

Bedfordshire Group - Transcript

Meeting #10 - Details

Date: Monday 5 June 2023

Time: 6:30pm-8:30pm

Type of meeting: Virtual (Zoom)

Attendees:

EWR Co attendees

- Hannah Staunton, EWR Co lead.
- Mo Alserdare, Programme Manager for the Bedford area
- Robert Milner, Development Programme Manager for C3
- Sarah Jacobs, Local Representatives Groups Engagement Manager
- EWR Co production and support team.

Parish Council representatives

- Cllr Peter Lamswood, Brickhill Parish Council
- Cllr Sarah Walker, Clapham Parish Council
- Cllr David Newman, Milton Ernest Parish Council
- Cllr Pat Olney, Oakley Parish Council
- Cllr Bernadette Russell, Ravensden Parish Council
- Cllr John Maberley, Ravensden Parish Council
- Cllr Martin Warwicker, Renhold Parish Council
- Peter Norris, Renhold Parish Council, technical expert
- Cllr Justin Griffiths, Roxton Parish Council
- Mike Barlow, Wilden Parish Council, Chair of Rail Sub-committee
- Cllr Brent Fielder, Wilden Parish Council
- Cllr Jan Lewandowski, Willington Parish Council
- Cllr Gordon Johnston, Wyboston, Chawston and Colesden Parish Council

Local authority councillors

- Cllr Dylan Simmons, Bromham, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Jonathan Abbott, Clapham and Oakley, Bedford Borough Council and Oakley Parish Council
- Cllr Jane Walker, Clapham and Oakley, Bedford Borough Council and Oakley Parish Council

- Cllr Phillippa Martin Moran Bryant, Great Barford, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Sarah-Jayne Gallagher, Shortstown, Bedford Borough Council

Apologies

- Biddenham Parish Council
- Bolnhurst and Keysoe Parish Council
- Bromham Parish Council
- Cardington Parish Council
- Colmworth Parish Council
- Cople Parish Council
- Great Barford Parish Council
- Shortstown Parish Council
- Staploe Parish Council
- Stevington Parish Council
- Thurleigh Parish Council
- Turvey Parish Council
- Cllr Jonathan Gambold – Biddenham, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Wendy Rider, Brickhill, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Charles Royden, Brickhill, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Roger Rigby - Bromham, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Nicola Gribble – Renhold and Ravensden, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Martin Towler, Riseley, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Doug McMurdo – Sharnbrook, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Leigh Coombs, Shortstown, Bedford Borough Council
- TBC – Wyboston, Bedford Borough Council

Documents discussed in this meeting

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

- Agenda
- Slides
- Video recording

Key points, actions and outcomes

NB The recording was started part way through this meeting following running through the agenda and housekeeping rules.

[0:00:00]

2. Housekeeping

Slide 6 – Housekeeping

[0:00:00]

Hannah Staunton (HS): Fantastic, thank you very much. So, my name is Hannah Staunton, I run the external engagement team at East West Rail. I'm joined tonight by a number of colleagues who will be mainly staying in the background doing some of the administrative stuff, I won't ask them all to introduce themselves today, but I will ask Rob and Mo perhaps to give us a wave, as they will be taking us through the route update and answering questions, I'm sure many of you are familiar with Mo and Rob already.

[0:00:30]

[...] Thank you very much. We also have Tabitha, Jonathan, Sarah, Tom and Isobel with us who are all doing various administrative and technical aspects of the meeting this evening, thank you very much to them. If we just really quickly go around the group so that we are aware as I said before, your name, what parish or ward you're from, and whether you are joining in your capacity as a parish / ward councillor or in some other capacity and if it's the latter, we just have to get agreement from the group that it's okay for you to stay.

[0:01:02]

[...] So let's kick off with Justin just because you're in that zone. Could you introduce yourself to the group, if you're happy to do so?

Justin Griffiths (JG): Justin Griffiths, Roxton Parish Council Chair

HS: Fantastic. Thanks so much. I've got Martin Warwicker?

Martin Warwicker (MW): Yep, Martin Warwicker, Renhold Parish Council.

HS: Fantastic, thank you. Pat?

[0:01:33]

[...] Pat, would you care to introduce yourself?

Pat Olney (PO): Pat Olney, Oakley Parish Council.

HS: Wonderful. Thanks so much, Peter?

Peter Norris (PG): Good evening everybody, I'm Peter Norris. I'm assisting Renhold Parish Council, if everybody's happy.

HS: everyone happy for Peter to stay?

The Group: Yes.

HS: Good.

[0:02:01]

HS: We have a gentleman listed as an Anne's iPad, but I suspect you have a different name.

John Mabberley (JM): Yes, hi. I just...hello. Can you see me?

HS: Yes, can see you and can hear you.

JM: Oh good!

HS: Would you like to introduce yourself?

JM: I couldn't see myself and I wondered whether I was here. Yeah, my name is John Mabberley, obviously I'm using my wife superior IT skills and her iPad. I'm a new Parish Councillor at Ravensden.

[0:02:35]

PN: Oh.

HS: Brilliant, thank you so much. Phillippa?

Phillippa Martin Moran Bryant (PMMB): Hello, yes, I'm the Borough Councillor for Great Barford Ward, which has changed and is now Great Barford, Willington and Wilden.

HS: Thank you so much. Good to see you. Dylan?

[0:03:00]

Dylan Simmons (DS): Hi, I'm Dylan. I'm the Borough Councillor for Bromham Ward. Bromham, Stagsden, Stevington and Turvey

HS: Brilliant. Thank you so much. Sarah Jayne?

Sarah Jayne Gallagher (SJG): Hi I'm Sarah, Borough Councillor for Shortstown Ward and Chair of Shortstown Parish Council.

HS: Wonderful, thank you so much... We have Bernie Russell?

Bernie Russell (BR): Hello, I'm chair of Ravensden Parish Council.

[0:03:33]

HS: Wonderful, thank you so much. Sarah?

Sarah Walker (SW): Hi Hannah. Hi, everybody. I'm Sarah Walker, and I'm here representing Clapham Parish Council this evening.

HS: Wonderful. Thank you. There we go. Gordon?

Gordon Johnston (GJ): Good evening, Gordon Johnston, Vice Chair of Wyboston, Chawston and Colesden Parish Council.

HS: Wonderful, thank you, Jonathan?

[0:04:00]

Jonathan Abbott (JA): Good evening. I'm John Abbott. I'm one of the two Borough Councillors for the Clapham and Oakley Ward also an Oakley Parish Councillor.

HS: That is wonderful and a brilliant tee up for Jane.

Jane Walker (JW): Sorry I couldn't get a mute off! Hello, I'm Jane Walker, I'm also a Borough Councillor, Ward Councillor for Clapham and Oakley and Oakley Parish Councillor.

HS: Brilliant, thanks so much. Brent?

[0:04:37]

Brent Fielder (BF): Hello, Brent Fielder, Chair of Wilden Parish Council.

HS: Wonderful. Thank you, Peter. Peter Lamswood, second Peter. Peter? I think we'll come back to Peter and that means David.

David Newman (DN): Yeah, hi there, David Newman, Chair of Milton Ernest Parish Council.

[0:05:05]

HS: Brilliant. Okay. Thank you so much, everyone, that's incredibly helpful. If we do have anyone else joining, I think it would be good in the circumstances, to ask them to introduce themselves as well. I know that locally, you're, you may well all know each other but I think

it's always good when we've got new people joining the meeting to make sure that everyone knows who we are. That's fantastic.

[0:05:30]

[...] Generally speaking, for our Terms of Reference, as well, we do normally request that it's one representative per parish purely to try and keep the numbers reasonable as we go through. I think we've had a few people asking if we can make an exception for this. Again, it's not my Terms of Reference, it's your Terms of Reference. I will pause briefly and see if anyone objects to us having more than one, Sarah?

[0:06:00]

SW: So no, absolutely not objecting at all. There was some discussion earlier on about having two representatives from Clapham but I can confirm that my colleague, John Reid couldn't make it this evening so I'm the sole representative. But there was an indication that we might have a discussion about moving forward that there is a need, perhaps on occasions for more than one representative from parishes. So just kind of putting that out there and if the group wants to discuss it, either, at some later time, or now...

HS: Shall we put given the amount of stuff that I'm sure people want to talk about today? Should we put that on the slate for something to talk about at a less busy meeting, but I think I'm fine talking about that.

SW: Yep, fine. Thank you.

[0:06:44]

HS: If everyone else is comfortable with that we'll take that as an action to put on the slate for a future meeting. But I think yeah, it's...Brent, is would that be an objection? Or would that be?

BF: What I want to do is kind of is just put it on the table now that we should all be able to bring extra representatives for our Parish Councils and that's it. I think that should just be draw a line under it, no need to bring it forward. Job done.

[0:07:07]

HS: I think that's... I think it'd be it'd be helpful to have that discussion, though, because we have got, there were some points of view around that could just end up with a meeting with hundreds of people in it at some point, which could be challenging, for a variety of reasons. And obviously, it would result in a change to the Terms of Reference. So I think, again, it's

your meeting, not mine so, but I would be grateful if we could have that discussion, that sort of in the round, just so I can be really sure that we're covering all bases if that's okay?

BF: Well, I don't agree with your Hannah, I think we should just ask for a show of hands now. All those who want to be able to have more than one rep for your parish council, just be able to raise your hands job done.

Unknown: Perhaps it would be advisable to say no more than three. I don't know if it makes it easier.

[0:08:00]

HS: So I think no more than three per parish?

BF: Yeah okay, I can go with that. That's good.

MW: Yeah that's good.

HS: Okay, let's take that away. I might follow up with a poll, because I can't quite see everyone's hands so I think we might follow that up with a poll. But that's we'll take that as a... the paperwork can catch up later. But I thank you very much for that.

[0:08:27]

[...] So I think, I'll just really quickly do a little bit of housekeeping. Before we get into the zone today. I think most of you have displayed your name, when you haven't you've told us what your name is, that's really helpful for us. We're adults use the mute function, don't use the mute function. We're all going to have respectful conversation, I'm sure but if there is something noisy going on in the background, then please do remember that it's there and the team might mute you if there is something noisy going on and we're finding it difficult to hear. The raise hand function is there and is very helpful, because then we know that the order in which the questions and the comments are coming in and it sort of allows us to keep track in that way. But again, we're all adults and if you're comfortable putting your camera on, please do. Again, it's helpful to kind of maintain the conversation that way, but it's entirely up to you. As we said before, this meeting will be recorded and is now being recorded. Any other questions, suggestions before we move forward into the next section of the meeting?

[0:09:20]

3. General Updates

Slide 8 – Since our last meeting

HS: Fabulous. So general updates. Again, I'm going to whip through this because I know we've got a lot to talk about in terms of the Route Update Announcement. Since we last met so you've obviously held your local elections so we've got some new members, welcome to new members, really lovely to have you here. If you'd like to look at any of the previous minutes or anything like that they're all available on the website. But if you want anything directly sent from the team, please let us know you should have found the Local Representative Group email address and all that kind of stuff by now but let us know if there's anything else that you want or anything you want us to talk you through.

[0:09:58]

[...] The advisory panel for which people in this group did give us some suggestions and some thoughts, met for the first session in April, it's very successful and will be really integral in helping us design some of the functionality and the design around the concepts that will make sure that everyone can use the railway. We'll talk about the route update shortly. That was followed on that the evening of the route update by a webinar for Local Representative Groups and recording of that is available on the community hub page.

[0:10:31]

Slide 9 – Introduction

HS: I'll skip over sort of the next bit because we'll cover that shortly. So I'll just sort of start what I'm going to do now is I'll give you a really, really top line of what happened in the Route Update Announcement from a route wide perspective, then I'll hand over to my colleagues to go through the bits that are most pertinent to the group here today. So as you know, as we've sort of explained on the next slide, since the Non Statutory Consultation, we've been reviewing feedback. I think we know that the process between the Non Stat Consultation and the announcement, it's taken longer than we anticipated. But as a product of that we have made some changes to the proposals which we presented in 2021, that take account of feedback, we received.

[0:11:12]

[...] A lot of the technical environmental work we've been doing in that time. And also the analysis undertaken as part of a project that we were tasked to undertake by Government, which was called the Affordable Connections Project, the output for which is mostly found in the Economic and Technical Report that was published a couple of weeks ago. So following all of that work, and drawing it all together, we're now publishing the updates about East West Rail, so the most sort of up to date information about East West Rail that we have.

[0:11:40]

Slide 11 – What have we announced?

