

# Minutes: LRG Webinar

**Held on:** 26/03/25 / 18:00

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**Location:** Microsoft Teams

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## Attendees

### Parishes

- Ambrosden Parish Council
- Barton Parish Council
- Bicester Town Council
- Blackbird Leys Parish Council
- Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council
- Brickhill Parish Council
- Caldecote Parish Council
- Cambourne Parish Council
- Clapham Parish Council
- Croxton Parish Council
- Elsworth Parish Council
- Great Shelford Parish Council
- Harston Parish Council
- Haslingfield Parish Council
- Hauxton Parish Council
- Hulcote and Salford Parish Council
- Islip Parish Council
- Little Shelford Parish Council
- Littlemore Parish Council
- Middle Claydon Parish Council
- New Bradwell Parish Council
- Newton Longville Parish Council
- Newton Parish Council
- Oakley Parish Council
- Offords Parish Council
- Ravensden Parish Council
- Sandy Parish Council
- Shenley Brook End and Tattenhoe Parish Council
- Steeple Claydon Parish Council
- Stoney Stratford Town Council
- Swavesey Parish Council
- Waresley-cum-Tetworth Parish Council

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- Wavendon Parish Council
- Wilden Parish Council
- Winslow Town Council
- Wixams Parish Council
- Woburn Sands Parish Council
- Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council
- Wyboston, Chawston and Colesden Parish Council

## **Wards/divisions**

- Bicester East Ward in Cherwell District Council
- Bicester North Ward in Oxfordshire County Council
- Bicester West Ward in Cherwell District Council
- Cherry Hinton Ward in Cambridgeshire County Council
- Churchill Ward in Oxford City Council
- Danesborough and Walton Ward in Milton Keynes Council
- Fen Ditton and Fulbourn Ward in South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Girton Ward in South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Grendon Underwood Ward in Buckinghamshire Council
- Greyfriars Ward in Bedford Borough Council
- Harpur Ward in Bedford Borough Council
- Harston and Comberton Ward in South Cambridgeshire Council
- Histon and Impington Ward in South Cambridgeshire Council
- Kidlington West Ward in Cherwell District Council
- Lye Valley Ward in Oxford City Council
- Monkston Ward in Milton Keynes Council
- Newnham Ward in Cambridge City Council
- North Hinksey Ward in Oxfordshire County Council
- Oakley Ward in Bedford Borough Council
- Pottton Ward in Central Bedfordshire Council
- Queen Edith's Ward in Cambridge City Council
- Renhold and Ravensden Ward in Bedford Borough Council
- Sawton and Shelford Ward in South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridge County Council
- Shelford Ward in South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Shenley Brook End Ward in Milton Keynes Council
- St Margaret's Ward in Oxfordshire County Council
- Tattenhoe Ward in Milton Keynes
- Walton Manor Ward in Oxford City Council
- Winslow Ward, Buckinghamshire Council

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## Overview

Sarah Jacobs (SJ) introduced herself and the session, stating that the recording and slides will be available on the community hub shortly.

SJ ran through the slides and provided updates on: Chiltern Railways being announced as the operator for the first stage of East West Rail, project updates, and a snapshot of the non-statutory consultation.

SJ introduced Siobhan Adeleke (SA) to discuss the next steps for the non-statutory consultation and the delivery roadmap. SJ and SA then covered slides on the engagement approach, key issues for engagement and tracking issues.

Ben Foley (BF) stated that the slides mentioned trackers being used to inform and develop position statements within parish councils, but wanted to know what would happen with those in unparished areas. There was concern that 'parished' areas were being privileged. BF also wanted to check that Bedford Borough Council would also have a position statement.

SA reassured BF that EWR Co will be working with all stakeholders regarding their concerns and that issues are currently being tracked, regardless of whether the stakeholder is 'parished' or not. There was no reason why they couldn't be included in formal representation as part of the DCO process. SA confirmed that Bedford Borough Council is a statutory stakeholder and is therefore included and will likely have a Statement of Common Ground.

SJ ran through the final slides, covering the LRG history and evolution, the current red line boundary map, the community workstream, and community hub updates.


## Question and Answer session

Brent Fielder (BrF) asked SA to confirm that EWR Co received 6,000 responses to the 2024 non-statutory consultation, questioning whether this was seen as successful and why there were fewer than at previous consultations.

SA confirmed that this was the number of individual feedback forms and emails received, but in each of these, multiple pieces of feedback were provided. EWR Co would expect there to be fewer responses at this stage as the design is more refined. SA stated that the fact that there was a record number of people attending the events and fewer responses may depict an increasing number of people understanding the materials.

