

Consultation 2026

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west
RAIL

Bedford Station - Ashburnham Road
Technical Note.



April 2026

Context for this report

This technical note presents the design progress and construction appraisal for the redevelopment of Bedford Station.

The redevelopment of Bedford station is intended to provide Bedford with a state-of-the-art transport hub, creating a key north-south, east-west node on the rail network, integrated with the Midland Main Line and part of the new EWR route, spanning between Oxford and Cambridge.

The document outlines the progression of the design, ensuring alignment with project objectives, stakeholder considerations, and regulatory standards. Whilst evaluating and considering the technical feasibility, constructability and sequencing of the works, with particular focus towards maintaining operational continuity, passenger and public safety throughout the construction phases.

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Executive Summary

The redevelopment of Bedford station would provide Bedford with a state-of-the-art transport hub creating a key north-south, east-west node on the rail network. It would connect direct trains on EWR to Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge with those on the Midland Main Line from London to Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield. It would also serve as a gateway from Bedford for passengers travelling to the new Universal theme park south of Bedford. By redeveloping Bedford station, we would be increasing capacity for passengers using not only the new EWR services but also the Midland Main Line.

The latest iteration of the Bedford station design presented in the November 2025 You Said We Did report, which will be consulted on, including the latest safeguarding proposals, now incorporates the acquisition and use of additional land currently occupied by properties on Ashburnham Road, that were previously excluded from the draft order limits boundary (DOLB).

EWR recognises the impact this would have on the properties, but the acquisition of the land is necessary for the development of Bedford Station and surrounding area.

The principal considerations for the decision to include the land on Ashburnham Road are:

- Improved Station and plaza Design
- Construction and logistics considerations
- Schedule and cost considerations
- Health, safety and welfare provisions
- Stakeholder and Community Impact

Improved station and plaza design

The acquisition of additional land supports the delivery of a modern station and public plaza, enhancing connectivity, passenger experience and public realm. Key improvements include a new 'Up Fast' platform, a western entrance, enhanced taxi and drop-off facilities, and better integration with the town centre. The design also supports future development opportunities and responds to feedback received from public consultation in 2024.

Construction and logistics considerations

EWR's previous construction proposals have been reviewed in detail, including by independent advisors and the constrained footprint of the existing station means additional space is necessary for construction compounds, logistics and workforce facilities. Acquiring properties on Ashburnham Road enables the establishment of adequately sized compounds, safe and efficient logistic routes, and parallel construction activities. The acquisition of this additional land is necessary for meeting programme milestones, minimising disruption and ensuring workforce safety. Case studies from Reading and Gatwick demonstrate the effectiveness of similar strategies in delivering major station upgrades efficiently and safely.

Section 8 of this report responds to alternative approaches for construction, including fabrication off-site and the use of alternative site access points. In summary, the alternative options have not been deemed to offer practicable or constructable options for the works required at Bedford Station.

Schedule and cost considerations

Expanding the construction compound area allows for maximised parallel working, which is expected to compress the construction schedule, reduce the overall duration of disruption during the construction phase and reduce overall costs. Without the inclusion of Ashburnham Road properties, the first phase of improvements would be severely delayed by up to three years, which would have knock-on effects on the delivery of the EWR scheme. While precise costs savings are yet to be determined, comparable projects indicate that the reduction in programme duration would yield substantial savings in contractor preliminaries and overheads.

Health, safety and welfare provisions

Additional space allows for safer segregation of construction activities from operational railway and public areas, reducing the need for complex temporary works and minimising risks. Adequate welfare facilities for workers and safe logistics routes further reduce the risk of accidents and incidents, aligning with industry best practice and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance.

Stakeholder and Community Impact

Acquiring the additional properties on Ashburnham Road is essential to ensure the efficient delivery of the Bedford station redevelopment. Without these acquisitions, the project would face more frequent and prolonged railway possessions and blockades, leading to greater disruption of train services for passengers and increased risk of failing to meet key operational and stakeholder requirements. By securing the necessary land, EWR Co can minimise service disruptions, maintain reliable rail operations, and better meet the needs of passengers and stakeholders throughout the construction period.

The proposed property acquisitions decrease the overall duration for the construction of the station by up to three years and increase the distance between adjacent properties and the live construction site thus reducing construction induced sound, noise, dust and vibration impacts.

EWR Co recognises that these property acquisitions would have community impacts, including the loss of a doctor's surgery, community centre, and emergency accommodation. We are committed to working closely with affected communities and stakeholders to mitigate these impacts where possible and to support the local community throughout the process.

As a result, we are actively supporting those impacted through a long-term mechanism of support and advice with independent legal advisors, paid for by EWR, to ensure the needs of those impacted are managed effectively. We have an ongoing series of advisory meetings, a dedicated point of contact, and an expert in land and property issues supporting each business and individual.

1. Introduction to our proposals

Providing Bedford with a state-of-the-art station at the heart of city centre redevelopment.

