

Stakeholder Webinar Q&A: Part 2

Theme	Matter raised	EWR Co Response
Biodiversity and housing development	How does your aim of improving biodiversity and giving people access to green spaces fit with accommodating housing development?	<p>Exactly where and how much housing development takes place is within the decision making power of the relevant local authorities. Whilst EWR will provide greater connectivity for communities around the region it won't be involved in housing development.</p> <p>In line with this, we have developed alignments serving Cambourne North which are assessed as likely to perform better in relation to housing and economic growth than alignments serving Cambourne South.</p> <p>Further, our proposal for a new station near Tempsford (part of Alignment 9) is in a location where development is more likely to come forward, and may well support enhanced place-making and opportunities to enhance biodiversity through the creation of a wetland reserve and green spaces within easy reach of the future communities.</p> <p>In terms of improving biodiversity, EWR Co recognises the importance of biodiversity and protecting the habitats of local wildlife including priority habitats such as woodland and ancient woodland as well as parks and greenspaces. As part of EWR Co's commitment to changing the environment for the better, the company is thinking carefully about protected species and their habitats when designing the railway. The project has committed to delivering biodiversity net gain which requires that habitats for wildlife are enhanced and left in a measurably better state than they were pre-development and as part of this we will consider how habitat improvements and creation can be developed to best service existing and future housing development.</p>
Flooding	Is there a flood risk in Tempsford?	<p>The area to the northwest of Tempsford, where the proposed station is located, does have a greater interaction with floodplain, which would restrict the availability of some areas of land for development. However, it may well support enhanced place-making and opportunities to enhance biodiversity through the creation of a wetland reserve and green spaces within easy reach of the community.</p> <p>Any consequence of the new railway and station on flood risk nearby will be assessed to inform the design process.</p>
	You mentioned the flood plain risks of using the old varsity line but no mention of assessing the flood risk crossing the flood plain north of Bedford. Have you investigated the impact on Clapham which has had serious flooding in recent years?	<p>We have considered the potential flood risk to the north of Bedford in choosing our preferred route and consider this to be of less concern than the Varsity Alignment. Going forward, we'll undertake detailed flood risk assessments to help inform the design process, especially where the route crosses major floodplains and has the potential to impact on areas of flood risk elsewhere. These assessments will consider flood risk over the lifetime of EWR – accounting and planning for the effects of climate change – and will be informed by hydrological and hydraulic modelling where necessary. The design of EWR, in line with regulatory requirements, would ensure that the railway is resilient to flooding and that it does not increase flood risk elsewhere.</p>

