Consultation feedback report:

Chapter 6: Section B

Version: Draft
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6. Section B

6.1 Your feedback and our response

This chapter provides a summary of your feedback and our response to the main comments raised in relation to Section B of the route and proposals for the Marston Vale Line upgrades. These comments have been broken down into sections, comprising those in relation to the concepts for the approach to the Marston Vale Line upgrade, level crossings, the blockade strategy, the upgrade to Bletchley Station, the additional track proposed at Fenny Stratford and other matters. More information on the options put forward as part of the 2021 consultation for Section B can be found in the Section B Consultation Document.

Throughout this section, text in *italics* is our response to the matters raised in your feedback. Assessment Factors, the factors used to assess and compare different options for the Project, have been and will continue to be used as part of the option appraisal and selection process across the Marston Vale Line Upgrades. The preferred options for each element will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, which are outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. Further information will be provided at the statutory consultation, which we expect to take place in the first half of 2024.

6.1.1 Marston Vale Line (MVL) concepts

Respondents commented on the overall approach and concepts that would be used to upgrade this section of the MVL. The two concepts proposed were as follows:
Concept 1 would retain the existing hourly service that stops at all intermediate stations and introduce fast limited-stop Oxford to Cambridge services alongside it. This means there would be five trains per hour in each direction on the MVL as follows:

- Four fast trains per hour, which would stop each way at Woburn Sands and Ridgmont stations only.
- An additional hourly stopping service, calling at all 10 intermediate stations.

Concept 2 would be five new merged stations on the MVL. All five would benefit from at least two EWR services every hour (in each direction), and some would have four. This would mean more communities would have access to more frequent and faster services, direct to more locations:

- Two stopping trains every hour between Bletchley and Cambridge, calling at all five new stations.
- Two faster Oxford to Cambridge trains every hour, only stopping at Woburn Sands and Ridgmont when travelling between Bletchley and Bedford.

Respondents' comments included: overall views for each of the concepts; notes on proposals for closing and relocating particular stations that would be required as part of Concept 2, the need for the upgrade, the impact of the upgrade on access and journeys, the impact of the

upgrade on the environment and on local development, and general comments on the design of the stations and their facilities.

6.1.2 Overview of concepts

Respondents provided a range of comments on the two concepts that could broadly be used to upgrade the MVL. These comments included general support and opposition for Concept 1 and Concept 2, no preference for either concept and suggestions for a hybrid concept or alternative solutions to upgrade this section of the railway.

6.1.3 Concept 1 – Opposition and support

6.1.3.1 Opposition

Some consultation responses expressed concern over the service that would be delivered by Concept 1. These respondents stated that Concept 1 would not deliver an improved journey time or service at most stations and would therefore provide limited benefits to communities along the MVL. These respondents also suggested that Concept 1 would result in a less reliable service for communities, and therefore lower patronage.

Both concepts presented at the 2021 consultation were selected based on their ability to offer communities reliability on all services along the line. If Concept 1 were to be delivered, local residents would have the ability to change to the faster EWR services at Woburn Sands and Ridgmont, which would make journeys to Bedford, Cambridge, Bletchley and Oxford quicker.

We'll further develop the options for service pattern and the provision of station improvements based on this service pattern. This work will be carried out at the next stage and presented for comment at the statutory consultation.

6.1.3.2 Support

There was significant support for keeping existing stations along the MVL. Respondents felt that consolidating the stations would impact local peoples' access to the railway and could result in an increase in car journeys and traffic due to people driving to the stations or choosing to travel by car. As a result, it was felt that retaining existing stations provided a more sustainable solution, as well as having a reduced impact on communities.

It was also argued that proposed development in the area justified maintaining the existing stations to serve the new residents as a result of new housing in the area. Respondents also argued that communities want to keep their heritage station buildings, as well as maintain the historic nature of the MVL. However it was also felt that it would be less disruptive and less costly to keep the existing stations.

We note respondents' support for the MVL proposals for Concept 1. Since the 2021 consultation, the Department for Transport (DfT) and EWR Co agreed that we should set up the Affordable Connections Project (ACP). This was driven by two factors. First; increasing affordability pressures on Government funding, due to the impacts of Covid-19 and lower economic growth than previously anticipated; and secondly a focus on ensuring the benefits

could be supported through local leadership. In response to the Government's request that we explore opportunities for a more affordable railway the ACP therefore 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 (please see the Economic and Technical Report (ETR)published with this Consultation Feedback Report). As part of the Project we've carried out further options analysis of the concepts and station proposals. Where analysis has identified further potential options - including which services would be provided at which stations - these are confirmed within the Economic and Technical Report.

Any potential impact on car journeys is not yet available, however these will be considered as part of the Transport Assessment. Outcomes of the assessment will initially be reported in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) published at the statutory consultation and then further developed within the Environmental Statement (ES) that will form part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

The heritage station buildings are privately owned and would remain in place under both concepts.

The preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include consideration of heritage and construction impacts as part of the Assessment Factor for environmental impacts and opportunities (14), as well as consideration of the costs as part of the Assessment Factor for capital costs (3). Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation stage.

6.1.4 Concept 2 – Opposition and support

6.1.4.1 Opposition

Respondents expressed concerns over the service that would be provided by Concept 2:

- The consolidated stations would not adequately serve communities along the line, which would be more disruptive to local communities and could encourage increased car use.
- It would present challenges for station access and local connectivity, including parking.
- It may not be a cost-effective investment.
- It would block a north exit from Woburn Sands town and would negatively impact the economy of the local high street.

Concerns were raised about the accessibility of the new stations for local residents along the MVL. Some respondents offered their support for Concept 2 only on the condition of broad improvements to walking and cycling routes, bus routes and other means of station access.

Concept 2, as shown at the 2021 consultation, set out a proposal which rationalises the number of stations along the route. As our proposals continue to develop, we'll consider the cost effectiveness of both Concepts 1 and 2.

If Concept 2 were to be delivered, some residents would need to travel further to their nearest station compared to Concept 1, and part of the development of this proposal would be developing plans for improved pedestrian and cycle routes, as well as working with local stakeholders on better public transport connection, consideration will be made to equality impacts as part of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA). An EqIA has been drafted which aims to capture potential impacts, both positive and negative, on protected characteristic groups (PCGs) as a result of the Project, and to detail how these have been taken into account. The EqIA process is an ongoing iterative process and will therefore be further developed and submitted as part of the PEIR at the statutory consultation and with the ES as part of the DCO application.

