

2021 Consultation feedback report:

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this report

This report provides the East West Railway Company's (EWR Co) response to the feedback received during the second non-statutory consultation on proposals for the development of East West Rail ('the Project') – a nationally significant railway Project which aims to deliver much needed transport connections for communities between Oxford and Cambridge.

In 2021 we asked what you thought about a series of options on our emerging proposals as well as what you expected for the customer experience and operation of the new railway. Section 1.3 below gives more details about the specific proposals we consulted on.

The consultation ran for 10 weeks, from 31 March 2021 to 9 June 2021, and we received 9,775 responses from local residents, community representatives, statutory bodies and a wide range of other organisations and individuals with an interest in the proposals. Taken together, this feedback raised over 190,000 individual matters for EWR Co to consider across a wide range of topics.

This report provides:

- A summary of the background to EWR including an overview of the proposed Project, why it's needed, the benefits it will provide and how the Project is being delivered.
- An overview of the proposals on which we consulted in 2021.
- A summary of the activities undertaken to publicise and deliver the 2021 consultation, including details of the consultation materials produced.
- A quantitative summary of the feedback received.
- A summary of the information contained in the feedback received during the consultation and our response to the substantive matters raised to demonstrate how these have been considered in the development of the proposed Project.
- Details of the engagement activities which have taken place since the end of the consultation, a summary of the matters raised during these activities and how these have been taken into consideration.
- Details of the anticipated next steps and timescales for the development of the Project.

1.1.1 Structure of the report

The table below provides an overview of what is covered in each chapter. The main contents pages of this report will help you navigate to specific sections of interest in each of the chapters.

Chapter	Description
Chapter 1	Provides an introduction to this report, summarising the proposals we consulted on in 2021, how the consultation was undertaken and presents initial statistics on feedback received.
Chapter 2	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to Project-wide matters and our response.
Chapter 3	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to our plans for the new railway to approach Cambridge from the south and our response.
Chapter 4	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to our preferred route for the section of new railway between Bedford and Cambridge following the 2019 consultation and our response.
Chapter 5	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to our proposals for Section A (Oxford to Bicester) and our response.
Chapter 6	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to our proposals for Section B (Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line) and our response.
Chapter 7	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to our proposals for Section C (Bedford) and our response.
Chapter 8	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to our proposals for Section D (Clapham Green to the Eversdens) and our response.

Chapter 9	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to our proposals for Section E (Harlton to Hauxton) and our response.
Chapter 10	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to our proposals for Section F (The Shelfords to Cambridge) and our response.
Chapter 11	Provides a summary of the main matters raised in the feedback received during the 2021 consultation in relation to the consultation process and our response.
Chapter 12	Provides a summary of the feedback received during ongoing engagement since the close of the 2021 consultation and our response.
Chapter 13	Provides a conclusion to this report and summarises the next steps for the Project.

Table 1: Structure of the Consultation Feedback Report

1.2 Project background

1.2.1 The proposed Project

East West Rail (EWR) is a nationally significant railway Project which aims to deliver much-needed transport connections between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. EWR will unlock economic growth, and make it easier, cheaper and greener to get around the region and beyond by:

- Bringing back into use a section of railway between **Bicester and Bletchley**. Once open in 2025, communities will benefit from regular services running from Oxford to Milton Keynes.
- Refurbishing the existing railway between **Bletchley and Bedford** – known as the Marston Vale Line – and improving how the stations along this part of the route can best serve their communities.
- Building a new rail link between **Bedford and Cambridge** to bring faster and better long-term connectivity to these areas, as well as building two new stations at Tempsford and Cambourne.

In addition:

- An existing section of railway between **Oxford and Bicester** has already been upgraded, and this work was completed in 2016. By making further improvements to existing stations on this section of railway to make sure they are fit for the future, this would increase customer capacity and provide people living, working and visiting the area with fast and reliable train services.

1.2.2 Why the Project is needed

EWR would connect both people and businesses in the towns and villages between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. It would open up new journeys, cutting travel times, easing congestion on local roads, connecting friends and families, and bringing more jobs within reach of local people.

This new railway connection is central to the UK's economic recovery, enabling long term sustainable growth. The region that runs from Oxford through Milton Keynes to Cambridge is the economic artery that makes the UK a global leader in life sciences, technology and innovation which creates jobs and attracts investment for the whole country. It's an area of huge potential – but the area is held back by poor transport connectivity that restricts people's opportunities and constrains growth, risking the UK's long-term international competitiveness.

*The Economist*¹ singled out the region as the top priority for investment in the UK. Capitalising on its world-leading universities, the region played a pivotal role in creating the world's first Covid-19 vaccine. It's also pioneering new technologies in energy, aerospace and automotive, as well as the Artificial Intelligence, Agri-Tech and Fin-Tech industries. The area has the potential to turbocharge the UK economy, adding £100+ billion extra GVA by 2050² and to secure the UK's future as a world leader in science and technology. Its track record also means it's a source of resilience for the UK economy, making the country better able to withstand economic shocks when they occur.

Oxford, Cambridge and Milton Keynes have delivered impressive growth in recent years³, exceeding most forecasts. However, whilst they are top performers on both growth and productivity by UK standards, there remains significant potential across the region yet to be unleashed.

We're developing a formal Business Case in line with Government guidance which will present the evidence that has shaped the Strategic Case for the railway. The business case will be completed after the submission of the Development Consent Order, which is standard practice for large infrastructure projects.

While the Business Case is still in development, our work to date has emphasised how the case for EWR is not focused solely on Oxford and Cambridge, but that the areas in between are key to delivering the Government's aspirations for economic growth too. Milton Keynes, for example, is a key location for new business formation, has strengths in logistics and finance, and is in the top eight cities for start-ups in the country⁴, top 11 for patent applications and top five for concentration of high tech and digital SMEs⁵. Bedford has attractive property prices⁶ and a highly educated labour force, though it also suffers from pockets of deprivation⁷. Bedford Borough Council has plans to redevelop the town centre⁸, making the area more attractive to businesses and workers.

¹ Zanny Milton Beddoes (Editor of The Economist) speaking on: BBC (2022). How to Boost Britain's Economic Growth. Best of Today. Radio 4

² When in 2021 values uplifted from £85bn (2011 prices) presented in the NIC report using the HMT GDP deflator (from Jan 23 TAG Databook). National Infrastructure Commission (2017). Partnering for Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc. <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Partnering-for-Prosperity.pdf>

³ Government's OxCam Ambition:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799993/OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

⁴ 66.43 start-ups per 100,000 people in 2020. Centre for Cities (2020). Cities Data Tool. Business Start-ups and Closures (per 10,000 population) 2020. ONS, Business Demography. ONS, Population Estimates. <https://www.centreforcities.org/data-tool>.

⁵ Bidwells (2022). Radical Capital. Supercharge the Arc.

⁶ Jan 23 average property price approximately £50k higher than U.K. Although, it is about average for the East of England region.

<https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/browse?from=2022-01-01&location=http%3A%2F%2Flandregistry.data.gov.uk%2Fid%2Fregion%2Fbedford&to=2023-01-01&lang=en>

⁷ Most LSOAs of Bedford rank above a "7" in the deprivation index (not very deprived) – however, some areas are 2s and 3s. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

⁸ Bedford Masterplan Report 2018

https://gat04-live-1517c8a4486c41609369c68f30c8-aa81074.divio-media.org/Corby/core-documents/nr_55.pdf

As it stands, the future growth of Oxford and Cambridge is constrained, and businesses need access to a wider pool of talent and the space to expand.

A key reason for the constraint is that journeys from places such as Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambourne to Oxford and Cambridge can take longer than they should because of congested roads and a lack of public transport.

Without good connectivity, the economic growth that is happening in Oxford, Cambridge and Milton Keynes isn't able to spread across the region, whether that is through people being unable to commute, or businesses being unable to expand to new locations.

EW R is needed because it would unlock constraints in Oxford and Cambridge, as well as open opportunities and spread prosperity elsewhere along the line of route.

