



EWR Co.

Programme

Document

Report for the Planning Inspectorate
East West Rail – Bedford to Cambridge and Western
Improvements
TR040012

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Programme Document

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11-12-2024	V01	All	First issue
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Abbreviations

Term	Description
CoCP	Code of Construction Practice
CtoC	Cambridge to Cambourne [guided busway TWAO project]
DCO	Development Consent Order
DOLB	Draft order limits boundary
EA	Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMI	Electromagnetic interference
ES	Environmental Statement
EWR	East West Rail
EWR Co	East West Rail Company Limited
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
MRAO	Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory
NCS	Non-statutory consultation
NMU	Non-motorised users
PDR	Permitted development rights
PPA	Planning performance agreements
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SoCC	Statement of Community Consultation
UC	Utility Company
TWAO	Transport and Works Act Order

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1. Introduction

1.1.1 This Programme Document has been prepared to support the proposed application by the East West Railway Company Limited (“the Applicant”) for development consent for the East West Rail (EWR) Project.

1.1.2 The Programme Document sets out the timetable and activities to be undertaken during the pre-application stage. It has been prepared in accordance with:

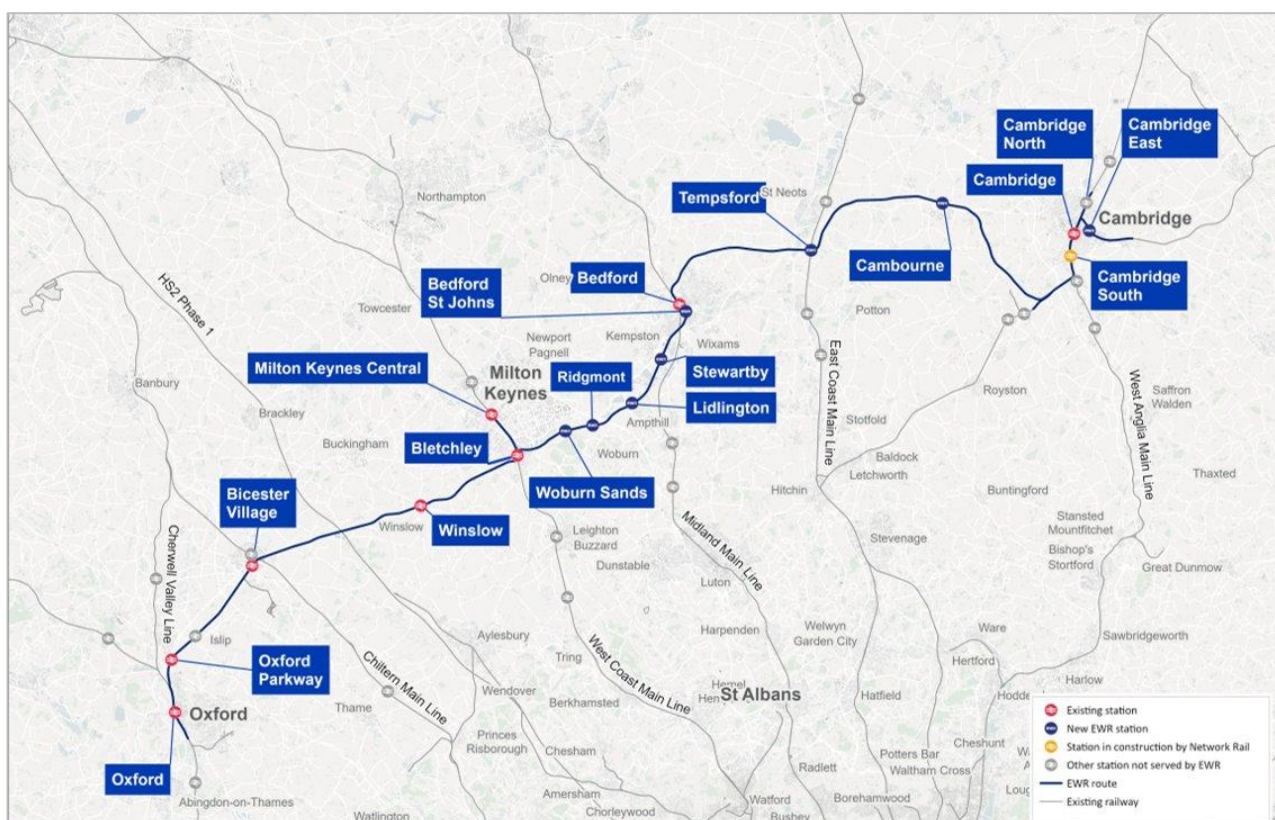
- a) National Infrastructure Planning Guidance: Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects; and
- b) Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus.

