

Our approach to assessing options

Bedford to Cambridge



Assessing the relative merits of different options is critical to making the right decisions for the communities the new East West Rail line will serve.

First published as part of the 2019 non-statutory consultation, and again as part of the 2021 non-statutory consultation, the team has used a clear and consistent framework of fifteen Assessment Factors to appraise possible options, allowing us to compare and consider a range of aspects, to find the best balance of benefits.

Our approach

Fifteen Assessment Factors are used to evaluate how well options meet our overall objectives. These factors help us to determine the benefits of each option to passengers, as well as the broader communities the line will serve.

Originally developed by the EWR Consortium of businesses and local authorities with the support of Network Rail, the factors were refined further by the East West Railway Company. They have been agreed with the Government and give us a robust framework for comparing the relative performance of options.

These factors have been consistently applied since design work began on the section of EWR between Bedford and Cambridge and we will continue to use them to further assess and refine the design work following the 2021 consultation.

All fifteen factors are taken into account at each stage in design and will be applied in different ways according to the stage of development, as some may assist to a greater extent than others in differentiating between options.

For example, last year when we selected our preferred route option E for the route between Bedford and Cambridge the factors which acted as the greatest differentiators between options were benefits for transport users, supporting economic growth and the delivery of new housing, costs and overall affordability and environmental impacts and opportunities.

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The full list of fifteen Assessment Factors is:

1. **Transport user benefits** - the benefits experienced by passengers particularly in terms of journey time savings and modal shift (where people change the mode of transport they use to make a journey)
2. **Contribution to enabling housing and economic growth** - including best serving areas benefitting from land that can be developed
3. **Capital costs** - the upfront costs, including consideration of risk, to implement each option
4. **Operating costs** - the costs incurred in the delivery of the train service
5. **Overall affordability** - the financial implications of the options in terms of costs and incomes, over the whole life of the railway; also encompassing capital and operating costs
6. **Short distance connectivity** - to support commuting travel into key employment hubs (current and future)
7. **Short distance passenger services** - the extent to which EWR facilitates passengers wishing to make short distance local journeys on the EWR network
8. **Rail passenger connectivity to existing main lines** - the ease of interchange
9. **Long distance passenger services** - the extent to which EWR facilitates long distance passenger services beyond Oxford and Cambridge
10. **Freight demand** – satisfying both existing and future demand
11. **Performance** - the ability of the railway to meet or exceed customer expectations in terms of service reliability
12. **Alignment with wider railway strategy / infrastructure**
13. **Safety risk** – both in terms of construction and operation
14. **Environmental impacts and opportunities**
15. **Consistency with Local Plans.**

More information

The Technical Report published as part of the 2021 non-statutory consultation sets out in more detail how the Assessment Factors have been used and the outcomes of our work to date.

Get in touch

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