

Comberton to Haslingfield Enhanced LRG- Meeting note

Meeting #2

Date: 06/10/2025

Time: 6:00pm

Type of meeting: Virtual (Microsoft Teams)

Key discussion points and outcomes

1. Introduction, housekeeping and agenda

- 1.1 Paula Whitworth (PW) welcomed attendees to the meeting and ran through the housekeeping and agenda. PW introduced herself and all EWR Co attendees on the call.

2. Review of actions from the last meeting

- 2.1 PW shared the actions from the last Comberton to Haslingfield Enhanced Local Representatives Group meeting (*See slide deck for the full list of all actions*).
- 2.2 Fiona Man (FM) provided an update on the first action, noting that a detailed planting strategy has not been developed at this stage. As part of this strategy, EWR Co will need to discuss maintenance requirements with Network Rail.
- 2.3 FM then provided an update on the second action, noting that surveys will be covered in more detail later in the presentation and that survey results will be published within the Environmental Statement as part of the DCO application.
- 2.4 FM then provided an update on the third action, explaining that key sensitive receptors at key locations along the railway alignment help to inform these studies. FM explained that the approach to noise and air quality surveys was set out within the EWR Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report on the Planning Inspectorate website and offered to share a link to that information. **Post meeting note: the link can be found here - [TR040012-000019-EWR - EIA Scoping Report - Final Version V3 \(3\).pdf](#).**
- 2.5 Andrew Martin (AM) asked if surveys will include the route to the construction site and expressed concern about construction traffic going through Barton.
- 2.6 FM responded that EWR Co would consider sensitive receptors within 200 / 300m of the route.
- 2.7 Stephen Christian (SC) provided an update on the fourth action, noting that resident concerns had been fed back and the conduct of contractors will be considered in the Construction Management Plan.
- 2.8 PW confirmed that the fifth action had been previously addressed both verbally and in meeting notes, with links to research shared, so is now closed.

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- 2.9 SC provided an update on the sixth and eighth actions and shared a visual of potential construction compound locations for Harlton and elsewhere.
- 2.10 The group discussed the seventh action and AM mentioned that he had raised Parish Online Mapping as a programme previously, noting that it provides 250 up to date layers of information including noise levels on major roads and railways.
- 2.11 FM provided an update on the ninth action, noting that there is not a decibel level for entry and exit to and from tunnels. Given the running speed of EWR is below 100mph, aerodynamic noise in and out of the tunnels is not likely to be an issue because the tunnels will be within deep cuttings but modelling and assessment work is ongoing and if there are significant effects, then mitigations will be put in place.
- 2.12 AM asked if the decibel level for the railway would be the same as road construction levels. FM responded that EWR Co work towards the LOAEL (Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level) and SOAEL (Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level) levels and TLG confirmed that EWR Co set out LOAEL and SOAEL thresholds within the Scoping Report that was shared with parish councillors previously.
- 2.13 SC gave an update on the tenth action, noting that concerns were regarding use by construction traffic to compounds that had now been removed, and access to properties will be maintained. There may be a severance at the southern end of Royston Lane, but it will still be accessible from the north.
- 2.14 SC gave an update on the eleventh action, noting that EWR Co have met with 'The Gas Works' owner and are in discussions to resolve the situation – this may involve buying the site and compensating the owner for loss of business.
- 2.15 PW provided an update on the last action, confirming that feedback would be logged and that meeting notes will capture discussions and actions.

3. Project updates

- 3.1 PW gave an update on the engagement that EWR Co has been involved in since the last set of LRG meetings.
- 3.2 PW discussed the current round of Enhanced Local Representatives Groups meetings and noted that invites to other LRG meetings can be forwarded on request.
- 3.3 PW then shared a snapshot of the political engagement that has been happening with MPs and other political stakeholders along the route.
- 3.4 PW gave an update on community engagement, noting that the team are in the process of planning 'pop up' sessions along the route to increase project visibility. EWR Co welcomes any thoughts or suggestions on venues or locations to host such sessions.
- 3.5 PW gave an update on landowner engagement – EWR Co have been engaging landowners who may be affected by proposals. Letters have been circulated and contain information about how landowners can contact the team. All LRG members will also receive updates on landowner engagement, and this will include contact details for the EWR Co Land & Property team.

4. Planning and Infrastructure Bill update

- 4.1 PW provided an update on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, noting that the key takeaway is that EWR Co are expecting engagement to be much more iterative, collaborative and consistent.
- 4.2 PW explained that EWR Co are currently working with government to understand the implications of the Bill and will come back to the LRGs on this when there is more clarity.