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Bedford Northern/Southern Route and BFARe option	<p>Why no reference to environmental damage of Northern Route from Bedford where there was to Southern Route. Is very imbalanced. Also need to evidence cheaper costings...</p> <p>Why was so little analysis done on BFARe option south of Bedford compared with work undertaken by EWR Co on Cambridge North option? It fully meets requirement and is lower risk, better for environment and avoids much urban demolition</p> <p>Why does the ‘significant amount of work’ not include the Bfare route? Lots of work was done on this.</p> <p>It’s not clear to me from what you said- did you consider the BFARe alternative route which allowed through traffic to bypass Bedford, but stopping trains to come to Midland Rd station?</p> <p>You haven’t mentioned at all the purple preferred alternative submitted by BFARe which went nowhere near prior Park, the bus station or the flood plain adjoining the great Ouse we will want to investigate this anomaly during the walk in events and LRG series</p> <p>Why won’t you prefer the A421 travel corridor in Bedford, but see the benefits of this out to Camborne?</p> <p>Does the ‘lot of work still to do’ include seriously considering the bfare alternate route. Political will and the Town have made their feelings clear about route E.</p>	<p>We have taken into consideration the alternative route option south of Bedford put forward by BFARe, as well as other alignment options put forward in responses in the 2021 non-statutory consultation. Southern alignment options, including the alignment put forward by BFARe, present significant engineering challenges and would cross a number of sensitive or complex environmental areas which would lead to significant or unacceptable environmental impacts that would be difficult and expensive to overcome. EWR Co’s review of the alignment put forward by BFARe is summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• With respect to the need to upgrade the track and stations at Bedford station and Bedford St Johns station, this would be required in any event if the new EWR services (or some of them) serve the stations in the centre of Bedford• Bedford St Johns station is a particular issue in this regard. The current station is located on a single-track section of the line with only one platform and subject to low line speed. At its current location, there is insufficient space available to extend the exisiting platform length and to construct a second line and platform in this area• This means that the need to undertake these improvements, including the potential impacts on the Thameslink carriage sidings if the track in this area needs to be re-aligned, would not be removed even if a different route option or an alingment passing to the south of Bedford was selected• EWR Co also considered whether it would be possible for services from Oxford and Bletchley to enter the centre of Bedford from the south, reverse or terminate at Bedford station and return to re-join the new EWR alignment to the south in order to continue their journeys to Cambridge. This would require additional infrastructure in order to enable this type of service pattern and we considered a number of options for how this might be constructed, including an option that is broadly the same as the alignment promoted by BFARe. The inherent issues and constraints with such a proposals include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ The need for a new north to east curve from the Ampthill Road area (near its junction with the B530 road) to southwest of Elstow. This would also require a lengthy viaduct to enable the railway to cross the River Great Ouse and its floodplain as well as the A421 dual carriageway – these features are in close proximity in this location. This would be complex and expensive to engineer.→ The north end of this new curve – where it would diverge from the Marston Vale Line at a new junction – is constrained by built development. Linespeed through the junction would also be severely constrained due to the limited radius of the curve which could be built and this would adversely affect capacity on both routes due to the longer time required for conflicting train movements to clear the junction. A larger radius curve with a higher linespeed or a grade separated junction (to reduce conflicting train movements) would be likely to require the acquisition and demolition of residential and commercial property on West End or Ampthill Road and would further increase the capital and maintenance costs of this additional infrastructure.→ The new curve would also have potential significant effects on the setting of the sensitive and important group of heritage assets connected with the Elstow Abbey site. This includes numerous listed buildings – including those listed at Grade I and II* - and two scheduled monuments. There would also be potential effects on the setting of other listed buildings further south on Wilstead Road. The railway would need to be elevated at this location which could exacerbate the potential impact on the significance of these assets and their setting.→ The south end of this new curve – where it meets the main EWR line passing to the south of Bedford – would be located in the area immediately to the west of Elstow. The new junction would be approximately 250 metres or less from the existing residential properties in the village. Both lines would also need to be elevated in this location. This is because of the need for the curve to cross the River Great Ouse and its floodplain as well as the A421 above and for the main EWR line to cross the B530 road, the Midland Main Line, the former Elstow landfill site and the A6 dual carriageway. This could increase the potential adverse effects on the local community in Elstow.