1.1.3 This is a live document which will be updated by the Applicant as necessary until the submission of the application for development consent. This document will be published on the Applicant’s website at [East West Rail | Home](#).

2. The Project

2.1.1 The Applicant is proposing to submit an application to the Secretary of State for Transport for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for a new railway link which would connect communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge (Figure 2-1).

Figure 2-1 The proposed Project as presented at the public consultation, spring 2026



2.1.2 A new railway is proposed between Bedford and Cambridge, with associated works to upgrade the existing railway between Oxford and Bedford and to the east of Cambridge. Together, these elements are referred to as ‘the Project’.

2.1.3 The Project involves the following key aspects:

- a) New railway and new stations
 - Construction of a new railway between Bedford and Cambridge
 - Construction of new stations at Tempsford, Cambourne and Cambridge East
- b) Upgrading the existing railway

- Improvements to the railway between Oxford and Bedford
 - Improvements to the railway on the approach into Cambridge, and on the Newmarket Line between Cambridge and Fulbourn
- c) Station upgrades and relocations
- Remodelling Bedford station
 - Consolidating stations on the Marston Vale Line into four new stations at:
 - Woburn Sands
 - Ridgmont
 - Lidlington
 - Stewartby
 - Decommissioning of underused stations
 - Relocating Bedford St Johns station
 - Improvements at Cambridge station, including construction of a new eastern entrance
 - Improvements at Bletchley station, including construction of a new eastern entrance
 - Upgrading existing stations across the route to accommodate increased passenger numbers
 - Active travel measures to enable easy access to stations and to maintain connectivity between communities
- d) New railway infrastructure
- Construction of infrastructure such as depots, viaducts, tunnels, bridges, cuttings and embankments
 - Construction of new passing loops
- e) Level crossings
- Improvements to, or closure of, existing level crossings, with appropriate replacement crossings where needed
- f) Electrification and power

- Works to enable discontinuous electrification, including overhead line equipment, substations and grid connections

g) Interfaces with roads, rights of way and utilities

- Works to manage interfaces between the railway and highways, public rights of way, watercourses and utilities

h) Environment and biodiversity

- Measures to reduce environmental impacts and deliver biodiversity net gain, including habitat creation, landscape enhancement and nature recovery initiatives

2.1.4 Some elements of the project are reliant on third-party funding.

2.1.5 The Project forms part of the wider East West Rail scheme which is being promoted and brought into use in a phased approach. Earlier phases were described as connection stages, with connection stage 1 enabling services to run between Oxford and Milton Keynes and connection stage 2 work to bring forward services between Oxford and Bedford by the end of the decade. These works were consented under the Transport and Works Act Order in 2020. Connection stage 3 would complete EWR and enable passenger services to operate between Oxford and Cambridge via Bletchley and Bedford to be consented through a Development Consent Order.

2.1.6 Going forward, East West Rail Co is moving away from the connection stage terminology to promote a phased delivery approach to accelerate parts of the programme and unlock benefits sooner.

- a) By 2030: start construction of the new Tempsford station with platforms on the East Coast Main Line (ECML) to serve the proposed new town, with EWR platforms to follow in the mid to late 2030s.
- b) By the early 2030s: upgrade and electrify the MVL to allow four trains per hour between Oxford and Stewartby, build the four new stations along the MVL including Stewartby to serve the Universal Entertainment Resort Complex, and improve Bletchley station.
- c) By mid-2030s: accelerate the construction of an upgrade station in Bedford, provide a new entrance at Cambridge station, and complete the new station at Cambridge East.
- d) By mid to late 2030s: Open the full railway service.

3. Pre-Application Timetable

3.1.1 The main milestones and anticipated dates during the pre-application stage are set out below in Table 3-1. It is to be noted that milestones are subject to periodic review and may change. Those highlighted in blue are completed milestones.

