# Approaching Cambridge

**At the last consultation in 2021, we expressed our preference for a southern approach into Cambridge, serving the Cambridge Biomedical Campus via the new station at Cambridge South.**

**We've looked again at this approach and compared it with a northern approach and one that serves Cambridge North station.**

We've been able to make meaningful improvements to the northern option, which would significantly reduce its cost. We've also been able to make material improvements to the impact of the southern approach, by reducing the need for and height of embankments and viaducts through South Cambridgeshire.

Here, we provide more information on our assessments and conclusions.

## Approaching Cambridge – work we've done so far

In 2019, we consulted on five route options for the Central Section of East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge. All five of them approached Cambridge from the south based on engineering, operational, economic, and environmental reasons. In that consultation, we asked whether people felt we had been right to prioritise routes which approached Cambridge from the south. While a number of responses stated a preference for approaching Cambridge from the north, our overall conclusion was that approaching Cambridge from the south remained preferable and this was included in the announcement of the preferred route option in January 2020.

At the last consultation in 2021, we published proposed route alignments that approached Cambridge from the south, based on the preferred route option. In that consultation, we asked for comments on our assessments about the continued advantages of approaching Cambridge from the south. Many responses to the

consultation suggested that the decision to approach Cambridge from the south should be re-opened and that EWR should instead approach Cambridge from the north, stopping at Cambridge North before proceeding to Cambridge station.

Following feedback from the 2021 consultation www.eastwestrail.co.uk/consultationfeedbackreport, and through the Economic and Technical Report www.eastwestrail.co.uk/economicandtechnicalreport, we reconsidered the need to connect to Cambridge (Cambridge South station in particular) and revisited the options to achieve this, including a northern approach to Cambridge.

**Our assessments covered:**

 Impact on developments

 Traffic congestion and connectivity

 Future capacity and service extensions

 Impact on freight

 Environmental considerations

Our analysis shows that both a northern and southern approach to Cambridge are technically viable.

**Improvements we've made to northern and southern approaches**

- On the **northern approach,** we've reduced the need for two additional tracks on the existing railway, which would significantly reduce the cost of a northern alignment

- On the **southern approach,** we've been able to make material improvements by reducing the need for and height of embankments and viaducts through South Cambridgeshire www.eastwestrail.co.uk/embankments-viaducts-factsheet

Even with considerable improvements to the northern approach – including around cost and environmental impact – analyses shows that a southern approach is preferred because it serves the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, which is an unparalleled centre for life sciences of global importance. By serving the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, the southern approach is more likely to unlock the constraints on the Cambridge economy, create jobs, attract investment and deliver growth in the national interest.

## The opportunity for the Oxford-Cambridge region, and Cambridge's pivotal role

The Oxford – Cambridge region plays a significant role in the national economy, contributing £111 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy every year. It has the potential to become an economic supercluster, bringing together complementary specialisations across the region, which will bring an additional

£4 billion GVA per annum to the economy based on Cambridge's growth alone.

Life sciences is a key high-growth industry nationally and within the region. It is strategically important for the UK, generating an annual turnover of over £89 billion in 2020 and directly employing 268,000 people. The UK government recognises the importance of increasing investment in life sciences research and its ambition is to make the UK the most attractive place in Europe to invest in and establish life sciences businesses, which it committed to in the March 2023 budget.

Cambridge is a particularly important node in the knowledge economy, especially in relation to life sciences. It hosts the largest and most successful life sciences cluster in Europe. It's therefore imperative to focus on connecting EWR to Cambridge, which plays a leading role in the UK in the innovation, life sciences and technology sectors and provides the best opportunity to support growth in life sciences, in turn helping realise wider economic growth in the region.

Forecasts predict that 80,000 new jobs can be created in Cambridge by 2050 but that this growth is constrained by the existing transport network, especially to the west of the city, which is preventing people from accessing these opportunities.

## Serving Cambridge South station

Cambridge Biomedical Campus is a driver for economic growth, creating high value jobs and attracting investment. It brings together that 'triple helix' of the public and private sectors, combined with academia, that characterise the most successful life sciences clusters around the globe.

It's also part of a wider life sciences cluster growing south of Cambridge. These circumstances are not matched further north in Cambridge. The Cambridge Biomedical Campus already has 17,000 jobs within easy reach of the future Cambridge South station. Immediate productivity benefits could be enabled by EWR as the new connection would help facilitate access for the future workforce, boosting productivity for existing and future jobs and strengthening the potential of the Cambridge life sciences and technology cluster.

In addition, there are three times as many jobs within walking distance of Cambridge South station compared to Cambridge North. The existing transport network is also more congested in the south, making it harder for existing employees to get to work, and limiting further job creation.

## Other options to serve Cambridge South station

We considered whether it was possible to serve Cambridge South station taking the northern approach, but this would reduce the frequency of trains, extend journey times and would likely require passengers to change trains. It would make it harder for people living in Bedford, the Marston Vale or near St Neots/Tempsford to access the jobs at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus – and therefore it would not deliver the economic opportunity that underpins the case for EWR.

Having reviewed all the consultation feedback and following this extensive further study our conclusion remains that approaching

Cambridge from the south is the best solution for the city, the region and – given the global opportunity at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus – for the whole of the UK too. Approaching Cambridge from the south also means that EWR does not take-up the existing capacity on the rail network north of the city.

## Next steps

Considering all of this, we've concluded that the benefits of the southern approach outweigh the cost and delivery advantages of the northern approach.

We're continuing to refine the designs for the southern approach, and will present these for comment at the statutory consultation which we expect to take place in the first half of 2024.

## Get in touch

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