

Bedfordshire Group - Meeting notes

Meeting #9 - Details

Date: Friday 3 March 2023

Time: 6:30PM

Type of meeting: Virtual meeting (Zoom)

Documents discussed in this meeting

The following documents were discussed during the meeting and are available on the Group's dedicated Community Hub site - [here](#):

- Action Tracker;
- Agenda;
- Slides.

Key discussion points and outcomes

1. Welcome, today's agenda and housekeeping

1.1 Hannah Staunton (HS) introduced Mohamad Alserdare (MA) who would be presenting information on managing environmental impacts during construction and Rob Milner (RM) who would be answering questions on the topic.

2. General updates

2.1. HS noted that Sarah Jacobs (SJ) had joined EWR Co as the Local Representatives Groups Engagement Manager and outlined her role. SJ joined the meeting at a later point and introduced herself.

3. Review of actions from previous meetings

- 3.1. HS ran through the outstanding actions from the previous two meetings and noted that they had all been completed.
- 3.2. An attendee noted EWR Co's response to Action 1 from Meeting #8: *The vertical grade is currently designed to be 1:80 as per Network Rail (NR) standards (NR/L3/TRK/2049). It is not possible at this stage of the project to confirm whether the standard gradient will be improved for EWR; any improvement would depend on a number of factors, including maintenance and future freight requirements and discussions with industry.* The attendee stated that the gradient feeds into every part of this scheme, including the height of embankments, the types of crossings and costings and asked how EWR Co could say that they still haven't decided whether they would be using 1 in 80.
- 3.3. HS and RM outlined that the current design is developed on the basis of the 1 in 80 standard, but that is something that EWR Co will continue to review and hope to improve on. RM added that there has to be a consideration of whether the benefit of reducing a gradient, to for example 1 in 100, would outweigh the fact that you would potentially end up with deeper cuttings and higher embankments.

4. Topic – Managing environmental impacts during construction: the EWR context and examples from Connection Stage 1

- 4.1. MA introduced himself and RM as the Programme Managers for the area covered by the Bedfordshire Local Representatives Group (LRG) and noted that the aim of the session was to explain the process for developing key documents required to manage, monitor and control potential future impacts during construction.
- 4.2. MA noted that at this point in time the exact details for the project and Bedfordshire area are still being developed but that regulation and other examples can be drawn upon to provide context.

Introducing the Code of Construction Practice (CoCP)

- 4.3. MA explained that a Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) may form part of the Environmental Statement and is likely to be submitted in draft as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application. A CoCP sets out the framework for controlling how the construction of the project will be undertaken and outlines associated measures to protect the environment.

What is in a CoCP? (example)

- 4.4. MA showed an example of what topics are covered within a typical CoCP. MA noted that while the aim would always be to minimise impacts such as noise, vibration, air quality, traffic and transport at source a CoCP provides a framework in which to monitor, assess and manage these against.
- 4.5. MA added that when it comes to sound, noise, and vibration, it is the use of best practicable means as defined in Section 72 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and Section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 that determines methodology.

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

- 4.6. MA explained that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) may be developed using a CoCP.
- 4.7. MA explained that a CEMP aims to eliminate, reduce or mitigate adverse effects of construction and focuses on the environment and communities.
- 4.8. MA outlined that a CEMP presents the approach and application of environmental management and mitigation for construction and provides a mechanism for delivering mitigation measures.
- 4.9. MA explained that a CEMP provides an outline of the content that will be supplied in additional management plans or strategies. It also ensures compliance with legislation and a prompt response to non-compliance with legislative requirements under the DCO, including reporting, remediation, and additional mitigation measures.

Management Plans

- 4.10. MA shared an example list of Environmental Management Plans that could be produced during the construction phase, including Drainage Management Plan, Flood Management and Maintenance Plan and the Construction Traffic Management Plan.

Where does this fit within the Development Consent Order (DCO) process?