1.2.3 The benefits

The EWR Project is designed to deliver positive outcomes for people, communities, businesses, the environment and the UK economy. In summary, EWR would:

- **Cut travel times and bring more jobs within reach of local people**
East to west public transport is currently inadequate. For instance, it can take nearly an hour to travel nine miles by car from Cambourne to the centre of Cambridge in the morning rush hour, or around 50 minutes by bus. Travelling with EWR would reduce this to 15 minutes. The off peak journey from Bedford to Cambridge would be reduced from an approximate 75 minute journey by car or 90 minutes by bus, to 35 minutes by train. EWR would considerably expand the number of people within commuting distance of high-quality jobs in the region. The region supports over three million jobs⁹ overall and by joining up the currently siloed individual jobs markets, whether in logistics in Milton Keynes, agri-tech in Central Bedfordshire, or life sciences in Oxford and Cambridge, EWR will make all these jobs more easily accessible for everyone living in the region.
- **Open up new areas for businesses to grow**
Growth in Oxford and Cambridge is constrained. Connecting them with the fast growing and less constrained towns and cities in between, such as Milton Keynes and Bedford, would make these areas more appealing to people who want to start and grow all types of businesses. It would help attract and retain the best talent in the region and bring businesses closer to their supply chains, workers, research sectors and other sectors, creating wealth and jobs for an area of over 3.95 million people¹⁰.
- **Improve quality of life**
Affordable, reliable and faster public transport would mean less time spent in traffic

⁹ NIC: Partnering for Prosperity (2017)
<https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Partnering-for-Prosperity.pdf>

¹⁰ Census 2021 data
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwalescensus2021>

and less air pollution resulting from congestion, improving quality of life for local people. It would also mean people can choose to live in a more affordable area within an easy commute, rather than having to pay premium house prices that often involve long commutes. This is particularly important for key workers. Housing costs in Oxford and Cambridge are the highest in the country outside London, which makes it more difficult for businesses to attract talent. In fact, in 2022, house prices in Cambridge peaked at 13.3 times the local average earnings, higher than London's 12.5 and the national average of 8.13¹¹. The region does have more affordable areas, such as Bedford and Milton Keynes, but in order for people to be able to take advantage of this, connectivity must be improved.

- **Ease congestion**

By offering rail travel as an alternative, EWR would help to ease traffic on local roads. It would also give people more choice, offering more sustainable ways to travel and opportunities to relax or work while travelling.

- **Open up new journeys**

EWR would offer new journeys to local communities because of its key intersections with most of the UK's main rail lines – including the East Coast Main Line, Midland Main Line, West Anglia Main Line and West Coast Main Line. With easy interchange, people from across the route could get to international airports at Luton and Stansted, or visit cities across the UK such as Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Derby and Leeds, and enjoy multiple connections into London.

- **Provide a greener way to travel**

Travelling by rail is more environmentally friendly than travelling by road. EWR would help take cars and lorries off local roads, resulting in cleaner air, safer roads and less congestion. EWR would be a new, environmentally sustainable way to travel across the region, and the aim is to become a net zero carbon railway.

- **Unlock inward investment locally, and for the benefit of the whole UK**

The region already adds more than £110billion¹² to the UK's economy every year. Both Oxford and Cambridge are in the top 25 cities around the world for venture capital investment¹³. Research¹⁴ ¹⁵ carried out in this part of the UK is creating high value jobs elsewhere in the country too. As EWR unlocks the constraints on growth, and enables world leading sectors to expand, that would attract increased investment locally, which would be felt not just in Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge but across the country too.

- **Provide employment**

Delivering the line between Oxford and Bletchley/Milton Keynes is currently employing around 1,000 people and supports a further 500 in the wider supply chain,

¹¹ ONS - Housing affordability

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales/2022#housing-affordability-in-england-and-in-wales>

¹² Office for National Statistics (2021). Regional gross domestic product: Enterprise regions. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) chained volume measures (CVM) annual growth rates.

¹³ Venture capital funding by city 2019 [PowerPoint Presentation \(dealroom.co\)](#)

¹⁴ [Oxford University's economic impact](#) | [University of Oxford](#)

¹⁵ [Cambridge University's economic impact](#)

contributing an estimated £1.1billion into the local economy in 2021/22. For later stages of the EWR, this could grow to over 8,000 jobs.

1.2.4 How the Project is being delivered

In 2018, the Department for Transport (DfT) created the EWR Co to develop the EWR Project and plan a railway with customers and communities at its core.

Plans were developed by the DfT, Network Rail and the East West Rail Alliance (an organisation made up of Network Rail, Atkins, Laing O'Rourke and VolkerRail) to construct the section of EWR between Bicester and Bletchley. Construction on this section began in 2021 and it's anticipated that trains will begin running on this section of the line in 2025.

Our job at EWR Co is to bring fresh thinking to the next stages of the Project. We're responsible for planning the section of EWR between Bletchley and Cambridge and are taking a route-wide look all the way from Oxford to Cambridge and beyond. We're also responsible for overseeing the East West Rail Alliance as it continues to deliver work between Bicester and Bletchley.

Trains continue to run on the section of the line between Oxford and Bicester, though further work is required to enable EWR services to run alongside those already in place. Services will be introduced in three connection stages:

- **Connection Stage 1 (CS1):** EWR services will run from Oxford to Bletchley/Milton Keynes.
- **Connection Stage 2 (CS2):** Building on the work completed in Connection Stage 1, EWR services would then extend from Oxford to Bedford.
- **Connection Stage 3 (CS3):** This stage completes the full EWR connection and would see services run from Oxford to Cambridge via Bletchley and Bedford.

1.2.5 The story so far

1.2.5.1 Oxford to Bicester, Bletchley and Bedford

In 2012, the Government authorised major improvements to the railway and local stations between Oxford and Bicester under a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo). This work was completed in 2016 and Chiltern Railways then began running services from Oxford to London via Bicester.

In 2018, Network Rail applied for powers to develop the Bicester to Milton Keynes and Bedford section of the Project. In 2020 the Government granted a further TWAo to authorise the construction, operation and maintenance of the necessary infrastructure to run extra services between Oxford and Bedford. In 2021 construction started on the section between Bicester and Bletchley. This work is being delivered by the East West Rail Alliance.

Further work is required on the Oxford to Bicester and Bletchley to Bedford lines to enable EWR services to run from Oxford to Bedford (CS2). This work forms part of our application for development consent and was included as part of our 2021 non-statutory consultation.

1.2.5.2 Bedford to Cambridge

To enable services to run from Oxford to Cambridge via Bletchley and Bedford (CS3) a new railway line is required to create a connection between Bedford and Cambridge.

In 2019 we asked for your comments on five proposed route options between Bedford and Cambridge – our first non-statutory consultation. Over 3,500 people attended our consultation events and around 7,000 people responded to our proposals.

A summary of these responses and how we've taken your feedback into account is in our Public Feedback Report – 2019 Route Option Consultation, which you can find on our website www.eastwestrail.co.uk.

Feedback from communities and stakeholders was central to our decision to identify Route Option E as the preferred option. This route – that links existing stations in Bedford and Cambridge with communities in Cambourne and the area north of Sandy, south of St Neots – was ranked as the highest performing on four of our five key assessment criteria by respondents. This included benefits for transport users and consideration of environmental impacts and wider community and economic opportunities (the most important things for us to take into account, as told to us by you).

After the close of the 2019 consultation and the announcement of the preferred route option on 30 January 2020, our team of engineers, designers, environmental scientists and other specialists began work to identify options for the best alignment for the new railway between Bedford and Cambridge, with a focus on the Route Option E area.

1.2.5.3 The 2021 non-statutory consultation

In March 2021 we launched our second non-statutory consultation – the feedback from which is the focus of this report. Our 2021 consultation focused on two aspects of our proposals:

- The customer experience and operation of the railway including specific questions about train services, station experience, on-train experience, interaction with railway staff and customer information.
- The emerging proposals and options for the infrastructure development required to deliver the new railway including questions related to route alignment options, station locations and level crossings. The questions were split into six geographical sections covering our proposals for the route between Oxford and Cambridge.

Further details on the proposals on which we consulted can be found in the next section of this report.

1.3 Second non-statutory consultation (NSC2)

On 31 March 2021 we launched our second non-statutory consultation. This ran for 10 weeks, closing on 9 June 2021.

This section of the report provides a summary of what we consulted on and how the consultation was delivered.

1.3.1 What we consulted on

So that we can offer a better travel experience, we asked what people wanted from their train travel for business and how they might use future services for work, to visit friends or family, or to get to leisure destinations.

To support this, the consultation focused on two main themes:

- The customer experience and operation of the railway including specific questions about train services, station experience, on-train experience, interaction with railway staff and customer information.
- The emerging proposals and options for the infrastructure development required to deliver the new railway including questions related to route alignment options, station locations and level crossings. The questions were split into six geographical sections:
 - Section A: Oxford to Bicester – Improvements to the existing railway and stations.
 - Section B: Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line – Improvements to the existing infrastructure, stations, and level crossings.
 - Section C: Bedford – Improvements to the existing railway, a new section of railway and improvements to stations at Bedford and Bedford St Johns.
 - Section D: Clapham Green to The Eversdens – Construction of a new railway and new stations.
 - Section E: Harlton to Hauxton – Construction of a new railway and a new railway junction.
 - Section F: The Shelfords to Cambridge Station – Improvements to existing railway and Cambridge Station.

We also asked for comments about the approach to Cambridge, inviting feedback on whether we were right to have favoured Route Option E and approaching Cambridge from the south as we confirmed after the 2019 consultation. The decision to enter Cambridge from the south was described in the [Preferred Route Option Report](#), published in January 2020, following a public consultation in 2019.