5. Environment

- 5.1 FM noted that initial environmental information was shared in the non-statutory consultation 2024 Environmental Update Report. Since then, EWR Co have been reviewing the feedback, continued to engage with stakeholders and complete surveys to inform design.
- 5.2 FM explained that environmental considerations are embedded into the design process and that EWR Co follow the principles of the environmental mitigation hierarchy.
- 5.3 FM then gave a survey update, noting that the first phase of Ground Investigations is progressing.
- 5.4 FM also discussed EWR's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) commitment. BNG is being embedded into the design process by avoiding and reducing impacts.
- 5.5 FM then shared a list of environmental updates that have been made since the non-statutory consultation. (*See slide deck for full list of updates.*)
- 5.6 Peter Fane (PF) said it would be helpful to have an update on negotiations with Cambridge University regarding the effect of vibration on travelling radio telescopes north of Haslingfield.
- 5.7 SC responded that these discussions are about the electromagnetic interference being caused by running electric trains along the route. EWR Co are in regular discussions with Cambridge University and are currently doing surveys along the Core Valley line in Wales to measure the Electromagnetic environment that those trains propagate. EWR Co are due to sit down with Cambridge University later this month to discuss findings and other ongoing matters.
- 5.8 AM asked what EWR Co means when referring to green bridges.
- 5.9 FM responded that green bridges are large structures that connect wildlife habitats and species as well as providing additional visual, health and wellbeing benefits.
- 5.10 AM asked if they were pedestrian bridges.
- 5.11 SC clarified that they are road bridges but can cater to pedestrians. TLG elaborated that these bridges are required for crossing the railway anyway, so it is about making them as multifunctional as possible. TLG said examples can be found on the National Highways upgrade works on the M25, which are now in place or being constructed.

6. Key environmental changes since NSC

6.1 SC noted that this section of the presentation would be looking at four key areas along the Comberton to Haslingfield route and the proposed environmental changes in these areas since non-statutory consultation.

Bourn Viaduct

6.2 SC first presented on the Bourn Viaduct. The height of the railway has been lowered, and it is also now not as wide. The location has moved about 30m west which has allowed a reduction in the size of the viaduct and a reduced visual impact. The crossing is still compatible with mammal crossings, and the height of viaduct is such that it is suitable for bats to fly under it.

6.3 David Revell (DR) asked if the location of the green bridges was to enable bats to fly under it and if there was a certain window under the viaduct so bats could pass.

6.4 FM confirmed that this was a factor and that guidance typically allows for 4.5m in height and width to allow for bats to cross, but the bridges will be designed to be multifunctional so consider other mammals as well as allowing permeability of views.

6.5 DR asked if EWR Co would be compromising bats by moving the bridge, noting that bats return from foraging areas via a variety of routes rather than just one location.

6.6 FM responded that proposals have been based on bat surveys and bat tracking. This would not just be isolated to one location and EWR Co would look to plant areas along the railway to guide bats.

6.7 DR asked if surveys inform where bats are coming and going from and if they would be forced into using the same route.

6.8 FM confirmed that surveys provide an indication of where bats are coming and going from. TLG added that EWR Co have identified habitat features and monitored the frequency of use to validate that EWR Co understands the right kind of foraging paths or commuting routes. The design team then makes sure there are multifunctional structures in each of those locations to accommodate that onward travel, so rather than forcing a bat to follow an exact route, it's making sure that routes are maintained that are known to be critical.

6.9 DR asked if routes will be available to bats during construction too.

6.10 TLG responded that EWR Co are working with Natural England and these discussions will help to understand how to sequence works to ensure this.

A603 Cambridge Road

6.11 SC then discussed the A603 Cambridge Road, noting that EWR Co are looking at changing the height of the railway here, so it is lower - now only 2.5m above ground level. This would mean no longer having embankments and now putting a road over the railway rather than under it. Long Brook would also be modified and have a better visual outcome.

Harlton Road

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- 6.12 SC then discussed Harlton Road. The height of the railway has been reduced here too and proposing a track being put in on the south side of the railway. This will be behind a hedge and treeline to mitigate visual impacts.
- 6.13 Lisa Redrup (LR) asked SC to clarify what the different colours and lines on the map he showed were referring to and what the lines attached to the attenuation ponds were.
- 6.14 SC clarified that the pink and purple areas are construction compounds and that the lines attached to the attenuation ponds are for drainage.
- 6.15 Isabel Robinson (IR) asked if the dotted red line is in the same location in both designs or whether it has moved, particularly in relation to the end of the village. IR flagged that it has been an issue for house selling lately.
- 6.16 SC clarified that the red line boundary has changed slightly and doesn't impinge on the referenced property as much.
- 6.17 IR asked if a prospective buyer would see this current design.
- 6.18 SC clarified that it would not at this stage as it has not yet been published and is work-in-progress.
- 6.19 DR asked about the location and depth of the cutting and whether this has been considered when reviewing the proposals.
- 6.20 SC responded that he did not have the information available but will take that away as an action (ACTION).