HS: That in absolute top level is the route on the next slide, which again, we'll go into some detail later that's available on the website and in documentation, so I'm sure you've seen that. So in terms of the announcement, there were four core documents that we published, there was, first and foremost, the Route Update Report, which describes how the proposals for East West Rail have developed since 2021, what our preferred plans for certain sections of the railway are, in which includes our route preferences, so where we've made specific decisions about routes or along the way.

[0:12:17]

[...] There are some route wide matters as well, some things that we consulted about in 2021, we're continuing to work on that effect, and impact, the whole route, and then some information about what happens next and what you can expect in the Development Consent Order process. And particularly thinking about some of the newer members to the group, if any of the acronyms I'm using, or if any of the history doesn't make sense do sort of jump in and let us know.

[0:12:41]

[...] Alongside that Route Update Report, we published three other reports, and some supplementary documentation to support as well. We publish the Consultation Feedback Report, we published the Economic and Technical Report and we publish the Need to Sell Property Scheme. So the Consultation Feedback Report contains a summary of all the feedback that we received during the consultation, and how we have taken account of it. The Economic and Technical report, as I said, it's there's a lot in there, which was from the affordable connections activity but that really lays out all of as it says on the tin, the economic and technical data that we have to date.

Slide 12 – A little more on the Need to Sell Scheme

[0:13:21]

[...] And the Need to Sell Property Scheme if we flick on to the next side. This is a property scheme that we launched to help home and property owners who have a compelling need to sell. Now, that's not something that we've really discussed with this group previously, it's not something that we understand is something that this group particularly wants to unpick so we don't have a land expert here today. But if this is something that impacts you, or anyone in your area, please let us know. Everyone who, whose property could be impacted that way, will have already been contacted by the team and they will have all of these details. Sorry I think there was a question there?

[0:14:05]

[...] No, phantom sound, apologies. So those are the main documents that we published and that's kind of the absolute top view.

Slide 13 – Route Preferences

[...] So what we're going to do now is ask Mo and Rob, to take you through some of the detail that specifically pertains to Bedford and the area north out of Bedford as well. I think we're gonna go through relatively quickly, because I suspect that you've got a lot of questions.

Slide 14 – Topic: Route Update Announcement

[0:14:37]

[...] Before we launch into that. I do just want to say that we will answer as much as we possibly can anything we can't answer in this session, we will take down and we'll try and respond to you by email. One of the things we're quite keen to do as well as to try and anticipate some of the questions that we'll be getting at the upcoming public events so that we can make sure that we're giving people the right information as well. So we are intending to use this session as a guideline to help us prepare for those sessions as well when we talk to the general public, so please do let us know if there's anything that's been talked about locally. Any questions that you've got. Mo and Rob, when we get around to the Q & A session, we'll try and answer as much as they can in the session.

[0:15:15]

[...] So you'll be delighted to know that I'm disappearing for a little while and I will hand over to Mo and Rob if you'd like to introduce yourselves.

Mo Alserdare (MA): Right. Thank you, Hannah. Yeah, I'm Mo Alserdare, I'm the Programme Manager for the Bedford urban area. And over the next few slides, Rob and I will take you through some of the considerations and the additional optioneering work that we undertook in the past year or so, taking into account the feedback from the 2021 Consultation and further developments of the designs since then, if I can get the next slide, please.

Slide 15 – Bedford St. Johns

[0:15:53]

[...] In terms of the choice for Bedford St. Johns station or thinking remains the same as in 2021. Where we consulted on two options, the first option being relocating the station to the west closer to the Bedford hospital, between Ampthill Road and Cauldwell Street. And the second option was to relocate it south of the existing railway, we confirm our emerging preference for option one due to advantages and benefits to the Bedford hospital, and its proximity to Bedford town center. Next slide, please.

Slide 16 – Bedford Alignments

[0:16:33]

[...] And, you know, some of the biggest items of work that we did, and optioneering that we did since, was kind of looking at the Bedford alignments, both in terms of the Northern alignments as we had actually consulted on... as we confirmed in 2020 and further consulted on in 2021. Some of the feedback received from the 2021 Consultation suggested alternatives to the south of Bedford in line with routes B, as well as the reuse of the former Varsity line. And we looked at these lines in a lot more detail. What you see on the slide there on the right-hand side, the northern alignment is in dark blue, that's the one that we confirmed in 2020. And the light blue and the red alignments are alternative Eastern alignments that exit Bedford from the east or from the south, in an attempt to actually address some of the feedback from the Consultation to look at this alternative.

[0:17:33]

[...] We also did further work on Southern alignments and kind of optioneered between them. And in essence, we developed I think what you see in front of you here, is the so called best southern or eastern alignments, which would in essence, try and avoid going north of Bedford. That's the option here and we undertook, I'm just going to finish my slides and I'll take questions if you don't mind.

[0:17:56]

[...] Relatively brief, so I'll just whiz through these and then we can actually, you can ask me the questions. And so I think I've introduced the Varsity hybrid alignments, the Varsity hybrid alignments being eastern departures from Bedford with two other alternatives, the red one following the A421 and the southern one going through Priory Park, and continuing on to an ECML interchange station. And if I can get the next slide, please.

Slide 17 – Bedford area environmental constraints

[0:18:27]

[...] Okay, just an additional map and drawing, kind of showing various alternative alignments that we kind of looked at, in 2019, 2021, 2022, and so on. So essentially, just rethinking our decision making in light of feedback and further design work, and the purple alignment is in alignment that's kind of in essence, tries to bypass Bedford altogether go into the south. And in essence, it will be the alignment that's promoted by BFAre, well a variation of our alignments has been proposed by BFAre, and then the green one is the amended version of that. The red alignment and the orange alignments are the two alignments I showed you on the previous slides, which are essentially the Varsity hybrid alignments.

[0:19:13]

[...] And if you look at the features on the map, it's really quite apparent that the areas to the south and the east and Bedford presents significant environmental constraints and most importantly poor ground conditions.

[0:19:30]

[...] In addition to that these alternative alignments will afford a lower frequency of interchange and connectivity with Bedford Station, because the only way you would actually be able to serve Bedford Station is through a triangular junction, track junction of three sides that would actually involve the turning of trains and relatively complex operational maneuvers that would have an impact on the overall journey time and benefits. And in doing so, actually, you reduce the frequency because you're only able to turn two train around at Bedford Station which is not what our proposal is, nor is based on our kind of thinking which is four trains per hour.

[0:20:08]

[...] So, as I say, a lot of thinking and decision making is driven by our ability to serve Bedford town center to achieve the benefits associated such as housing growth and job opportunities and regeneration in the area. And also, some of our decision making is driven by our desire to provide the four per hour good frequency of its interchange to destinations like Luton Airport, Nottingham and Derby, via Thameslink or EMR.

[0:20:38]

Slide 18 – Bedford to Cambourne

[...] So in summary, I think this is my last slide, in summary, a northern approach to Bedford from Cambridge from the Cambridge direction BSJ, Bedford St. John station to be relocated West, and Bedford station to be redeveloped. And I don't know how we want to proceed. I mean, is the plan for kind of Rob to take the other slides? Or should I take questions now? Because I see a few hands up.

[0:21:06]

HS: I think let's take those questions now so we go through and then Rob can take the next section, but I would say if there are any questions that are pertaining to areas that Rob is an expert in, then I think we will hold them and so never, I would also say as well as being able to put your hand up, you can of course, use the chat function, whichever works best for you. So I think, according to my thing here, I think Peter was first so should we see what Peter's got for us?

[0:21:36]

PN: Thank you Hannah. I was a bit bemused earlier on today, when I was looking through the reports to see what a low profile and extensive briefing that we are given to Simon Blanchflower on the BFAre alternative southern proposal that received. The way your slides read is that you favored two variations on the Varsity, the original Varsity concept, you think that they were the only ones worth considering and then you've gone on to mention two other routes.

[0:22:11]

[...] I think you've got them mixed up because the purple line was the one that we recommended, the Green was an earlier version of that. But where in fact, I mean this was a significant bit of work that we did at the invitation of East West Rail, there were presenters including myself and John Maberley, who's present tonight and we looked at looked at some detail as far as we could as intelligent amateurs. And it was done with meeting notes with briefing notes and it was all taken away. And I've never seen anything as a result of it apart from some reference now that you didn't think very much of it. So is that somewhere else within the package of documentation that's been what on issue where our presentation was properly analyzed, please.

[0:23:09]

MA: So I'm sorry, could you confirm which reports you actually read? Because essentially actually there's quite a few reports, there is references to it across reports in the CFR chapters, and the appendices. And within the RUA report, however, not the actual kind of inner workings of the technicals and the numbers were published, they weren't.

[0:23:39]

[...] However, I think that is something that, you know, kind of was considered and taken into account, the first time around in 2019, when the route was confirmed, and 2020. And this was essentially us revisiting that decision. And as I say, I think rather than looking at it in terms of numbers and figures are not supplied, but I think that we did consider it in a lot of a lot more detail than you would think. And the idea is that essentially, we're unable to serve Bedford Station as frequently as we would like to with the southern alignments.

[0:24:19]

PN: Yep. I appreciate that, yes. I do understand that. But having listened to Will Gallaghers presentation last week, on the results of everything all he could mention was Priory Country Park and floodplains, neither of which the BFARe suggestion was at risk of.

MA: No its...

[0:24:45]

PN: And, finally, finally, I'll add in that you've got a, you're proposing a departure from the consulted alignments, in that you're merging one and nine over a section.

MA: And I'll defer that to Rob, who looks after that side, but in essence, I think just rest assured that we...

[0:25:06]

PN: But elsewhere within the consultation comments, there's a fair amount of concern being received by respondents at the proposed interchange, passenger interchange, at Tempsford, where under your route, you have to approach from the west almost at right angles, and therefore, it's got to go over the East Coast Mainline, over all the overhead line work, it's going to be enormously high and quite vast to create.

[0:25:45]

[...] The BFARe suggestion would have crossed the East Coast Mainline further south and run up parallel using the same flood defenses as the East Coast Mainline. And you could have an interchange station at grade. So that's what I wanted to put in please.

MA: I take those points. And I think in response to that, I can partially respond to that. Some of the constraints with the BFARe alignment, or BFARe as you pronounce it sorry, is that in essence, it impacts the landfill site at Elstow which would be very difficult and complicated and expensive to remediate.

[0:26:16]

[...] It would require significant viaducts and infrastructure interventions to cross the railway twice. But most importantly, and I think one of the biggest factors contributing to that is the, you know, poor or poorer ground conditions, so in relative terms, poor ground conditions, to the east, and to the south of the railway, which are not very reusable for the landfill, kind of fill balance, if you like. So essentially, that comes into the equation, but I think, I think what the message I'm trying to actually convey here is that no matter how you try to link the BFARe alignments, or the southern moments, you are unable to get a four train per hour level of service unless you go to the north of Bedford and that is a very big takeaway.

[0:27:04]

[...] But in essence, as developed by BFARe and as consulted on in 2019, by East West Rail, alignment, route option, B Sorry, which BFARe only provides an alternative to, you know, those concentrations were taken into account and a geotechnical sensitivity analysis was undertaken by Network Rail, in 2018, which details those very concentrations that I just mentioned to you.

[0:27:31]

[...] So we revisited those, we still looked at these in more detail and we went a step further, to try and develop another alternatives that we thought was ever so slightly more viable than the southern alignment that we proposed and you amended, and we still thought that that was not, you know, that was not great. And we still found that on 15 assessment factors, which are kind of like our assessment criteria, the best performing one was the northern alignment.

[0:28:02]

[...] Yep. So I think, I take your point, I noted what you said, I, and I know I partially answered your questions, and I'm sure Rob will also answer some of some of the questions that I wasn't able to answer, most notably with alignment one and alignment nine. But, you know, all I'm trying to say is that, you know, we have we have considered these in 2022, so more recently.

[0:28:26]

PN: Thank you. That's me for the moment.

HS: Wonderful. Thanks so much. Um, so I think we have Brent, then.

BF: Thanks Hannah. Yeah, I entirely agree with Peter. And I'm afraid Mo that you're rather bland statements that you've, you've looked at it in more detail than we might think, doesn't fill me with confidence. I think the least you could have done is come up with a proper examination and show exactly what we need to do. However, I'm gonna skip on that, because I think John Maberley wants to talk about it. My other point on this...

[0:29:01]

[...] Sorry if I'm allowed to answer that, I might have I might have misspoken, really, I think what I was trying to say is that we have considered it and reported on it in the in the chapters. So there's quite a few bullet points and details of why that alignment was not taken forward. Far more detailed than I actually even reported on here. I think there's a series of bullet points of the environmental constraints and the potential demolitions that would be required with an alignment like the one prepared, promoted by BFARe.