This Consultation Feedback Report sets out what people told us about our emerging proposals for the railway between Oxford and Cambridge, and how we have considered this

in making our route announcement. The route announcement confirms the preferred route alignment for the new railway between Bedford and Cambridge, as well as confirming our proposals for infrastructure improvements between Oxford and Bedford. We will be responding to the feedback we received on customer experience and the operation of the railway - setting out what people have told us and how we have considered this – at a later stage and within a separate document. This will explain in further detail our vision for the railway and the service that people should expect, and will set out how feedback from our consultation has influenced this.

1.3.1.1 Approach to Cambridge

Following identification of Route Option E as our preferred route option, we began work to identify the best alignment for the new railway between Bedford and Cambridge, with a focus on the Route Option E area. Because alignments closer to north Cambridge were being considered, we looked again at whether we were right to have favoured Route Option E and approaching Cambridge from the south as confirmed after the 2019 consultation. In particular, we reviewed our previous assessment that concluded approaching from the south was the better option taking account of a station north of Cambourne outside of Route E to see if we'd have made a different decision. We concluded that the advantages of approaching Cambridge from the south continued to support this conclusion and that a number of challenges remain for a northern approach.

In the consultation document, we outlined our assessment and explained why the advantages of approaching Cambridge from the south continued to support our earlier conclusion. Further details can be found in [Appendix F of the Technical Report](#) that was issued at the time of the consultation.

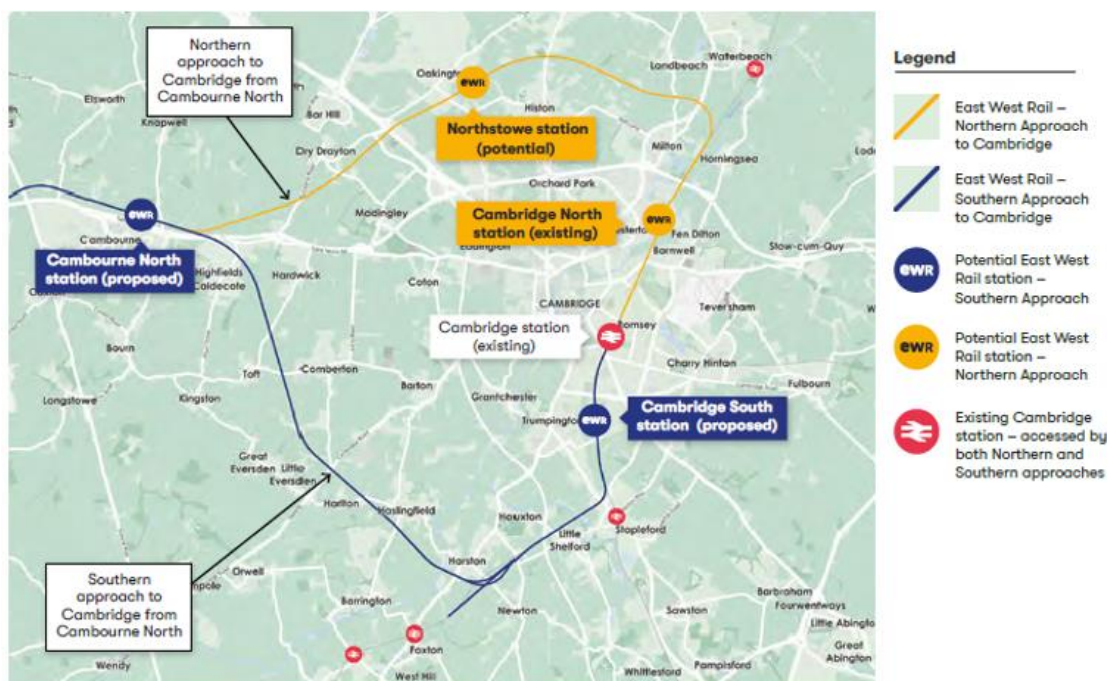


Figure 1: Map of approach to Cambridge

1.3.1.2 Proposed infrastructure development

The map below shows the six geographical areas that we focused on when we developed our proposals for the railway from Oxford to Cambridge.

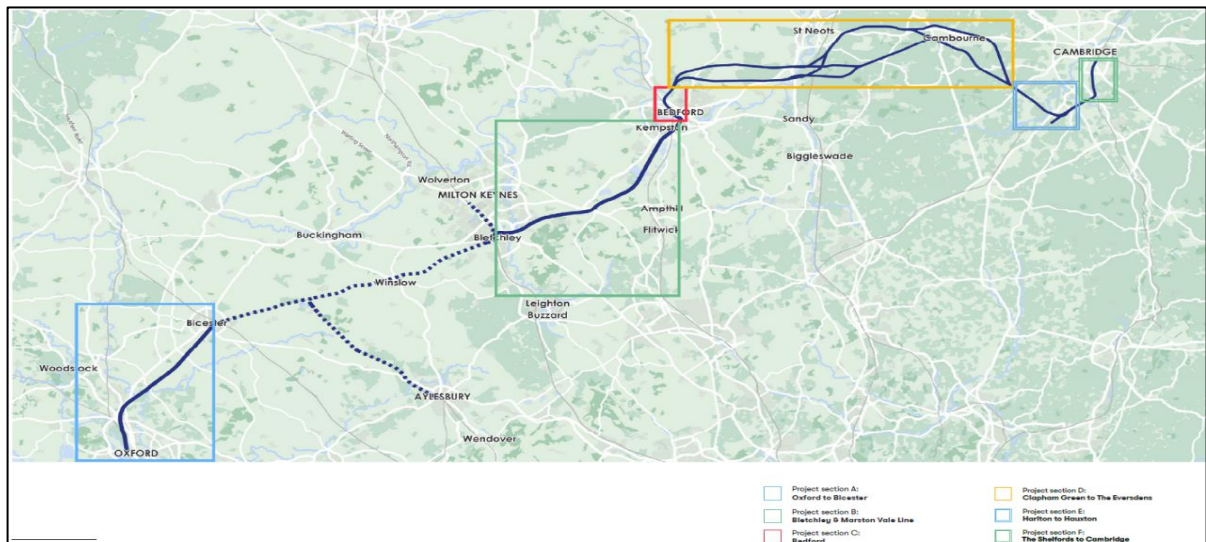


Figure 2: Plan showing the six sections of the EWR route that we consulted on

1.3.1.3 Section A: Oxford to Bicester - Improvements to the existing railway and stations

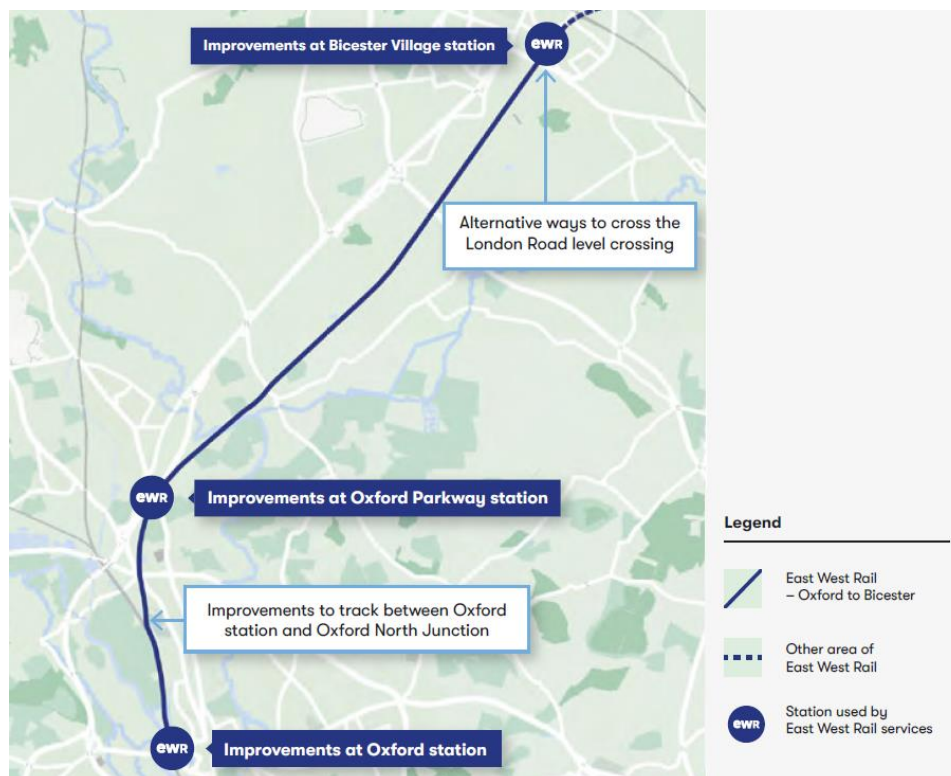


Figure 3: Section A – Oxford to Bicester

This section of the consultation invited feedback on:

- Proposed improvements at Oxford, Oxford Parkway and Bicester Village stations to accommodate more trains and more customers.
- Proposals for one or more additional platforms at Oxford Station.
- Improvements to the track in the Oxford area to increase capacity for EWR services to approach Oxford.
- Alternative ways for vehicles and pedestrians to cross the railway at London Road in Bicester to improve safety, enable a more reliable train service and reduce traffic disruption.