The Bedford station area is in a highly constrained urban railway environment. The proposed works include:

- Two additional EWR tracks and platforms to the east of the existing Midland Mainline tracks, north from Bedford Station up to the MML/EWR junction.
- Widening of island platform 2 and 3 to create a new 'Up Fast' platform for EMR services
- A new transfer deck overbridge with improved accessible vertical circulation to facilitate passenger flow around the station.
- A new station building and public plaza to the east.
- Taxi rank, bus stop and pick-up drop-off facilities.
- Active travel hubs
- Station facilities and driver accommodation building
- A new western entrance
- A new MSCP south of Ford End Road to replace much of the existing surface car parking on Ashburnham Road
- Creation of opportunities for future development by others e.g. use of the existing Ashburnham Road surface car park for residential and commercial facilities

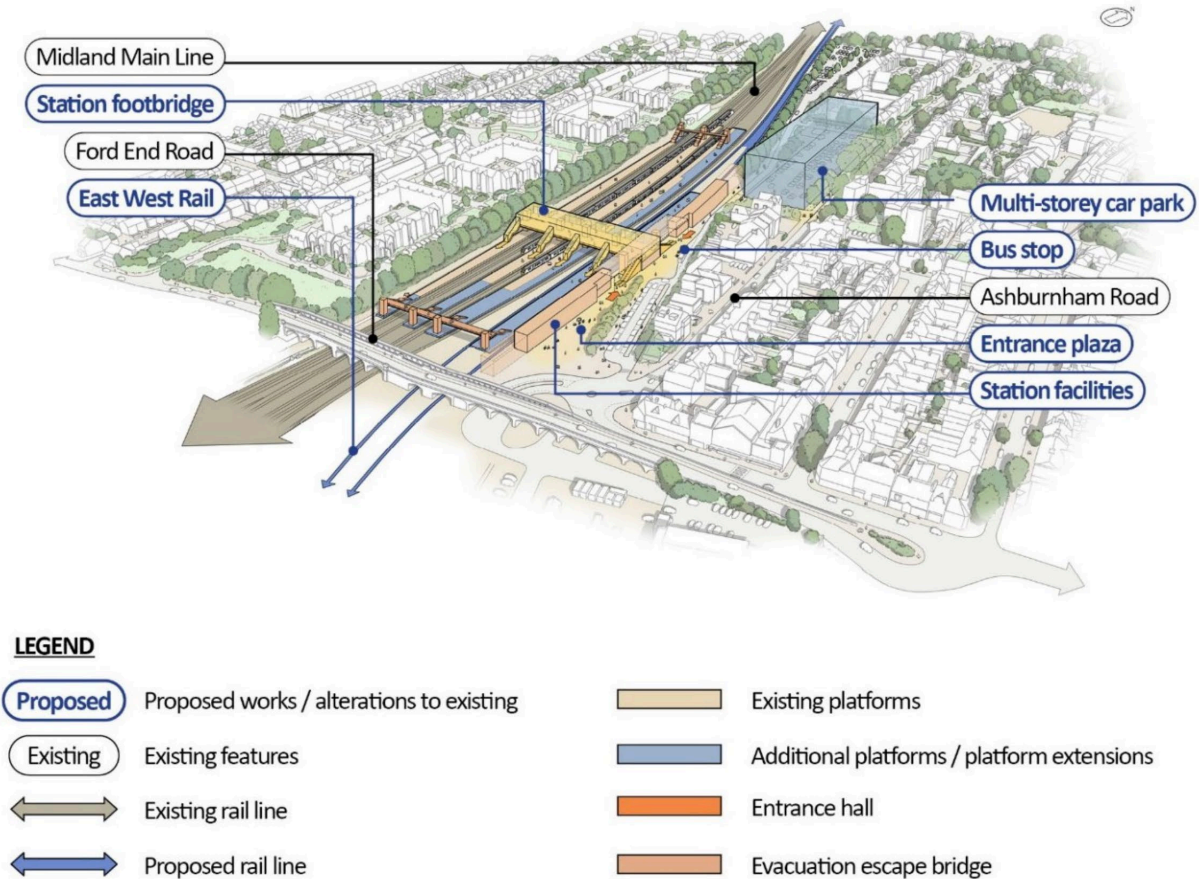
The latest iteration of the Bedford station design presented in the November 2025 You Said We Did report, which will be consulted on, including the latest safeguarding proposals, now incorporate the acquisition and use of additional land currently occupied by properties on Ashburnham Road.

1.1 Evolution of the acquisition approach: from no acquisition, to partial, to full

At the 2021 non-statutory consultation and the 2023 Route Update Announcement EWR identified several commercial and residential properties with direct links to Ashburnham Road that may be affected and subject to demolition. Properties potentially affected included a doctors' surgery, the Pentecostal Church, the tyre centre, Dom Polski and some private residences. Further work was undertaken at the next stage of the design to minimise the area of land necessary for construction.

In the absence of a detailed constructability assessment presented in 2024 reflected that Ashburnham Road properties would not be included in the DOLB with the intention of delivering the station upgrade within the existing railway footprint, using careful phasing and construction management to avoid the need for property acquisition. This early design was based on the technical work carried out at that time and was chosen to minimise disruption to the local community and avoid the loss of valued community assets. The figure below shows the design for Bedford station as presented in our 2024 non-statutory consultation.