[0:29:33]

[...] So, I'm probably, you know, didn't express myself very well there.

[00:29:39]

BF: Okay Mo hear I hear what you're saying. But I don't think that you can dismiss it as lightly as this. This is such a big issue on the alignments, so not properly considered our lives. But I'm gonna let John Maberley come on in that in a second.

[00:29:52]

[...] The other point I'd ask on is on your slides, the one you made about the hospital and I saw Beth west on television saying that the new hospital is going to actually, the new station is going to be in the hospital car park. Now we've already got massive problems in Bedford, you cannot hardly get into the station car park. How's the parking gonna be affected for patients, visitors, staff when you've got a new railway station, right where the hospital car park is now?

[00:30:26]

MA: So I think we are developing our policy with regards to car parking, but in essence re-provision of car parking, where reasonably practicable and wherever we can is the line

there. I can't comment exactly on numbers. But there is concentration of re providing car parking space where it's lost.

[00:30:48]

HS: I think

BF: I'm sorry Mo but that's yet another blank statement that says nothing. When, when you're building this railway station right near the hospital, where are people going to park?

HS: Well, I think we're, we're happy to take that that specific way. I do think it's worth saying that the hospital are incredibly supportive of this. They understand benefits of the railway to the hospital to staff and patients. This is something that they are they have consistently and for a long time been supporters of this the hospital particularly understand the benefit to the team.

[00:31:26]

[...] There are options around how we could maintain and re provide car parking, which is something that needs to be worked up in the next stages of design, that now we've made a decision on where we feel this should go. That's the next stage. Design does happen in stages, design doesn't all happen in one plop. It does happen in stages. So that's something that that we'll look forward to working with the hospital closely on in the next stage of design. But I do think it's important just to get back to that point that the hospital themselves are very supportive of this and understand and we already work and we will continue to work with them on finding the best solution for car parking among, among other things.

[00:32:11]

BF: The staff that I've spoken to, were very concerned about it, and they say they can barely, they can barely park now. And as for doing it in stages, I have to say that sounds very much like making it up as you go along. But I guess that's as good as we're gonna get. So I'll put my hand down now. Thank you.

HS: All right, I just want to say that with any project like this, with any infrastructure project like this, you go through a period through each stage design is narrowing down options. That's completely normal. You say we'd like to build it here, and we consulted on some some broad options of where we might do it and you narrow down, you narrow and narrow down until you have a detailed design.

[00:32:51]

[...] That's entirely normal for an infrastructure project of this size. That's with absolutely within the Green Book processes and all the other processes that we go to. So if you'd like us to run through, again, what the DCO processes is and the expectations of what level of design we need at each stage and that sort of stuff, we're really happy to put that in as a topic for future. It isn't making it up as you go along. It's making sure that there's a very clear process of accountability for each for each stage of design. Again, super happy to go back through that if when we sort of went to it before if that if that didn't you know if that didn't land as well as it could have done?

[00:33:26]

BF: I think we're all familiar with the DCO process. And that's not the problem. I better leave it there because I seem to be hogging the mic a bit. Thank you.

HS: Thanks very much.

Mike Barlow (MB): Hi, Hannah. It's Mike Barlow. Sorry, I'm late, I had a commitment

HS: Mike, I think, Mike, Mike sorry, we've got we've got questions here.

MB: Can you hear me okay?

HS: We can but we've got questions.

MB: Oh I apologise.

HS: So I'll ask you to wait until you're put in the queue. Thanks so much. Philippa would you? I think you were next in the queue. Thanks so much.

[00:33:59]

PMMB: Thank you. Yes. Well, actually, it was to ask very much the same question that Brent was asking about the hospital. And actually, I think you do you know what, it's not that we don't understand the DCO process at all actually. I think the thing is, is what we're saying, if I can carry on from Brent have I've got this? Well, this is my view. We are raising, it's something that we are concerned about at Bedford hospital. And so obviously you're saying we're look at design, and that's part of the big thing. I understand that entirely. However, what we're saying is that this is a big concern for us.

[00:34:30]

PMMB: I think maybe we'll be more useful than going through the DCO process again, would actually be having someone talk to us about what are the options around the Bedford

hospital. I mean, obviously the remit of the of these meetings is not for for Bedford hospital to come and talk to us. So if we want to talk to them separately as representatives, and that's something that we would have to do. But you know it is quite an issue. That carpark is already very full. It may seem you're dealing with a whole line. It seems like a small point to you but for the residents of Bedford it's a huge issue.

[00:35:00]

PMMB: Parking is already a real, real problem. So it's all for us saying, well guess we will re provide elsewhere. But I don't know what land is available. So I think we would really like to, if we can understand what you will look at, what kind of things you might fund, where you might look at alternatives. And actually just just maybe be a bit more specific on that point, I think that actually would be really helpful to allow our concerns that that will be useful from my point of view.

HS: That's really helpful. Thanks, Philippa. Mo, what's that, is that something we should be able to cover?

[00:35:30]

MA: I completely understand that I take your point, it's, you know, it is a matter that's important to us. I think, in talking about the DCO process, I think what Hannah was trying to kind of explain is that there will be these kinds of conversations in subsequent stages of the project. And that is going to be likely to be the statutory consultation. What we are doing here is confirming the route. What we have done so far is to try and do as much work as we can to assess the alternatives and the options. So it's what feeds into the option earring, what allows it to be a differentiating factor.

[00:36:06]

[...] Car parking will be lost, whether we go with option one or option two. I appreciate that in both instances, you know, in the hospital carpark that's more pronounced issue, and it's one that's closer to people's hearts. And I take that on board. And those kinds of design elements are being undertaken at this stage of the project, and going to be reported on relatively shortly after the announcement. So as part of the statutory consultation. So, you know, I understand that you're raising, we understand it's important to you, and these are issues that we will be looking at. And we will be consulting on in fact.

[00:36:44]

PMMB: If I could just raise another question from that. Will we be having another one of these meetings Hannah, before we have the statutory consultation?

HS: Yep. So the view and we absolutely. So the current view is that statutory consultation will be held in the first half of next year. As you saw from the recent whatnots, the exact date of these kinds of things isn't within our control, but that's what we're aiming for.

[00:37:11]

[...] This group meets most groups meet, every three months, this group have chosen to meet every six weeks. We've got a slide towards the end, where we discuss what the next topics are going to be. And I think that'd be really interesting, topic.

PMMB: That's what I was going to suggest is, could it be a topic for us? I think that'll be beneficial.

HS: Yeah, I think it could I think we've got to be realistic about how much we know at this point, just because as we said now the decisions, you know, now we know what our preference are in this space. Now we can crack into some of the the detail work in this space. So there'll be a moment I think we're, you know, that optionality becomes something that we haven't enough detail to share. So I'll take that away. But let's definitely when we get to that slide, let's definitely pull that in. See when the best space, but I mean, if we're going to meet every even if we're only going to meet every three months, we've at least got a couple more of these. And if we meet every six weeks, we've got four or five, I think, at least until the end of the year, so there's definitely scope to talk about a myriad of topics.

[00:38:00]

PMMB: Great, thank you.

HS: Erm thanks so much Phillipa. John. Been waiting patiently.

JM: Hi. Can you hear me okay?

HS: Absolutely.

JM: Good. Good. Good. Thank you. Yeah, I found it very interesting listening, and I've made some notes that I need to go away and checkup and read parts of the report that I've apparently missed.

[00:38:29]

[...] One immediate question I would have, I had great surprise, because the varsity option was sort of insert dumped into this stage of the of the consultation. When actually it hadn't featured in the 2021 consultation, and it had been largely discredited by studies conducted for Bedford Borough Council.

[00:39:01]

[...] So it wasn't very clear to me why or how it was inserted into the debate at this stage. It did seem to me, I have to say, that it was a bit of a straw man that we will put in an option which we can easily get rid of, and that will leave an enhanced case for the option we preferred. So but perhaps I'm being cynical, and for that, I apologize.

[00:39:35]

[...] So seeing the varsity turn, option turnout was a surprise. My other surprise was the BFARe option, what I hear what Mo has said, I hoped and I saw that I've read the report, and I think that you've actually dismissed it quite in a very summary manner.

[00:40:00]

[...] So, it and that is a pity because a great deal of work went into it. And it has largely been dismissed. You and you spent quite a bit of time on a on the varsity option which wasn't even in discussion earlier in in in the process. If I could just make one more point before shutting up and letting people comment or move on

[00:40:37]

[...] The BFARe option does allow Bedford Town Center, Bedford Midland station to be used. And it's accessible to both the Oxford direction and the Cambridge direction.

[00:41:12]

[...] It, what we anticipated, and I'm not quite certain that you've taken on board. Is that the there would be some trains that will go into Bedford mainline and either stop there or come back out and carry on with their journey in either direction. But there would also be a there would also be trains, which were fast, so to speak. In that they went to the south of Bedford and did not go up into the town center. Now, this has two, I have two points on this.

[00:41:37]

[...] One is that it obviously plays well on the desire to connect Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge as fast as you possibly can. And that's a priority, according to the plan for the Arc.. And the second thing is that the Bedford local plan 2040 makes it quite clear where the developments are likely to be. And they are undoubtedly for for housing and therefore potential workers.

[00:42:18]

[...] They are going to be on the south side of the city of the town. And therefore, as long as there is a station on the south side, and there is, people will travel to that station to commute to Oxford or Cambridge. And the, so I don't see that Bedford itself is going to be disadvantaged by having a train travel quickly along the south southern perimeter of the town to either Oxford or Cambridge, as long as there are a train, not all of them, that go into Bedford mainline.

[00:43:05]

[...] For people who want to change to the to the mainline station and the services that go further north. So I don't I think the last point I'd make and I apologize for taking your time. My last point I would say is the whole approach that East West Rail seemed to be adopting is on the time it takes from station to station.

[00:43:38]

[...] And one of the important things is the time when people are traveling and deciding whether to catch a train, or to go by car, is the time it takes from their home to their destination. And it's no good people thinking that people are eagerly going to travel into the center of Bedford, which is very congested and already a problem, to catch a train, when actually they could easily drive to on the road systems that already exist to a station on the south of the town.

[00:44:21]

[...] So the point I'm making is that that we need to think about when we're talking about passengers, the time it takes to get from their home to their destination. I apologise. I've raised a lot of points and taking up too much time.

HS: Please don't apologise John, that was really helpful. Mo I think there's a few points for you to come back on there, and then if there are any areas you want Rob or me or someone else to do let me know.

[00:44:53]

MA: I think I think I'll answer the last point first. And you're absolutely right, end to end journey times do matter to us and are an important consideration for us on the project. So I hope I mean, you know, essentially, I hope you take some comfort in the fact that I'm telling you that it is something that we consider including all sorts of public transport to and from stations, as well as promoting active travel as part of our proposals.

[00:45:21]

[...] But I'm not really an expert on active travel, and that's, I think, as I understand, it is usually a topic that can be covered at separately. But I'll try and I'll attempt to answer quite a few of the questions where I can, I think I'll refute the idea that we, you know, use some sort of technique or tactic to come up with a lesser alternative than the alignments proposed by BFARe as a way to dismiss BFARe, BFARe's alignment.

[00:45:52]

[...] More strongly, that is not the case. We don't deploy this kind of tactics at East West Rail, really, I think we've tried to be as scientific as we can. The reason why the varsity alignments did come to play is because we realistically and reasonably looked at it in light of consultation feedback, as well as actually got consultants to look at it in more detail. And there was some viability to it.

[00:46:19]

[...] You know, there was some advantages to it, and most notably, the fact that we would avoid demolition at north of Bedford, and that was actually a very important driver for decision making. However, you I think, in your view, the varsity hybrid alignments are not as good an option as the southern alignment. Which, let me remind you is in alignment we consulted on and we developed in 2019, as well.

[00:46:48]

[...] It's part of our considerations and, you know, was amended to afford access to Bedford Midland station vi via triangular Delta Junction, as you refer to. I appreciate and it is well understood that you can serve Bedford station with that triangular edge arrangements. I'm not saying you're not, that is the key difference between our alternatives, our alignment and the one proposed by BFARe. But in essence, it is the frequency as you say, it is the frequency of trains that I think is a driver there.

[00:47:21]

[...] We want to serve Bedford Town Center with four trains per hour to achieve the transformational benefits that we are seeking to achieve in the Bedford area. And we're simply unable to turn four trains around that Bedford station only because it takes about 15 to 20 minutes to turn trains around. So the most reasonable service pattern you can really achieve under a triangular junction to serve Bedford Midlands is two trains per hour.