1.3.1.4 Section B: Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line – Improvements to the existing infrastructure, stations, and level crossings



Figure 4: Section B - Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line

This section set out our plans for improvements to the railway between Bletchley and Bedford, known as the Marston Vale Line (MVL). It included our proposals for providing a faster, more frequent and reliable service, specifically seeking feedback in relation to:

- Train services and stations on the MVL.
- Bletchley station.
- Additional track at Fenny Stratford.
- Level crossings on the MVL.
- How work to upgrade the MVL would be delivered.

1.3.1.5 Section C: Bedford – Improvements to the existing railway, a new section of railway, and improvements to stations at Bedford and Bedford St Johns

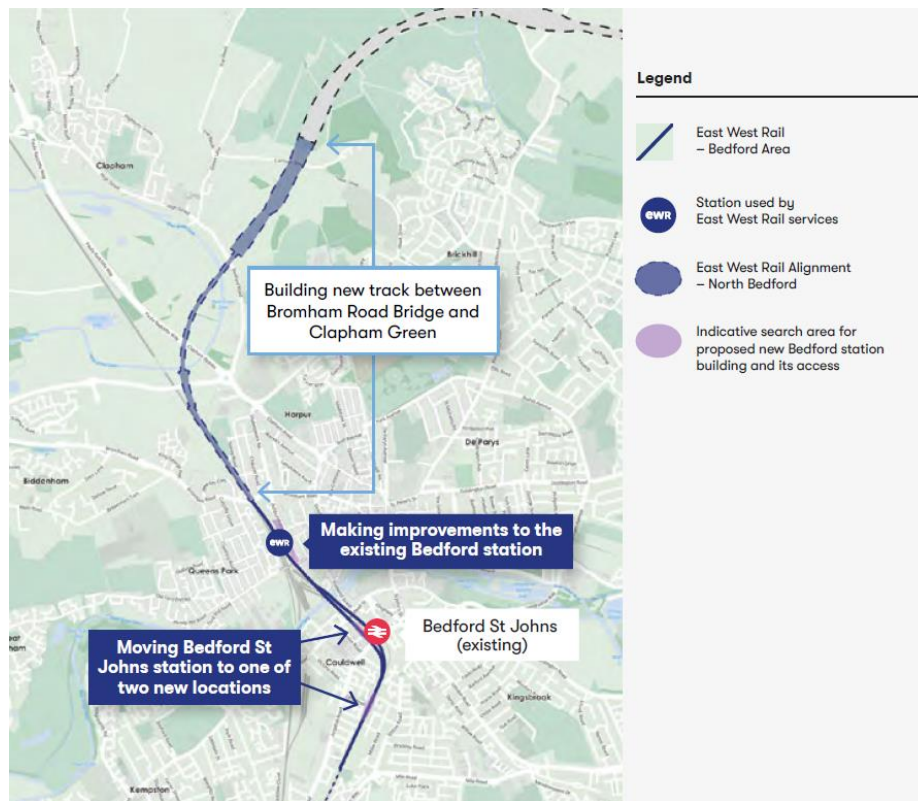


Figure 5: Section C - Bedford

In relation to our proposals around Bedford we invited feedback on:

- Bedford St Johns station: the location of a new Bedford St Johns station.
- Bedford station: demolition of the existing station and construction of a new one, to help unlock the potential for regeneration in this area, and building new tracks north of the station to Bromham Road Bridge.
- North Bedford: building new track in between Bromham Road Bridge and Clapham Green, creating the new connection to Cambridge.

1.3.1.6 Section D: Clapham Green to The Eversdens – Construction of a new railway and new stations

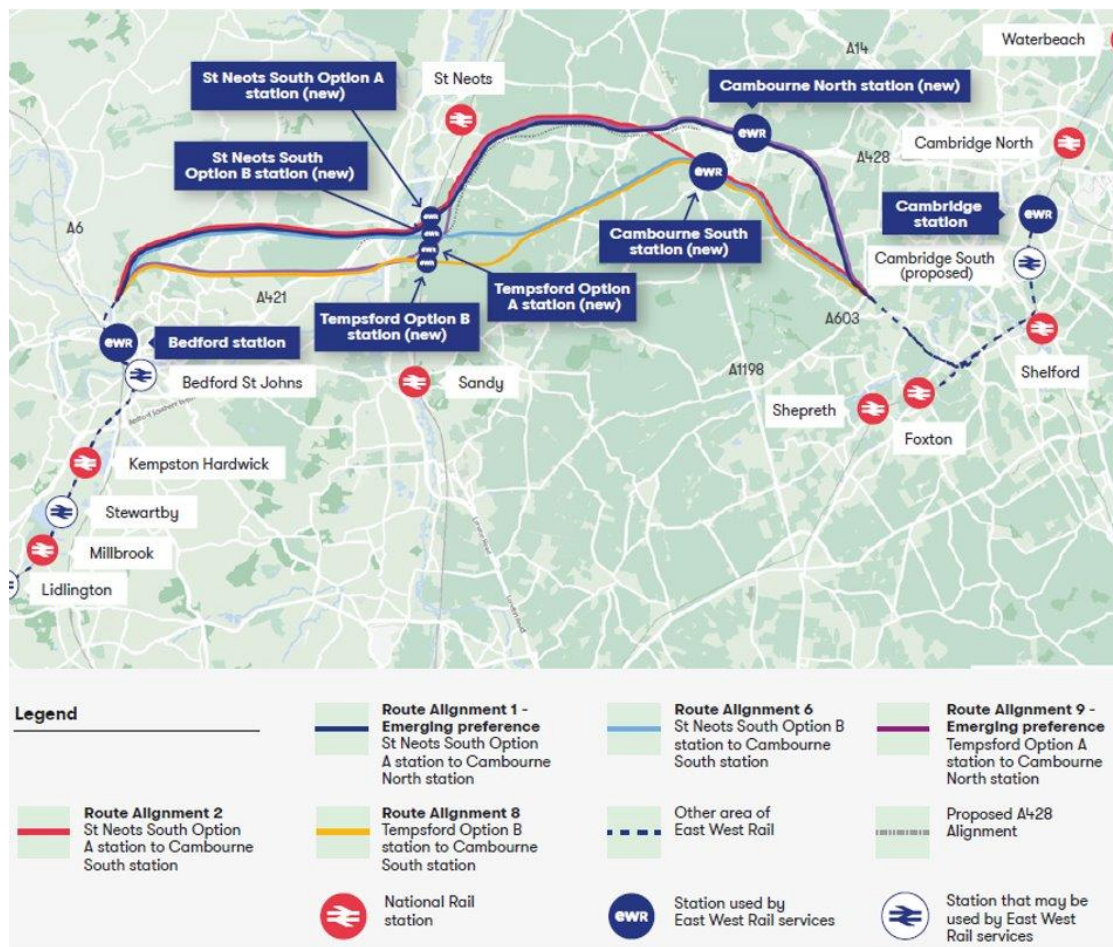


Figure 6: Section D - Clapham Green to The Eversdens

This section invited feedback on five proposed route alignment options for the new railway required to connect Bedford to Cambridge, which includes the area between Clapham Green, north of Bedford, to The Eversdens, southeast of Cambourne.

We also asked for people's preferences in relation to:

- The development of a new station near Tempsford or St Neots, which could connect EWR with the East Coast Main Line.
- A new station either north or south of Cambourne.