We're developing the Business Case in line with Government guidance and this will present the evidence that has shaped the Strategic Case for the railway. While the Business Case is still in development and will not be completed until we've obtained the required consent for the Project, our work to date has confirmed how the case for EWR is not focused solely on Oxford and Cambridge, but that the areas in between are key to deliver the Government's aspirations for economic growth too.

Cost will be considered in the selection of a preferred option, under the Assessment Factors for capital costs (3), operating costs (4) and overall affordability (5).

As part of the ES that will form part of the DCO application, we'll prepare a Transport Assessment to consider the impact on the strategic and local highway network, road safety and local sustainable modes of transport, including public transport. It will also set out the impact of construction on the road network, including changes to existing traffic patterns because of predicted construction traffic. The PEIR will include information regarding the baseline for transport, access and non-motorised users, together with a preliminary assessment of impacts and will be published at the statutory consultation. It is unclear what the 'north exit' from Woburn Sands is from the feedback, however the Transport Assessment will include consideration of the impact of the proposals on Woburn Sands, the high street and the wider area.

Local connectivity is one of the key considerations in developing EWR proposals. Proposed options will be developed to consider the access across the railway and access to the station and businesses in close proximity will be considered. Where new stations are provided, there is an opportunity to incorporate enhanced facilities. We'll undertake an analysis to determine how much parking might be required at the new stations. We also note requests for consideration of improvements to bus services and will consider this when engaging bus operators about the proposals. Further information will be available at the statutory consultation.

6.1.4.2 Support

Respondents voiced general support for Concept 2, with some commenting that usage of the current line is low and fewer stations could be more optimally located. Respondents believed it would be sensible to concentrate new stations in more populous areas. Some highlighted specific stations where they supported consolidation, and many highlighted the need to provide enhanced access to the relocated stations. Reasons given for supporting Concept 2 included that it would deliver faster journey times and better connectivity between Oxford and Cambridge. Respondents also remarked that Concept 2 would attract new rail users, and some felt that, although some people would have to travel further to a station, many rail users would still see a reduction in their overall journey time.

Concept 2 was seen as more likely to support proposed housing developments, and therefore encourage population growth, in the area. It was also noted that improved connectivity could spur further housing and economic growth. Respondents welcomed improved station facilities, including enhanced pedestrian and cycle access to stations, parking and enhanced accessibility and connectivity to public transport. Others felt that Concept 2 would result in lower operational costs, a better service and enhanced reliability when compared to Concept 1.

EWR is a nationally significant railway project which aims to deliver much-needed transport connections for communities between Oxford and Cambridge. Since the 2021 consultation, and in response to the Government's request that we explore opportunities for a more affordable railway whilst still delivering the identified benefits (please see the ETR published with this Consultation Feedback Report on our website) we've carried out further options analysis of the concepts and station proposals. Where analysis has identified further potential options, including what services would be provided at which stations, these are confirmed within the ETR. We'll further develop the options for each individual station, including the provision of station improvements where required, based on the service pattern to be provided. This work will be carried out at the next stage and presented for comment at the statutory consultation.

6.1.4.3 No preference for Concept 1 or Concept 2

Respondents stated that they did not have a preference for either Concept 1 or Concept 2. Some respondents suggested that a strategic review is required to inform the concepts.

We have investigated what service concepts would deliver the most benefit to local communities and the area, and have sought to understand where enhancements to the existing line would be needed to meet safety standards and provide a sufficient level of service. We are continuing to work with local stakeholders to help us identify the best solution for communities along this section of the route, which we will present at the statutory consultation.

6.1.4.4 Hybrid concept

Consultation responses suggested hybrid concepts, combining elements of both Concept 1 and 2. Respondents also suggested that fast services should also call at Stewartby.

We've noted respondents' suggestions for hybrid concepts in respect of the MVL, as well the suggestion that fast services should call at Stewartby. We're in the process of reviewing the timetabling for trains and will consider hybrid concepts and stop locations as part of that process. Further information will be provided at the statutory consultation.

6.1.4.5 Alternative solutions

Respondents put forward a variety of suggestions for alternative concepts on this section of the route. These included:

1. The need for alternative routes, specifying fast links to Oxford and Cambridge; and a line that runs from Bedford through Bletchley to Milton Keynes.
2. Improved access to local towns along the Bletchley-Bedford Line, including Stewartby, Calvert, Winslow, Newton Longville, Wixams, Kempston and Aylesbury.
3. Alternatives to proposed station consolidations under Concept 2, including merging Lidlington and Ridgmont stations; merging Fenny Stratford and Bow Brickhill stations; and merging Woburn Sands with Aspley Guise.
4. Moving the MVL away from village centres such as Lidlington, and following routes such as the A421.
5. The need for a shuttle service between Bletchley and Bedford.

We've considered respondents' alternative concepts. Our responses are as follows:

1. The purpose of EWR is to provide new connectivity across the Oxford to Cambridge area, making it cheaper, easier and quicker for people to move around; the new stations proposed would provide local people with the opportunity to experience that connectivity directly. The approach taken for the MVL aligns with one of EWR's objectives; to provide a sustainable and value for money transport solution to support economic growth in the area (see page 40 of the Consultation Document). A direct connection from Bedford to Milton Keynes Central does not currently form part of EWR Co's remit from DfT. Network Rail have undertaken some early analysis of the feasibility of developing a connection from the Bedford direction at Bletchley onto the West Coast Main Line (WCML) heading north, which has demonstrated that the options are limited and the costs likely to be very high. As a result, there are no proposals to provide a Bletchley Chord as part of the Project, however the delivery of EWR does not preclude this option from being developed in the future.