- 4.11. MA noted that EWR Co is currently in the pre-application phase of the DCO process. MA explained that at the end of the pre-application phase, a draft version of the Code of Construction Practice may be submitted as part of the DCO. If and when consent has been granted, the CoCP, CEMP and any additional Environmental Management Plans would then be adopted by the EWR Co supply chain.

The Context of Connection Stage 1 (CS1)

- 4.12. MA used CS1 as a case study and outlined its aim to upgrade approximately 23km of new railway between Bicester and Bletchley. MA provided an overview of the work being

done to achieve this including rebuilding earthworks, constructing 2 new stations, 17 new bridges, and reconstructing 26 bridges and 66km of rail.

- 4.13. MA outlined that works on CS1 are being managed by the EWR Alliance which is comprised of NR and their supply chain.
- 4.14. MA explained that the powers to build CS1 were authorised under a Transport & Work Act Order (TWAO), which was applied for in 2018 by NR and obtained in 2020. He outlined that the consenting and delivery mechanisms would therefore be different for CS2 and CS3 given EWR Co would be delivering these under a DCO.
- 4.15. MA added that although the two projects were not directly comparable, in some cases the principles of mitigating the impacts were.

Controlling impacts for environment and communities: Examples

- 4.16. MA outlined examples of some of the kinds of mitigation measures that could be used, including using clear signage and safe access along diversions to help the community navigate construction; preventing congestion on local roads by placing certain restrictions on construction vehicles; and reducing construction noise by erecting noise barriers, when required and using quieter electric generators and plant.
- 4.17. MA shared some photos from CS1 and highlighted the different mitigation measures being used, including a monitoring target and examples of habitat creation and noise barriers.

Examples of mitigation measures used on CS1

- 4.18. MA outlined examples of environmental mitigation measures used on CS1 including restricting speed of construction traffic in villages, assigning traffic ambassadors, installing noise barriers, use of ballast dust suppression techniques and tree planting.

Examples of communications on CS1

- 4.19. MA gave some examples of communication methods used to keep communities up to date during construction on CS1, including holding community drop-in events, issuing quarterly works newsletters, using letters to inform people of disruptive works and engagement with local schools.
- 4.20. MA noted that social value initiatives were also put in place with 667 volunteers from the EWR Alliance undertaking 2642 hours of local volunteer work.
- 4.21. MA explained that lessons learnt from CS1 are being used to feed into the development of the approach to managing construction on CS2 and CS3.

Questions

NB - Due to the number of questions these have been broken down by topic.

CoCP, CEMP and surveys

- 4.22. An attendee noted that the example CoCP seemed light on water related topics and highlighted concerns around drainage due to the clay land in North Bedfordshire. MA clarified that this CoCP wasn't EWR Co's version of the document and noted that EWR Co is aware of the drainage and flooding concerns in the area.
- 4.23. Another attendee queried whether there would be a minimum level of service that would be provided or ensured for road users and how EWR Co would benchmark that to ensure delays don't go beyond a certain level. MA noted that the purpose of the session was to demonstrate the mechanisms by which impacts are mitigated in a generic sense rather than to provide details on specific topics which would require the knowledge of a relevant expert.
- 4.24. The attendee asked what an acceptable baseline is and if there was a standard for this. MA noted that these would be developed in collaboration with the local authorities, and in line with relevant policy. MA added that there is a threshold with all environmental impacts and assessment would be required to determine the baseline.
- 4.25. The attendee asked what would happen if EWR Co couldn't keep within the threshold and if they would just continue with works regardless of this. MA confirmed that this would not be the case as there are rules, regulations, frameworks and policies that EWR Co would have to abide to. If a factor couldn't be mitigated sufficiently an alternative approach would have to be sought.
- 4.26. Another attendee asked if EWR Co will have developed a CoCP and relevant CEMPs before engaging at the statutory consultation. MA outlined that EWR Co are likely to submit a draft CoCP as part of the Environmental Statement within the DCO application, but that EWR Co would aim to share a draft of these documents in advance of this.

Post meeting clarification: A CoCP is not the only method that can be used to secure mitigation as part of the DCO process. Whilst EWR Co may produce a CoCP for the proposed development, it may use an alternative method.

