East West Railway Company

6 April 2021
Thank you for joining

This hour-long event on Zoom will include information about this public consultation before a Q&A session.

We’d be grateful if you could display your full name on your username – this can be done through the ‘Participants’ section.

Please turn your camera on but be on mute unless you’re asking a question during the Q&A.

If you have questions during the presentations, please put these in the chat bar and address to ‘Questions’.

Please use the ‘Raise Hand’ function in Zoom to ask a question during the Q&A, found in the bottom ribbon (sometimes found under the ‘Reactions’ option).

Display full name in username

Please use the mute function

Questions can be submitted via the chat (address to ‘Questions’)

Use the ‘Raise Hand’ function to ask a question during the Q&A

Please do put your camera on if possible
Who have we invited today?

Parishes

• Biddenham Parish Council
• Bromham Parish Council
• Bromham Parish Council
• Elstow Parish Council
• Great Denham Parish Council
• Kempston Rural Parish Council
• Kempston Town Council
• Stewartby Parish Council
• Wixams Parish Council
• Wootton Parish Council
Who have we invited today?

Bedford Borough Council

- Bromham and Biddenham
- Castle
- Cauldwell
- De Parys
- Elstow and Stewartby
- Harpur
- Kempston Central and East
- Kempston North
- Kempston Rural
- Kempston South
- Kempston West
- Kingsbrook
- Newnham
- Queen’s Park
- Wilshamstead
- Wootton
What we’ll cover today

- Introduction to the consultation
- What we’re consulting on
- How to get involved
- Next steps
What we are consulting on

This 10-week consultation is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts on emerging proposals for East West Rail and your views on the broader scheme.

The consultation document covers the following key sections:

- Customer experience and railway operations
- Proposed infrastructure development
  - Oxford to Bicester
  - Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line
  - Bedford
  - Clapham Green to The Eversdens
  - Harlton to Hauxton
  - The Shelfords to Cambridge station
Shaping customer experience and railway operations

This part of our consultation focuses on what future customers want from their railway experience.

We want to hear your views – from individuals and organisations – on the customer experience you would like from East West Rail.
What we’re consulting on

Customer experience and railway operations

As part of developing the customer experience, we are keeping our minds completely open about what we might be able to offer.

We are looking for feedback on what our customers think would make positive differences to their customer travel experience.
Section B

Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line
Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line

- East West Rail represents a once in a generation opportunity to provide a reliable, frequent train service for communities along the Marston Vale Line.

- Communities have an opportunity to protect the line, whilst making sure it meets the needs of local people today and into the future.

- It is not possible to introduce a fast, reliable and frequent service between Oxford and Cambridge without making a significant investment in the Marston Vale Line.

More information can be found in Section B of the consultation document.
Why are we proposing this work?

• The signalling system is obsolete and has, at times, been unreliable. This has led to train services having to be suspended on occasions.

• The existing infrastructure means the line is slow, with just one train an hour, taking 42 minutes to do 16 miles – an average speed of just 25mph.

• The stations are all unstaffed, and are very constrained in terms of the facilities they can offer passengers.

• Many of the stations have amongst the lowest usage on the national network. Indeed, three of the ten stations see fewer than 40 passengers on average each day.
We have identified two ways this part of the line could be upgraded:

- **Concept 1:** The existing hourly stopping service would continue to serve all Marston Vale Line stations, with a new limited-stop EWR service calling at two stations – Woburn Sands and Ridgmont – four times an hour.

- **Concept 2:** There would be five new merged stations on the Marston Vale Line – all five would benefit from at least two EWR services every hour, and some would have four. This would mean more communities have access to more frequent and faster services, direct to more locations.
The existing hourly stopping service would be largely unchanged.

Some shorter journeys on the route would take slightly longer—but end-to-end journeys would take roughly the same time as today.

Woburn Sands and Ridgmont stations would benefit from an increase to five trains per hour.

The four new EWR services would complete the journey between Bletchley and Bedford in around 22 minutes.

What could concept 1 mean for local communities?

Concept 1

Retain the existing hourly service that stops at all current intermediate stations, and introduce fast limited-stop Oxford – Cambridge services alongside it.
What could concept 1 mean for local communities?

- Most communities excluding Woburn Sands and Ridgmont would not benefit from these increased fast services and direct services.

- Existing communities could continue to access the train service as they do today – although passenger use at some stations is some of the lowest in the country.

- Most station facilities would remain largely as they are today – many of the stations are on constrained sites so they cannot easily be expanded to improve accessibility.