3.1.2 The Planning and Infrastructure Act (PIA) came into force on 18 December 2025. The PIA will remove the requirement to carry out statutory consultation set out in the Planning Act 2008. EWR Co had previously planned to carry out a Statutory Consultation in early 2026. However, EWR Co decided to carry out consultation informed by the PIA in spring 2026. In the meantime, EWR Co held Design Update Sessions between January and March 2026 for people to see and discuss the updated designs as presented in the You Said, We Did - Autumn Update report (November 2024), which outlined how the updated proposals have been revised including in response to feedback received to the non-statutory consultation which was carried out between November 2024 and January 2025.

3.1.3 EWR Co anticipates submitting the Development Consent Order (DCO) application in August 2027.

Table 3-1: East West Rail main milestones and dates

Actual / Anticipated Date	Milestone
January – March 2019	2019 consultation Non-statutory consultation on five route options for the section of railway between Bedford and Cambridge
January 2020	2020 – preferred route option announcement Route option ‘E’ identified as preferred route
March – June 2021	2021 consultation Non-statutory consultation on wider project including nine potential alignment options for the railway between Bedford and Cambridge
May 2023	Route update announcement Alignment 1 confirmed as preferred alignment for new railway for most of the route between Bedford and Cambridge with an emerging preference for a local variation to provide a new station at Tempsford
	Six months October 2024 – March 2025
6 November 2024	PINS Meeting No. 1 Agenda - update on the Project - consultation strategy

Actual / Anticipated Date	Milestone
14 November 2024 to 24 January 2025	Non-Statutory Consultation following the route update announcement and refined design proposals.
2 January 2025	Request for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion
12 February 2025	Scoping Opinion provided
7 March 2025	PINS Meeting No. 2 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scoping Opinion - Programme Document and future meetings
	<i>Six months April 2025 – September 2025</i>
18 June 2025	PINS Meeting No. 3 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issues Tracker - Feedback from non-statutory consultation and implications for design
Q3 2025	Design development following non-statutory consultation and ongoing stakeholder engagement.
29 September 2025	PINS Meeting No. 4 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Update - Programme Document and Issues Tracker - Planning and Infrastructure Bill
	<i>Six months October 2025 – March 2026</i>
13 November 2025	PINS Meeting No. 5 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Update - Main Issues Tracker - Ecology and Surveys - Approach to engagement and consultation - Feedback on MHCLG on streamlining infrastructure planning
Q1 2026	Programme of engagement with key stakeholders and affected communities
4 February 2026	PINS Meeting No. 6 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Update - New ways of working with PINS
23 February 2026	PINS Meeting No. 7 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Update - Programme of activities with PINS - Engagement and consultation update - Land and property update - Structure of the Environmental Statement
	<i>Six months April 2026 – September 2026</i>
April – July 2026	An 8-week public consultation from 14 April 2026
April	PINS Meeting No. 8 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detailed discussion of the proposed Project

Actual / Anticipated Date	Milestone
April – September 2026	Drafting of plans and reports for the DCO application
Summer / Autumn	Placeholder for one or more PINS meetings. Agenda to be agreed.
Autumn	Potential for an accompanied site visit for PINS
	<i>Six months October 2026 – March 2027</i>
Q4 2026	Ongoing drafting and internal review of DCO application reports and plans
	Placeholder for one or more PINS meetings. Agenda to be agreed.
Mid-January to end February 2027	PINS review of key DCO application reports and plans
Spring 2027	Updating DCO application documents following comments from PINS
	<i>Six months April 2027 – September 2027</i>
Q2 and Q3 2027	Final revisions, assurance and sign off of DCO application documents
	Placeholder for one or more PINS Meetings. Agenda to be agreed.
	Application Submission.

4. Main Issues for Resolution

4.1.1 Table 4-1 sets out the Applicant’s current view of the potential main issues for resolution in the application and the activities it will undertake to address those issues.

