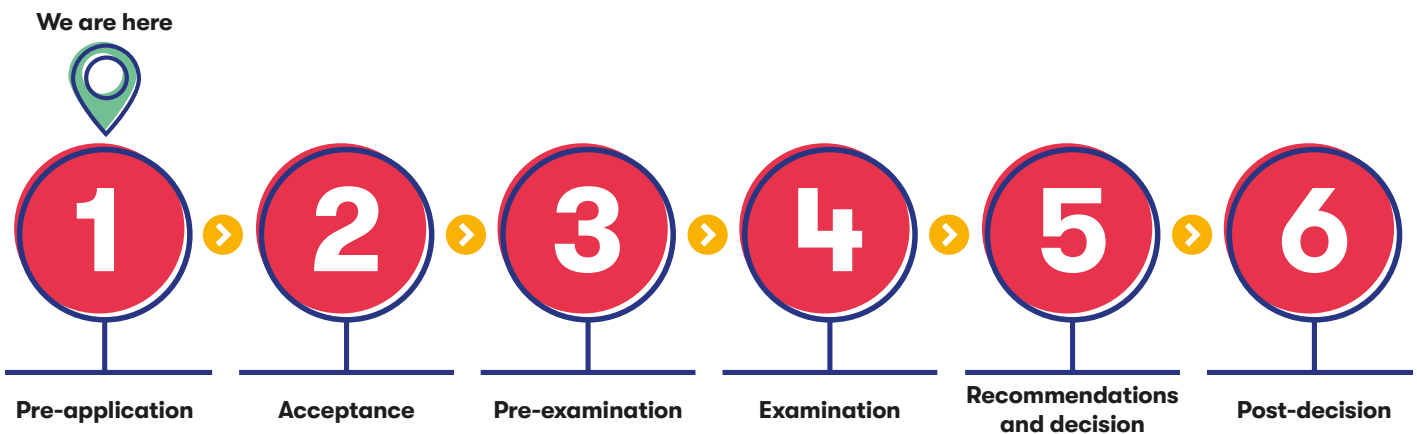


The Development Consent Order (DCO) process

The proposed new railway between Bedford and Cambridge has been designated as a project of national significance. This means East West Railway Company (EWR Co) will apply to the Secretary of State for Transport for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to get approval to build and operate the new railway and the associated upgrades to the existing railway between Oxford and Bedford and around Cambridge.

The DCO process is governed by the Planning Act 2008 and has six stages:



Pre-application

The pre-application stage is when proposals are developed, consultations are carried out and communities and statutory bodies are engaged. We are currently in the pre-application stage. We have carried out three rounds of consultation so far as we have developed our proposals. Alongside these consultations we have carried out a range of engagement activities with stakeholders including local authorities, environmental bodies and community groups. The feedback gathered from this consultation and engagement has helped shape our proposals.

A public consultation will be held in April 2026. We will take account of feedback from this consultation before finalising our proposals and submitting our DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate. We plan to submit our DCO application in 2027.

Acceptance

Once our application is submitted, the Planning Inspectorate has 28 days to review the application and decide whether to proceed to the next stage. They will consider whether all relevant documents have been submitted and whether the application is of a satisfactory standard to proceed to examination.

Pre-examination

If our application is accepted, we must publicise this decision and explain how people can register to become Interested Parties. Interested Parties are able to participate in the examination by submitting written comments and speaking at public hearings.

The Planning Inspectorate will appoint independent inspectors (known as ‘the Examining Authority’) to examine the application and make recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport about whether permission for development should be given.

At the end of the pre-examination stage, the Examining Authority will hold a Preliminary Meeting to discuss how and when the application will be examined. Following the meeting, the Examining Authority will issue a timetable for the examination. The timetable will set out deadlines: the dates by which comments can be submitted by any Interested Party, and the dates the application must respond to them by.

Examination

During the examination, the Examining Authority asks questions and gathers evidence and views about the proposals. The applicant and Interested Parties can submit comments at each deadline in the timetable and attend hearings to provide their views on the proposals. The examination stage takes up to six months. The examination stage is made up of several rounds of written questions and answers, followed by issue specific, open hearings that explore the key topics identified.

Decision

After the examination has ended, the Examining Authority makes a recommendation to the Secretary of State on whether or not development consent should be given for the proposals. This must be done within three months of the end of the examination period. The Secretary of State then has three months to make a decision.

Post-decision

There is a six-week period during which legal challenges to the decision can be made to the High Court. This process is known as Judicial Review.

Get in touch

If you have any questions, please get in touch using the details below:



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