Figure 1: Bedford Station as presented at 2024 non statutory consultation



As the design process progressed and further technical studies were undertaken, it became apparent that some acquisition would be unavoidable. We therefore considered an option for partial acquisition approach, retaining as many properties as possible, including Dom Polski. This was seen as a balanced way to limit community impact while still enabling the delivery of the new station. The design of the station that partially retains properties in the Ashburnham Road triangle is shown in figure 2.

The option above was not taken forward as our preferred option as it would result in the following non-desirable features:

- Compromised Urban Realm to the rear of Dom Polski with unresolved pinch points.
- Limited development opportunities in the vicinity of the station area in contradiction to the adopted Local Opportunity Plan (2030).
- Lack of visibility approaching the station and compromised access from Woburn Road.
- Distance between car park and station entrance significantly exceeds People of Reduced Mobility (PRM) access requirements.
- Compromised demolition access to the existing station building.

Figure 2: Previous design partially retaining properties in the Ashburnham Road triangle



Taking in to account the above considerations, our design teams continued to develop our station design. The operational studies and construction feasibility studies continued, and several critical issues emerged as a result of this work:

- Station and plaza design: The restricted site would have compromised the quality of the new station, limiting improvements to connectivity, passenger experience, and future development opportunities (section 3).
- Construction and logistics: The limited footprint of the existing station meant there simply was not enough space for safe, efficient construction activities without acquiring additional land (section 4).
- Schedule and cost: Without extra space, the construction programme would be significantly prolonged, increasing both disruption and overall costs (section 5).
- Health, safety and welfare: Insufficient space would have made it difficult to segregate construction from operational areas, increasing risks to both workers and the public (section 6).
- Stakeholder and community impact: Failing to secure the necessary land would have led to more frequent service disruptions and made it harder to meet the needs of passengers, stakeholders, and the wider community (section 7).

Taking account of these factors, EWR Co has adopted a full acquisition approach which addresses these critical issues and also unlocks a range of benefits for Bedford. Our initial proposals for the station, as presented to Bedford Borough Council on 18 September 2025, are indicatively shown in the figure below.

Figure 3: Current design Bedford Borough Council on 18 September 2025



The most recent design proposals for the station are described in the following sections.

2. Improved station and plaza design

Deliver a state-of-the-art station and plaza that supports future development aspirations in the area.

In 2024 we consulted on our proposals at Bedford station, where we proposed a range of work including redeveloping the station building to provide Bedford with a state-of-the-art transport hub that connects different modes of transport, including frequent direct trains to Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge, bus connections and walking and cycling routes. We shared our proposals to create a new station plaza, improving access to the town centre, building footbridges to improve connections to the station and building two new platforms.

Several respondents to our public consultation requested that EWR:

- Provide an Up Fast platform for EMR services.
- Provide a western entrance to improve connectivity and station access.
- Enhanced and improve station forecourt area improving public realm proposals.
- Relocate the multi-storey car park away from residential properties.

In conjunction with the improvements stated above, further design development and review of our station proposals have led to the development of enhanced proposals for the taxi and drop off facilities and the arrival route from Woburn Road.

The feedback received from respondents to the public consultation and our review of the station constructability and user experience has prompted us to revisit and refine the overall concept for Bedford station. Our primary objective in revisiting the station redevelopment was to enhance the passenger experience, minimise impacts on local residents and deliver a state-of-the-art solution that supports future development in the area.

The proposed acquisition of additional properties on Ashburnham Road enabled a design which significantly enhances the station offering and delivers on key design principles, which in the previous design were compromised due to aiming to minimise land take:

- Gateway connection to town centre
- Enhanced station views with clear, active and legacy plus flexibility focused public space(s)
- Holistic and safe urban realm with introduction of green spaces
- Intuitive passenger experience with user focus design approach
- Optimises intermodal connectivity.

These improvements now include:

- Enhancements to public realm and station forecourt area with the creation of a public square
- Improved taxi/ pick up drop off facilities on Ashburnham Road
- Improved passenger experience at the station, with improved pedestrian access and public realm
- Support future development in the station area by others.

Following consultation feedback and continued detailed design development the design of Bedford station has developed to ensure it can meet the needs of passengers well into the future, including the increased demand from nearby developments such as the recently announced Universal resort. The updated plans are more ambitious and are intended to create long term benefits for Bedford town centre, including opportunities for wider regeneration.

The images below reflect our emerging thinking for the Bedford station area – a modern, connected gateway designed to bring people closer to the town centre and beyond. These early concepts show how the proposals would provide a vibrant transport hub and public space that would deliver lasting benefits for Bedford and the community. They also highlight the development opportunities available in the area.