1.3.1.7 Section E: Harlton to Hauxton – New railway and a new railway junction

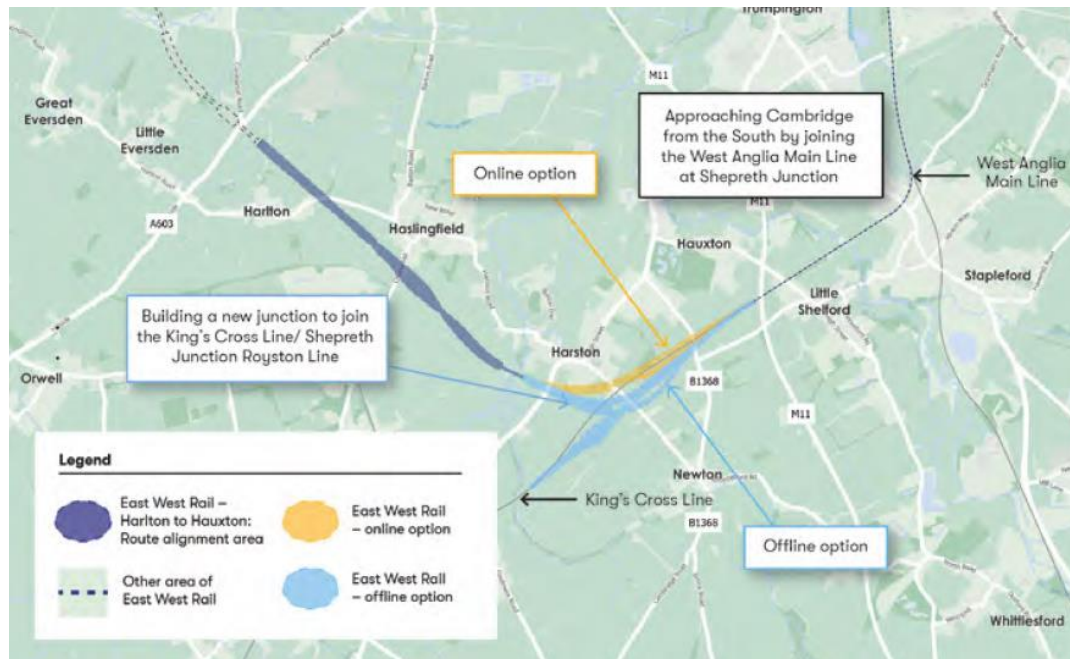


Figure 7: Section E - Harlton to Hauxton

Section E looked at the new railway infrastructure required to the southwest of Cambridge to join the new railway to the existing Royston – Shepreth Branch Junction line (the King's Cross line), which then connects to the West Anglia Main Line at the Shepreth Branch Junction to the north east. We invited feedback on the design of a new railway junction near Harston and Hauxton.

1.3.1.8 Section F: The Shelfords to Cambridge station – Improvements to existing railway and Cambridge Station



Figure 8: The Shelfords to Cambridge station

This section focused on the part of the West Anglia Main Line that EWR services would use to get from the new Hauxton Junction to Cambridge Station. We invited feedback on proposals related to:

- Options for the Hauxton Road level crossing.
- Modifications to Shepreth Branch Junction.
- The addition of two extra tracks to the existing railway from Shepreth Branch Junction to Addenbrooke's Road bridge.
- Increasing the existing two/three tracks between Long Road Sixth Form College and Cambridge station to a four-track railway.
- Adding platforms to Cambridge station and the opportunity to stop at Network Rail's proposed Cambridge South station.

1.3.2 How we delivered the 2021 consultation

The 2021 non-statutory consultation ran from 31 March 2021 to 9 June 2021. Throughout this ten-week period local residents, interest groups, local authorities and a range of other organisations attended events, asked questions and responded to our proposals.

We held more than 100 online meetings (when face-to-face meetings were not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions). There were 51,000 visits to the EWR Co website, 199,000 page views and 75,000 documents were downloaded.

Early and in-depth consultation helps us develop better, more informed plans for the new railway. Although this was a non-statutory consultation, we followed the principles for statutory consultation required for Development Consent Order (DCO) schemes under the

Planning Act 2008. More information can be found on legislation and process on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>.

1.3.2.1 Public consultation during the COVID-19 pandemic

When government regulations made in-person meetings impossible, we identified a range of alternative ways in which we could engage with local communities and other interested parties remotely.

We came up with a range of new ways to reach people and found that through digital technology, we could provide a level of direct engagement between our team and more people than ever before via:

- Online meetings and 'live chat' sessions to give people access to our experts.
- Virtual consultation rooms designed to replicate in-person public information events.
- Making it easier and quicker to order printed versions of the consultation documents through our website, via email, our Freepost address or by phone.
- Issuing packages of consultation documents to all elected representatives across the route.

1.3.3 Who we consulted

The consultation was open to anyone with an interest in our proposals, with a particular focus on:

- Members of the public.
- Prospective statutory consultees.
- Owner-occupiers of land or property potentially directly affected by our proposals.
- Other organisations and groups likely to have an interest in our proposals.

1.3.3.1 Members of the public

We identified a consultation zone for communities we felt were most likely to be affected by our proposals or have an interest in the Project. The zone was based on a 2km buffer from the centreline of each option we were consulting on, adapted to follow established geographical features or boundaries where appropriate, such as to avoid bisecting villages.

A summary of the consultation document was delivered to more than 270,000 homes and businesses in this zone along the EWR route, as shown on the plan below.

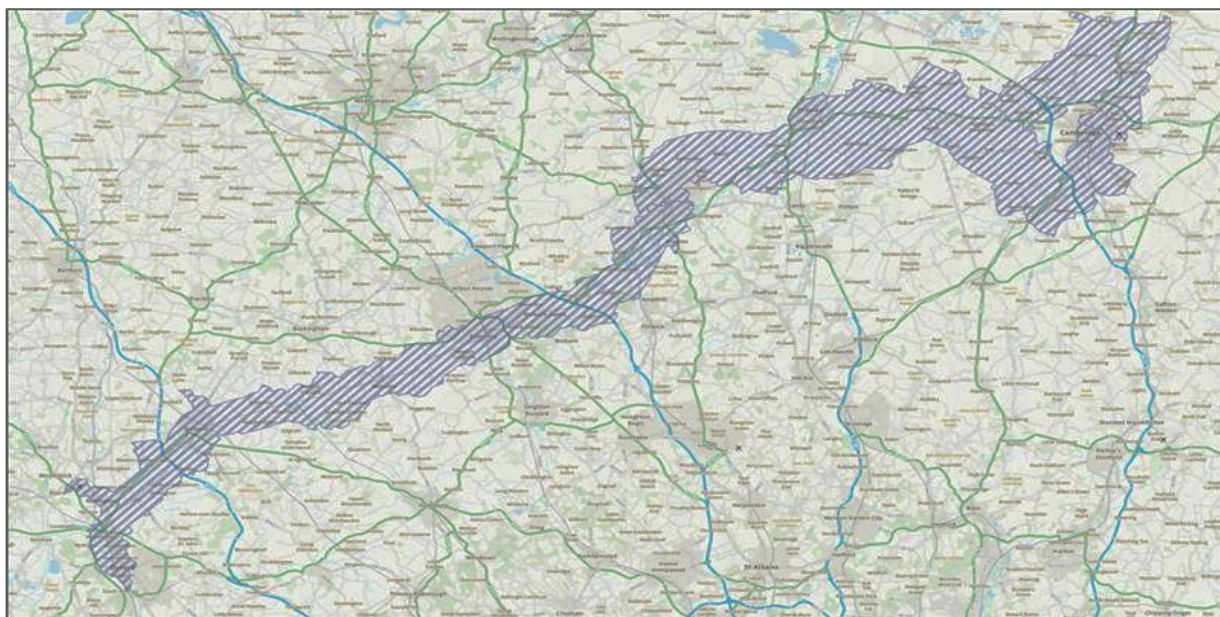


Figure 9: Area in which a copy of the consultation summary document was delivered to all properties

1.3.3.2 Prospective statutory consultees

This consultation was non-statutory, but we wanted to engage with prospective statutory consultees – likely to be involved in the future statutory consultation such as local authorities, parish councils, and national environmental, historical and ecological bodies.

These stakeholders were notified about our proposals, and we provided them with information on how to get involved via email. We also held various meetings with statutory bodies, so that we could brief them on our proposals and encourage them to submit their feedback during the consultation period.

Recognising the important role parish councils play in local communities, all parish councils along the proposed route between Oxford and Cambridge received a pack of information by post, which included:

- Summary consultation document.
- Full consultation document.
- Technical report and appendices.
- A 'You Said, We Did' report to summarise how our proposals have developed in response to feedback received during the 2019 consultation.
- Copies of the feedback form.
- A suite of large A1-size maps, relevant to their geographic location.

1.3.3.3 Directly affected land/property owners

Immediately prior to the start of the consultation we sent an information pack to all of the owner-occupiers of land/property potentially directly affected by our proposals. The information pack included:

- A tailored cover letter to clearly identify that the Project may require land or property in their ownership and encouraging the recipient to contact the EWR team to discuss the implications of our proposals and so we could respond to any questions.
- A plan showing the potential impact of our proposals on the individual's land/property.
- A briefing note to respond to likely immediate questions on compensation, timing, payment of agent fees, where to find further information and how to get involved in the consultation.

Follow-up letters were also issued in the final weeks of the consultation to encourage those who had not at that time got in touch to engage with the Project team.