[00:47:49]

[...] And in addition to that, some of the costing we developed as part of the 2020 route announcements shows that the southern alignments is more expensive than the northern alignments. And that does not take into account the triangular junction or the so called Delta Junction that is relatively extensive and requires considerable infrastructure and interventions over roads and over railways. And that was not even costed in that so, you know, if you were to factor all those things in then in terms of capital costs, the southern alignments, which follows from **option E** would be more expensive.

Post meeting clarification: During the meeting option E was unintentionally stated instead of option B. Final sentence should read *'And that was not even costed in that so, you know, if you were to factor all those things in then in terms of capital costs, the southern alignments, which follows from option B would be more expensive.'*

[00:48:26]

[...] But as I say, it's a range of factors. It's not only benefits, as I alluded to, in terms of frequency of interchange, and transformational benefits. Nor is it only capital costs, nor is it only environmental impact. But actually a range of a range of options a range of concentrations that are taken into account and the selection of these alternatives.

[00:48:52]

[...] I think I tried to attempt as many as many things as I could remember from the top of my head. But if I if I haven't or if someone wants to come in and answer something else I I welcome that.

HS: I think you had all the same points I did. But I think John, is there anything that you particularly?

JM: Could I just could I just make a point? You're trying to, as somebody who lives in Bedford, but I applaud it, you're trying to make sure that Bedford gets full benefit from East West Rail and it provides a means of people traveling to and from and commuting.

[00:49:29]

[...] To point I'm surprised that is that if you if you for instance, have two trains per hour, that call at Bedford Midland station. And you then have two trains per hour, which go along a southern route and do not turn up into Bedford Main Town Center, you've provided the four trains per hour that you your modeling suggests Bedford needs and East West Rail needs to get benefit from Bedfords, that Bedford can give.

[00:50:09]

[...] So I don't understand why you don't, why you haven't why you're centering on trains that serve Bedford have to go through Bedford Midland mainline. Some do of course, if you want to trains to the midland mainline trains, then you have to go to through Bedford Midland.

[00:50:38]

[...] But if you're using it to, to, to commute across or to travel across the Arc, or to Oxford, Cambridge or Milton Keynes. Then you don't need to go to the center of Bedford, because most people wouldn't want to go to the center of Bedford to catch a train somewhere else.

[00:50:59]

MA: I think I take your point. I completely, I fully understand the service pattern that's been proposed. I understand that there's two through services, kind of bypassing Bedford Town Center and stopping at a southern station. As well as the ability to serve two trains per hour. And as I say, I think we what we're seeing here is that the catchment areas and the benefits realization, this is not only service or railway that's meant to serve Oxford to Cambridge and Milton Keynes. Bedford is just as equally important, and it's part of the equation.

[00:51:40]

[...] And to achieve these transformational benefits, we want to serve four trains per hour. And actually, one of the most important considerations is the ability to interchange at Bedford Station with North South services as well. But as I say, it's the catchment areas. It's the modeling that's indicated that four trains per hour connectivity to Bedford station is the best service offering for Bedford Town Center, and the residents of Bedford now.

[00:52:07]

[...] But that is not the only considerations. And I don't want us to just I what I'm trying to say is that there's about 15 considerations and benefits. It's a very important one of them. And we think we are we you know, our assessment shows that better benefits can be achieved by serving Bedford Town Center more frequently than two trains per hour. But as I say, there are challenges.

[00:52:36]

[...] If could just get the previous slide, I think it's a more visual representation of kind of the environmental constraints in Bedford. So if I can get to slide 17, please. In essence, that

there is more environmental constraints and more difficulties associated with a southern alignment.

[00:52:56]

[...] You can see some environmental features there. It's not very clear on the slide, it's far more clear on the documentation that's been published. And you see some you know, a larger presence of floodplains in in the south of Bedford and to the east community amenities such as Country Park, which I appreciate is a concern only for the varsity hybrid alignments in essence. And inherently as I say, poorer ground conditions, I appreciate that the northern alignments may have some silts and other geo technically, not very strong material. But our geotechnical experts have looked at this and do think it's far more challenging to build a southern alignment.

[00:53:45]

[...] So, again, the nuance in the alignment is not lost on us. And we have considered it in a lot of detail. And there are there are considerable constraints and issues associated with the southern alignments.

JM: But with respect and I, I can guess the amount of work that you've done to enable you to make statements like that.

[00:54:13]

[...] But I would just to provide some balance. Point out that do appear to be quite severe difficulties having left Bedford station on alignment one, when you get to crossing over the River Ouse and then heading up into what I would refer to as the hill country. Because the topography of the northern route is significantly more difficult than it is on the southern route.

[00:54:53]

[...] You show a map, which clearly indicates potential flooding area. And you're using that to argue that that is much more difficult than traveling on the alignment one which appears from the map to go across flat green countryside, which wouldn't be a difficult it wouldn't be difficult at all.

[00:55:22]

[...] But if you look at the terrain on the northern roads coming out of Bedford, and going across northern Bedfordshire, it is significantly I can't understand how you could argue. It's

significantly more difficult to take a rail line which has to be at around one in 100 maximum gradients across potentially the, well what are actually, the hilliest parts of Bedfordshire.

[00:55:58]

[...] And you're showing maps, which show blue lines across green fields is misleading because it isn't a flat green field. They flat green field fields tend to be on the south of Bedford, not on the north of Bedford. And that seems not to be mentioned, either by you now or in or in the report. You talk about the things like floodplains and, and bridges and things, all of which I understand and have to be taken into consideration. But you're it's not a balanced picture.

[00:56:41]

MA: I think I will I'll proceed that it is not our intention to mislead, far from. We're trying to be as open as we can really, in all honesty. but I think what you're seeing here is not only floodplains, but you're also seeing other environmental features that are in hatched green and hatched red, and other environmentally sensitive areas that are triangular, shown triangularly.

[00:57:12]

[...] I must confess, I think it's yeah, I take your points, I think taken taking snapshots of maps and just putting them here. And perhaps this is put in, you know, requires a lot more explanation. And I take your point, I think the additional points I'd make here is that no mention of typography is made here. Nothing is shown in topography. We're not showing that on this map. It is only environmental features, there is no contour maps that would show that this is flatter or hillier. I take your point that the south of Bedford across the corridor routes, option B is flatter.

[00:57:44]

[...] The reason why, perhaps there's a missing link here that I should be perhaps expanding on a bit more. The fact that there are floodplains means that you have to raise and elevate the railway. You can do that in two ways. You can build embankments, or you can build viaducts. If you build embankments, you do have a certain risk of having such a high embankment that you're having an impact on the on the kind of like the drainage of the entire area if you like. So then you require additional significant drainage interventions.

[00:58:15]

[...] So what is likely to happen is perhaps and more detailed design would be needed. But that is not differentiator between options. But you'd have to put it on a viaduct. You would

incur some costs with regards to that, or you would put it on an embankment. I mean, there's no there's no right and wrong. But if you have over you know, if you've got a saturated ground conditions that are associated with floodplains, these are very difficult to build on top of. They settle differently, they require constant maintenance. And they require quite a bit of kind of like removal of the top layer. Three to four layers by the geotechnical sensitivity report, that's report by the report prepared by Network Rail. And then compaction, and then significant infrastructure works.

[00:58:59]

[...] So essentially, I take your point, that the northern alignments is challenging. It's got its own challenges with crossing the River Great Ouse. It's got its own challenges with regards to the viaduct that's being proposed. However, on balance, I'm looking at the alternatives based on the 15 criterias, that are the so called assessment factors. The northern alignments remained our preference. But we have gotten through that kind of granular detail that you are speaking of we're not, there's nothing we're hiding. We have looked at these.

[00:59:35]

[...] If I daresay I mean, some of the stuff is from 2020/2021, the geotechnical study was shared with yourselves and on the East West Rail website publicly available for quite some time now. And these concentrations were detailed. But I mean, it is not our intention to do preferential engineering, nor can mislead you or provide misinformation. I must stress that.

[1:00:01]

JM: Okay, I accept that. And I apologise if I appear to be questioning your honesty. But the final point I would make on the southern route is that people will look at, will listen to what you've just said, and look carefully at the list of reasons why going on the southern route is difficult. And then they will get in their car, and they will drive up the A421...

[1:00:33]

[...] which is followed roughly the same, same countryside and topography. And they'll realise that the car, is possible to build a roadway system, it can't be that difficult to be to build a rail system. But that's probably naivety. But it is something that will be in people's mind. If you take the road up there. Why can't you take a railway out there?

[1:01:10]

HS: There are some responses to that. I think that perhaps just in the interest of moving forward and making sure that that we bring some more questions in but John, I think one of

the things we'll do is we could definitely take that away. I know the team. We've recording this anyway and the team are scribbling

[1:01:28]

[...] questions down to make sure that we can respond. And I know that the question of can we not put the road and rail you know, in the same space is one, that's come up a lot. And depending on where we are on the route, they're probably different, different answers to that question. So thanks very much, John. I really enjoyed that. That was that was some really interesting stuff that came through there. And thanks very much Mo.

[1:01:51]

[...] if I might move on to Mike and see welcome, Mike. Before we move on, we asked everyone at the beginning of the conversation just to introduce themselves and say which parish you're representing?

MB: Yeah, so Mike Barlow,

[1:02:07]

[...] here with Brent with Wilden as the chair of the rail subcommittee on Wilden Parish Council.

[1:02:16]

HS: Have you moved? You were with Brickhill before, have you moved?

MB: I was yeah, but I'm no longer parish councillor.

HS: So so you're not a parish councillor at Wilden. Just we had this conversation at the beginning that we just need to have everyone's assent for non parish councillors to join us as part the terms of reference, so can we just check.

[1:02:33]

MB: Not parish councillor. Which is made of which made up of the chairs of the parish councils of North Bedfordshire.

HS: Great. Thanks, Mike.

MB: So few points to pull out there Mo, you've covered a lot of ground. Thank you for that. So firstly, the geotechnical stuff, I know you're not a geotechnical technical engineer, but north Bedfordshire produces almost entirely clay.

[1:03:02]

[...] Right. Whereas the southern routes are on gravel and silt. So clay, take 40 years under a railway to settle during which time you need to do maintenance all the time, Network Rail is already spending billions because of climate change where clay subsoils are moving more than they ever have in the past. And this is going to make that worse. So more than that, the way you have to do the extraction in the southern area,

[1:03:33]

[...] the gravel is actually areas of very high quality gravel, so you can sell that, in order to recoup some of the costs of the of the building railway. We've got a soil engineer that works on railways, ourselves, and he's been looking into it. So let's, let's get into more detail about also on the costs related to that. In 2020, there was a spurious 400 million put in as a reasonable worst case scenario that had no specification what it was for other than soil in, on the southern route.

[1:04:06]

[...] The same was not applied to the northern route, despite it being the worst type of clay. So that's an 800 million pound swing, if you were to if you were on the costs on a level playing field. Also, while we're on costs, my understanding is that that the looking at some of the southern route, they've now come out back as being cheaper again, after they were more expensive than route E.

[1:04:06]

[...] They're now cheaper again in the current costs that come out. But we can get into that, because it seems that the route E was only the cheapest during the route, route consultation stage, but then latterly has become more expensive again. And you made a point about a number of the costs hadn't been

[1:04:56]

[...] a number of the costs not being accounted for on the southern route. But on route E in 2020, when the route decision was made, there was no allowance made for land take or CPOs, there was no allowance made for the moving the Jowat sidings, and there's no allowance for the station work at St. John's, there was there was about half a dozen other things that I can't remember off the top of my head, they're the only ones I can remember off the top of my head, were not put into the costs at the point of route, route selection.

[1:05:24]

[...] The other thing is, you've descoped the Marston Vale part of the line, which obviously increases journey time. So you've basically said you're not going to upgrade the level crossings, you're going to compromise on safety, which means that the speed of the trains will slow down. So why is journey time so important when you're coming through Bedford, but not important when you're going through Marston Vale? I don't get it.

[1:05:51]

[...] The other thing you said was about the, yeah, the transformation of benefit. But the transformation benefit comes at extreme sacrifice to Bedford. We're talking about how long is it going to take to build in that town center? 7 years? 10 years of massive disruption. A town center that's already, I mean, I was when I was driving tonight, I was looking at the map on my GPS.

[1:06:21]

[...] And it was showing me that that all the roads in the town center were red, it's already clogged up with traffic, but we're going to put more traffic in there to go to railway stations, which will make it worse, but you've not done a traffic analysis. In the in the 15 criteria.