2. Although we're not responsible for providing onward travel links and access to the stations, we'll consider this within our proposed options. We'll engage with England's Economic Heartland on door-to-door connectivity to provide access to local towns. The preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include consideration of access to the railway with the Assessment Factors for transport user benefits (1) and short distance connectivity (6) Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

3. EWR Co will consider the consolidated station locations as we continue to develop concept proposals and undertake the option appraisal and selection process at the next stage

of design. Any proposed station location or consolidation needs to consider the effect this would have on the rest of the route and what access the station and service would provide to communities along the MVL. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

4. Moving the MVL line away from village centres is not a feasible option because it would not represent good value for money for the taxpayer, due to the increased amount of design, engineering works, materials and land take required to deliver. It would also have significantly higher environmental impacts than upgrading the current line. Moving the railway away from the communities would undermine the purpose that it serves and reduce its accessibility to potential rail users.

5. A proposal for a shuttle service between Bletchley and Bedford was presented at the 2021 consultation as part of Concept 1 for the MVL services. The journey would take 22 minutes.

6.1.4.6 Alternative stations

Alternative station locations were suggested at Wixams, Bedford South or Kempston Retail Park.

We're not considering providing new stations for the line through Bletchley and along the MVL, other than the relocated stations proposed at the 2021 consultation, as the extra land take and cost of constructing a new station is not warranted in these locations.

We're aware of Bedford Borough Council's proposals for a station at Wixams, south of Bedford. A station location near Wixams would be situated on the Midland Main Line. We're working on local proposals, with a focus on door-to-door connectivity to and from stations and will consider how we could enable access to EWR stations from Wixams if the latter station is built.

Route options passing to the south of Bedford were considered before the selection of a preferred route option in 2020. Route Option E was selected as it would deliver higher transport user benefits by serving Bedford Midland and Bedford St Johns directly. This would provide access to other rail services, transport modes, local homes and businesses and facilities such as Bedford Hospital. An alternative station location at Bedford South would not deliver these benefits.

The information that respondents have provided is either not new or would not change these conclusions. As such, a route alignment following Route Option E and passing through Bedford remains preferable. All of the alignments proposed take this route, so it is not a differentiating factor between them.

We've consulted on a project involving an upgrade to Bedford Midland and a relocation of Bedford St Johns station. Although a station at Kempston would provide benefits to the Kempston area and retail park, it would not serve Bedford communities south of River Great

Ouse in proximity to Bedford Hospital. As a result, a station at Kempston will not be progressed as an alternative station location.

6.1.4.7 General concerns

Respondents raised concerns that the local services along the MVL would be slower than current services. There was some concern that services are already slow or unreliable and the addition of EWR may worsen the service.

If Concept 1 were delivered, the hourly stopping service at intermediate stations would enable a change onto faster EWR services at Woburn Sands or Ridgmont, to connect to Oxford, Bletchley, Bedford and Cambridge. This would result in the hourly local stopping service end-to-end journey time increasing slightly to allow fast services to pass. While this may be the case, by interchanging at Woburn Sands or Ridgmont, a faster journey time could be achieved. Page 135 of the Consultation Technical Report shows comparisons of journey time for different MVL stations for current services and both concepts.

If Concept 2 were delivered, this would see existing services replaced with a faster service at new or retained stations.

We'll provide updated proposals for train services, including the effects on existing services, at the statutory consultation.

Respondents stated their opposition to EWR and the MVL proposals generally with specific references to opposition to these general proposals in Lidlington and Woburn Sands.

The approach taken for the MVL aligns with the Project objectives, including the objective to provide a sustainable and value for money transport solution to support economic growth in the area (see page 40 of the Consultation Document).

However, we recognise that the proposals and changes to level crossings and accesses across the railway would impact the local communities along the MVL and we understand the concerns raised by local residents. We've taken all consultation feedback into consideration during development of the proposals, including comments received about the proposals for Lidlington, Woburn Sands and the MVL.

6.1.4.8 Equality Impacts of MVL proposals

Concerns were raised about the accessibility along the MVL such as at stations and level crossings for pedestrians (including wheelchair users).

We want to provide proposals for the MVL that are suitable for a diverse range of end users, including disabled people, older people and people with young children. Therefore, our proposals will follow current rail legislation and modern standards, driven by a requirement to consider a range of end user groups. An EqIA has been drafted which aims to capture potential impacts, both positive and negative, on protected characteristic groups (PCGs) as a result of the Project, and to detail how these have been taken into account. The PEIR will be presented at the statutory consultation. The EqIA process is an ongoing iterative process and will

therefore be further developed and submitted as part of the PEIR at the statutory consultation and with the ES as part of the DCO application.

6.1.4.9 Passing loops

Respondents believed that passing loops could improve overall service speed and reliability.

We're considering the service patterns on the MVL and how passing loops would be configured to support this. Where possible, we'll seek to avoid the additional construction associated with passing loops. We'll provide updated proposals at the statutory consultation.

6.1.4.10 General station concerns and design considerations

Respondents made a range of comments regarding access to stations and active travel opportunities, facilities at stations, and the naming of stations.

6.1.4.11 Access to stations and active travel opportunities

Respondents raised concerns about having limited access to the stations, particularly for active travel and multi-modal journeys such as bus interchange, and the need for improvement in these areas.

Respondents suggested that the promotion of active travel must be considered at all stations. This includes routes for walking, wheeling and cycling to reduce the use of cars.

Station access is a key consideration for EWR Co. We'll continue working with other organisations, including bus operators, to improve interfaces and interchange with bus services at stations and provide onward travel information. In particular, we're considering opportunities to improve door-to-door connectivity between the new stations and customers' destinations, timed to connect with the train services.

We're committed to delivering a real step-change in the quality of active transport infrastructure throughout the EWR corridor, so that travelling by bike or as a pedestrian becomes a realistic and attractive choice for short journeys. Options for active travel being considered include new and improved walking, wheeling and cycling routes and increased safe cycle storage to promote the use of bikes.

Although sustainable modes will be prioritised, we recognise that access by car would still be required, so we're also considering the parking requirements and available space at each station including in relation to parking for disabled people.

Respondents suggested that door-to-door connectivity proposals should build upon the existing work that has been undertaken by England's Economic Heartland and EWR Co. We'll continue ongoing engagement with England's Economic Heartland (EEH) on door-to-door connectivity. More detailed information on these proposals will be presented at the statutory consultation.

Respondents recommended that equestrian access should be considered when developing new station designs, suggesting that noise pollution can scare horses, raising concern on the safety of the proposed station designs.