Table 4-1: Main areas of potential issue and resolution

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
General aspects		
Design development and option selection	Removal of optionality / identification of single preferred option	<p>The non-statutory consultation held in November 2024 to January 2025 sought feedback on areas of the route where the Applicant was still considering options. The Applicant had regard to the feedback received in the ongoing design development.</p> <p>The Applicant is continuing to refine and optimise the design proposals, with a focus on sustainability and mitigation of potential environmental effects, cost reduction, constructability and reducing impacts on traffic and transport.</p> <p>The outcome of ongoing design development and decisions on the options presented at non-statutory consultation will be reported at the next public consultation in spring 2026.</p>
Independent Design Review	Commissioning design review	EWR Co commissioned the Design Council to undertake independent design review. The review takes the form of a series of reviews and workshops up to and including statutory consultation. The first meeting was held in March 2025. It took the form of a briefing with the aim of proving the Chair and the Panel with an overview of the Project and to inform the subject

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
		<p>of the further planned reviews. Further reviews are planned for 2026.</p>
<p>Environmental Impacts</p>	<p>Potential environmental impacts arising as a result of the construction and operation of the Project.</p>	<p>Design development will take place in parallel with a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and supporting surveys, modelling and technical assessments.</p> <p>Information from the EIA process will be used to inform the development of appropriate mitigation measures as part of the ongoing design development process. It will also support more detailed analysis of biodiversity measures needed to deliver biodiversity net gain.</p> <p>Following the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, EWR Co will no longer prepare a Preliminary Environmental Information Report or present a statutory consultation. An Environmental Statement will be submitted as part of the DCO application which will contain full details about the likely significant effects of the Project and the proposed mitigation measures.</p>
<p>Land acquisition</p>	<p>The Applicant would need to acquire land and property to build and operate the railway.</p>	<p>Where possible, the Applicant would use existing railway land rather than acquiring new land in connection with the Project. However, in some places it will be necessary to acquire other property which includes residential properties, businesses and agricultural land.</p> <p>As the proposals have been developed, the Applicant has</p>

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
		<p>sought to reduce the impact on land and property owners and on sensitive environmental features and historic landscapes and will continue to do so.</p> <p>The Applicant will seek to enter into voluntary agreements with regard to any land acquisition that is required wherever possible.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Transport has safeguarded land which would potentially be required to build and operate the Project. This means that people who own and occupy a property in the safeguarded area from November 2024 may be eligible to serve a statutory blight notice, asking the Applicant to purchase the property before it is needed to build the new railway.</p> <p>The Applicant also published a discretionary Need to Sell Property Scheme at the route update announcement in May 2023. This provides support for those property owners who have a compelling need to sell their property but are unable to do so, other than at a substantially reduced value, because of the Project proposals. This scheme is also available to landowners who are not eligible to serve a blight notice, for example because their property is not within the safeguarded area.</p>
Construction Impacts	The construction phase of the Project would have an impact on local	As part of the design development, the Applicant is assessing the potential

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
	<p>communities, businesses and the environment.</p>	<p>construction impacts and how they could be mitigated.</p> <p>The Applicant is committed to regular engagement with communities and businesses that would potentially be affected by the construction of the Project as the design and approach to construction are developed.</p> <p>The Applicant will submit a draft Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) as part of the DCO application. The CoCP will set out a range of mitigation measures and principles which contractors would be required to follow when building the Project, including engaging with stakeholders and the community. The Project would be delivered by contractors and supply chain partners with experience in successfully delivering major infrastructure projects and managing the related impacts.</p>
<p>Public rights of way, highways and private means of access</p>	<p>Whilst the Applicant would seek to maintain existing public rights of way, highways and private accesses wherever possible, in some instances it may not be feasible or safe to do so.</p>	<p>In circumstances where it is not possible to keep a public right of way, highway or private access open in their current location, the Applicant would seek to provide suitable alternatives which would reduce the impact on communities and take account of the needs of all users, accessibility and equality considerations.</p> <p>During construction, the Applicant would seek to maintain connections that are temporarily affected by the works. This may include the creation of temporary diversions.</p>

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
Level crossings	In some cases, the increased speed and frequency of the new train services would mean it would be unsafe to retain some level crossings. Where this is the case the level crossing would need to be closed.	Where a level crossing would need to be closed the Applicant would seek to provide an appropriate diversion or alternative crossing. The Applicant will continue to engage with stakeholders and will take account of feedback to consultation and ongoing engagement to inform the final proposals with regards to level crossings. The final proposals will need to be endorsed by the Level Crossing Review Panel at Network Rail, which considers every level crossing on the national rail network.
Future / existing developments		
Universal theme park	Implications of a major development near Beford.	The current understanding of the implications of the theme park for EWR are set out in the 'You Said We Did' report published in November 2025. Discussions between Universal and UDX are ongoing regarding how a consolidated Stewartby-Kempston Hardwick station could serve the resort. The Universal resort was granted planning permission in December 2025.
Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory (MRAO)	Potential Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) and construction / operational noise and vibration impacts that might interfere with the operation of the observatory.	Ongoing engagement between EWR Co and Cambridge University (the operators of MRAO) since 2022 on the potential mitigation to reduce these impacts. The results of the Environmental Impact Assessment will determine whether the mitigated design is sufficient or further mitigation should be explored. EWR Co will continue to engage with Cambridge University.
Environment		