[1:06:43]

[...] Hannah mentioned accountability. And you keep mentioning openness and transparency, your 15 criteria that we've talked about, we still haven't seen how that the detailed scoring of that came out with the with the top five, making it route E despite asking continuously, we still haven't seen the environmental details of the report something which you've admitted you've got but won't release under FOI from the 2019 consultation, we still haven't seen it, you still not shared it.

[1:07:14]

[...] You did no carbon comparison. Have you done a complete carbon comparison now?

MA: Mike you've asked for too many questions for me to answer on the spot. So either you ask me questions, and then answer one by one, or I'll wait for all of them. And then I'll try and answer them. But I think the short answer is yes, we have.

HS: If we can, if we could possibly. Mike, I think it would be great if we could go back and just pick out some of those and sort of go through them. methodically, there was as Mo said, there was an awful lot packed in there. And I think we're keen to make sure we answer what we can.

[1:07:44]

[...] And as we said in the part you missed in the beginning of that if there's stuff we need to take away, so be it but let's, let's pop through some of these methodically. So which, which would you like Mo to tackle?

MA: So Hannah, I'll just I'll just try and answer what I can from memory.

HS: Fabulous, thank you.

MA: You can stop me and I can compliment but um, I think I think the one point I will make first is East West Rail will never compromise

[1:08:07]

[...] journey times for safety. That is not the case. That is, that is definitely I think safety is probably one of the most is the most paramount principle [inaudible]. So I'll just like to make that point for the record. And I think there I think the nuances are perhaps kind of not coming out as clearly as they should be, perhaps in the report, or you're misinterpreted that but in essence, there is still more risk assessments to be undertaken on the level crossings. I am not the expert for that area.

[1:08:35]

[...] So I will have to take some of those things away. But I can guarantee you that that is not something that we will compromise on.

MB: That wasn't my point. My point was because you can't compromise on health and safety, it means you've had to drop the speed. Because you've decided that you're gonna come keep the level crossings on the Marston Vale Line and not upgrade them to bridges or whatever.

MA: I accept your point.

MB: I wasn't saying you're compromising on health and safety.

MA: I take your point. So, in essence, you're saying why is journey time so important? Okay, I take your points. I think I think there's quite a few things in there. And we spoken in person before I think, Mike, I don't know if you can remember and

[1:09:10]

[...] you know, a lot of these things that you mentioned are things we are we are aware of, I think there's disagreement between us. As a matter of fact, you ask whether I'm a geotechnical engineer, I am a geotechnical engineer by education, as it turns out, but I haven't been acting as one for quite some time. You're right, there is some some drying up of clays that's been kind of like found with deep excavations and areas that are already watered. However, I can't have this conversation with you unless I was to look at the borehole data and in more detail, but

[1:09:44]

[...] I think what I'm talking about what we're talking about here is the three to four meters at ground level kind of the top stratum of the kind of the area that is completely unsuitable for construction. That is what we're talking about here, we're not talking about the deeper strata, we understand that you can actually, you know, if you if you wanted to, I think I'm only speculating here and I will take your question away and look at the boreholes in more detail.

[1:10:13]

[...] But what the study has found is that the superficial layer, the so-called mid ground, if you like, is unable to take the loads, and has to be completely, kind of disposed of and brought in, back in. Okay. So that's, that's where the nuances and I appreciate all the things that you talk about, like in terms of the accuracy of what you spoke about in terms of geotechnical terms. I'm not, I'm not going against that, I will not refute that. However, the cost estimates you touched on cost estimates.

[1:10:42]

[...] And I'll just run you through kind of like the evolution of the cost estimates. We've prepared the so-called phase E, a phase 2 E report into that fed into the 2019 estimates, which had options E as 2.8 billion pounds and route option B as 2.2 billion pounds. And then subsequently to that. We did the geotechnical analysis that I keep referring to when which I definitely invite you to read if you haven't yet I hope you have. What I did is essentially factored in three things, it factored into floodplains that they can be crossed by a mixture of embankments and viaducts.

[1:11:19]

[...] It took into account that all cut or excavated material could be reused in construction, which is the same assumption as at face to be and then different earthwork profiles in terms of height and slope in certain areas, which were guided by the ground conditions. Now that actually changed the prices, oh sorry, the capital cost estimates for route option E to be 1.9

billion pounds, and for route option B to be 2.2 billion pounds. And further to that, we commissioned an independent study.

[1:11:49]

[...] So essentially, this was all work that was done by Network Rail prior to the establishment of East West Rail Co. When we were established as a company, we set up Atkins and other consultants, I think it was [inaudible] to actually look at these and independently cost the options.

MB: So wasn't there an error in the calculation to the BCR, in that one of those reports?

MA: So BCR is something that's completely different. BCR is benefit to cost ratio, I'm talking about cost only here. And I'm not the expert to comment on that, unfortunately.

[1:12:19]

[...] But in essence, I think all I would say is that the third estimates actually made more changes to the assumptions in light of additional information, in light of additional data that was provided, and we received and that's mostly the geotechnical sensitivity assessments I keep referring to. And the changes are such that for floodplains, the same assumptions were used for all alignments. We still assume that half of the cut and excavation material can be reused. But the alignments were revised to avoid environmental constraints.

[1:12:51]

[...] And that has an impact, an impact on earthwork volumes. And finally, the final point was that all roads and public rights of ways needed to be retained by providing bridges or underpasses and that's what fed into the capital costs. And, and that gave us the final numbers that are reported on in the 2020 consultation, so approximately three years ago. These numbers have never changed since that point, those are for route alignment, A, B, C, D, and E.

[1:13:19]

[...] And our preferred one being £3.7 billion and route option B being £4.1 billion. Now, the that does not take into account, the triangular arrangement of track that we spoke about that allows access to Bedford Midland station. That is purely bypassing Bedford to the south altogether with a with a southern Bedford station, a parkway station. So if you were to factor those costs in, including the remediation of the landfill sites, the additional trackwork and other infrastructure interventions over roads and bridges, you're very likely to incur higher costs.

[1:13:55]

[...] You're right in saying that there are some elements of costing that were not taken into account. And were subsequently added to the estimate for routes option E. But those were not in the order of magnitude that you refer to, they are.

[1:14:14]

[...] I'm going to be careful what I say but kind of like in the millions of pounds, not the tens or the hundreds of millions of pounds, I think it amounts to tens of millions of pounds in terms of kind of like the two additional tracks north of Bedford. You spoke about a 400 million pounds kind of provision that magically appeared I cannot contest that. I don't know what the actual numbers actually say. This comes as a surprise to me. If it was added to one not added to the other, there must have been a reason I can take that away and look at it. But certainly, if you were to remove one if you were to remove it from option E and add it to option, sorry, remove it from option B added to option E that would indeed swing the cost by 800 million pounds as you say, but if you were to actually treat them fairly, it would be 400 million pounds cost but that still is not something

[1:15:00]

[...] I'm not I'll take it away and have a look at it. It comes as a surprise to me doesn't seem like the kind of thing we would do, but I will look at it again.

MB: So I just went on the cost of it there, in the current report, they've just released HR five, which is route E which is six track North of Bedford, four track southern approach to Cambridge is currently on this lower bound risk 4.4, upper bound risk 5.3 billion.

[1:15:33]

[...] the, and then the, from December 2022 costing. With the August 2022 costings for HR two, which is the Bedford varsity route with a three that's coming out at 3.15 for the upper boundary. So a difference of 3.1 versus 5.3. That's a big difference.

[1:15:57]

MA: So I think I would say I would, I would reiterate the points. And I think that I probably in answering your previous question did not emphasise the point enough. That is the reason why the varsity hybrid alignment was pursued. The apparent reduction in capital costs that we thought we could achieve and however, actually, after further analysis, we found that actually those costs are likely to go up. And the scheme is very difficult to consent and, and represents considerable environmental impact.

[1:16:26]

[...] But the cost of route option E, sorry, route option B has not changed, it is still more expensive than northern alignment. This is an alternative alignment that goes to the east of Bedford that was not consulted upon in the 2019 consultation officially. So there's a there's a slight nuance, I mean, I think, you know, you're having to make some assumptions with regards to kind of like service patterns. If you're serving two trains per hour at the Bedford Midland station, perhaps the scope is slightly lower than if you're serving four trains per hour and there are some capital gains to be achieved from that.

[1:17:01]

[...] The triangular junction is far smaller than the one proposed under the routes option B, but I think it is it is not HR five or sorry, I I don't know exactly which HR is which. But in essence, the eastern departure is not to be confused with the southern departure out of Bedford. That was not something that was taken into account in the affordable connection reports due to the fact that only the varsity hybrid alignment provided perceived advantages in terms of capital costs.

[1:17:36]

MB: Okay,

HS: Brilliant. Thanks so much, Mike, for your questions. That's fantastic. I think we have obviously got a record of everything you asked. And I think we'll try and unpick some of those in the follow up. Peter you've patiently had your hand up for a little while. I wonder if we could

PN: It will be very, very brief, actually, of course. So it's been largely covered in the previous consultation. But I put my hand up because there's clearly a

[1:18:04]

[...] diametric, a diametrically opposite appreciation of the soil report that our soil man put in to support the BFARe option. Tom Pearce, he's qualified soil engineer and he has the opposite conclusion that the

[1:18:30]

[...] that the subsoil to the north is rubbish and stuff in the south is very expensive and reusable. So maybe, maybe there's a scope to to try and bridge that gap and, and appreciation.

MA: And I think I think I would just for the record, honestly, I did not undertake the geotechnical study, right. I think it was also done by experts stating for the fact that I was. So it was done by competent people as well, it was done by competent consultants.

[1:19:00]

[...] I think I definitely agree with what you just said, I think conversations between your geotechnical engineer and our side would be very helpful to bridge the gap. And I think it is not as simple as that it is not as simple as the North is better or the South is better. I think. I tried to kind of explain or allude to the fact that it depends on what you're trying to build. And then what, what are you trying to achieve?

[1:19:25]

[...] Are you trying to get a good cut and fill balance? Are you trying to put piled foundations and get to the ground level that's suitable? And the answer is different depending on what you're trying to do and what your scope of work is. So it's not as black and white as perhaps I think, or you might think and I definitely welcome that I welcome us having a better, can I just ask whether your expert has actually read the geotechnical sensitivity report and whether he has an inkling?

[1:19:55]

PN: I would have thought he probably hasn't actually, because I think he appreciates that there's such a totally opposite professional opinion, personal opinion. Are you intending to be present at any of the drop-in centers?

MA: I will be on Tuesday. I will be on Tuesday next week at Bedford, yes.

[1:20:11]

PN: Okay, and will you be coming to Ravensden?

MA: It's most likely I will, yes. Okay.

PN: Okay, I'm sure that Tom Pearce would welcome a quick one.

HS: It should be said that should there be particular experts that you want to have a chat with might be a good idea to route that through other things, because obvious there'll be a lot of members of the public who want to speak to Mo and other experts. That's that's absolutely not to say that Tom shouldn't be speaking to Mo. I think that's to say if there are conversations to have, let's try and make sure that Mo who's clearly an expert in a lot of different areas is available to a lot of different people.

[1:20:48]

HS: So I'd be happy to pick that up with you, Peter, if you want to, to have a chat around how best to get your, your geo guy comfortable with with the reports that we've created today. And it may be that actually Mo would recommend someone else in the team to have that conversation because it's because as he said, he's he's is a geotechnical expert, but hasn't specifically worked in that capacity on this project.

PN: Thank you Hannah.

HS: Thank you. So we'll, we'll take that away, as as an action to look at the best way of doing that, because I know Mo will be in great demand from members of the public at those events.

[1:21:25]

[...] Thank you so much. We seem to have run out of people with their hands up, which means and I know that that was a fantastic Q&A from Mo. I'd like to introduce Rob or rather let Rob introduce himself because there is sort of some further information that we have, I think there's only one slide but it's quite a good one. So I'm going to hand over to Rob now. And I'll see you on the other side. Thank you.

Rob Milner (RM): Thanks, Hannah and Mo. So I'm Rob.

[1:21:52]

[...] I think I attended the last meeting we had. I'm basically the programme manager between Bedford and Cambridge so I pick up from Mo as the as the tracks leave Bedford. So as you probably know, in the 2021 consultation, we had five shortlisted options between Clapham and The Eversdens. And so basically just outside Bedford to just outside Cambridge.