The 2021 consultation was undertaken at an early stage of design, with various proposals presented at a high level. Where equestrian routes may be affected by development of the station designs these will be shared through user groups and consultation for comments to be considered. We're committed to considering all users and their specific needs, including sensitivity to noise in respect of equestrian routes such as bridleways, to ensure that any impact from the development of the railway is minimal. The location and detailed design of the stations will be informed by the Assessment Factors and the feedback received.

There were some concerns regarding bus routes to stations.

Although we're not responsible for bus routes, as part of our approach to considering overall journey connectivity and people's door to door journeys we'll consider this when engaging bus operators about our proposals.

6.1.4.12 Station facilities

There was some feedback in the consultation responses about facilities at the existing MVL stations, as well as some calls for new and enhanced station facilities including car parking and cycle storage provisions. There was also support for enhanced provision for a diverse range of end users, including disabled people, and the potential for creating new community facilities at stations.

Where new stations are provided, there is an opportunity to incorporate enhanced facilities and provision. We've undertaken an analysis to determine how much parking might be required at the new stations, but we're also focusing on door-to-door connectivity opportunities to encourage sustainable travel to and from stations. Any station facility upgrades we propose would be designed to improve the customer experience by focussing on the areas that people have said matter the most to them. More information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

We're actively considering the end-to-end journey, including how services can connect to existing modes of transport. Provision of facilities to encourage use of active travel modes including cycling is a key consideration to the customer proposition as station designs are developed, as well as looking at opportunities to improve infrastructure and facilities in and around stations. Where new stations are being considered we're considering the provision of CCTV covered secure cycle parking, and requirements to ensure optimum security for the cycles and a safe easy passage into the station for users.

There are multiple options for including cycle storage, which we'll consider based on suitability, space required, demand, ease of use and feedback from representative groups as the options are assessed. During further design, we'll consider the feedback for the provision of charging points for electric bikes in designs taking into account local requirements, and also consider parking for adapted cycles and future proofing facilities for changes in demand.

We'll design sufficient parking to be provided at stations to meet future customer demand, including parking for disabled people. We would also seek to provide electric vehicle charging

facilities, promoting public transport and active travel, ensuring car park facilities are not detrimental (aesthetically or functionally) to the community.

We recognise the need to ensure access to the whole station, including getting on and off trains, is easy and safe for a diverse range of end users, including disabled people, older people, people with young children and people travelling with luggage. New stations would be built to meet industry standards and guidance including the Office for Rail & Road Regulations' 'Accessible Travel policy – Guidance for train and station operators (March 2021). As we develop designs for stations, we will consider the provision of level access, gate arrangements, ticket machines, wayfinding and signage, acoustics, audio systems and hearing enhancement, surface finishes and visual contrast; and seating that is designed to be suitable for a diverse range of end users.

Respondents expressed concerns around the availability of parking at stations, affecting accessibility.

As we develop the concepts for the MVL, we'll also develop the requirements for each station and the facilities we would provide and upgrade, such as parking spaces including parking for disabled people.

Respondents also expressed concerns that lack of suitable parking would lead to congested roads.

At the next stage of design we'll be undertaking modelling work to understand if additional parking is required at stations. We would also provide electric vehicle charging points and parking for disabled people, as well as passenger drop-off and taxi facilities. Station parking would be designed with future customer demand in mind.

6.1.4.13 Station names

There were some calls for EWR Co to rename stations. Alternative names put forward for Ridgmont were Husborne Crawley or Cranfield Parkway. Other respondents suggested that if stations are consolidated in Concept 2, that the new station name should reflect the communities it serves - for example, Stewartby Hardwick.

It is not within our responsibility or authority to re-name stations, however we'll consider the case for renaming of stations as the Project develops and incorporate this in our proposals if appropriate.

6.1.1.1 Specific stations

Under Concept 1 all stations would be retained except Ridgmont, which would relocate; however under Concept 2 certain stations would be closed or relocated. Proposals for each station in each Concept is as follows:

	Concept 1	**Concept 2**
Fenny Stratford	Retain	Closed

Bow Brickhill	Retain	Closed
Woburn Sands	Retain	Relocated
Aspley Guise	Retain	Closed
Ridgmont	Relocated	Relocated
Lidlington	Retain	Relocated
Millbrook	Retain	Closed
Stewartby	Retain	Relocated
Kempston Hardwick	Retain	Closed

Table 4: Stations under Concept 1 and Concept 2

Respondents provided a range of comments on the proposals for a number of the stations. These comments included general support and opposition for their proposed closure or relocation, and comments on the impact of the proposals and considerations that would need to be made within the design of certain stations.

6.1.4.14 Fenny Stratford station

It was suggested that Fenny Stratford station should be retained. People felt that the station was important for local access, commuting and connectivity and would serve new developments as well as existing communities.

While Concept 1 would retain the Fenny Stratford station, we recognise that Concept 2 would close Fenny Stratford station and this would affect local communities and businesses. If Concept 2 were to be delivered, some residents may need to travel a little further to their nearest station. Part of the development of this proposal would be developing plans for improved pedestrian and cycle routes, and we'll continue to work with local stakeholders to coordinate connectivity between EWR services and the local area.

The preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, which are outlined in the Consultation Technical Report. This will include consideration of short distance connectivity (Assessment Factor 6) and rail passenger connectivity to main lines (Assessment Factor 8). Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

It was suggested that a second platform could be reinstated at Fenny Stratford station, high- and low-level platforms like Bletchley, and that passenger access could be provided at both ends of Fenny Stratford station.

We're considering proposals for the stations on the MVL to understand where enhancements would be needed to meet safety standards and to provide an appropriate level of service. This includes the consideration of platform and access requirements at Fenny Stratford station. We'll further develop the options for each individual station based on the service pattern to be provided and will present further information at the statutory consultation.

6.1.4.15 Bow Brickhill station

It was stated that Bow Brickhill station should be retained, particularly because of its current use by local workers.

It was also believed that more local workers could be encouraged to use the railway if the service was improved, and that closing the station would increase car use and exacerbate current congestion problems. Concerns were also raised about the potential impact of closing Bow Brickhill station on the connectivity of planned developments, notably nearby housing and warehouses.