At the same time as the consultation on the infrastructure proposals, a separate consultation was run in parallel on a proposed scheme to support those who need to sell their property but have difficulty doing so at a fair market rate because of the uncertainty caused by our proposals. Further information on this consultation can be found on [our website](#).

1.3.3.4 Other organisations and interest groups

We identified a list of other organisations and groups who may have an interest in the Project. This included interest groups such as community organisations and transport user associations. These groups were also sent a letter at the launch of the consultation providing information about how to get involved.

1.3.4 **Consultation materials**

At the start of the consultation, we published a number of documents to set out the proposals that we were consulting on and to give more information to help people respond to our developing plans.

1.3.4.1 Consultation documents

Our core consultation documents comprised of:

- The main consultation document.
- A detailed technical report to support the consultation document.
- A summary version of the consultation document.
- A feedback form.

We made sure that all documents were available to view or download on our website, and hard copies could be ordered online or requested by email or phone. People could also request documents in large print, braille or in different languages if necessary.

1.3.4.2 Maps

The infrastructure proposals included in the consultation covered six geographical areas ('sections') between Oxford and Cambridge. To provide more information about the plans, and to support the information in the consultation documents, we published more than 100 static maps. These maps could be viewed or downloaded from our website and were designed to help show our emerging concepts and proposals for each section of the route. We also sent packs of printed A1 maps to each parish council.

The maps were contained within the consultation document and technical appendices, and we also published them separately so that they could be downloaded individually and viewed at a larger scale.

We also made sure that seven interactive maps offering different layers of detail were available on our website, for the following key sections of the consultation:

- Oxford to Bicester.
- Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line.
- Bedford.
- Clapham Green to the Eversdens.
- Harlton to Hauxton.
- The Shelfords to Cambridge.
- The approach to Cambridge.

We wanted users to be able to personalise the map based on their areas of interest, by turning on/off various proposals and environmental features in the area, so that people could review multiple proposals at the same time. The maps also included environmental and heritage datasets such as the locations of listed buildings, special areas of conservation and priority habitats.

1.3.4.3 Supporting materials

We developed a series of supporting materials to provide further information and responded to common topics and questions related to our proposals. The materials we produced included:

- A 'You Said, We Did' report to summarise how our proposals have developed in response to your feedback from the 2019 consultation.
- Engineering long section drawings for the proposed alignments for the new railway between Clapham Green and the Eversdens.
- A series of supporting factsheets to provide more information on key topics, such as our approach to the environment and freight.

1.3.5 Building awareness of the consultation

We encouraged people to participate in the 2021 consultation through activities designed to raise awareness of the many engagement opportunities. These included online events, live chats and virtual consultation rooms.

We also directed people to the consultation materials, highlighted ways in which people could respond to the consultation and provided clear notification of the closing date of the consultation.

1.3.5.1 Local media advertising

We placed more than 300 advertisements in local media between Oxford and Cambridge. These included:

- 56 adverts in local print media.
- Adverts on local radio stations, which led to 900 mentions of the consultation being broadcast on radio stations along the route.

We also ran targeted online adverts on a range of websites and mobile apps, aimed at people in postcodes along the route. Using the Google Ads platform, search campaigns and display campaigns led to 14,670 clicks to the consultation page of our website from a range of websites and apps, including QR reader tools and social channels.

1.3.5.2 News and media outlets

We briefed news and media outlets between Oxford and Cambridge via a press release to help promote the consultation. This led to more than 430 pieces of editorial coverage about the consultation being published, including 314 print and online articles and 118 broadcast pieces in local, regional and trade media.

There were a number of interviews with local and regional broadcast outlets – including a dedicated feature on BBC 1 Look East – as well as published articles in local and regional media, and the rail and transport trade press.

1.3.5.3 Social media

The consultation sparked extensive conversations on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. This included more than 23,900 tweets, which led to more than 4,200 interactions and around five million impressions.¹⁶

¹⁶ Interactions are where someone clicks anywhere on the post, including retweets, replies, follows, likes, links, cards, hashtags, embedded media, username, profile photo, or post expansion; impressions refer to the number of times content about the Project was displayed.

1.3.5.4 At-station advertising

An outdoor advertising campaign was run at key stations along the route. This included large adverts placed at or near:

- Oxford station.
- Bicester Village station.
- Bletchley station.
- Milton Keynes Central station.
- Bedford station.
- Cambridge station.

1.3.5.5 EWR Co website

At the start of the consultation a page was added to our website to provide information on the consultation, including:

- An introduction to the consultation.
- Viewable and downloadable copies of all of the consultation documents and supporting materials, plus a form via which hard copies could be ordered.
- Details of public webinar and live chat events – with details on how to join a session.
- An online feedback form and details of the email and Freepost response channels.
- The closing date for the consultation.
- The email address and phone number that people could use to contact our team with any questions.

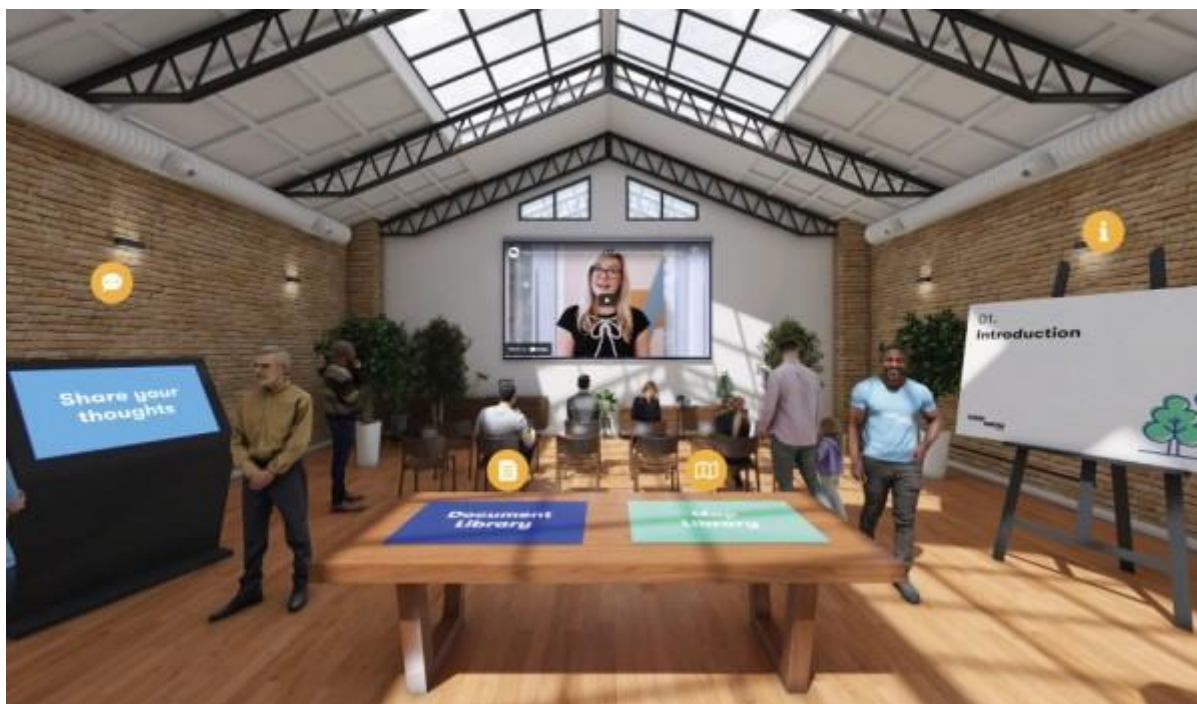


Figure 10: Screen shot from one of the seven virtual consultation rooms

At the outset of the consultation, we launched seven virtual consultation rooms to provide information about the proposals, partly to replicate the feel of in-person public consultation events. These rooms – that could be accessed via our website – presented information on the proposals through virtual exhibition boards, videos and maps. We also provided links to the consultation documents and an online feedback form. During the consultation period there were over 4,800 visits to the virtual rooms.

1.3.5.6 Online events: public webinars and live chat sessions

We organised 34 online public events during the ten-week consultation period. They were open to all and held during the daytime, evening, and at weekends – so that they were available to as many people as possible.

We held a total of 18 public webinars, that focused on both customer experience and railway operations and the six geographical sections where we're proposing infrastructure development. Senior members of our team led these sessions, and they presented details of the proposals before holding a Q&A session based on common questions received via the online chat function.

There were also 16 live chat sessions, where we invited people to engage directly with our technical experts – as you would at a face-to-face event – to ask questions on any aspect of the Project and receive responses.

1.3.5.7 Briefings for elected representatives

We held 64 online, interactive meetings with local MPs, councillors, and parish councils where senior members of our team presented relevant aspects of the Project and responded to questions asked by the elected representatives.

1.3.5.8 Industry and business group events

We held 32 online meetings with a range of other stakeholders during the consultation, including rail industry groups, active travel representatives and business groups. These sessions were led by senior members of our team and included a short presentation followed by an open Q&A session.