[1:22:19]

[...] And looking at this section through Bedfordshire here, as the screen shown. The dark blue is alignment one and effectively, our alignments followed that alignment or a more southern approach typically, the emerging preferred option was alignment nine and the alignment nine ran south of Ravensden and Wilden and south of Roxton and met the, alignment nine met the Tempsford station as we crossed the East Coast mainline

[1:22:49]

[...] and from the assessments done at non statutory consultation, alignment one performed the best generally across the assessment factors. However, the alignment one connected to St Neots station. Further works have been done looking at St Neots station and Tempsford and it is considered that Tempsford offers a greater potential for

[1:23:17]

[...] housing and economic growth than St Neots does. One of the other key points was highlighting at consultation was that alignment nine effectively encircled Roxton with transportation. So, to the south, you had alignment nine and then to the west and east, the A421 and the A1, with the Blackcat roundabout to the north.

[1:23:45]

[...] And so, this is sort of key consideration of the town and the conservation area there. Some work was developed and following that which was looking at a variant to alignment one which could serve Tempsford station and our preferred option which will take forward for sort of further development and presentation at Statutory consultation is alignment one Tempsford variant

[1:24:13:]

[...] which on the screen is the dark blue line apart from when we get to the red area which deviates off near Chawston and connects to Tempsford and then connects back to the alignment one just east of Little Barford. Peter, you've got a hand up.

PN: I will do but so you can carry on to the end of this particular part.

RM: Well, I thought I'd introduce it and then bring it and then questions can come in as you were depending on what subjects you want to cover.

PN: Here we go then.

[1:24:50]

[...] Throughout the course of this project, with our contact with various senior managers at East West Rail, the question of rechecking where we are looking back, whether we've made the right decisions, has been dealt with several times, and there's always been a common line coming from East West Rail was that you have a process of back checking how you got to the current point where you're likely to go into the future, and have you made the right decisions and

[1:25:25]

[...] for items that have little impact, they're probably not worth of not worthy of much further consideration. But for items that are of more substance, then then they can introduce a change. And this appears to have been what's happened here is that if you've perceived that there was an advantage, to merge

[1:25:59]

[...] alignments one and nine, over a section of about nine kilometres, and run it through a different route to a different station at Tempsford. I can understand that, that's fine. But this particular route, this hybrid route, wasn't one that was consulted upon as part of the five. There were five distinctly different options. Masses of technical information was was was made available those

[1:26:31]

[...] one of the most useful aspects of the technical information were the horizontal long engineering drawings, which enabled people to bring lines on a map into life and to to reveal the likely impacts of amendments and cuttings and unearth effective land take.

[1:26:59]

[...] The other thing that Will Gallagher has said that in cases where a significant change was thought to be necessary, that then raises the question of actually going back to the original consultees and say, look, you know, we want to add in a change to because this is significant and it could, well change your views.

[1:27:27]

[...] So, personally, I think that the magnitude of this change between amalgamating one and nine is such that it crosses the crosses the bar for people not just to accept it, and to expect a degree of involvement and consultation. I also read in the, in the consultation report,

[1:27:58]

[...] a pervading conclusion that whatever is changing now, and obviously, the whole program is in a process of evolving, will finally come to light, at the statutory consultation. But the point I want to make, Rob, is that that East West Rail to their credit, when the route alignment consultation was

[1:28:33]

[...] announced, were pretty open in the information they made available to the general public. I would have expected at minimum, that East West Rail would be prepared to

update the horizontal long drawing, long section drawing for the modified alignment one, and make that available for the benefit of the community. So we've got the same sort of level playing field we had when we did the the alignment consultation.

[1:29:11]

[...] Would you be prepared to express an opinion on that? And agree, maybe, to making that available? Please.

RM: I think I can express your opinion, but maybe not the second part of that.

[1:29:27]

HS: I'll just jump in there real quick and just say that the just to be really clear, what we've done in the past couple of weeks is not start a consultation exercise. We have released a significant amount of information and published a significant amount of information, but it is not the beginning of the consultation exercise. You're absolutely right, Peter, that you should you should expect specific kinds of information at consultation exercises. And as we said earlier, that we do expect to have our statutory consultation begin in the first half of next year. That's the what we're aiming for.

[1:30:00]

HS: But what we have done in the past two weeks is publish the latest information that we have about the program available. So I just wanted to jump in there real quick and just make a very clear delineation between two things.

PN: What I wanted to just point out the irony in between Will Gallagher open handed attitude that if you want to change something big time, then we'll go back to you and talk about it.

[1:30:28]

HS: Just to be real again, absolutely appreciate there's been a lot of information published over the past couple weeks. But as part of the Economic and Technical report, you'll see that the Affordable Connections Project that we talked about at the beginning of this presentation was a significant driver in the Economic and Technical report. And that really did go back to first principles in a number of really critical areas and was what one of my colleagues is called an almighty backcheck. There are any number of things that have been reviewed and rechecked.

[1:31:02]

[...] And the there are some areas which is a consequence of consultation in the feedback we received and ongoing stuff we have changed. And as you say that one of the key things that we have changed is that the alignments that we consulted on the last consultation,

there were improvements we could make by effectively taking the best of of two different alignments and putting them together.

[1:31:26]

[...] So there are there are changes that are made, as part of that almighty back check. There are changes that are made in a number of areas, might not be that the changes are the ones you were hoping for, but there are certainly changes that are made once we look at in the round the information available to us. I'm sure you've got stuff to add to that.

PN: We're happy to be involved with any changes as this project goes forward, because hopefully we will end up an agreed situation at the end.

[1:31:59]

[...] We've certainly for the Bedfordshire LRG group, as you know, we've engaged more than double the rate of most of the others. And we've endeavoured to, to elicit information. We've raised concerns. We've been clear about that. And whereas it in the most case, you haven't been able to give us any further information beyond what was declared the 2021 public consultation.

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[...] we're now a stage further on with that, because you've had the results back from the public and the elected representatives and stakeholders. And, and you are incorporating changes. But as far as this, this Tempsford variation is concerned, it's just a red line or a map at the moment. It will be a close interest to Roxton nearby, because it looks like they've exchanged a large embankment for a large viaduct. But it's not clear from the available information to what extent these changes will impact on the visual nature of this project.

[1:33:24]

HS: Okay, that's helpful clarification. Thanks. Thank you, Peter. Rob, have you got anything to add to that?

RM: Yeah, I think he took my first few paragraphs there. So maybe I mean, reiterate what Hannah said. So the route update announcement is obviously our announcement route following the appraisal of the feedback from the non-statutory consultation, and it's our intended route. But there's, I think we're quite clear in documentation that there's a degree of design development and additional things like, you know, surveys, for instance, to go before statutory consultation.

[1:34:06]

RM: Statutory consultation is where we'll produce that those level of detail. So there will be engineering plans, and there'll be a lot more detail than just providing a non statutory consultation. But we wouldn't be in a position to provide those engineering drawings on the route until we've gone through that that process, which I'm afraid will be at **non statutory consultation**.

Post meeting clarification: We will be in a position to provide the engineering drawings at the statutory consultation (non-statutory consultation was unintentionally stated).

[1:34:35]

[...] And you know that that's the week you know, we have a we have a route for the alignment 1a, which we are which we're counting gives us a feasible solution through there. But through the development that route, that route may may change as we develop more and as we do surveys, I think is you and you understand we've got a number of key challenges in area of routes of roads and rail crossings.

PN: I do understand that Rob, and I will see comments attributed to your CEO that they have talked about building more intelligently or building better without not so big, not so expensive. So there will be differences to the contours of the visible lines in terms of heights of embankment slips or cuttings and length of viaducts.

[1:35:19]

[...] But you will be maintaining an ongoing working reference. And as these long section drawings are the base record, aren't they? They're the base record of what the grounds like where you want to go, and how you intend to go over the ground. And those I imagine, they're not just as they existed back in 2021.

[1:35:44]

RM: I mean, these are the these are the clearest output from our designs, but you know, designs developing in, you know, CAD modelling computer models these days as a sort of 3D design developed. But then, you know, you've got certain stages such as this stage where you've got a kind of whole point in development, and then you're developing your building that that development.

[1:36:14]

[...] But I think the danger is that if we start if we, if we provided detailed design now of a section and that changes. You've then got two drawings in public, which has changed, and for some people that would prefer that and some other people they wouldn't. But you don't, you wouldn't produce like public drawings, designed drawings during the design process until you've gone through the full process and got that, you know, signed off and up or improved and get done all the work into that point is in statutory consultation.

[1:35:54]

[...] I mean, I think this is the sort of difficulty with the route update announcement. That we it's not the same as the non-statutory consultation. We won't be providing the same level of detail. But there are opportunities for people to give opinions on on this route at the statutory consultation and again at the DCO stage.

PN: Well, what I've, what I'm saying is, it's a it's a substantial change to what was presented at the non statutory consultation.

[1:37:25]

RM: Sorry, I should have picked that up as well as your first point, wasn't it? So the, the change we've made us, as I think Hannah delivered to you, was brought out of comments that we received during the consultation. And as you say, it is a combination of two routes, which were which, which were, you know, this is a hybrid of both the routes, and it is over a relatively short section compared to the full route across. So we feel that the the additional improvement that we've brought forward with this alignment is in line with the with the non-statutory consultation.

[1:38:01]

[...] And as I said that there is the opportunities to sort of express views on that at the statutory consultation.

PN: Well, if a bit more information was provided now, it might stimulate a discussion using this this forum, the LRG forum. Where it might cause you to modify slightly or sort of see a reason in doing something but rather than leaving it to this to the, to the last hurdle, which is a statutory consultation, to find that you got unbridgeable gaps in.

[1:38:41]

HS: I think, Peter, what, I think that's a that's a really fair point. And I think our intent isn't to leave things until the statutory consultation. We I'm aware that we've got a few other questions coming in and only sort of a quarter of an hour left in our allotted time tonight.

PN: Yeah, okay.

HS: If there are questions or conversations that you'd like to have, I think, please let us know. Because I think that's, that's something we'd be quite keen to understand.

[1:39:12]

PN: Hannah, let me let me stop you there then. Because if you've caught sight of your mail, in the last couple of days, you will know that I've asked that question in detail of you. So it and I'll put it in the chat line, sort of both the CEO presentations that preceded this. It's it's the clearest question that comes to me at this stage of the game, bearing in mind that we are we've opened a new page now we're looking forward and a lot of things will be will be changing going forward. But I would I really feel strongly that okay, we don't need we don't need to start another consultation on this particular aspect, but you will have information which could easily be shared with us, which will be a value to us.

[1:40:04]

HS: That's really helpful. Thanks, Peter. Um, I have to admit my emails last couple of days have been very full and the team have been very kindly looking at things on my behalf. So I'll, I'll dig into that after this meeting, if that's okay, and pick that up with you separately.

PN: That's fine. That's okay. And we believe that question to be picked up and responded to formally then.

HS: Thank you

[1:40:29]

RM: I would say on that, you know, there are particularly concerns on the route, or on this section of the route that is something we can discuss in further meetings and come back on.

PN: Okay. Thank you, then.

HS: Absolutely. Thank you. We've We've got questions from Brent, Justin, and John, to come. I think it's, it's fair to say if if we're all comfortable staying on just a touch longer than the 8:30. I'm sure we're happy to do that. And then we'll we'll close up the meeting after we've responded to the questions from Brent, Justin. And John.

[1:41:04]

[...] I will say if you have a question you haven't managed to get yet please put it in the chat or pop it over and an email, we'll make sure that we do respond. So Brent, I wonder if you could jump in at this point.

BF: Thanks, Hannah. Yeah, I just want to further to Peter's first point about the changes. This is one of the things that upsets people most. In your previous consultation, you changed the costs after the consultation and made the decision based on that. In this consultation, everybody's commented, everybody's been consulted. And yet, you've changed the goalposts again, in this, this hybrid alignment, it was never anything that people had a chance to speak about, has suddenly been scooped out of thin air.

[1:41:47]

[...] So I mean, is this what's going to happen is this is this a pattern that continues? Where you give it you give out information, people comment, and then you change your data, and then make the decision based on that.

RM: And so we, we do look to make updates in line with the feedback, we get a consultation, I think that's good practice. In the consultation, a number of people expressed concern of alignment nine's encirclement of Roxton, and actually people did suggest that alignment one and the other alignments along those lines should go to Tempsford station instead.

[1:42:24]

[...] So I think there's a sort of theme here, which is, you know, we've listened to the consultation. And we've we've introduced a variant based on that, and for the work we've done, so I think there's there is a sort of consistent and justifiable narrative there. I don't think you know, it's we're not talking about moving goalposts, we're talking about listening to consultation and updating in line, and going back to consultation consulting back on that.

[1:42:53]

BF: I don't think that's true at all Rob. Because in the previous consultation, where you changed the costs, I'm sure that people didn't all say in their consultation comments that they thought E would be much

RM: yeah, I, I'm answering your point you're making on the variant. And

BF: Ok, so I would say to that Rob, that you may have had a very small number of people, but 99% of people are responding, responded on alignments one to nine, and gave you views on that you might have had one or two, so maybe one and nine for the hybrid. But I bet there weren't very many.