We recognise that Concept 2 would close Bow Brickhill station, and this would affect local communities and businesses. If Concept 2 were to be delivered, some residents would need to travel a little further to their nearest station, and part of the development of this proposal would be exploring plans for improved pedestrian and cycle routes. We'll continue to work with local stakeholders to coordinate connectivity between EWR services and the local area.

Concept 1 would retain the current station. The preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, which are outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. Station access and travelling to and from the station will be considered as part of the transport user benefits Assessment Factor (1).

As part of the ES that will accompany the DCO application, we'll prepare a Transport Assessment to consider the impact on the strategic and local highway network, road safety and local sustainable modes of transport, including public transport. It will also set out the impact of construction on the road network, including potential changes to existing traffic patterns because of predicted construction traffic. This will include consideration of potential congestion of the local area, access (including access restrictions), parking, and any possible health and safety impacts. The PEIR will include information regarding the baseline for transport, access and non-motorised users, together with a preliminary assessment of impacts and will be published at the statutory consultation.

A few respondents raised concerns about potential severance for residents from neighbouring towns and commented on Bow Brickhill station's use for access to local leisure opportunities, such as Caldecotte Lake.

We understand that severance is a significant concern to people living in villages in the vicinity of the railway and to local businesses such as leisure services at Caldecotte Lake. We're committed to ensuring so far as reasonably practicable that the Project is able to mitigate disruption during the planning, construction and operation of the Project.

During construction, provision would be made to maintain connections that are intended to be retained after the Project is completed, even if they have to be temporarily diverted, including to key community facilities. This approach would help to address concerns regarding community severance.

Respondents commented on the lack of alternative public transport options, stating that the one bus per hour currently available would not be close enough for use by workers at the planned warehouse development.

We'll take a coordinated approach with bus operators. We note requests for consideration of lack of alternative public transport options and will consider this feedback as we discuss the Project with operators.

6.1.4.16 Woburn Sands station

Respondents expressed objections towards the relocation of Woburn Sands station. Concerns included the safety risk for school children; the negative impact on the character of the village; and train speed in the village causing noise and disruption to residents.

We've considered safety of the public, including school children, at all stages of design, and this would continue during construction and into operation and maintenance.

The safety of workers, road users, non-motorised users (NMUs), our supply chain and local people has been prioritised and considered so that risks are identified and reduced wherever possible. During construction, we would ensure that health, safety, and wellbeing performance meets or exceeds minimum legal requirements and industry best practise.

The Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) or an equivalent document will set out standards to maintain safety and security during the construction phase.

We're considering potential impacts on the village character and how to reduce or mitigate the potential impacts the Project may have. This includes noise and vibration, air quality, as well as potential impacts on public rights of way (PRoW) and land and property requirements.

At a later stage in the planning and development process, we'll develop a noise policy, which will set out a plan designed to establish and mitigate noise and vibration to avoid any significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life. We're committed to considering measures that would reduce noise and vibration.

Other respondents' concerns included limited access for pedestrians and NMUs. Respondents also noted the increase in car travel required to reach the new station and others referenced the increase in pedestrian journey times.

During the recent consultation we outlined options for Woburn Sands station, which considered both vehicular access and access for pedestrians, cyclists, and other NMUs.

We're committed to ensuring so far as reasonably practicable that the Project is able to mitigate disruption during the planning, construction and operation of the Project. This includes reducing the impact to communities from any crossing closures by providing reasonable alternatives where possible. During construction, provision would be made to maintain connections that are intended to be retained after the Project is completed, even if they have to be temporarily diverted, including to key community facilities such as the school. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

The need for bus routes was also noted, to serve the new housing developments outside the village centre.

Although we're not responsible for bus routes, we note requests for consideration of access to the station from rural areas and surrounding villages and will consider this feedback as we hold discussions with operators.

Respondents noted existing possibilities to use brownfield spaces adjacent to the current station for its development and upgrade.

The proposals at Woburn Sands station will be developed to provide for the future demand and service along with compatibility with the level crossing proposals and the station's connectivity to the whole village. We're developing designs for the station and reviewing the potential location of the station, including having it retained in its current location and extending the station (such as into brownfield locations adjacent). We're considering moving the Woburn Sands station to the west in order to provide easy access to new areas of development. Proposals presented at the 2021 consultation considered moving the station approximately 500m to the west (6 minutes' walk away from the current location) in order to build a larger station with more and better facilities. This new western location would be better positioned for access to and from the Milton Keynes South East development area, without disrupting the existing community. This development includes proposals for 3000 new homes.

Respondents expressed concern at the amount of land taken for building the station.

The location proposed within the 2021 consultation for the relocation is an area which is part of the South East Milton Keynes development area. Any land take undertaken would be for necessary infrastructure or environmental purposes. We're working closely with Milton Keynes Council to ensure alignment on plans for the area as the proposals are developed, in order to limit the impact of the Project should this location be chosen.

Respondents expressed a preference for keeping Woburn Sands station in its current location and extended into either the old Costa car park, the car wash facility or the business park across from the station.

As part of the Concept 1 proposals, one of the options for the station is for it to remain in its current location. We're developing designs for the station and reviewing the potential location of the station, including having it retained in its current location and extending and potentially using the locations referred to above.

There was also support for relocating Woburn Sands station. Responses to the consultation supported the relocation in order to serve the new proposed housing to the west of Woburn Sands and the opportunity for a new, modern station.

We note respondents' support for the relocation of stations as part of the Concept 2 proposals. We'll continue to develop and review the proposals presented.

6.1.4.17 Aspley Guise station

Respondents expressed concern about the closure of the station. They requested that Aspley Guise station is kept open as part of the proposals. Respondents were also concerned about the impact of EWR works on the village.

We presented two options during the 2021 consultation. Concept 1 proposes to retain Aspley Guise station, which would address the respondents' concerns about closing it. Concept 2 proposes merging some of the existing stations to provide five new stations on the MVL. The benefits of each option can be found in the Consultation Document for Section B.

We'll prepare a Transport Assessment to consider the impact on the strategic and local highway network, road safety and local sustainable modes of transport, including public transport. It will also set out the potential impact of construction on the road network, including changes to existing traffic patterns because of predicted construction traffic. This will include consideration of any impact on Aspley Guise village traffic and mitigation through alternative routes.