- 4.27. An attendee asked if EWR Co would consult parish councillors as part of the development of CEMPs such as the Public Space Management Plan and added that Group members had a lot of local knowledge and expertise for example on Public Rights of Way (PROW) that could help EWR Co to inform the development of these plans.
- 4.28. MA and RM outlined that the statutory consultation will be used to lay out plans such as PROW and will invite feedback from the community to help shape these. HS added that

this local knowledge is really valuable and that in the coming weeks EWR Co would be looking into what kinds of conversations it should be having with local stakeholders and how to have these conversations in a meaningful way.

- 4.29. An attendee asked MA to say where EWR Co were in the DCO process. MA outlined the next milestone would be the statutory consultation. The attendee asked when this would be. HS noted that EWR Co doesn't have a date for when this would be and understood this could be frustrating for people.
- 4.30. The attendee referenced the Route to Construction video on EWR Co's website, asserting that it was misleading and an oversimplification, particularly as it does not outline engagement with the Department for Transport (DfT) to scrutinise plans as part of the pre-application phase the project is currently within.
- 4.31. HS explained that the purpose of the video was to lay out the process to make it is as straightforward as possible for a broader audience to understand. The attendee noted that they felt the video was unacceptable. HS noted she was happy to pick this up and discuss further with the attendee.
- 4.32. An attendee asked whether when EWR Co submits applications for things such as the CoCP these would be agreed by local authorities in a similar way to CS1. MA confirmed that they would be subject to similar planning approvals at a local authority level. The attendee asked if parish councils are considered statutory consultees within this. HS confirmed that they are not, but that EWR Co would engage parish councils as relevant.
- 4.33. An attendee stated that if a village has a National Planning Policy (NPP), it will be a statutory consultee and should be consulted heavily. HS agreed and noted that there are specific exceptions. HS added that parish and ward councillors are very much at the centre of EWR Co's approach.

Post meeting clarification: Parish Councils would not be involved in the discharge of Requirements process under the DCO; this is dealt with by the Local Planning Authority. However, parish councils are considered prescribed consultees for the purposes of statutory consultation and EWR Co would engage with them and ward councillors throughout the consultation process as appropriate.

- 4.34. An attendee asked when ground investigations would take place and noted that this must be required to inform the design. MA said that it would take place in advance of construction and it would inform detailed design. RM added that the Ground Investigation Strategy is currently being considered and that in exceptions where existing records (such as those from the British Geological Society) do not provide sufficient information, some early ground investigation works may take place before the DCO

submission. However, he explained that he expected that the vast majority of these works would be undertaken after the DCO once there is commitment to the cost and the necessary land has been acquired.

Construction impacts on local roads

- 4.35. An attendee asserted that Buckinghamshire Council were having to spend five million pounds to correct damage to roads caused by works being undertaken for HS2 and EWR (CS1) and noted the concern that council tax may increase if similar measures were required for CS2 and CS3. HS noted that the EWR Alliance had been working with local authorities to develop avoidance measures and that agreements made with the EWR Alliance and their joint working was referenced in media reports by the local authority.
- 4.36. HS and MA outlined that the mitigation practices that EWR Co would put in place would ensure the local communities and councils don't bear the brunt unnecessarily in terms of financial costs and physical issues on the ground. MA added that as part of the development of a CoCP construction traffic routes are identified and monitored so lorries and HGVs cannot use any traffic routes where access has not been granted.
- 4.37. Another attendee added that there is nothing to stop local authorities from putting papers directly into the DCO enquiry stating a case that roads need to be suitably maintained. MA agreed that this is usually requested by local authorities and that EWR Co is bound by policy to not worsen any assets it uses.
- 4.38. An attendee noted that at this point of the project EWR Co should have some ideas specific to Bedfordshire to share with the community. HS noted that she understood the attendee's position but that until the route was confirmed the construction methodology would still be in development. HS emphasised the need to consider the route as whole rather than just focusing on specific areas in distinct sections.
- 4.39. The attendee asked whether EWR Co would look to build its own roads rather than to use existing public roads for transportation. HS stated that EWR Co may consider this but that it would require a lot of land take, which would in itself create disruption. HS added that mitigation plans have to be considered in both a site-specific sense as well as from an overall project view.
- 4.40. The attendee noted that it appears as though little cooperation with the local authorities has taken place to date. HS noted that the level of engagement EWR Co had undertaken was equal to if not more than would be expected of a project at this stage.
- 4.41. An attendee noted that there would be a lot of material to move and deposit before EWR Co could lay tracks and assumed EWR Co would have undertaken detailed work on how they would move these materials. RM noted that for this section of the route EWR Co would aim to balance the amount of material excavated with the amount of material being used, where possible. RM added that the construction planning would consider how EWR Co can use materials locally and while it would be fair to say that there would