Chapel Hill Tunnel

- 6.21 SC explained that the proposal for Chapel Hill tunnel is now longer - extended from about 700m to over 900m. Part of reasoning for that is to avoid the archaeology that is at the southern end of the tunnel. SC noted that he would feed back on the depth and images of Chapel Hill tunnel too (ACTION).
- 6.22 SC flagged that EWR Co are considering using Barrington quarry to dispose of spoil out of the tunnel, rather than having to rely on HGV traffic movements albeit this is work-in-progress.
- 6.23 SC then pointed out that the access roads to either end of Chapel Hill Tunnel have been simplified.

7. Accessibility Panel

- 7.1 Georgina Taylor (GT) presented on EWR's Accessibility Advisory Panel. EWR Co are focusing on getting inclusive design right from the outset. Members of EWR's Accessibility Advisory Panel had fed back that this focus was not coming out strongly enough during the latest non-statutory consultation, so EWR Co are presenting on this work today.
- 7.2 GT discussed the legal obligations of the Equality Act 2010 and how EWR Co is playing due regard to those obligations. GT also ran through the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).
- 7.3 GT discussed how EWR Co are incorporating inclusive design across all assets and spotlighted the work EWR Co have been doing on stations in relation to accessibility and inclusion.

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7.4 GT ran through EWR's Accessibility Advisory Panel and how the Panel helps to ensure that inclusive design is understood through the lens of lived experience.

8. Discussion, Q&A

8.1 IR asked about connectivity of Harlton to Haslingfield, noting that if access was cut off during construction then this would severely impact the connectivity of Harlton. IR noted that her community would not be able to use the train but will still be disrupted.

8.2 SC responded that EWR Co will be considering how best to maintain access during construction and will take IR's comment away (ACTION). GT elaborated that she would look at the EqIA work in this area and make sure that the right mitigations are put in place during construction. TLG noted that the Scoping Report sets out EWR Co's approach to the EqIA during construction and EWR Co will be very cognisant of impacts on communities.

8.3 PW closed the meeting by reiterating her focus on working closely with the LRGs and to come out to discuss emerging thinking. PW shared EWR Co's commitment to sharing the meeting notes with attendees.

8.4 LR asked if EWR Co are considering any active travel plans in the area.

8.5 SC responded that there are active travel plans and that it would be a good agenda item for a future meeting (ACTION).

9. Summary of Actions

ACTION 1: EWR Co to provide the ELRG group with the rationale for the depth of cuttings at Harlton Road and Chapel Hill Tunnel.

ACTION 2: EWR Co to provide a response to IR regarding how access will be maintained between Harlton and Haslingfield.

ACTION 3: EWR Co to include Active Travel as an agenda item at the next Comberton to Haslingfield ELRG.

Attendees

EWR Co attendees

- Paula Whitworth (PW) – Senior Stakeholder Manager - East

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- Stephen Christian (SC) - Development Programme Manager - Clapham to Hauxton
- Fiona Man (FM) - Environmental Area Manager (East)
- Georgina Taylor (GT) - Accessibility Manager
- Kate Campbell (KC) - Head of External Engagement
- Joe Harris (JH) - Statutory Stakeholder Engagement Team
- Olu Solola (OS) - Development Programme Manager

Parish councillors

- Andrew Martin – Barton Parish Council
- Isabel Robinson – Harlton Parish Council
- David Revell – Haslingfield Parish Council

Local authority councillors

- Lisa Redrup – South Cambridgeshire District Council, Harston & Comberton ward
- Christopher Morris – Cambridgeshire County Council, Hardwick ward
- Peter Fane – Cambridgeshire County Council, Sawston & Shelford ward; South Cambridgeshire District Council, Shelford ward
- Laurence Damary-Homan – Cambridgeshire County Council, Sawston & Shelford ward
- Aidan Van de Weyer – South Cambridgeshire District Council, Barrington ward

Other attendees

- Mark Lunn - Part Time Constituency Liaison Manager for Pippa Heylings, MP

Apologies

- Sharon Erzinclioglu – Eversden Parish Council

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