At the 2021 consultation a road connection between Salford Road and Bedford Road was not considered as providing access across the railway. We're only altering roads where necessary due to the new services EWR would provide to the area.

We're committed to ensuring so far as reasonably practicable that the Project is able to mitigate disruption during the planning, construction and operation stages. To set out how we would manage the construction of the Project a CoCP or an equivalent document will be developed. This will contain provisions aimed at reducing disruption to local communities and mitigating impacts on the wider environment.

Consultation respondents said that they felt Aspley Guise station could close with minimal impact on the local community. There was support for enhanced connectivity to the relocated Ridgmont location for Aspley Guise to ensure local people can continue to access the railway.

We aim to provide sustainable transport opportunities and rail connectivity to both existing and new communities in the Marston Vale; this would include connectivity to relocated stations for the existing communities to enable them to continue to have access to the route and the new benefits we're looking to bring with the improvements.

6.1.4.18 Ridgmont station

Respondents expressed concern about the proposed relocation of Ridgmont station. These concerns included comments that the relocation could potentially have a detrimental impact on local businesses and the nearby heritage centre and noted the potential negative impacts on local conservation areas.

The relocation of the Ridgmont station would have an effect on local businesses and the heritage centre. We recognise the work of the Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership at the Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre. The relocation of Ridgmont station would move it away from the heritage centre with a walking time between the two of 10-15 minutes, dependent on the final location of the station. If the station were relocated as proposed at the 2021

consultation, we would consider how we could maintain access between the new station and the Heritage Centre and will work with stakeholders to reduce the impact of this aspect of the proposals.

There were suggestions that Ridgmont could be moved to the east, which would allow retention of the Heritage Centre.

As we develop the proposals for Ridgmont, we are considering the potential relocation for the station and the potential for it to remain in its current location is being reviewed and we're considering how land is currently used, such as the Heritage Centre. Currently there are no proposals to move the station east, as moving the station in that direction would not provide benefits the local community, due to the proximity to Lidlington station. Retention of, and access to, the Heritage Centre are within the options we're considering for the relocation of Ridgmont station. The preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, which are outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include consideration of the historic environment as part of the environmental impacts and opportunities Assessment Factor (14).

Concerns were voiced about wider development in the Ridgmont area, including the impact of relocating the station on green belt land.

Assessing the impact of the Project on the environment is a fundamental part of the Project's development, including consideration of possible mitigations. This includes consideration of landscape and visual impacts. We're carefully considering how the development can be designed to blend in with the local environment.

We're looking to ensure that landscape mitigation measures are closely integrated with the ecological requirements of both the Project and the wider area to ensure that the environmental legacy of the works is positive and to support our commitment to 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

We're also aware of the proposed Milton Keynes to Bedford Waterway Park in this area and will carefully consider how the proposals would interact with this new facility.

Respondents noted concerns about access for motorised vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians at Ridgmont. Respondents commented that local roads could become congested and that the proposed relocation is not pedestrian or cyclist friendly, necessitating new paths. Respondents also commented that bus routes would need to be rerouted or developed to serve the new relocated station.

We'll prepare a Transport Assessment to consider the potential impact on the strategic and local highway network, road safety and local sustainable modes of transport, including public transport. It will also set out the potential impact of construction on the road network, including changes to existing traffic patterns because of predicted construction traffic. This will include consideration of possible congestion, access (including access restrictions), parking, and any health and safety impacts on the local roads around Ridgmont station. The PEIR will

include information regarding the baseline for transport, access and NMUs, together with a preliminary assessment of impacts and will be published at the statutory consultation. Proposed options will be developed to consider the access to Ridgmont station, including for pedestrians and cyclists, and includes consideration within the station design work of local connectivity, bus services and customer experience while travelling to EWR stations.

Respondents suggested that the fast services do not need to stop at Ridgmont. They mentioned it is not accessible for most potential users and do not think the new location of the station outside village would encourage use.

The ability to change to the faster EWR services at Ridgmont would make journeys from some intermediate stations to either Bletchley or Bedford quicker, while also providing a location to build a station of suitable size and accessible to the local area.

This station was selected as a stop for fast services because it presents an opportunity to create a multimodal interchange from various villages across the MVL, as well as for people accessing the station by car from the M1. We're still considering the service patterns on the MVL and how stations and level crossings should be configured to support this and will provide updated proposals at the statutory consultation.

Respondents suggested the development of a Parkway Station to take traffic off the roads, using Ridgmont station as a park and ride option. Respondents stated that this would support access via M1 J13.

The site proposed for a relocated Ridgmont station would have more space for interchange with bus or other sustainable transport services, as well as convenient access to the M1 and A421 via J13. Alongside this, we're undertaking forecasting and modelling work to understand likely future demand for car parking and to size any parking facilities appropriately for those who need to drive, while promoting sustainable transport options. Ridgmont would be used as an interchange, enabling people to access the fast service trains by interchanging from other stations, as well as using the station directly. We'll work with the local authority and National Highways to explore this opportunity and how we could help support other sustainable travel initiatives to create a transport hub in this area. Further work is required to assess how the potential options could affect both the local highway network and the strategic road network, and how to link the new station to communities in Aspley Guise and the employment sites at Marston Gate for cycle and pedestrian access.

There was support for the proposals for the Ridgmont station relocation, suggesting the new location would better enable a transport interchange.

We'll continue to develop the proposals presented and further information will be shared for comment at the statutory consultation.

6.1.4.19 Lidlington station

Respondents noted concerns about the impact of relocating Lidlington station, stating that Lidlington is in a convenient location and shouldn't be moved outside of the village. There was some concern that the station relocation would lead to community severance.

We recognise that moving the station as part of Concept 2 is a concern for some people. Concept 1 retains the station in its current location and feedback received will be considered as the proposals are developed. A relocated station would continue to serve the existing village while being accessible from the new homes planned as part of the Marston Valley development. Working with local stakeholders, we would design the station with infrastructure to encourage sustainable ways of travelling to and from the station and ensure connectivity for communities.

Support was voiced for relocating Lidlington station. It was felt a new station would support proposed development in the local area and respondents welcomed new, modern facilities and strategic infrastructure.