be impacts on local roads, EWR Co would look to minimise and mitigate against these impacts.

- 4.42. An attendee highlighted that the section of EWR within Bedfordshire was different from CS1 and that bringing in rails and ballast by train was not the key issue and asked if that is all EWR intended to do by rail. MA and RM said that EWR could not confirm this at present but would continue to explore the potential use of rail. MA outlined that there are planning requirements that EWR Co needs to satisfy with regards to the reasonable worst-case scenario and a range of improvements EWR Co can undertake to improve that scenario in subsequent stages of the project and where reasonably possible.
- 4.43. An attendee asked how EWR Co would deal with the weight limits imposed by villages on their roads. RM and MA outlined that EWR Co would need to ensure roads proposed to be used are suitable for the type of vehicle required, or EWR Co would not be able to use them and noted that they are aware that there are constraints in the area.
- 4.44. Another attendee noted that good roads to move the materials would be via the M1 and A1. HS added that this certainly would not be the last time EWR Co discusses this with the Group, and she hoped there would be more detailed conversations on this going forwards.

Lessons learnt from CS1 and other projects

- 4.45. An attendee noted that CS2 and CS3 seem more comparable to HS2 than CS1 and asked whether EWR Co has learnt from the issues on HS2 to ensure these don't get mirrored. MA highlighted the difference that HS2 includes a large section of tunnelling which requires a significantly larger amount of excavation than CS2 and CS3 would require. RM noted that projects always aim to learn from other projects including HS2 and EWR Co is no exception to this.
- 4.46. An attendee asked about the visual impact of electrification. MA outlined that the Environmental Statement would consider the impacts of electrification and where required mitigation would be implemented in the line with the principles set out in a CoCP. The attendee asked if it was normal to build a track like this and then add all the electrification steel work. MA noted he could not comment on the sequencing of electrification on CS1. RM stated that if EWR was to be an electric railway on opening he would expect the electrification steel work and foundations would be built at the same time as the rest of the infrastructure for the railway.
- 4.47. An attendee asked whether the noise barriers would be in place during construction or as a permanent feature. MA explained that in the example shown from CS1 the noise barrier had been put up for both the construction and operational phase. HS added that there are many different types of noise barriers (in terms of height, colour, material) and this is just an example of one type of noise barrier used in CS1.

- 4.48. An attendee asked whether EWR Co is putting electrification in CS1 or any part of this route. HS answered that the intention of EWR Co is to ensure the final running of the route is sustainable, and that the terms electrification and sustainability should not be used interchangeably. HS added that the railway is being designed so as to not preclude electrification should the latter power traction method be selected.
- 4.49. An attendee asked if EWR Co could speak to the EWR Alliance and provide a guide as to how much of the soft landscaping on CS1 was planted early on. The attendee noted the length of time taken for the vegetation to grow can mean it can take time before its full benefits are realised. HS agreed to take this point away.
- 4.50. Another attendee advised that the section of the route around Bedfordshire is a gift for advanced planting and outlined how inexpensive plants can be planted in flood plains and used to mitigate impacts as part of a temporary construction planting scheme rather than a permanent one. The attendee gave an example of willows growing and offering significant benefits within a year or two and highlighted how these could be very beneficial for habitats during the construction period whilst also acting as noise barriers. HS thanked the attendee for their contribution.