1.3.5.9 Engagement with potentially directly affected land/property owners

During the consultation we held online meetings or telephone conversations with 207 potentially directly affected land/property owner-occupiers and their agents or advisors.

Senior members of our land team led these sessions, to help explain the potential implications of our proposals, discuss the next steps in the Project's development and answer any questions.

A specific email address and phone line was set up and provided to potentially directly affected land/property owner-occupiers to enable them to contact our land team directly to ask questions relevant to their property.

1.3.6 How people could provide feedback

We asked for responses to the consultation through a variety of channels. These included:

- Online, via the response form on the consultation page of our website and the virtual consultation rooms.
- By email, to: consultation@eastwestrail.co.uk.
- By post, to: Freepost EAST WEST RAIL.

Our consultation team responded to more than 3,500 questions during the consultation. They monitored and responded to any questions received via the contact@eastwestrail.co.uk email address and the EWR Co helpline number (0330 134 0067).

1.4 Feedback received

This section of the report provides a quantitative summary of the feedback received. We first provide an overview of the total number of responses received and then summarise who and where these came from. We then set out how many responses were received to each of the questions asked in the feedback form for the 2021 consultation.

The final part of this section provides details of how we reviewed and took into consideration the comments contained in every response received.

1.4.1 Volume of feedback received

A total of 9,775 responses were received to the 2021 consultation.

Response method	Number of responses
Online consultation response form	6,479
Emails	2,285
Hardcopy letters	580
Hardcopy response form	431
Total	9,775

Table 2: Number of responses by channel

1.4.2 Respondent demographics

We asked people to provide details about themselves, and the capacity in which they were responding, to give more context to their feedback. Most people who responded to our consultation did so in an individual capacity.

Out of the 6,654 people who provided information on the capacity in which they were responding, 90.2% told us they were responding as a local resident.

Out of the remaining 9.8%:

- 2.8% said they were responding as a land or property owners.
- 1.9% said 'other'.
- 1.4% said they were a local business owner.
- 1.2% said they were a visitor to the area.
- 0.9% said they were a commuter to the area.
- 0.7% said they were an elected representative.
- 0.4% said they were a future resident.
- 0.3% said they were a local authority.
- 0.1% said they were a statutory body.

1.4.3 Geographical distribution of responses

Of all those who responded, 7,090 provided a postcode – the maps below show the geographical spread of respondents. This map is not an exhaustive representation of the distribution of respondents to the consultation as 2,685 people didn't provide a postcode as part of their response.

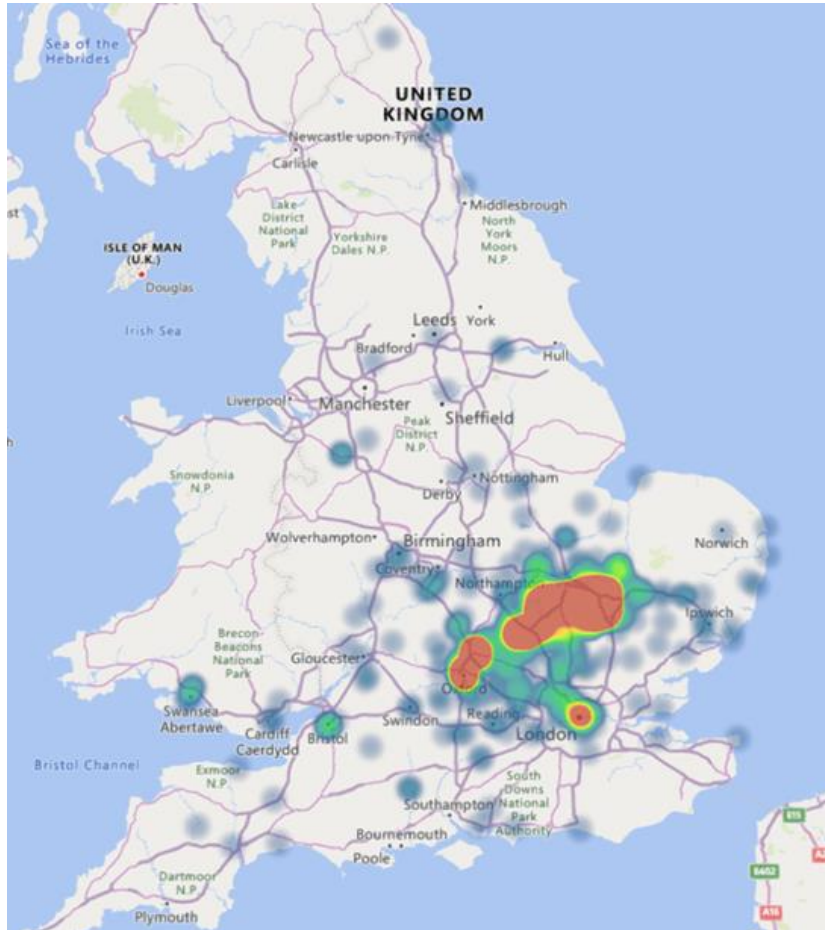


Figure 11: Geographical distribution of all responses with a valid UK postcode

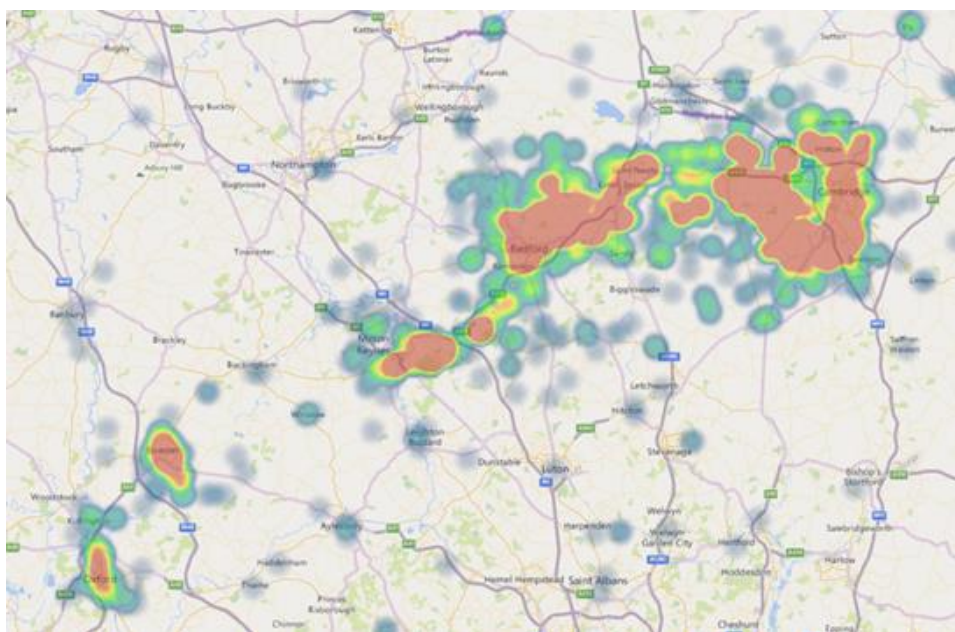


Figure 12: Geographical distribution of all responses with a valid UK postcode (Oxford to Cambridge)

1.4.4 Summary of responses

The table below provides a summary of the number of responses received to each question contained in the feedback form. Note, the cumulative number of responses to each of the questions is greater than the total number of responses received to the consultation as most people responded to multiple questions.

Question	Number of responses	Chapter in this report containing further detail
1: Please share your view on the approach to Cambridge	5,645	Chapter 3
2: The train service	4,955	A summary of the feedback received and our responses is provided in Appendix 21
3: Station experience	3,829	
4: On-train experience	3,460	
5: Interaction with colleagues	2,954	
6: Customer information	3,038	
7: What is important to consider during development of the proposals for the railway in the Oxford to Bicester area?	2,074	Chapter 5

Question	Number of responses	Chapter in this report containing further detail
8: Please rank your preference for the proposed concepts for the level crossing at London Road in Bicester	658 respondents expressed a preference for at least one concept	Chapter 5
9: Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed concepts above and provide any other comments.	1,498	Chapter 5
10: What do you think is important to consider when developing our proposals for the Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line area?	1,882	Chapter 6
11: Please rank your preferences for the proposed options for the existing stations on the Marston Vale Line	1,028 respondents expressed a preference for at least one option	Chapter 6
12: Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed options for the existing stations above as you have and provide any other comments.	1,551	Chapter 6
13: Fenny Stratford level crossing: vehicular traffic – three options	1,118	Chapter 6
14: Fenny Stratford level crossing: pedestrians and other non-vehicular road users	1,082	Chapter 6
15: Bow Brickhill level crossing (V10 Brickhill Street)	1,086	Chapter 6
16: Browns Wood level crossing	1,017	Chapter 6
17: Pony level crossing	984	Chapter 6
18: Woburn Sand level crossings	1,149	Chapter 6
19: Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley level crossings	1,017	Chapter 6
20: Husborne Crawley Footpath No. 10 and Station Road in Ridgmont level crossings	972	Chapter 6
21: Lidlington level crossings	989	Chapter 6
22: Millbrook level crossing (Station Lane)	959	Chapter 6
23: Green Lane level crossing	953	Chapter 6
24: Wootton Broadmead level crossing (Broadmead Road)	931	Chapter 6
25: Wootton Village level crossing	914	Chapter 6
26: Kempston Hardwick level crossing	924	Chapter 6