We note respondents' support for the relocation of Lidlington station as part of the Concept 2 proposals. We'll continue to develop and review the proposals presented and further information will be released at the statutory consultation.

Suggestions were made about the Lidlington relocation, including the potential for Millbrook station to be expanded and for there to be transport links between Lidlington and Marston Moretaine.

If Lidlington station were to be relocated, we would consider access to the station for existing communities. This would include understanding the feasibility of expanding Millbrook station, along with other stations, to undertake option appraisal and selection process into the next stage of our designs. We would explore ways to provide sustainable access to the new station from the village of Marston Moretaine. The proposed relocated Lidlington station would be approximately 700m further away from the village than the current Millbrook station.

In terms of connectivity between Lidlington and Marston Moretaine, we would be unable to provide a station between these two locations, as it would require relocating the railway and prove more costly than upgrading the current line. It would also have significant impacts on the local environment and community.

Respondents were concerned about the speed of trains passing through Lidlington.

We're considering the service patterns for the MVL, including line speed and how stations and level crossings might be affected by this.

6.1.4.20 Millbrook station

Respondents commented that they wanted Millbrook station to be retained. Respondents felt that the station was important to residents of Marston Moretaine and visitors to the local attractions at the Forest of Marston Vale, Community Park and Centre Parcs.

While Concept 1 would retain the Millbrook station, we recognise that Concept 2 would close Millbrook station and affect local communities and businesses. If Concept 2 were to be delivered, some residents would need to travel a little further to their nearest station. Part of the development of this proposal would include exploring plans for improved pedestrian and cycle routes, such as to the Forest of Marston Vale, as well as working with local stakeholders to improve public transport connectivity. There is currently no direct connection to Centre Parcs from Millbrook, and we'll continue to work with stakeholders to consider opportunities for connectivity between EWR services and the local area.

6.1.4.21 Stewartby station

There was support for relocating Stewartby station and merging it with Kempston Hardwick. Consultation responses suggested this would provide enhanced infrastructure to support the proposed housing and employment developments in the area by providing better facilities and faster services.

We note respondents' support for the relocation of stations as part of the Concept 2 proposals. We'll continue to develop and review the proposals presented and further information will be released at the statutory consultation.

Respondents supported the proposals to retain the location of Stewartby station because of the number of students that use the service to attend Kimberley College. Respondents stated that a large number of students use the MVL and Stewartby station such that, if the station was to move, connectivity between the station and the college would need to be considered.

Kimberley College is a significant driver of current and future rail patronage. We're aware of people's concerns about the proposals to merge Stewartby and Kempston Hardwick stations at a new site further from the college. We're carefully considering how these proposals could affect students' access to and from the college, during construction and operation, and will work with the college to explore how we can seek to provide safe, uninterrupted services to the college whilst works would be underway.

Respondents suggested that a railhead (rail freight terminal) at Stewartby Covanta is required.

Providing a railhead at Stewartby Covanta does not form part of EWR's scope, as the facilities are not required for the service proposals or to mitigate any impacts from the Project. However, the construction of EWR would not preclude a potential for a railhead at Stewartby Covanta in the future.

6.1.4.22 Kempston Hardwick station

Respondents stated that Kempston Hardwick station should be retained. These respondents pointed to the station's proximity to local employment sites and use for the communities of Wilton and Wootton villages.

While Concept 1 would retain Kempston Hardwick station, we recognise that Concept 2 would close the station and this would affect local communities and businesses. If Concept 2 were to

be delivered, some residents would need to travel a little further to their nearest station, and part of the development of this proposal would be exploring plans for improved pedestrian and cycle routes, as well as working with local stakeholders to improve public transport connectivity. We'll continue to work with stakeholders to seek opportunities for connectivity between EWR services and the local area.

6.1.5 Impact of the Marston Vale Line Upgrade on communities and the local area

Respondents made a range of comments about the general impact of the proposals under MVL Upgrade on local communities, roads, developments and the environment.

6.1.5.1 Impact on local communities

Respondents expressed concerns about the potential impacts of the MVL Upgrade proposals on the local community, including potential divisions for communities and the use of fast trains in the local area. Respondents recommended that EWR aims to reduce disruption and ensure connectivity is not impacted.

We understand that severance is a significant concern to people living in villages the in the vicinity of the railway. We're committed to mitigating disruption during all phases of the Project, through continued work on understanding the potential impacts of our proposals and working with affected communities to reduce impacts. We'll consider a wide range of matters including sound, noise, air quality, impacts to PRoW as well as land and property requirements.

We're considering the service patterns along the MVL and the speed of EWR services, which could also potentially affect stations and level crossings. More details on speed of services through the village, and potential mitigation strategies, will be presented at the statutory consultation.

We're also actively considering the end-to-end journey, including how stations can facilitate easy and simple connectivity for people.

Respondents had concerns regarding the potential for property values to decline as a result of the MVL proposals and that properties would need to be demolished.

For the owner occupiers of properties which would need to be acquired in part or wholly to construct EWR, full unaffected market value compensation would be provided in accordance with the Compensation Code as explained in the Guide to Compulsory Acquisition and Compensation on our website. Landowners will be entitled to choose and appoint their own suitably qualified surveyor to submit the compensation claim on behalf of the claimant. The reasonable cost of the surveyor's fee will be reimbursed by EWR Co as part of the claim.

Where no land is taken, under Part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973 property owners may be eligible to claim compensation for reduction in the value of the property due to physical factors caused by the use of a new or altered railway. This is explained further in the Guide to

Part 1 Claims on our website, including an explanation of what constitutes a qualifying interest.

When we submit our application for the DCO this will show the details of the land required. Landowners and leaseholders may then be able to require us to purchase the land identified. This is explained further in the Guide to Statutory Blight Notices on our website.

Qualifying occupiers who receive a formal notice to end their tenancies would be entitled to receive compensation in accordance with the Compensation Code, subject to them having a qualifying interest. This is explained further in the Guide to Compulsory Acquisition and Compensation on our website.

We will look at ways to reduce the impact of the construction and operation of the railway as part of the design development process. Once a detailed design has been created, we'll discuss the potential impacts with the owners of land and property likely to be required for the scheme and seek to mitigate these where possible.