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
<p>Availability of survey data due to limited site access.</p>	<p>This issue relates to all environmental topics, in particular for archaeology, ecology, and water surveys. Since 2021, EWR Co has been seeking access to land to enable intrusive and non-intrusive surveys within and adjacent to the Draft Order Limits Boundary (DOLB)</p>	<p>EWR Co is engaging with landowners where access is required. With some, negotiations are on-going and Section 172 notices are being used, where appropriate. If land access cannot be secured it may be necessary for specific elements of the environmental assessments to be based on precautionary assumptions. This could result in the Environmental Statement (ES) overestimating some environmental effects for key topics, including historic environment, biodiversity and water resources. Following receipt of the EIA scoping opinion from PINS in February 2025, work has commenced on the EIA. Information about potential impacts and proposed mitigation measures will be presented in the 2026 consultation. Ongoing technical engagement with statutory bodies and other technical stakeholders will continue throughout the pre-application phase.</p>
<p>Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) and the interface between EWR and internationally designated sites.</p>	<p>The Project is assessing potential impacts on Barbastelle bats associated with the Eversden and Wimpole Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to for example changes in land use during construction or operation, loss of ecological connectivity, increases in vehicle movements using public highways during construction and</p>	<p>EWR Co is currently undertaking detailed engagement with Natural England in relation to the scope of the HRA and potential mitigation using the mitigation hierarchy. An evidence plan approach is being followed in accordance with PINS's guidance.</p>

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
	operation, and collision with moving trains during operation.	
Permanent acquisition of open space and mitigation.	The Project will require the acquisition and use of land that comprises open space e.g. areas of land used for recreation close to the railway, playgrounds / sports facilities. The relevant legal and policy tests will need to be satisfied in relation to the acquisition and use of such land.	Open space required permanently for EWR has been identified. Mitigation options are being developed in accordance with the relevant legal and policy protections that apply to open space land. Scoping and environmental assessments, in relation to open space, have been agreed with PINS in the Scoping Opinion. EWR Co. will hold discussions directly with landowners and local authorities where required and mitigation proposals will be presented at further engagement and consultation points.
Scope of the traffic and transport modelling study.	The modelling approach has been agreed in principle as part of the transport assessment scoping process. The details of the transport modelling scenarios continue to be developed including through ongoing engagement with the highway authorities.	Discussions between EWR Co and the highway authorities are ongoing.
Interface with the strategic road network (SRN).	There are interfaces with the SRN. Examples include National Highways Future Proofing requirements, M1 J13 A5 rail bridge, Wider Route Interventions (such as the A421/Renhold Junction), A1 viaduct, Tempsford Area and Emergency Access.	The Highways and Traffic & Transport teams are in regular contact with National Highways to discuss any potential impact on SRN assets and required modifications due to the EWR Project.
Closure of London Road level crossing,	Proposed closure of London Road Bicester	The November 2025 announcement provided an

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
<p>Bicester and replacement NMU / vehicular access redirecting onto the local highway network.</p>	<p>level crossing with provision of a replacement crossing. Feedback from Non Statutory Consultation and ongoing stakeholder engagement raises concern about the impacts of the closure of the level crossing, particularly in terms of severance and the impacts of traffic redirecting onto the local highway network.</p>	<p>update on options for replacement crossings comprising a footbridge with lifts as well as stairs, or a revised underpass design consisting of a protected active travel corridor for pedestrians and cyclists and the possible addition of a single-lane road that could be used by vehicles.</p> <p>These proposals have been updated for the spring 2026 consultation to comprise the underpass option only, consisting of a protected active travel corridor for walking, wheeling and cycling and a single lane road that could be used by vehicles no more than 2.1 metres high together with traffic lights and barriers on the ramps. This underpass would be subject to third party funding.</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing between EWR Co, Cherwell District Council, and Oxford County Council. If required, the Transport Assessment will recommend any mitigation measures needed for this section of the local highway network.</p>
<p>Impacts on Heritage Assets</p>	<p>The construction of the Project has the potential to impact a number of heritage assets, including multiple nationally significant heritage assets. For example, 'Site revealed by aerial photography W of White Hill Farm' at Nine Wells is a nationally significant heritage asset designated</p>	<p>Ongoing engagement with relevant statutory bodies to discuss the assessment of impacts and potential mitigations, including bi-monthly meetings with Historic England and the local planning authorities.</p>