- There is the possibility that some villages would experience increased traffic and additional cars being parked in the vicinity of stations.
Concept 2

Provide more people easier access to more frequent, faster and direct trains at five merged stations on the Marston Vale Line.

Local communities would benefit from having East West Rail services calling at all five new stations, rather than just two of the existing intermediate stations.

More people would have access to more frequent services.

The relocated Woburn Sands and Ridgmont stations would have four trains per hour in each direction.

More people would have access to direct train services going further afield, including Cambridge.
What could concept 2 mean for local communities?

- More communities would have access to faster services - two trains each hour would complete the journey between Bedford and Bletchley in around 22 minutes, the other two trains – that stop at all 5 stations - each hour would take 27 minutes

- All journeys on the route would be quicker than they are today, without the need to change trains

- The services are likely to be more reliable in this concept than in concept 1, as there is no need for trains to overtake each other, which can cause delay

- Communities and users would benefit from new stations which would be purpose built with improved facilities

- Concept 2 would help avoid the risk of village roads being adversely affected by additional traffic and rail users’ cars being parked in streets close to the existing stations
Level crossings on the Marston Vale Line

• There are currently 31 level crossings on the Marston Vale Line

• These include public highways, private access roads, public footpaths, bridleways and agricultural access routes for farms divided by the railway

• We fully recognise the importance of maintaining vital connections for people whilst balancing the need to make the railway safer for everyone.
Network Rail gained permission to close 11 of the 31 Level Crossings on the Marston Vale Line as part of its previous proposal for the introduction of an hourly Oxford to Bedford service.

Network Rail has also recently closed three further crossings on the line.

East West Rail services would increase the number of trains beyond what was previously planned and we would need to close more level crossings to ensure a safe and reliable service.
Given safety concerns, it is a primary objective of the Office of Rail and Road to close level crossings permanently.

East West Rail would result in at least four times as many trains using the Marston Vale Line than is currently the case, with trains running faster than the current services.

This would make the existing level crossings on the Marston Vale Line unworkable in their current format.
We aim to close level crossings on the Marston Vale Line and replace them with alternative access.

We would provide between 16 and 19 new bridges over or under the railway together with new links to existing bridges. The aim of our proposals is to achieve:

- Convenience for users of the local rights of way
- Improved safety for all, given the new more frequent, faster services
- Increased reliability for those services, minimising delays caused by incidents or equipment failures.
Marston Vale Line upgrade and construction

• The railway line between Bletchley and Bedford needs significant modernisation to enable the faster and more frequent trains

• Major improvements are needed over the full length of the railway between Bletchley and Bedford, irrespective of the precise concepts and options selected, and we would need to close parts or all of the railway line during construction and testing

• We have considered the existing plans that have been developed for this section of the railway and looked at whether it is possible to minimise the disruption of construction work on local communities.
Our options

- **Option 1**: a series of short blockades
- **Option 2**: a prolonged blockade
- **Option 3**: a mix of short and long blockades
Section C
Bedford
Bedford

Improvements to the existing railway and a new section of railway

- Bedford station is already an important transport hub in the region

- The introduction of East West Rail services means the station and supporting infrastructure need a range of improvements to make sure sufficient capacity is available

- In restoring a vital rail connection between Oxford, Bedford and Cambridge that was lost to local people in the last century, these improvements can support local stakeholders’ future aspirations for more jobs, prosperity and growth in this lively, diverse town.

More information can be found in Section C of the consultation document
Bedford
Our developing plans

- **Bedford St Johns station**: a new station on a different section of track into Bedford, either closer to the hospital or to the south west of the existing station, close to the Ampthill Road – Elstow Road Pedestrian Link bridge.

- **Bedford station**: building new track to Bromham Road Bridge. The existing station building is proposed to be demolished and a new station building would be built.

- **North Bedford**: building new track in between Bromham Road Bridge and Clapham Green, creating the new connection to Cambridge.
Bedford St Johns

- There is only one track on this part of the railway that limits capacity and the station only has one platform.
- The track is on a very tight curve, limiting the train speed to 15mph.
- We expect to change the route alignment of the railway in this area, so that there is less of a curve, allowing trains to travel at a minimum of 30mph.
- This means moving the existing location of Bedford St Johns station.
Option 1

Relocating Bedford St Johns to the west, closer to the hospital

- The new railway alignment would move to the west from its current location and run beneath Ampthill Road and Cauldwell Street
- Cauldwell Street Bridge would need to be rebuilt, as is the case with option 2, as it isn’t high enough for our trains to pass under
- This new railway alignment would use the existing railway bridge over the River Great Ouse
- Bedford St Johns station would be relocated to the west, between Ampthill Road and Cauldwell Street.
Option 2

Relocating Bedford St Johns to the south

- The new railway alignment in this option would run beneath Ampthill Road and Cauldwell Street
- As with option 1, Cauldwell Street Bridge would need to be rebuilt, as it isn’t high enough for our trains to pass under
- This new railway alignment would require a new railway bridge over the River Great Ouse.
- Bedford St Johns station would be relocated to the south west on the existing railway alignment, close to the Ampthill Road – Elstow Road Pedestrian Link bridge.