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BrF asked a question regarding a change in the design of gradients since the non-statutory consultation and whether an update could be provided on this.

SA and SJ confirmed that they were unable to answer this question during the meeting, but they are scheduled to hold the next round of LRGs within the next three months with engineers who can address this type of question. SJ confirmed that updated maps, gradient scales, and updates will be presented at those meetings where possible.

Eric Cooper (EC) stated that if there was a design change in their area in Clapham that would alter the footprint of the design, EWR Co would need to return to the community and local councillors for further comment and was concerned about potentially not having enough time to submit these comments.

SJ suggested that all timings are being taken into consideration and that information will be shared in advance where possible, giving ample time to provide feedback.

John Riches (JR) mentioned the proposed passing loops in their area (Middle Claydon parish) and stated that Middle Claydon Parish Council would like to speak to EWR Co about their concerns regarding the position and line-side residence at these. There are also concerns that there is no communication with councillors regarding the work that land agents are currently undertaking in the area. JR requested that proper liaison be put in place to enable councillors to provide residents with the correct information.

SJ confirmed that EWR Co could arrange a meeting with Middle Claydon Parish Council about the design of the passing loops, and this would be taken as an action. SJ stated that there would be another action on EWR Co to look into the concerns surrounding land agent communication in the Middle Claydon parish area.


Roy Adams (RA) asked whether EWR Co would look to coordinate timetables with other rail and bus operators in the area once the Oxford to Bletchley and Milton Keynes lines are open. SJ stated that although timetabling is a long way off, it is something that will be considered as it makes sense for the trains and buses to be connected in a way that optimises travel. EWR Co will also work with local authorities to address this issue in the background.

Dawn Seaward (DS) raised a concern about EWR Co. being eager to close the level crossing at London Road in Bicester, with little consideration for the potential impact. DS also stated that there has been significant traffic disruption recently in the Bicester area due to road closures, highlighting and emphasising the impact that EWR may have in the future due to potential designs.

SJ confirmed that the business regularly reviews this particular level crossing on London Road in Bicester, and the design team will be taking such disruptions into account. SJ did not have an update to give on this but assured DS that the team are carefully considering this.

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Alex Poppleton (AP) asked if Bletchley, Fenny, Bow Brickhill and Woburn Sands could be in the same LRG as they are all in Milton Keynes and without the connecting ends of Marston Vale in the group (where most people get off), it doesn't make sense.

SJ replied that EWR Co could investigate this further and consider whether it would be possible to facilitate this for future rounds.

John Chilver (JC) stated that he fully supported JR's comments earlier in the meeting regarding the passing loops at Middle Claydon. JC also said that it would be beneficial if the opening date and timetable of services in Winslow were confirmed as soon as possible. JC asked about the superfast broadband that EWR Co have previously said will run alongside the line, wondering whether more information regarding the connection points and how local communities would be able to connect/ benefit from this could be provided.

SJ confirmed that this was an excellent question and a good topic to inform communities as it is a great news story. No further information could be provided, but it would be taken away as an action to investigate this further and discussed at future LRG meetings.

JC asked about the Aylesbury arm on the map that was shown because, as far as he knew, there are no agreed upon services on this yet. JC requested information on what EWR Co are doing to lobby the government and anyone deciding on the Aylesbury arm, as those in the area want to see it delivered.

SJ highlighted that it remains in the red line boundary because it's been there since the beginning of the preferred route. SJ understood that this has been heavily lobbied by the local MP in this area, and currently, that decision is with the Department for Transport (DfT). SJ confirmed that comments on this were received during the consultation, and these will be fed back to the DfT. SJ encouraged JC to continue speaking with local MPs and lobbying on this issue.


Immy Blackburn-Horgan (IBH) asked if it would be possible to share these webinar slides with Queen Edith Community Forum, the leading grassroots organisation in Queen Edith ward so that they can circulate in their weekly e-mail newsletter to residents.

SJ confirmed that IBH can do this.

IBH asked about the opportunities for work along this route, the number of people employed to date, and what types of jobs are available for Queen Edith ward in Cambridge.

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SJ responded that there would be opportunities for apprenticeships, engineering, and construction, as well as localised opportunities that will bring benefits to local people. EWR Co. will be returning to communities to gather feedback on this. SJ confirmed that EWR Co. is not yet at a point where they can determine exactly what this will look like, but it will be a worthwhile project to engage communities in. SA reaffirmed that EWR Co. is not yet able to provide that content, and the details will be outlined in the Code of Construction Practice; however, there is still work to be done to explore providing benefits to local areas.