Figure 4: Bedford station area – a modern, connected gateway

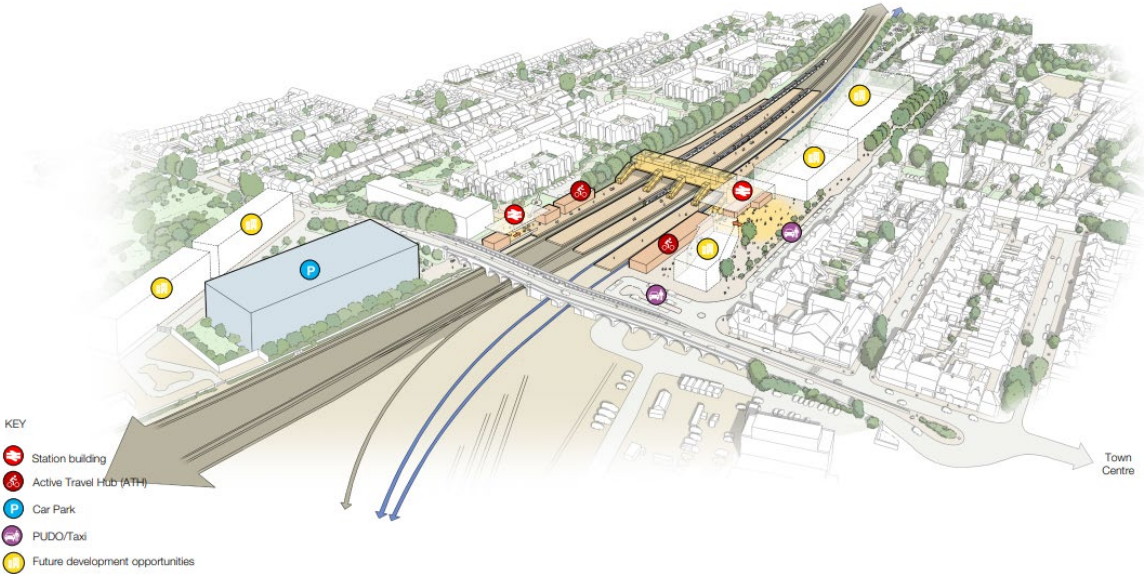


Figure 5: Bedford station North East approach



Figure 6: Bedford station West corner approach

WEST CORNER APPROACH



3. Construction and logistics considerations

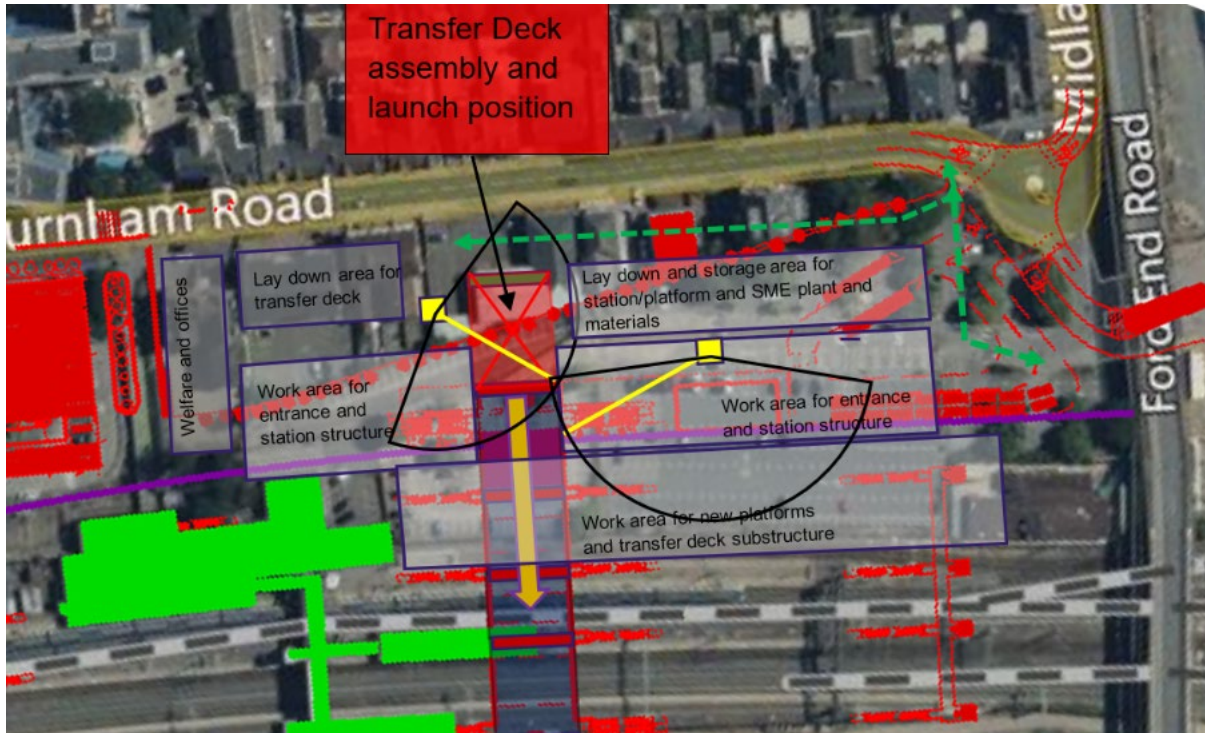
It is essential to provide additional space for construction, around the station, to ensure an efficient and safe construction sequence.

This section explains why we have increased the size of the proposed construction compound for Bedford station and our proposals to acquire and demolish 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20 Ashburnham Road.