[1:43:27]

RM: There was a lot of comments around rather than just rolling, just expressing opinions. There was a lot of comments on suggested variations and concerns. A lot of the concerns with nine were raised, and particularly around this sort of Roxton area. So that's the feedback. That means it similarly, when we go to statutory consultation, we'll be listening if there are particularly concerns with with route alignment that tend to vary. I mean, do you have an issue with the actual route shown on here? Or is it more of a process or a question, and it is the process?

[1:44:02]

BF: It's the process I'm objecting to Rob. Can I ask you?

HS: I think it's, I sorry, it's just

BF: Sorry Hannah, I haven't finished. I haven't finished Hannah, Rob asked me a question. He asked me if I was objecting to the process or the line, and I'm objecting to the process in general. But also looking forward, moving forward from this, when you do the statutory consultation early part of next year, will we find that things will change again, when it comes to the DCO?

[1:44:31]

HS: Yes, absolutely. Sorry, Rob I'm just gonna jump in. The point of consultation is that it's one of several information routes and that we go out we gather information. We gather information from the public, we gather information from economic reports, technical reports. We gather information from a wide range of sources and that's that that is what you would hope to happen and that the what you'd want to happen is that the team continue their design they continue to understand what's possible and what's preferable.

[1:45:00]

[...] The information that we get in from the general public, the feedback that we get from people is absolutely one of the key elements of that. That's something we take into account. If through various processes, it's not the only thing we take into account. It is one of many, many things that we take into account. This is very important, but it is not the only thing we take into account. Will things change between the thing that we consult on and the thing that we've submitted to DCO? Absolutely, because it's very likely that we'll get things in back in that consultation, that, you know, that cause us to refine our our proposals, that's the point of consultation, point of consultation is to test your proposals.

[1:45:40]

[...] So alongside testing our proposals through consultation, we test our proposals through ongoing economic, financial, environmental, all sorts of different studies that we do. So at any given moment, we are sharing the most up to date information that we have. When we when we publish information that we have, we're publishing the most up to date information that we have. And we're asking people's views at that point. So that that's, that's part of the process. That's part of how the design happens.

[1:46:09]

BF: I'm afraid that doesn't wash out because you say at any given time we are giving information out, you don't give information out you do a consultation, you wait, then you give your results afterwards. You haven't given the information out, what you haven't done is allow re consultation on major factors a) in the previous one on the cost, on this one on the line changes.

[1:46:37]

MA: Sorry, if I may, I think just on costs, I will come in and say that the selection of route option E took into account the latest costs. That is there is there is a change. And it's usually the case for infrastructure projects to revise estimates, as further work is done. We've been transparent on costs. We've published costs as part of the 2019 consultation.

[1:47:01]

MB: But it's not just a little bit, you change them significantly. Route E increased by 9%. Route B increased by 80%.

MA: Mike I'm not I'm not I'm not debating that. All I'm trying to say is, as a matter of principle, I think all I'm trying to say is that there wasn't a selection than an update of the costs, there was an update of the costs than a selection. That's all I'm trying to say here. We did subsequently change those (inaudible)

[1:47:28]

MB: No costs been shown to the public, you'd have got a very different response from the public.

JM: Here here.

MB: Because people dismissed Route E on the basis that it was by far the most expensive with the information you shared. When you made the decision, it had changed to the cheapest and everything else would become much more expensive. Because

MA: [Inaudible].

MB: They looked at it and rightly or wrongly, they made an assumption that it was never going to go on Route E, because it was such so much more massively expensive.

[1:48:00]

MB: And that is what people object to. The fact that you, that it changes on the basis of the work but you don't inform the public.

MA: Like what I'm trying to say

MB: It's the same to the six track and the demolitions in Poets. Because you knew about those during the consultation, and you've denied those people the opportunity to contest Route E because you didn't share that information before the decision was made.

[1:48:26]

MA: I think I think it's a I that that is not true.

MB: That's absolutely 100% true. We know you knew about it in July 2019. We've got the letters. We've got the letters from Bedford Borough Council to EWR. Don't tell me that's not true.

MA: Mike, I think

MB: [Inaudible].

MA: We've had we've had this debate several times, and we're about to close it up. I mean, essentially, all I'm trying to say here is that it is not unusual for costs to evolve as part of the design development. And these are reported on and I am just trying to refute the arguments.

[1:49:04]

MB: You said that that's not true insinuating.

MA: We have been as transparent as we can.

MB: It is true that you knew about those demolitions in July 2019. In fact, you probably knew about it before that, but I've got proof that you knew about it in July 2019.

HS: Mike, you've made that you've made that assertion to me before.

MB: And yeah do you know what Hannah? How many how many people have you had crying on the phone to you this week? Because the offer that you've made to them is 20% below the offer they got for sale two years ago, they got called because the solicitors

[1:49:36]

HS: there's a there's a number of things happening here. As I said, you've made that assertion to me before I'd be grateful if you could send me the letters that you have. I don't think we've ever closed that out.

MB: We've published them. I will gladly send them

HS: I'd be grateful if you could send to me directly and we'll address that. And as for the 20% I'm unclear what you're talking about there. We've not offered below market rate for any houses you're talking about in that space. Glad to pick that up

[1:50:12]

MB: Well, I'm not gonna share the name. I've had a woman on the phone to me on Friday crying because of what's happening with EWR. Because her granddaughter is basically in blight because of the housing issue.

HS: Anyone in that position to get in touch with us

MB: You basically ignore them. And that's part of the point that they were saying.

[1:50:36]

HS: Again, I would absolutely refute that we will ignore people, Mike. We have a team in place that talk to people and have regular meetings. We offered a meeting with every single person who is impacted in any way. If that feels like ignoring to you, we can have that conversation. We have a land team, that's available to talk to people. And we're quite happy to do that. And I would say to the person that was talking to you, if their granddaughter wants to get in touch with the team that hasn't yet gotten in touch with the team, I think she absolutely should. And I'd be very happy to, you know, if you're not comfortable sharing details here, which I think is right, then then we can take that away and talk about it separately.

[1:51:10]

[...] But there is, you know, we have a team in place. All of the letters in that section was delivered by hand so that they could have a conversation on the doorstep. We invited the leadership of the Poets and Ashburnham groups to the call that we had on Friday. We have a separate call, which was organized in partnership with the Poets and Ashburnham groups on Wednesday afternoon for all of the residents in that area to talk to us. And as I say we've offered every one meetings. So there's been a lot of dialogue with people in that space, there's a lot of opportunity for people to talk to us in that space. If you want me to detail anything of what I've just said to you. If that could be helpful I can, we haven't to this point with this group, because obviously you don't represent those people. But we were happy to

kind of outline the conversations that we've had with those people. I think if we can move on to Justin, that will be helpful.

[1:51:57]

JG: Hi erm, obviously, I fully support Peter in his request for those long section drawings. And the absence of that of you not providing that we can probably devise our own assumptions about the height of the embankments that are now going to be going across close to circa 100 houses in Roxton. It's very easy for us to do that. It'll be minimum clearance height over a dual carriageway, plus an assumed thickness for construction.

[1:52:29]

RM: To be honest, I think so we're gonna just jump in on that. I mean, the

JG: You don't need to

RM: No, no, no, I'll just say that I don't think we're shying away from the height there. If you look at the the longest sections of alignment one but more, more properly, appropriately, alignment nine, we they show the height we need to go to go over the road roads and railway. So that section will need to go over similar heights for over the road or railways. The questions of the questions of the design development here is, you know, things like do we where we have an area where we're not crossing a road or a railway do we drop the alignment down and come back up again, which isn't a brilliant railway alignment. But it does save on the the visual impact of that point. And it also means more embankments.

[1:53:12]

[...] Or do we maintain the height and you know those. And also, you know, the is more you there's lots of ways of tweak tweaking that that curve as we learn more from surveys. And as we look at the railway alignment in more detail. I don't think we're shying away from the the the heights of the heights there where we cross a road or a railway. In this alignment, we need to we need to safely cross at the same as other one's.

[1:53:40]

RM: Your Tempsford variant isn't long enough to do one in eighty. The sort of dips to minimize embankments that you're suggesting might happen. So please. So I think the one big point, I'm very conscious of time. I think there's a thread here Hannah to tonight, and it's a thread that's happened many, many times. What I would really, really like to see is the background homework. We're asking you to choose to show me show me your homework. How did you get here, we would really, really like to see how you got to the point where the Tempsford variant became preferred.

[1:54:22]

HS: So I mean, I think

JG: That's not available now. You've admitted tonight, your colleagues, both Mohammad and Rob has said we've done a lot of work. We've done a lot of detail assessment, give them to us.

HS: Have you had an opportunity to read by reading?

JG: Yes I read through yesterday. It's a very excellent example of how to put hundreds and hundreds of words into a document and say very little.

HS: So specifically, I'm just trying to just I'm just gonna...

JG: I have some time tonight to go through it. So I will go through, I'll go through it line by line and start picking apart the bits of data that we would like to see that justify your thinking.

[1:55:07]

[...] I'm telling you now it isn't there. It may look like it, but actually, when you read it, it is there's a lot of detail missing. We will go through, and we'll pick it up separately. But I would hope, I would hope, Hannah, that you could commit, if you've done an assessment that isn't published, that you would publish it.

[1:55:24]

HS: I feel like I do want to take that away, because I think your, it depends exactly what you're asking for. So it depends on the questions, you ask them whether or not we have the detail behind it. So let's, let's see the questions you ask. If we have the information that sits behind them, then obviously we can, you know, we can walk you through it.

[...] If we don't have, you know, the specific answer to the question that you're asking. So let's, see where that comes from.

[1:55:49]

JG: In a nutshell it's needing to see the homework that has gotten you to the point where you think this Tempsford alignment is required; this Tempsford variant is required.

HS: Okay, that's helpful. Thank you very much. Thanks, Justin. John, I think let's, let's bring you in as the final question for today.

JM: Okay.

HS: And, of course, if there's any questions to follow up then you're welcome to take...

[1:56:10]

JM: No no, it's very much less important than that, despite that you've, you've just been having. But my my question was, how, to what extent are you now discussing all of this and, and the changes and where we are, with Bedford Borough Council?

[...] Because since 2021, and a couple of years, that led up to it when there was a lot of interaction between East West rail, and the then administration, we've got a) new administration, in terms of an executive team, but we've also got a new local plan.

[1:56:55]

[...] And although East West Rail will have a railway line with national authority, where people actually, where people are located and where houses are located, will in the end depend on local plans, and local borough and local councils. And so I just wonder what degree of discussion there is between Bedford Borough, the executive team and East West Rail when you're making having these debates and these discussions?

[1:57:36]

HS: Also with all of the local authorities along the route, including Bedford borough, like I say, every local authority along route. We will meet, we would offer the senior leadership meetings with our chief executive, or our strategy director Will, who was mentioned earlier.

[1:57:57]

[...] I understand that our chief exec Beth has met the new mayor more than once, since his election, I think it might be as many as three times since his election? I'd be happy to look into that. There are also several conversations go on, on what we would call an officer level with various people across the, again, across every local authority.

[1:58:27]

[...] So normally you talk to perhaps transport, archaeology, environment, those kinds of people, and those conversations happen on a peer to peer level across the piece. Those are all statutory consultees. So they are people that even if, you know, for whatever reason, we chose not to talk to people, which we wouldn't, that those are statutory, statutorily mandated conversations to have as we as we go forward.

[1:28:57]

[...] We also talk to, you know, through this route, we're talking to ward councillors. We will also talk to the portfolio holders. So there's a wide range of conversations that are going on with all of the local authorities across the route. And it's worth saying that England's economic heartland and the East West mainline partnership are also people that we talk with, regularly.

[1:29:24]

[...] So there are conversations going on there. And there's obviously links in between those organizations and the local authorities across the route. So there's quite a comprehensive map, I suppose, of conversations that are happening. I hope that, does that answer your question?

JM: No, it's, thank you for that - it's reassuring. I think the central thought in my mind is in the end, where people are located and where houses are located is going to be defined by local authorities and what they encourage and then what they allow, and that has to be, there the people; they're the development; they're the communities, that East West Rail serve with railways that we're talking about this evening.

[2:00:09]

HS: I think that's fair. And I think it's also, you know, worth saying that as much as these people are statutory consultees, for us they're, you know, planning requirements and planning elements as well all come to us as well, so that we're making comments saying, you know, this is something that, you know, there are three options open at the moment, and one of them might be impacted by East West Rail.