Alastair Grant (AG) requested additional information about what a railway depot entails.

SA stated that there were some study areas in the consultation materials to look at for the depots. SA explained that a depot is an area where trains turn around, are maintained, and where staff and train operations are managed, among other purposes. These need to be placed in strategic areas so that train services are not disrupted. SA confirmed that currently, study areas have been identified, and EWR Co are working with Network Rail to determine the most feasible locations for these. Once more information on these is available, EWR Co will request feedback on them.

AG raised concern that it was difficult to find this information in the consultation material and felt that due to this, there was concern that EWR Co. was not being open about these and the effect of a depot on an area such as Brickhill.

SA and SJ confirmed that this information was not being hidden and was in the technical report made available at non-statutory consultation. SJ noted that DfT supports giving communities more information ahead of the consultation and, therefore, will ensure this is the case. AG highlighted that these depots would have an impact on the affected communities; SJ understood and agreed with this.


David Newman (DN) asked if EWR Co. were doing anything to support Rail 200. DN stated that there will still be people alive who travelled on the old Oxford to Cambridge line, and it would be good to bring them together with young people, looking at what is happening with the new line.

SJ acknowledged this as an excellent suggestion and something EWR Co will consider and think about how to implement.

Peter Deer (PD) stated that he put a question in the chat about local opportunity plans around new stations and whether there is a realistic chance that those at parish level could be involved in the development of this. PD stated that the parishes felt like they haven't been the focus, so if there are going to be local opportunity plans being developed, that would seem to be a vehicle for that involvement. PD also said that they would like to invite EWR Co to visit their parishes as they're very concerned about access to the station from anywhere north of the A428.

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SJ responded that work is happening on local development plans but that it was a good point in terms of how parishes can feed into these. SJ confirmed that EWR Co often look to work with more people, and she will make a note to contact the correct team about this.

SJ suggested that, in terms of EWR Co going out to visit parishes, any parishes interested in this should contact SJ directly, and they will do their best to come out.

Peter Norris (PN) aimed his comment towards Brickhill Parish, stating that he believed that depots could not be put on a particular level of descent. PN noted that there was an error in the maps within the technical report – two of the maps that talk about stabling and depots in the Clapham Green area are interposed. PN said they were looking forward to discussing this at the upcoming meetings.

BF stated that he noted earlier that SJ said ‘if’ the consultation happens rather than ‘when’. He questioned whether there was a sense that it may not happen.

SJ confirmed that things can change regularly in the programme/ project, but that EWR Co is planning for a January 2026 consultation. SA added that EWR Co wants to correctly review and refine their work before they consult again, so the need for this may alter the timelines. The dates are not fixed and are determined by several factors, including design and government changes.

There was acknowledgement between SJ and BF that the changing timelines were frustrating for communities.

John Vickery (JV) said he was adding to PD’s previous comment, and he attended the second of the workshops on the local plan, which some parishes attended. During this workshop, comments were made about the proximity of the train station to villages, the location of stations, and the impact of rat-running through the villages to access it – this was heavily raised within the local plan.

SJ noted this comment and stated conversations were happening around this.


David Revell (DR) asked if any further information would be given about freight – specifically the volume of freight.

SJ confirmed that all the details about freight were published in the consultation documents that EWR Co is currently working towards two freight trains a day on the route. It was confirmed that this was not over a 24-hour period – that there would be no freight or passenger trains running during the night.

SJ wrapped up the meeting, thanking the attendees for joining. SJ confirmed that the questions posed in the chat would be addressed, answered, and shared, along with details of the new LRG groups and meetings. The webinar materials would be available to access via the community hub by the following week.

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Further questions which were not able to be answered during the webinar, and their answers, can be seen here: [LRG Q&A](#)

## Actions

- EWR Co to set up a meeting with Middle Claydon parish council regarding the proposed passing loops in their area
- EWR Co to investigate communication/ liaison with land agents undertaking work in the Middle Claydon area and Middle Claydon parish council
- EWR Co to assess LRG group attendees, checking if it is possible to invite Bletchley, Fenny, Bow Brickhill and Woburn Sands to the same meeting
- EWR Co to investigate and report back on the superfast broadband proposals along the route (and feedback as a good news story to communities)
- EWR Co. to investigate Rail 200 and get involved with this initiative
- EWR Co to understand and report back on how local parishes can provide feedback on local development plans
- EWR will share further details about LRG groups and meetings shortly
- Attendees to email Sarah Jacobs if they would like EWR Co to visit their parish/ward to discuss the designs affecting their parish.

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