Project costs

- 4.51. An attendee asked about balancing the cost of design and mitigation and whether this could be done within the existing budget. HS noted the need to consider overall value as well as cost and outlined that it is rare for government to give a set number to a project and this process is usually iterative. RM added that the cost is often entwined within the environmental impacts so there has to be a balance between the two.
- 4.52. The attendee asked for the latest costs of Route E. MA noted that EWR Co isn't able to provide this information at this point in time. HS added that EWR Co considers information as it comes through and following design refinement and assessments, but that information has to be published at specific moments to ensure a balanced picture. HS noted that the information on the [EWR Co's website](#) is still the most up to date information available on costs.

5. Future topics

Topics for future discussion

- 5.1. HS noted that the Group's next meeting is likely to be held in mid-April but that there is no topic agreed for the meeting yet.
- 5.2. HS asked the Group what topics they would like to discuss and suggested a conversation about methods of engagement with local people and how EWR Co could improve on the

previous community engagement undertaken to date. Attendees agreed this would be a useful topic.

- 5.3. An attendee noted that if the next meeting were to take place in mid-April that it would fall during the pre-election period. The attendee noted that while the meeting should be fine to go ahead the topic of community engagement may be best discussed after the local elections due to the potential changes in elected representatives.
- 5.4. Attendees shared a range of views on whether the topic of community engagement should be covered during the pre-election period and whether the next meeting should go ahead at all during this time.
- 5.5. It was agreed that two polls should go out: first a poll seeing opinion on whether the next meeting should go ahead during the pre-election period, and requesting a list of topics for future discussion. Second, the list of topics would be circulated for group vote.

Summary of actions

Action 1: EWR Co to speak to the EWR Alliance and confirm where in the project’s lifecycle soft landscaping was planted on CS1.

Action 2: EWR Co to send out a poll for Group members to vote to decide if Meeting #10 should take place during the pre-election period and if so, if it should be used to discuss the topic of methods of community engagement. The poll will also be used for Group members to put forward suggestions for topics they would like to see covered.

Attendees:

EWR Co attendees

- Hannah Staunton, EWR Co lead.
- Mo Alserdare, Programme Manager for the Bedford area
- Rob Milner, Programme Manager for Clapham- Hauxton
- Sarah Jacobs Local Representatives Groups Engagement Manager
- EWR Co production and support team.

Parish Council representatives

- Cllr Eric Cooper, Clapham Parish Council
- Cllr Pat Onley, Oakley Parish Council
- Cllr Gordon Johnston, Wyboston, Chawston and Colesden Parish Council
- Cllr Justin Griffiths, Roxton Parish Council
- Cllr Alison Myers, Ravensden Parish Council

- Cllr Nicola Gribble, Renhold Parish Council
- Peter Norris, Renhold Parish Council advisor

Local authority councillors

- Cllr Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant, Great Barford, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Martin Towler, Riseley, Bedford Borough Council and Thurleigh Parish Council

Apologies

- Biddenham Parish Council
- Bolnhurst and Keysoe Parish Council
- Brickhill Parish Council
- Bromham Parish Council
- Cardington Parish Council
- Colmworth Parish Council
- Cople Parish Council
- Great Barford Parish Council
- Milton Ernest Parish Council
- Shortstown Parish Council
- Staploe Parish Council
- Stevington Parish Council
- Turvey Parish Council
- Willington Parish Council
- Wilden Parish Council
- Cllr Wendy Rider, Brickhill in Bedford
- Cllr Charles Royden, Brickhill in Bedford
- Cllr Jonathan Gambold - Bromham and Biddenham, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Roger Rigby – Bromham and Biddenham, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Jane Walker – Clapham, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Sarah Gallagher – Eastcotts, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr James Weir - Great Barford, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Jonathan Abbott – Oakley, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Doug McMurdo – Riseley, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Tom Wootton – Sharnbrook, Bedford Borough Council