By incorporating the land located between Ashburnham Road and the surface car parks near Bedford station, it becomes possible to establish larger site compounds increasing worker safety, improve logistics, and undertake parallel construction of the station building, transfer deck, and platform works. EWR Co's ability to be able to undertake work in parallel is necessary for reducing disruption to the public and railway operations and meeting the overall programme milestones.

The proposed property acquisitions decrease the overall duration of the construction of the station and increase the distance between adjacent properties and the live construction site reducing the impacts of construction induced noise, dust and vibration. The figure below illustrates the extent of land required during construction and the area required for the operation of cranes.

Figure 7: Extent of land required during construction



The existing station footprint is extremely constrained, leaving minimal room for construction compounds, logistics routes and workforce facilities. Under current constraints, only one major activity could proceed at a time, forcing a sequential programme rather than a parallel approach. This would:

- Extend programme duration significantly (see Section 5).
- Increase safety risks to the construction workforce.
- Cause greater disruption to railway operations and passengers, due to extended timescales.

Acquiring additional properties on Ashburnham Road would provide the safe construction space required to:

- Establish adequately sized compound area for offices, welfare facilities and storage.

- Create safe and efficient logistics routes for construction materials and multiple work activities.
- Enable parallel construction activities, including station building, transfer deck installation and platform alterations.
- Mean that there is reduced impact on the wider public, due to reduced timescales.

To support our rationale for the proposed approach to deliver improvements to Bedford station, we have included a case study showing how similar proposals were delivered and how larger construction compounds were necessary to allow for improved construction logistics and better overall offering at the stations.

Case study – Offline transfer deck installation at Reading and Gatwick

At Reading and Gatwick stations, the railway and the station platforms were operated in a degraded state during construction to create as large as possible offline worksites leading to efficient programme for construction. A degraded operating state refers to periods when the railway cannot function under its normal working conditions and must run with reduced capacity. In addition to the degraded state, both stations used large compounds to enable the offline assembly and installation of the transfer deck(s) resulting in a safer and more efficient construction method for the transfer deck. A similar construction method is being proposed for Bedford Station enabling offline construction, in particular the assembly of the transfer deck at Ashburnham Road, which would then be jacked/launched over the railway, and the off-line construction of the new station, significantly reducing disruption to passengers, ensuring safety for the construction workforce, and increasing construction productivity to deliver the state of the art Bedford Station.

4. Schedule and cost considerations

Considerable reduction in construction timescales and costs.

Programme schedule

Our technical review of the station buildability and construction sequencing demonstrates that if the current Ashburnham Road DOLB is not adopted, the completion of the first phase of Bedford station improvements would take up to three years longer and would result in the whole scheme delivery and entry to service being delayed. The key reason for this potential delay would be that works to the new station building at Bedford station cannot commence until the transfer deck and the escalator/ canopy installation is completed. This delay would extend the construction programme considerably, impacting the station construction programme which would impact the entire Bedford area programme and subsequently the programme and cost profile of the EWR scheme. The impact of the programme would impact stakeholders as discussed in section 7.

The improved construction sequencing facilitated by a larger construction compound area would:

Maximise parallel working to meet key programme milestones reducing the duration of disruption around the station, including Ashburnham Road.

Installation of escalators/ canopy and construction of the new and improved station building to be undertaken in parallel with other construction activities.

Station building, transfer deck assembly and platform work to be undertaken concurrently and with increased safety.

The proposed construction methodology would avoid the disbenefits (including programme, cost, safety and stakeholder impact) of undertaking the construction works sequentially.

At this stage of design development, it is not possible to state the precise impact on schedule and cost of not including the additional land. But the analysis carried out to date shows it is likely to be substantive – years rather than months, and hence with programme elongation cost impacts that would likely be in the hundreds of millions.

Given the consequence of this would likely be to push programme completion back several years, our conclusion is that the design presented at NSC no longer represents a viable option. The cost and schedule impacts are such that it would call into question the viability of the programme overall, and would, at best, result in several more years of construction impacts for Bedford, and delayed benefits.

Cost considerations

The cost of the EWR scheme is of considerable public interest and is a key consideration when making decisions on the scheme, The cost of the scheme is not only dictated by the physical infrastructure but also by the duration of the delivery programme. The reduction in overall construction duration described above, enabled by parallel working, has the potential to reduce the overall build costs substantially. Whilst the specific value has not yet been determined, comparable costs for contractor preliminaries and overheads indicate that the cost saving would be considerable.

5. Health, safety and welfare provisions

The additional space would allow for safer segregation of construction activities from operational railway and public areas. It reduces the need for complex temporary works and minimises risks associated with working in constrained environments.

At EWR Co, health, safety and welfare are our highest priorities. We are committed to protecting our employees, partners, supply chain, customers, neighbours, and everyone affected by the development and delivery of this railway infrastructure. Our goal is simple: to ensure everyone arrives, works, and returns home healthy, safe, and secure every day. These principles underpin our 'Safe & Secure' vision and guide every decision we make.

This commitment is especially vital in the construction industry, which remains one of the most hazardous sectors. The latest Health and Safety Executive (HSE) data shows that construction accounted for 28% of all fatal injuries to workers in 2024/25, with 35 deaths recorded. Despite robust regulations, space constraints and poor segregation continue to be common contributors to incidents across the sector.