We are considering:
- Moving Bedford St Johns station to the south west of its current location
- Adjusting its existing alignment
- Rebuilding Cauldwell Street Bridge
- Building a new railway bridge over the River Great Ouse
Bedford station area

• Bedford station is simply not able to accommodate the new services which EWR would bring to the town

• To connect the town with both Oxford and Cambridge, we would run trains through the station, leading to far more trains and passengers using the station

• To optimise the proposed journey times we would also need to ensure trains can operate at faster speeds in the Bedford area.
Bedford station area

The current station and infrastructure can’t support all of this activity:

• There is only one track from the Bletchley direction into the bay platform

• There is a bend on the track which restricts the speed to 15mph

• The track terminates at platform 1A so trains couldn’t use it to go through to Cambridge

• Available platforms couldn’t accommodate EWR services as well as existing services.
Bedford station area

To deliver the benefits, we would have to relocate the station buildings and make a number of changes to the infrastructure around the station, including:

• The existing railway as it approaches Bedford station from Bedford St Johns
• The Thameslink sidings
• Bedford station Platform 1A and other platforms
• Ford End Road bridge, and road access to Bedford station
• The location of the station building and access to it
To enable EWR services to run through Bedford and connect people with Cambridge, some significant infrastructure improvements would be required.

The existing Midland Main Line track north of Bedford station has seen substantial growth and is already well used with both freight and passenger trains.

Our emerging preferred option is to build two new tracks to the east side of the existing railway through Bromham Road Bridge and following the existing railway as far as the UK Power Networks Substation at Fairhill.

**We are considering:**
- Building two new tracks to the east of the existing railway
- Introducing a range of infrastructure interventions to support this, as shown on this map
Information for landowners

To construct and operate the new East West Rail line, some of the proposals put forward for consultation will affect people’s homes, businesses and farms.

• In developing our proposals, we aim to minimise the negative impact these may have on people’s land and property and mitigate any impacts we cannot avoid.

• While we don’t yet know for certain which land or property will be needed, we know that publishing our plans could potentially affect people needing to sell their home, agricultural holding or small business.

• We are consulting on a discretionary purchase scheme, the Need to Sell Scheme, that, if introduced, would support owner occupiers once the announcement of the preferred route alignment for the railway has been made.

• We have a dedicated team in place who are focused on how the proposals will affect people’s homes, businesses and farms. More information on how to contact them is available on our website at eastwestrail.co.uk.
Public consultation

Working with you

Two meeting sessions with your neighbouring councillors during consultation:

- **Today** – A session to run you through all the elements we will be consulting on that are relevant to you

- **Late May** – A more discursive session – once you’ve had a chance to read through the documents and liaise with your constituents and residents - designed to raise any questions you might have.
How your communities can get involved

There are lots of different ways to get involved in the consultation, including:

- **Virtual consultation rooms** – open from 12 April 2021 until 9 June 2021 which provide more information on each section of the consultation, including a full list of documents and maps available via the central table.

- **Online public events** – we are holding twelve online events for communities right the way from Oxford to Cambridge. There will be two lots of six events covering geographical areas along the route.

- **Live chat events open to the public** – a series of ten, two-hour live chat sessions held via the virtual consultation rooms, where participants will be able to discuss key topics directly with members of the project team.

- **Dedicated phone line** – the EWR Co telephone line will be available throughout the consultation period to enable those not wanting or able to engage online or in writing to speak to members of the Project team. The telephone number is **0330 134 0067**
Questions & Answers
How to respond to this consultation

We’re keen to understand what you think about the emerging proposals for the Project, and your views on the broader scheme.

Feedback forms can be submitted online by emailing us at consultation@eastwestrail.co.uk or sent by post to Freepost EAST WEST RAIL

For further information, or to request a paper copy of the form to be sent to you, speak to the team by emailing us at contact@eastwestrail.co.uk or by calling us on 0330 134 0067
What next?
Stay in touch

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