Question	Number of responses	Chapter in this report containing further detail
27: Woburn Road level crossing	912	Chapter 6
28: Bedford Carriage Sidings level crossing	922	Chapter 6
29: Please rank your preference for the proposed options for the Marston Vale Line upgrade	1,401 respondents expressed a preference for at least one option	Chapter 6
30: Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed Marston Vale Line upgrade options above as you have and provide any other comments	1,038	Chapter 6
31: Please rank your preference for the proposed options for the Fenny Stratford additional track	400 respondents expressed a preference for at least one option	Chapter 6
32: Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed Fenny Stratford additional track options above as you have and provide any other comments.	972	Chapter 6
33: What do you think is important to consider when developing our proposals for the Bedford area?	2,016	Chapter 7
34: Please rank your preference for the proposed options for Bedford St Johns station	684 respondents expressed a preference for at least one alignment options	Chapter 7
35: Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed Bedford St Johns options above and provide any other comments	1,281	Chapter 7
36: What do you think is important to consider when developing our emerging preferred option for Bedford station?	1,730	Chapter 7
37: What do you think is important to consider when developing our emerging preferred option for the area north of Bromham Road bridge (North Bedford)?	1,564	Chapter 7
38: Please rank your preference for the proposed Clapham Green to The Eversdens alignment options	2,906 respondents expressed a	Chapter 8

Question	Number of responses	Chapter in this report containing further detail
	preference for at least one alignment options	
39: Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed alignment options above and provide any other comments	4,096	Chapter 8
40: What do you think is important to consider when developing our proposals for the Harlton to Hauxton area?	3,018	Chapter 9
41: What do you think is important to consider when developing our proposals for the The Shelfords and Cambridge area?	2,986	Chapter 10

Table 3: Consultation questions and number of responses

1.4.5 Analysis of the comments contained in the feedback received

We commissioned Traverse¹⁷, an independent external organisation specialising in the analysis of responses to public consultation and engagement activities, to review all of feedback to the 2021 consultation.

All responses received via the online response form, the dedicated email address and freepost consultation address were sent directly to Traverse for analysis. Any other correspondence received by EWR Co during the consultation period such as letters or emails sent to senior members of the EWR Co team, or information received via our standard correspondence channels, was reviewed to see if they included any comments related to the proposals on which we were consulting. If any information linked to the consultation was identified, the correspondence was forwarded to Traverse for analysis.

1.4.6 Consideration of individual comments – the coding process

Every response to the consultation was read in full by analysts from Traverse to identify all of the individual comments contained in each piece of feedback. Each individual comment within a response was assigned a code. Each code represents a specific point of view and because most people provided feedback on multiple points, most responses were assigned more than one code.

Coding all of the feedback in this way enabled Traverse to group comments based on similar themes or sentiment for analysis. This approach generated a systematic record of all points raised in the responses received and enabled Traverse to develop an independent report that

¹⁷ Traverse ceased trading in December 2022

summarises all of the feedback in a logical and structured way. The Traverse report can be found in the Appendix.

9,775 comments raising 190,000 matters across a wide range of topics were coded in this way.

The EWR Co Project team has subsequently reviewed all of the coded comments identified by Traverse so these could be taken into consideration in the development of our proposals. Our responses to the matters raised in the comments are summarised in this report. More detailed responses to the matters raised can be found in the tables provided in the Appendix.

1.5 Activities since the close of the consultation

1.5.1 Engagement since 10 June 2021

Listening to and understanding the views of people living and working in the communities EWR would serve is fundamental to the way this new rail connection will be designed, built and operated. We've continued to have conversations and foster relationships with our stakeholders since the close of the 2021 consultation.

1.5.2 The local community

In spring 2022 we contacted over 450 homeowners and occupiers in the area north of Bedford station to offer one-to-one meetings. A total of 45 meetings took place. Between May and October 2022, we hosted ten face-to-face public information drop-in events across the route. Nearly 1,500 people attended the events, which provided an opportunity for communities to speak to members of the Project team. They also helped us to better understand people's aspirations and concerns about our proposals.

1.5.3 Local representatives

We've delivered quarterly meetings with 15 Local Representatives Groups (LRG) spanning the whole route. The groups include county, town and parish councillors, and representatives from EWR Co. Since the LRGs were launched in February 2022, over 65 meetings have taken place. These are open forums for discussion, with presentations on key topics from subject matter experts from across EWR Co and offer another way for communities to connect with our team through their locally elected representatives.

People can stay up to date with what's happening in each group by visiting the Community Hub on the EWR website: <https://communityhub.eastwestrail.co.uk/>

1.5.4 Businesses, industry and academia

Since the close of the 2021 consultation, we've met with nearly 50 different stakeholders within business, industry and academia. This has helped us grow our understanding of the challenges they face and learn how EWR could best support their organisations and their wider industries.

1.5.5 Political stakeholders

We've engaged with 15 MPs and 12 local authorities, including over 100 individual officers and elected members across 38 meetings. This engagement has included site visits where members of our team have walked sections of the route with local MPs and councillors to hear their views and those of their constituents.

Any new suggestions and comments received during our engagement since the close of the consultation have been taken into consideration by the Project team. More can be found in Chapter 12 of this report.

1.5.6 Affordable Connections Project (ACP)

In December 2021, the Department for Transport and EWR Co agreed that we should set up the Affordable Connections Project (ACP). This was driven by two factors. First, a drive for lower costs, reflecting the impacts of Covid-19; and secondly a focus on ensuring the benefits could be supported through local leadership. The ACP considered whether there remained a strategic case for investing in EWR and if there were solutions which could deliver the majority of the expected benefits of EWR at a lower capital cost to the taxpayer.

Overall, the ACP concluded that there remains a compelling strategic case for EWR. Indeed, it has strengthened the case and demonstrated that there is scope to deliver the transformational change that the Project promises at a lower cost than that presented at the 2021 consultation.

Please note, alongside this Consultation Feedback Report, we've also published an Economic and Technical Report (ETR), which details the ACP and its conclusions. You can view this document and the full list of the other information being published, download documents, or request copies on [our website](#).

1.6 What we expect to happen next

We still have work to do and are carrying out further surveys and investigations to help us design the Project in more detail. These will be vital in providing information for our assessments, which will underpin the information presented at the statutory consultation and our subsequent application to seek consent to build and operate the railway. As part of this work, you may notice some activity in your area.

We'll develop our design based on feedback received from the two previous consultations and continuing environmental, economic and technical studies. There will be further opportunity for you to comment on our proposals during the statutory consultation.

Throughout the process we'll keep listening and talking to everyone with an interest in the Project. There will also be regular updates and information on our website www.eastwestrail.co.uk.

1.6.1 Environmental Impact Assessment

EWR is a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP) and will be required to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the Infrastructure Planning Regulations 2017. We'll present the results of the EIA in the Environmental Statement, setting out the likely significant effects of the Project on the environment, which will be submitted as one of the documents to support our DCO application.

We're aware of ongoing government led activity on NSIP reform and the implementation of a new system Environmental Outcomes Reports for the purpose of environmental assessment. As further information becomes available and we better understand how this will change the EIA process for EWR, we'll provide more detail on how we'll comply with new regulations.

1.6.2 Future consultation

We plan to start the statutory consultation on the preferred route and associated infrastructure, such as stations and level crossings, in the first half of 2024 to give you a further opportunity to share your views with us. In the meantime, we'll continue to engage with our stakeholders and the local community to help us refine the design before inviting the public to submit further feedback. Consultation feedback will be carefully considered when finalising our proposals.

1.6.3 Application for a Development Consent Order (DCO)

The Secretary of State has directed that the Project be treated as a development for which development consent is required, as is the case with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects under the Planning Act 2008. This means that we're required to make an application for a DCO to obtain permission to construct and operate the railway.

The application will be made to the Planning Inspectorate who, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport, will appoint a panel (the Examining Authority) to examine the application. The examination will include consideration of the likely impacts of the Project on the environment and protected habitats. Following the examination, the Examining Authority will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will decide whether to give consent for the Project.

You can find lots more information about the DCO process at
<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>