environmental reasons.

The Technical Report sets out further detail on the constraints and issues that would need to be considered for both northern and southern approaches into Cambridge.

The information in the Consultation Document addresses emerging route alignments in and around route option E, with a southern approach to Cambridge. In selecting a preferred route alignment we will also take into account comments about other approaches.

7.1 You said:

"Have you considered....?"

There was a broad preference to keep Sandy station in its current location.

Bedford

- * There was a general preference for EWR to serve the existing Bedford Midland station rather than a new station to the south of Bedford
- * A new Bedford South station between Wixams and Bedford Midland would mean cancellation of Wixams station
- * Cancelling Wixams station would lead to extra local traffic and congestion.

Tempsford station

- Lack of supporting infrastructure in Tempsford to accommodate a new station
- Tempsford station would require sustainable transport links – consider a public transport interchange at Tempsford station
- Station at Tempsford will support significant growth

St Neots

- New station south of St Neots would be detrimental to the delivery of a new settlement at Tempsford and detrimental to growth within Central Bedfordshire.
- * A new station at St Neots enables sustainable east-west and north-south travel.

(Continued on following page)

7.2 We did:

We considered all responses to the 2019 consultation before publishing the Preferred Route Option Report in 2020.

The 2021 Consultation Document sets out proposals for the route alignment between Bedford and Cambridge. The proposals include the redevelopment of Bedford station and the following shortlisted options for the railway between Clapham Green and the Eversdens:

- The yellow alignment which includes a Tempsford station and a Cambourne South station
- The dark blue alignment which includes a St Neots A station and a Cambourne North station
- The red alignment which includes a St Neots
 A station and a Cambourne South station
- The light blue alignment which includes a St Neots B station and a Cambourne South station
- The purple alignment which includes a Tempsford station and a Cambourne North station.

The dark blue and purple alignments have been identified as emerging preferences for a number of reasons:

- Joined up infrastructure they would run broadly parallel with the proposed A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement Scheme, meaning they already cover a route used regularly to connect people to places
- New housing and communities there is more potential for new homes and communities in the area (particularly for Cambourne North compared to Cambourne South)
- Economic growth alongside the development of new housing, a new station could bring economic growth to the community, creating more jobs and prosperity
- Value for money they are expected to be less costly to deliver than other alignments connecting to the same station pairings.

7.1 You said:		7.2 We did:
Cambourne		
*	Benefits for a station at Cambourne are rated highly.	
*	New stations at Cambourne and Northstowe would encourage more commuters to Cambridge to switch to rail.	
*	Concern regarding indicative location of Cambourne station and ongoing route from Cambourne to Cambridge; access to the southwest of Cambourne is poor and there is a benefit in locating the proposed station to the north to be accessible to local residents and to the A428.	
*	Support for a new station at Cambourne (not Bassingbourn) to build upon existing settlement strategy in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.	
The A428		
*	A significant number of respondents suggested that we consider alignments running parallel to the proposed A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement Scheme.	

Cambourne lake



Further information

We encourage you to view the consultation materials and respond to the 2021 consultation. All the materials can be viewed on our website at www.eastwestrail.co.uk

You can also access all of our previously published materials at www.eastwestrail.co.uk/library/documents