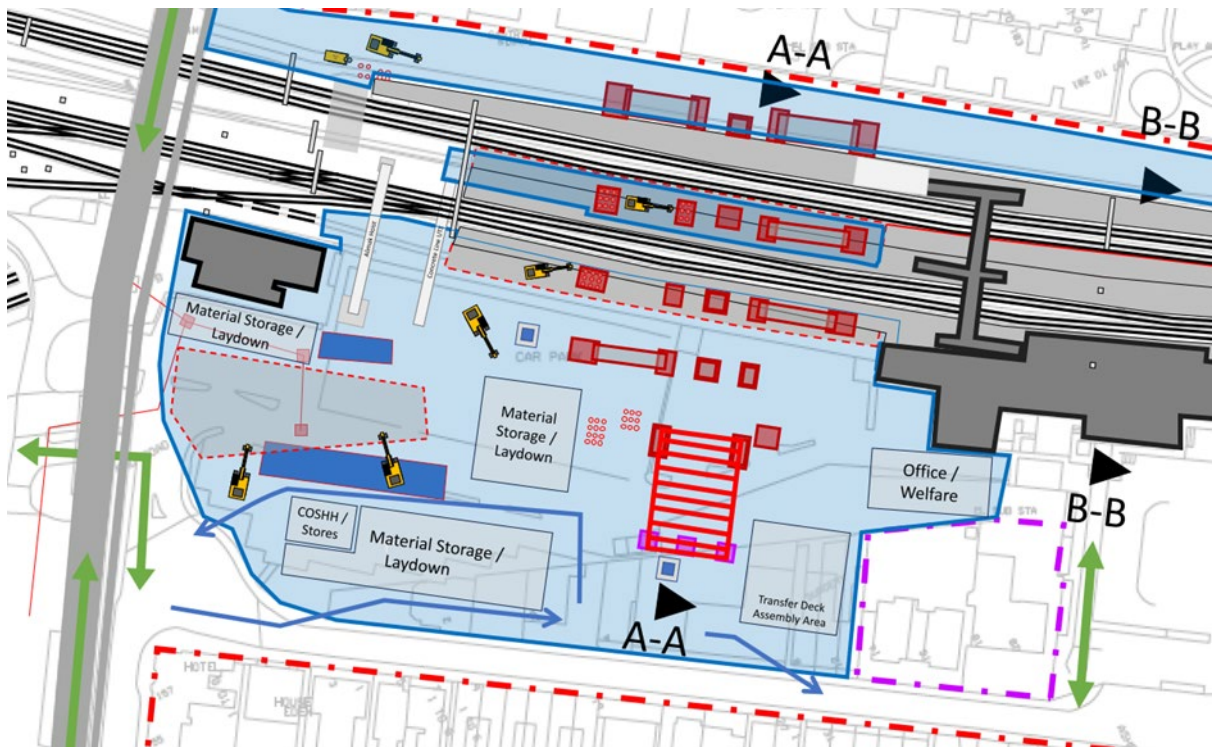
For Bedford station, our commitment to health, safety and welfare translates into practical, proactive measures. Construction activities must be safely segregated from the operational railway and public areas to protect passengers and workers. Following consultation feedback and continued detailed design development, including the use of independent construction advisors, the acquisition of additional land is necessary to achieving this and enables us to:

- Provide dedicated welfare facilities for the workforce, ensuring comfort and compliance with industry standards.
- Create safe storage and movement areas for materials and plant, reducing congestion and hazards.
- Establish clear logistics routes for vehicles and equipment, minimising conflicts and pinch points.

- Reduce reliance on complex and risky temporary works, which are often associated with higher accident potential.

The image below illustrates the parallel activities being undertaken with appropriate and safe areas identified for the various health, safety and welfare facilities. This would not be possible without the acquisition and demolition of the Ashburnham Road Properties.

Figure 8: Appropriate safe areas



N.B. logistic routes are shown with blue arrows through the site and would vary depending on the stage of construction. Planning for adequate space and clear segregation is necessary for the provision of a safe working area.

6. Stakeholder and community impact

Not demolishing the extra properties would result in: more frequent and longer railway possessions and blockades, impacting train services; increased risk of failing to meet operational and stakeholder requirements.

Reducing the length of the construction programme would have a direct effect on both the local community and rail operations. A longer programme would mean extended disruption to rail services, such as reducing the number of available Thameslink platforms from three to two for a prolonged period. This would significantly affect passenger journeys and increase inconvenience for rail users.

In addition, extended works would amplify the impact on local residents, with more sustained exposure to noise, dust and other construction-related disturbances.

Not acquiring the Ashburnham Road properties would further compound these issues. Without this land, the project would require more frequent and longer railway possessions and blockades, leading to greater disruption to train services and communities. It would also increase the risk of the station failing to meet operational and stakeholder requirements, including Thameslink passenger services and essential freight paths.

EWR Co recognises that these property acquisitions would have community impacts, including the loss of a doctor's surgery, community centre, and emergency accommodation. We are committed to working closely with affected communities and stakeholders to mitigate these impacts where possible and to support the local community throughout the process.