[2:00:34]

[...] So there is a massive interplay there between the planning elements of the local authorities and East West Rail team. And we try and keep as close contact as is sensible to us as we move forward in this.

JM: Good because, you know, the, there's been a very significant change over the last, since the previous plan and the current plan on where the developments and houses are likely to be, and therefore, where the need is, for better communications and better transport.

[2:01:10]

HS: That's absolutely fair, John, and it's a conversation that will continue going on with, you know, ongoing administrations in all the local authorities along the route. And indeed, in Westminster as well. I'm very conscious of the time I'm very conscious that we've overrun. I just want to sort of close out for today and talk about next steps. So I'm going to ask Rob, I think is going to talk to this slide.

Slide 19 – What happens next?

[2:01:37]

RM: It's I think, as we mentioned before, but we carry on to develop the design. So we've got further work to do, we'll still be doing more surveys and investigations to help us build the design to help find information for statutory consultation and for the future DCO application.

[2:02:01]

[...] Yeah, as we sort of mentioned, where, you know, we build a design based on previous consultations and environmental, economic technical studies. And, yeah, I think we're maybe labouring the point, but there's featured opportunity to comment in the statutory consultation.

HS: Fabulous, thank you so much. We, I think jump to slide somehow? Wonderful. So the statutory consultations, we said earlier, we plan to start that in the first half of next year.

[2:02:36]

[...] The application for DCO, I think various people have said today that you're comfortable with that process. But obviously the details laid out here and it's laid out on our website. I think the next stage for this group, and yes, we can go to the next slide now. We're holding a number of community events. We hope that your local community will be joining to this. We've got four events in your local area at Bedford heights, Ravensden village hall, Tempsford Memorial village hall and Loves Farm that are happening over the next few weeks.

[2:03:11]

[...] If there are specific conversations that you'd like to have, or specific people that you'd like to make sure are available at those meetings, please do let us know in advance. As we alluded to earlier, we do expect to be quite busy events. So if there are things that you want to have conversations about outside of those events, or want us to bring people in, please do let us know.

[...] Any further sort of comments or anything we've said in that space? Mike?

[2:03:43]

MB: Yeah, look, I just want to share something because I'm conscious that I've been accused of saying something that's not true. So unless he's prepared to withdraw unreservedly I'll share my screen with a couple of documents. Aw it's disabled. I've got a couple of documents here. One showing the Network Rail document which you provided as part of the 2021 consultation that shows the six-track option and the houses that it, that it impacts.

[2:04:17]

[...] And also the letter from, to Will Gallagher from Councillor Headley dated the 30th of August 2019, where it references the six tracks and the fact that they spent public money from Bedford County Council on a report with SLR consultancy, to basically saying that they didn't think it was necessary and therefore the demolitions weren't necessary. So.

[2:04:48]

HS: Okay. If you could share that with me Mike, that will be helpful.

MA: I think also, I would say that, I think that the 2019 consultation was published in January 2019. And there is a build up to that.

[2:05:05]

MB: It was published January 2020. And this is exactly the point. Those people didn't get the opportunity to respond against that route when you knew that there was a risk of demolitions, but they did not.

MA: What I said what I said was that in 2019, that we did not know about those demolitions, that information, all of those dates that you've provided are post January 2019. There's a build up to that.

[2:05:29]

MB: They're not the Network Rail document is dated the 25th of October 2018.

MA: There's a build-up, there's a build-up of work that needs to be done until you build up the documentation. You write stuff, you freeze design to actually develop all those productions. All I'm trying to say to you Mike here, is that we are trying to be as honest, as honest as we can.

[2:05:54]

[...] And I would be extremely surprised if we were hiding information in the way that you are inferring more than once. You keep inferring that we are trying to hide information we are not.

MB: You expose that information to Bedford County Council (Bedford Borough councillors). But it but it wasn't exposed to the public.

MA: Bedford Borough Council commissioned a study, commissioned a study to say that we can actually build a railway on four tracks, not six tracks that was subsequent to the consultation that was 2021. And I had the date.

[2:06:20]

MB: No it wasn't!

MA: It's maybe referring to different two different studies now.

MB: They regurgitated the report in 2021 and change the ending only very, very slightly, I can provide you with both copies Mohamad.

HS: So I think Mike...

MB: You knew about it in July 2019, you had a meeting about it with the counsellors in 2019.

[2:06:43]

HS: Mike the key element there, you can provide us with those documents. What Mo and I've said repeatedly is that we don't, I would be grateful if you could provide us with those documents so that we can give you a response.

MB: I can share them with you if you let me share the screen.

HS: I believe that we're talking across purposes, just not helpful. I don't want to talk across purposes. So if you could provide us with those documents in a specific email.

MB: I don't think we are. Mohamad's saying that we that you didn't have that information that was available to share, you did have that information during the period of when the consultation was and when the consultation response came out.

[2:07:25]

HS: And we're saying that information, I think very specifically, we would like to be provided with that information and so that we can have a look at that information. And we will give you our response.

[...] If you could provide that to Mike, we've run over time, it'd be very helpful if you could provide that information to us when we can pick this up at the next meeting as an agenda item if you like, but I would be very grateful you could provide that to us. And then we can provide a response to you.

[2:07:50]

MB: I'll tell you what I'll provide I'll provide the letter I sent on the second of June, during the consultation.

HS: Thank you. Fantastic. Thank you very much, Mike. Thank you. That's been very, very helpful. Thank you very much.

Slide 20 – Community events in your area?

[2:08:04]

MB: I don't like, I've been accused of telling, not telling the truth, really.

HS: Literally haven't accused you of that. Mike, I'm just saying if you provide us with that, if you could provide us with that we can give you a response. Without seeing and reading what you're referring to. It's very difficult for us to give you a response.

MB: Mohamad said that's not true. You can't, you can't, I mean, it's recorded.

MA: Look Mike, I mean, I mean, if I have accused you. That is not my intention at all I'm trying to say is that we're trying to publish information that we have at the time that we had, I think the accusation is coming from you. And I'm trying to defend the fact that we tried to be as honest as we can. I apologize if that's how it came off.

[2:08:46]

MB: You knew about it, you knew about it. He knew about that in 2019.

HS: Mike, Mo has apologized for any misunderstanding. I have asked you specifically to send us that and we will respond to you.

MB: That was a back-handed apology. I'm making an accusation he said. All I'm doing is stating facts. You knew about the potential for demolitions in 2019, you did not share that information publicly. Those people didn't get the opportunity to respond to the consultation

with that full knowledge. Before you announce the result in the in 2020. They are all facts. So tell me what I'm accusing you of?

[2:09:24]

HS: Mike, if you could send us the information that you're talking about. We will respond to that in due course. We're not gonna respond to in this in this session now, because we don't have the facts together.

BF: Mike is offering to send you the facts now, he's offerings share the screen now but you've disabled his screen share.

MB: Right now, with everything with the two reports, both the 2019 version and the regurgitated one from 2021 that Mo just referred to. I can share the networked rail diagram from October 2018. And I can share the letter from Councilor Headley which references the meeting that Will Gallagher had with him where they discussed it.

[2:09:59]

HS: And with all respect. I won't be able to comment on any meeting, Will Gallagher or anyone else has had in this meeting, we need to go look at the information that you have and we need to develop a considered response to what you're saying.

[...] I am unable to talk to a meeting I was not in. Mo is unable to talk to a time in the business that he was not there. We need to get back into the business and find you a considered response to what you're asking. I think that's fair. And I think that's sensible.

[2:10:26]

MB: Okay. All I've done is state facts. I've not accused anything, anyone.

HS: And I haven't said that any of your facts are true or untrue. I've asked you to share those facts with us so we can get back into business to check.

MB: Well if you let me...

HS: That's all I've done. And that and I believe that it'd be very helpful if we could, if we could draw a line, please send that to me. And we will respond. Thank you very much, Mike.

[...] Just then, I think it'd be helpful to run to some completed actions, which normally we put at the beginning of the meeting, we've popped them at the end, because we had a lot to talk to.

Slide 21 – Completed actions?

[2:10:57]

HS: There was a question about whether the Alliance were planning, sorry, where in the project lifecycle soft landscaping was on CS1. I think, given the time constraints, we'll be

happy to share that by email rather than meeting unless there's a specific requirement. If anyone has a specific requirement for share that otherwise we'll follow up by email.

[2:11:25]

[...] No, I think that's fine, we'll follow up with that up by email. And there was a question about sending out a poll for group members to decide whether meeting 10 should take place during the pre-election period etc. We've had that meeting now we are in that meeting. So I think that that that poll is concluded fairly sensibly.

[...] Just as closing remarks, we have a few topics for future conversation.

Slide 22 – Closing remarks?

Slide 23 – Next steps

[2:11:50]

[...] I think there's quite a lot that's come out of today's meeting that we probably need to go away and consider whether or not those are specific topics for future meetings. I think some of the things, particularly that Mike and Brent have brought up are probably things that we want to bring up in future meetings.

[...] So I think I probably suggest that rather than locking ourselves into one of these now, shall we do a poll by email to see which ones people prefer? Once we've pulled out of the meeting, which the key areas for discussion has been at this meeting?

[2:12:29]

[...] Because I think there were a few topics for sort of future. Thank you very much for sharing that link Mike, that's really helpful. There are sort of a few a few topics for each conversation, I would imagine that this group wants to maintain the six week frequency. Is that right?

PN: (Gave thumbs up gesture)

HS: Fabulous, we'll put something in for quite soon. So again, we'll do that by poll. We're less constrained now by the challenges of not understanding the date for the announcements.

[2:12:55]

[...] So we'll obviously run that through fairly quickly, I'd imagine. And as a reminder, meeting notes circulated within 10 days, feedbacks requested within 10 days, and then within five working days, we would hope to post that on the hub. So those are the next steps from us. So just to be clear, we will circulate a poll with some of the topics to discuss at the next couple of meetings.

[2:13:26]

[...] That meeting will be held within the next six weeks, and or over, sort of in a six week period, and we'll circulate the meeting notes within the next 10 days. Are there any other closing remarks that people would like to pick up?

Slide 24 – We're always here

BF: I'd just like to say Hannah, if we could make it possible for us to share the screen, as Mike wanted to do tonight was prevented from doing so in future meetings?

HS: Yep, we'll have a look at the technical elements of that, I would say as well that the people in the room can only talk to what we know about. And I think that that the group have to be aware of that. So if there are specific discussions that we need to pick up, there may be a lag, but we'll find the right person to bring into the next set of meetings.

[2:14:06]

[...] So with some of the specific things that Mike wanted us to talk about tonight, we don't have people in this space that had the background knowledge of what he was talking about. But if that's a specific kind of technical point that we can address, then I'm sure that there's a way we can address screen sharing. I think that's kind of fine.

[2:14:22]

BF: I hear what you're saying Hannah. If we could be allowed to share a screen that would have made a difference tonight. Thank you.

HS: Thank you very much, Brent. Any other questions for any participants? Peter?

PN: Yes Hannah, for the next meeting, are you going to put out a poll with maybe a selection of three dates?

HS: I wonder if Sarah is still on the call. I know she had some obligations but if Sarah's on the call is that the regular methodology that we use?

[2:14:59]

SJ: Yes, absolutely. We can do that. This was the only occasion that we didnt have time because we want to be able to see you as quickly as possible. So what we'll do is we'll issue you a poll, we have some date suggestions, and obviously the topics for you to decide on. And we'll get that out quite quickly.

PN: And I imagine in choosing the proposed dates, you'll have a look at the Bedford council meeting program, just to make sure you don't, conflict with their council meetings.

SJ: Of course, absolutely. Thank you for reminding me, Peter. But absolutely.

[2:15:29]

HS: Thank you. I think we're, I should have said at the outset, we're really grateful for people making the time this evening. I'm sure you're aware, you are in fact, the first LRG

that we've spoken to post the announcement, we wanted to make sure that we saw all of the local representative groups as quickly as we could after the announcement.

[...] So we could have discussion. And as I said, again, at the outset, we particularly wanted to do that in advance of the drop in meeting so that we can make sure that we were addressing, we understood the issues that were likely to come up so we can help prepare the team and make sure that you have the information. So thanks very much for being so flexible in the date.

[2:16:05]

[...] I'm sure some of you had clashes and had had to move things. So thank you very much for that. We have run over by a little while. So again, thank you very much for staying with us. really grateful to you for that. We will be following up quite soon. Lots of think about and thank you very much everyone for your participation. We'll see you and on.

[...] Gordon, sorry?

GJ: I just said bye.

HS: Bye, thank you so much.

SJ: Thanks, everybody.