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
	for its archaeological interest, which the EWR Project will impact due to its proximity.	
Water environment	Ongoing work to ensure proposals affecting waterbodies along the route are acceptable and appropriately mitigated. Issues include the crossing of the new railway at Tempsford over the River Great Ouse. Flood modelling is ongoing along the line of route and will be completed to inform flood risk assessments prior to DCO submission.	Flood risk assessment (FRA) and Water Framework Directive (WFD) studies are on-going and there is regular engagement with appropriate statutory bodies and other organisations to provide regular updates. The Environment Agency (EA) has been reviewing the models as they have been developed.
Impacts on trees and woodlands	The route was selected to avoid and minimise impacts on ancient woodland. Work is ongoing to ensure that proposals affecting trees and woodlands along the route are acceptable and appropriately mitigated.	EIA and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) studies are on-going and there is regular engagement with appropriate statutory bodies and other organisations to provide regular updates. This includes woodland assessments and arboricultural and ancient/veteran tree surveys. Woodlands present within the potential zone of impact that are shown on historic 19th century maps are being assessed further to determine whether they are likely to be ancient, even where they are not listed on Natural England’s ancient woodland inventory.
Stakeholder Engagement		
Interface between EWR and Bourn Airfield mixed use development.	Potential impacts on the land identified for the Bourn Airfield mixed use development. Issues include the interface between the proposed cut and cover tunnel under the A428, the proposed	The November 2025 announcement confirmed a mined tunnel is now proposed rather than cut and cover. Ongoing discussions on design options between EWR Co and the developer. EWR Co has also entered into an agreement with

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
	route of the Cambourne to Cambridge (CtoC) project, and the planned mixed-use development on the site of the former Bourn Airfield.	the promoter of the GCP project regarding the interface between that project and EWR.
Loss of residential property in the Poets area, Bedford.	Bedford Borough Council has objected to the DCO Project's design to construct six tracks north of Bedford Midland Station in order to meet rail timetabling requirements. The land-take needed would require the demolition of a number of buildings including residential properties in the Poets area north of the station.	Engagement is ongoing between EWR Co and Bedford Borough Council and land and property owners.
Bedford Hospital car parks	Bedford Hospital has objected to EWR Co's proposal to use land comprising one of their existing car parks.	Bedford Hospital submitted a planning application to Bedford Borough Council on 7 November 2025 for an Elective Care Hub and associated infrastructure, car parking, landscaping and access. Constructive discussions are ongoing between EWR Co and the Hospital regarding the Hospital's plans to redevelop part of their site and EWR Co's proposals for the relocation of Bedford St Johns Station and car parking arrangements.
Effect of temporary closure of Long Road Overbridge on Addenbrooke's Hospital	Addenbrooke's Hospital has concerns over the temporary closure of Long Road Overbridge, Cambridge. This bridge is the main access to the bio-medical campus that contains Addenbrooke's Hospital and other medical providers.	Engagement is ongoing between EWR Co and Addenbrooke's Hospital and blue lights services regarding the temporary closure of the existing Long Road Overbridge. EWR Co is seeking to mitigate impacts on the hospital and blue lights services. EWR Co is also liaising with East of England