7. Bedford Borough Council considerations

We have considered alternative approaches for construction but have not been deemed to offer practicable or constructable options for the works required at Bedford Station.

7.1 Introduction

When reviewing the proposals with BBC on 18/09/25, three points were raised for discussion. These were:

- Is it possible to build infrastructure off site and transport in?
- Is it possible to have a construction route through the site around the back of Dom Polski?
- Is it feasible to have a connection from Bromham Road into the site?

These points are discussed in the following sub-sections.

7.2 Is it possible to build infrastructure off site and transport in?

Where feasible, off-site fabrication would be undertaken. However, the proposed transfer deck dimensions are approximately 85m in length and 19m wide. Transporting an off-site manufactured/modular transfer deck of this size is not feasible via road or rail. It should be noted, even with significant local road modifications, demolition and removal of blockers, this would still not be feasible. To undertake works to increase the road suitability and enable delivery to the launch site at Ashburnham Road is not practicable.

An option to bring in the transfer deck in large/medium sized sections would also be difficult due to the constraints of the existing local road network and junctions within Bedford. In addition, to enable offload and placement of large/medium sized sections, there would be a need for regular large cranes on site. This repeated heavy lifting operation would take up considerable space in an already constrained site.

The use of rail to transport the entire or large/medium sections to site is also not practicable due to operational restrictions on train haulage widths and clearance to existing infrastructure.

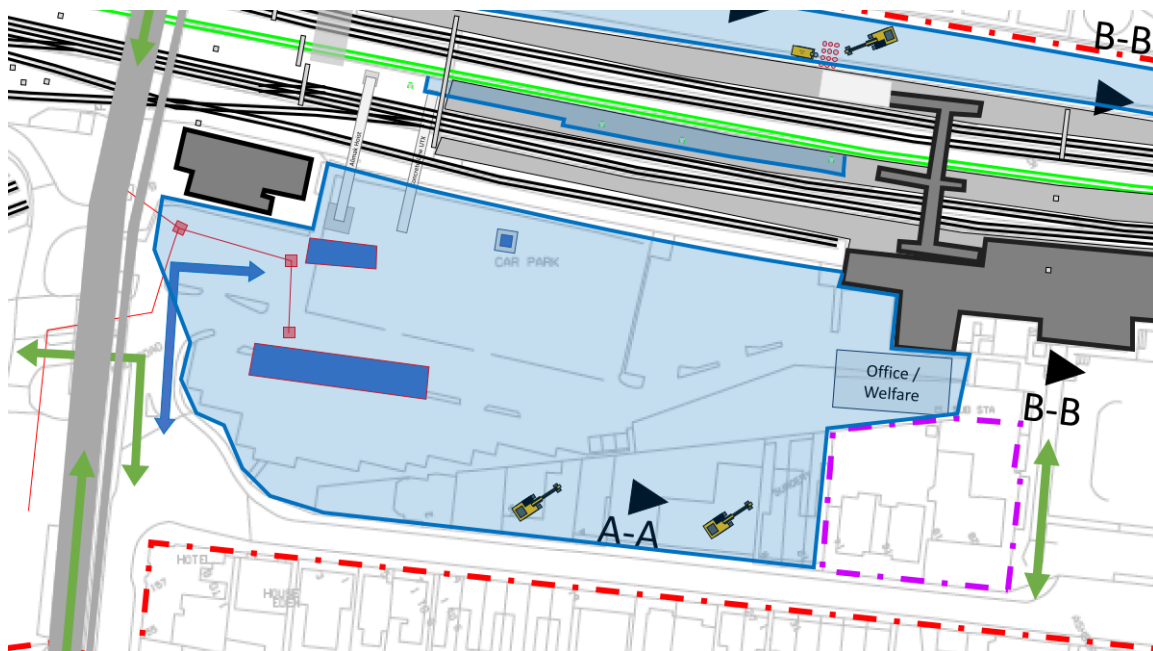
The proposed solution is to deliver components in pre-fabrication sections, as large as practicable, and fabricate the main structure in individual spans on site. The structure would then be launched forward making room for the next span to be built and minimising the working area required. The proposed methodology requires a large amount of on-site preparation works and a suitably sized layout down area to enable the respective components to be lifted and bolted/welded together.

This method allows for controlled vehicle movements and management of construction logistics whilst minimising disruption and interfaces with the local highways, residents and the operational railway/station.