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Varsity Line	The Varsity Line was not included in the 2019 consultation- why has it been analysed now?	After the 2021 non-statutory consultation - People told us we should reconsider our decision for all EWR trains to serve Bedford town centre from the south of town and passing through the north towards Cambridge because of potential impacts on residents and that we should consider whether a different way of connecting the centre of Bedford to EWR along some or all of the former Varsity Line should be adopted.
Compensation	Have you spoken directly to the affected developers, currently with unfinished units & unsold units now impacted by the proposed route? Are they to be compensated?	We have written to all potentially directly affected landowners (which includes developers) at the Route Update Announcement. EWR Co will compensate all landowners where we will need to acquire land to construct and operate the railway.
Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)	What is the BCR of the scheme?	<p>The economic case sets out the costs and benefits of a Project and presents them as a full economic assessment. Ultimately, the economic case results in a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR), a single quantitative summary of the economic assessment. It feeds into the decision-making process as to whether the scheme is a good investment in terms of value for money. The shortcomings of traditional appraisal models have been recognised by the recent revisions to HM Treasury’s Green Book. These revisions highlight the importance of capturing the strategic merits of a project and place a greater emphasis on its strategic benefits, such as its contribution to economic growth and ability to meet wider policy objectives, rather than focusing on an assumption that value for money is solely based on a project’s quantified costs and benefits.</p> <p>EWR Co has developed a more holistic view when estimating the value for money of the Project, which will be carried forward to underpin the strategic and economic case. In addition to traditional approaches to modelling demand and benefits, and following the guidance set out in HM Treasury’s Magenta Book, EWR Co has developed a Theory of Change methodology to test whether the Project is necessary to enable the economic transformation of the region. This gives a more appropriate assessment of whether the Project provides good value for money. Theories of Change are a well-established approach, and The United Nations describes them as a useful tool that “explains how a given intervention, or set of interventions, are expected to lead to a specific change, drawing on a causal analysis based on available evidence”.</p>
	What is the BCR with the proposed route and when does NIC review?	<p>Detailed appraisal tables can be found in Appendix 5. Further work was then undertaken applying EWR Assessment Factors – to help understand the benefits not captured in the BCR. See chapters 6-8 in the main report.</p> <p>The shortcomings of traditional appraisal models have been recognised by the recent revisions to HM Treasury’s Green Book.</p> <p>1. The Green Book is the guidance issued by HM Treasury on how to appraise policies, programmes and projects. The 2020 review of the Green Book concluded that it failed to support the Government’s objectives in areas such as “levelling up the regions” and reaching net zero. The review said this was because the process relied too heavily on cost-benefit analysis, also known as the benefit-cost ratio (BCR). The review found that the BCR placed too much weight on benefits that could easily be assigned a monetary value, with insufficient weight given to whether the proposed project addressed strategic policy priorities. The review also suggested that the BCR approach discouraged the co-ordination of separate projects that might address the same issue</p>

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Door-to-door connectivity	You focus on station to station journey times: have you factored in the time taken to access stations to-and-from both housing development sites and businesses when deciding route options? For example situating main access in Bedford in middle of congested urban centre will make first-mile-last-mile travel times longer than the rail journey to Cambridge.	<p>We’re still at a relatively early stage of the design process and are carrying out further assessments and modelling to understand how people could access the railway and the implications of our proposals on current traffic. One of our aims is to provide people with a real choice, enabling them to travel by train and other public transport and active travel modes, rather than by car. Our plans don’t just include the railway – we also design the other solutions that support the railway, such as connections to stations. We’re focusing on active travel and improving public transport integration, to minimise the need for people to use a car for any part of their journey and contribute to alleviating congestion in urban centres such as Bedford.</p> <p>We anticipate that our designs and solutions will serve as a catalyst for greatly improved active travel infrastructure and public transport connectivity across the region, bringing associated health and economic benefits to communities.</p>
Other	Can you confirm that EWR as a gov’t owned company adheres to the Nolan Principles and publish the procedures EWR has to enforce them? How should complaints be submitted and which ombudsman covers your company?	<p>EWR Co confirms that it adheres to the Nolan Principles. The obligation to adhere to such Principles is set out in EWR Co’s policy documents, including the EWR Code of Conduct and The Counter Fraud, Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy which are published and available on our website. All EWR Co employees are required to comply with these policies, with failures to do so addressed through EWR Co’s internal disciplinary process.</p> <p>Complaints Process</p> <p><u>Contact Us:</u> You can either speak to us*, write to us, or contact us online via our website.</p> <p><u>To speak to us:</u> Call EWR Co contact tel. no. 0330 134 0067* Our Helpdesk is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday*</p> <p><u>To write to us:</u> Please email contact@eastwestrail.co.uk or write to Freepost East West Rail (you do not need any other address details on the envelope, and you do not need to use a stamp).</p>

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	Please will you publish the feedback you have had from the Treasury to your proposals?	HM Treasury did not provide a response to the 2021 non-statutory consultation.