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
		Ambulance Service and the Biomedical Campus.
Bletchley West Train Maintenance Depot (TMD)	Buckinghamshire Council has concerns around the proposed Bletchley West TMD and freight loops due to potential visual, noise and traffic impacts.	Engagement is ongoing between EWR Co and Buckinghamshire Council regarding the TMD and freight loops design.
Cambridge Eastern Train Care Centre	Fulbourn has been identified as a potential location for the Cambridge Eastern train care centre. EWR Co is also continuing to work with other train operators in the Cambridge area to explore whether an alternative location might offer better opportunities to reduce construction impacts and improve service reliability when EWR opens.	No decisions have yet been made and EWR Co is also continuing to collaborate with regional train operators to explore alternative solutions.
Utilities		
Designing diversions	EWR may affect c. 450 – 500 assets of statutory undertakers (previously c.1600 sections of utility apparatus). Design work is ongoing to ensure that the main works either avoid the existing utility assets, protect them from impact, or include diversions where necessary to prevent clashes. Where diversions are required, Utility Companies (UCs) are asked to provide their designs and delivery methodologies so these can be incorporated into the main works proposals. This information, along	Engagement between UCs and EWR Co is ongoing to finalise the network designs. These designs will identify any works that qualify as an NSIP in their own right and the temporary and permanent land requirements. The EIA will assess the potential environmental impacts of the utilities works and the need for mitigation.

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
	with any environmental mitigation measures, will inform the Draft Order Limit Boundary (DOLB).	

5. Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

5.1.1 The Applicant has adopted a strategic and proactive approach to stakeholder engagement for this DCO. This involves seeking to build strong working relationships with stakeholders to gather valuable insights and feedback, which can be considered as part of design development. Delivering meaningful engagement ensures that all voices are heard and considered with the aim of developing a more informed project.

5.1.2 The Applicant has outlined the proposed programme for the Project in discussions with the local authorities and other statutory consultees, including Network Rail and statutory undertakers. Based on its discussions with those bodies, the Applicant understands that they are content with the current proposed programme.

5.1.3 Throughout the development of the Project the Applicant has engaged with local communities, representatives and statutory stakeholders.

5.1.4 The Applicant will continue to engage throughout the project with key stakeholders, such as Network Rail, National Highways, the Environment Agency and relevant local authorities. The Applicant has also created Local Representative Groups, which are made up of elected members and Parish Councils, and regularly engages with these groups about the Project.

5.1.5 As set out in Table 3-1, the Applicant has previously carried out three rounds of non-statutory consultation, the most recent non-statutory consultation commenced on 14 November 2024 and closed on 24 January 2025.

5.1.6 Once the relevant provisions of the PIA come into force, the legal requirement for EWR Co to carry out a statutory consultation (which was planned for Q1 2026) will be removed. EWR Co is planning a programme of engagement with key stakeholders and affected communities followed by a public consultation in spring 2026. EWR Co is also preparing a voluntary document, a Community Consultation Strategy, setting out its proposals for consultation *in lieu* of the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC), which will no longer be a legal requirement once the relevant provisions of the PIA come into force.

6. Financial Support Agreements

6.1.1 The Applicant has been discussing the terms of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) with the local authorities listed below. To date, seven out of ten PPAs have been agreed and signed. The purpose of the PPAs is to provide a framework for constructive engagement between the Applicant and the local authorities and for the Applicant to provide financial support to the local authorities to help facilitate this.

- a) Bedford Borough Council.
- b) Buckinghamshire Council.
- c) Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (working in partnership as the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service).
- d) Cambridgeshire County Council.
- e) Central Bedfordshire Council.
- f) Cherwell District Council.
- g) Huntingdonshire District Council.
- h) Milton Keynes Council.
- i) Oxford City Council.
- j) Oxfordshire County Council.

6.1.2 The Applicant has also entered into Service Level Agreements (SLAs) or similar with the bodies listed below. Like the PPAs, the purpose of these agreements is to provide a framework for constructive engagement between the Applicant and the relevant bodies in relation to the project and for the costs of such engagement to be paid by the Applicant in order to help facilitate this engagement.

- a) Environment Agency
- b) Natural England
- c) Forestry Commission
- d) Historic England
- e) National Highways
- f) Network Rail

7. Main Risks to the Pre-Application Stage

7.1.1 As the Project is in a relatively early part of the pre-application stage, the Applicant recognises that there is a risk of changes to the programme and submission, for example to respond to any matters identified during consultation.

7.1.2 The Applicant will continue to track any risks to achievement of the pre-application stage and manage them by keeping the programme under review.

7.1.3 The Applicant will inform the Planning Inspectorate of any extensions to the anticipated dates set out in section 3.