7.3 Is it possible to have a construction route through the site around the back of Dom Polski?

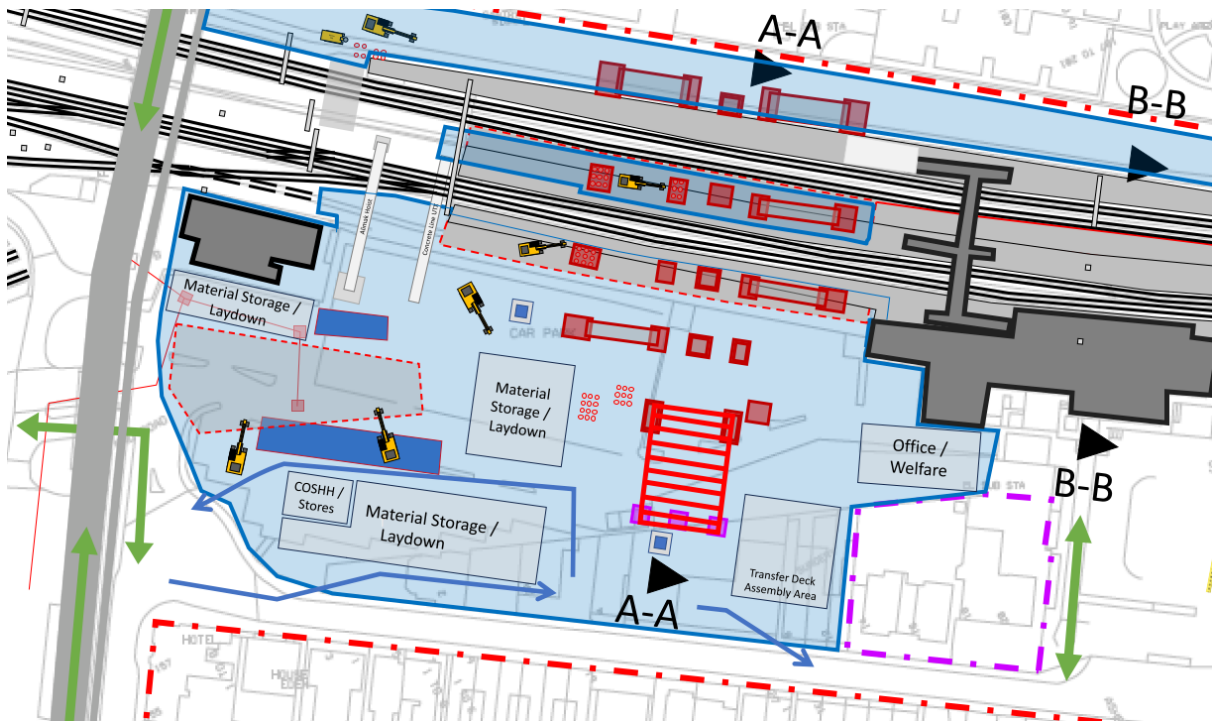
The construction of station infrastructure requires logistic routes through the Ashburnham Road site. During construction, prior to the demolition of any properties on Ashburnham Road, these routes would be into the existing car park area via Midland Road. Due to the constrained nature of the site, entry and exit would be in the same location (indicated by the blue arrows in the image below), limiting the area of the construction compound. Office and welfare facilities would be located between the existing station building and the back of the flats / Dom Polski, safely segregating the construction activities from the public accessing the station. The figure below shows the extent of land necessary for the Bedford station Main Construction Compound.

Figure 9: Land necessary for construction



When the properties on Ashburnham Road have been demolished, alternative logistics routes running parallel to Ashburnham Road through the site can be utilised. These routes open the space to maximise the construction compound thereby enabling the parallel works described in previous sections to be completed. The figure below illustrates parallel construction activity during peak construction including transfer deck assembly and lifting into position.

Figure 10: Parallel construction activity during peak construction including transfer deck assembly and lifting into position



Having a route through the site, entering via Midland Road, passing behind Dom Polski and exiting via the existing car park or PUDO area has several issues:

- The logistics route footprint would reduce available construction space and prevent parallel construction activities. In addition, the footprint would also impact the rear of the properties due to the pinch point at the station staff car park.
- The route would reduce the available space for construction of the transfer deck in its optimum orientation. Launching of the deck would be more complex if the structure must be rotated whilst lifting it over the railway into its final position.
- The office and welfare facilities would need to be located elsewhere on the site, further reducing available construction space and preventing parallel construction activities.

- If a logistics route could be fitted through the site at the rear of Dom Polski, an interface would be created resulting in an unacceptable safety hazard where the vehicular route crosses the pedestrian access into the building. It would not be possible to easily segregate these routes without significant additional impacts on the existing premium parking and taxi rank area.

Noting the points above and read in conjunction with the wider points in this technical note, EWR Co do not believe a route behind Dom Polski would be acceptable.

7.4 Is it feasible to have a connection from Bromham Road into the site?

The consideration of a construction logistics route into the existing station car park from Bromham Road is no longer relevant following the relocation of the MSCP from Ashburnham Road to south of Ford End Road. There are several reasons why this was deemed to be unfeasible in the original considerations for the area, both when considering access into the proposed MSCP and as a potential construction and logistics route.

- The vehicular access off Bromham Road, along with the necessary earthworks, would be extensive and would reduce available space in the car park which would have to be provided elsewhere.
- Vehicles travelling east on Bromham Road lack sufficient visibility to see the proposed junction, posing a collision risk. To address this, Bromham Road would need to be realigned. We have previously agreed with Bedford Borough Council to avoid this to minimise disruption.
- Vehicles exiting the junction lack visibility over the bridge, necessitating a further widening of the structure to provide adequate sightlines past the existing and proposed parapet extensions. This is further complicated by visibility restrictions to the east due to existing properties and foliage necessitating tree felling.

- Implementing this access would significantly increase both the cost and complexity of the design at a critical traffic point in Bedford. Given that alternative access points are available, the additional costs would not be justified.