

# East West Rail and the Development Consent Order (DCO) Process: What it means for landowners

The proposed new railway between Bedford and Cambridge has been designated as a project of national significance. This means we (East West Railway Company) will apply to the Secretary of State for Transport for a Development Consent Order (DCO) which would grant consent to build and operate the new railway.

This document accompanies our factsheet on the DCO process which sets out the six stages of the DCO. It explains how you can get involved if your land and property would be needed to build or operate East West Rail ('the project').

## Stage 1 - Pre-application

Before submitting the DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate, we are engaging and consulting with landowners, Local Authorities, the local community and other interested parties regarding our proposals.

The Secretary of State has issued Safeguarding Directions for East West Rail, which protects land within the defined safeguarded area from conflicting development and means that statutory blight provisions are available to property owners within the area. If you own a property in the safeguarded area, you may be eligible to serve a blight notice on us asking us to buy your property before we need it to build the railway. For more information, please see our factsheet on safeguarding which you can find at [eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2026](https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2026).

During this pre-application stage:

- We may require ongoing access for environmental, ground investigation and archaeological surveys.
- Statutory blight provisions and the Need to Sell (NTS) Property Scheme are available.
- We will discuss potential mitigation and accommodation works with you.
- We will open negotiations with you to agree terms to acquire land and rights over land by agreement.

## **Stage 2- Acceptance**

We will submit our DCO application. Following submission, the Planning Inspectorate has 28 days to accept the application for examination.

## **Stages 3 and 4- Pre-examination and Examination**

As part of the DCO application, we will submit a Book of Reference which will list all those with an interest in the land that would be affected by our proposals for the Project. If you are listed in the Book of Reference, you will be notified by us if the Planning Inspectorate accepts our DCO application.

Other application documents you may want to review include the Statement of Reasons which explains why each land parcel is needed to deliver the Project and the Land Plans which show each land parcel listed in the Book of Reference in map form.

During the pre-examination stage you will be invited to register with the Planning Inspectorate as an 'Interested Party' and submit a Relevant Representation on the application. The Planning Inspectorate will keep you informed of progress and opportunities to make representations or to speak at public hearings. The Examining Authority may ask questions of Interested Parties to gain a greater understanding of their case and the reasons why they support or oppose the DCO application.

Once the examination starts, Interested Parties can make written submissions and/or request to speak at hearings. Anyone with an interest in the land which would be affected by the Project (affected persons) can request a compulsory acquisition hearing is held.

During this stage:

- We may require ongoing access for environmental, ground investigation and archaeological surveys.
- Statutory blight provisions and NTS Property Scheme are available.
- Where appropriate, we will seek to resolve issues raised in Interested Parties' Relevant Representations.
- Where appropriate, we will continue to seek to acquire land and rights over land by agreement.

## **Stages 5 and 6- Recommendation, Decision and Post-Decision**

Interested Parties will be notified of the Secretary of State's decision and will be provided with a copy of the Secretary of State's decision letter explaining the reasons for the decision to grant or refuse development consent.

During this stage:

- We may require ongoing access for environmental, ground investigation and archaeological surveys.
- Statutory blight provisions and the NTS Property Scheme are available.
- Where appropriate, we will continue to seek to acquire land and rights over land by agreement.
- We will discuss with you when we would need possession of land for construction.
- Where there is no agreement in place and the DCO is granted, then we will use powers in the DCO to take temporary possession or acquire land to start building the project
- The compensation code will apply to any land compulsorily acquired under the powers in the DCO.
- Part I compensation claims can be made a year and a day after the railway or road constructed under the DCO first comes into public use. Please refer to our Part I Guide for further information.

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