If a qualifying business (e.g. commercial or agricultural) is located where land or a section of land is required by the project, the landowner may be able to require us to acquire the whole of the premises/field if the rest is deemed incapable of reasonable beneficial use. The landowner would be able to engage a surveyor to advise the owner of their options and to act on their behalf in relation to the compensation claim. The surveyor's reasonable costs would be reimbursed as explained in the Guide to Compulsory Acquisition and Compensation on our website.

We invited those parties who believed they had an urgent need to sell to discuss their situation with us to explore if EWR Co could offer assistance prior to the Proposed Need to Sell Property Scheme being introduced.

We consulted on the Proposed Need to Sell (NTS) Property Scheme at the same time as the 2021 non-statutory consultation and have introduced the Proposed Need to Sell Property Scheme, which aims to assist eligible property owners who have a compelling need to sell, but who have been unable to do so other than at a substantially reduced value because of the Project. The Proposed NTS Property scheme is a non-statutory scheme and is therefore separate to the statutory blight notice process (as the trigger for statutory blight is the submission of a DCO application). It provides early support for eligible property owners who have a compelling reason to sell their property but are not able to do so, other than at a substantially reduced value, because of EWR. The Guide to the Proposed Need to Sell Scheme is available on our website.

6.1.5.2 Impact on roads

Respondents expressed concerns about the impact of road closures on local traffic in residential areas. Respondents requested that traffic surveys are undertaken to inform the proposals, to understand the level of impact on local roads.

We understand respondents' concerns about the local road network and potential for congestion in local areas around the Project and will continue to work with local highway authorities to understand possible impacts and identify any potential mitigations that may be required. This involves undertaking traffic surveys and modelling of the area, to understand how our proposals, including proposed temporary and permanent road closures and diversions, could impact traffic. We'll prepare a Transport Assessment to consider the impacts on the highway network, road safety and local sustainable modes of transport, including any changes to existing traffic patterns, because of predicted construction traffic. Outcomes of the assessment will initially be reported in the PEIR published at the statutory consultation and then further developed within the ES.

It was felt that level crossing barrier downtime due to increased rail services would cause disruption to road users and pedestrians.

There are several factors that influence barrier down times, including the protection and warning arrangements in place at the level crossing. The configuration of the protection and warning arrangements are governed by legislation. Each crossing will be subject to further design development and traffic modelling will be undertaken so that we have a clear understanding of level of use. We will consider connectivity for all types of users, and a risk assessment of the level crossing will be prepared which will consider barrier downtime, the effects on the local traffic network and the safety risks. This work will confirm which crossing could remain open as part of our proposals. This work will be carried out at the next stage and presented for comment at the statutory consultation.

6.1.5.3 Impact on local development

Respondents recommended that EWR Co coordinates proposals with local developments, which are proposed or have already been delivered. There was some concern that station relocations could encourage new housing developments, which respondents believe could negatively impact on the local culture and identity. There was also concern about the negative impact of the Project on the wider development of residential areas and decreasing number of green spaces.

We're aware of several development proposals along the MVL, including at Woburn Sands, Lidlington and Stewartby. We'll work closely with local planning authorities and developers to align proposals as much as possible.

We will, where possible, quantify the impact of EWR on the wider economy, specifically its impact on economic growth, investment, jobs, housing and connectivity across both the region and the country. This will inform the strategic and economic cases of the business case for the Project. EWR is a nationally significant infrastructure project which aims to deliver much-needed transport connections for communities between Oxford and Cambridge (as referenced on page 40 of the Consultation Document as part of the Project Objectives). We're already working with developers, landowners and local planning authorities to understand how the various developments interact with the Project and will continue to do so throughout the development process to identify opportunities and mitigations from any impacts. However it is

not our aim to provide for wider development of residential areas at the detriment of existing communities, local culture and identity.

We recognise that the countryside, parks and green spaces and access to them is important and will work to reduce any potential impacts on these areas. To help reduce impacts, we'll follow an environmental mitigation hierarchy by seeking to avoid significant adverse effects on the countryside and where this isn't possible, seeking to reduce and mitigate impacts and if necessary, providing environmental compensation measures where this is feasible.

6.1.5.4 Impact on the environment

Respondents were concerned about the negative impacts of construction and operation of the railway along the MVL, including noise, dust, and vibration.

We understand that noise, dust and vibration in both the construction and operational phase of the railway is a key concern for local communities along the route. We'll undertake assessments before any works begin, and will also develop a noise and vibration policy, which will set out plans on how we aim to avoid or mitigate impacts to health and the quality of life of local communities. This will include the choice of trains, track technology and use of noise barriers.

For noise and vibration, we'll use industry-leading computer modelling which incorporates information regarding the local geology to stimulate noise and vibration impacts as part of the assessment of any mitigation required. The PEIR will include information regarding the existing baseline noise and vibration levels (where there are already vibration generating sources), together with consideration of construction and operational noise limits, having had regard to the appropriate guidance and legislation. An ES will then be submitted as part of the DCO application.

Construction-related impacts on the environment will be identified and managed, as far as reasonably practicable, by a CoCP or an equivalent document submitted as part of the DCO application. This will include measures to control impacts related to construction noise and vibration, and dust. Consideration of the types of vehicles and equipment used and management of work sites will be considered within the CoCP.

Respondents provided comments on the current construction of Connection Stage One by the East West Rail Alliance, and that not enough noise mitigation measures have been provided.

We're working alongside the East West Rail Alliance to embed lessons learned and will look at similar projects and work with Network Rail, National Highways and other organisations to adopt best practise methods.

Respondents raised concerns about the potential negative environmental impacts of the MVL proposals, including impacts on air quality, wildlife and biodiversity and the countryside and that carbon net-zero ambitions are unachievable.

We take our commitment to delivering sustainable transport seriously and we're developing the Project in line with the policy and law of the Government, such as the Clean Air Strategy. The project team will work with local authorities to understand the current situation in

communities. The PEIR will include information regarding the baseline air quality environment and identification of the relevant air quality standards and targets. The likely risks from construction activities and potential impacts from operation, including identification of mitigation and control measures will be presented as part of the PEIR presented at the statutory consultation.
We recognise the importance of biodiversity and protecting the habitats of local wildlife including priority habitats such as woodland and ancient woodland as well as parks and greenspaces. As part of our commitment to changing the environment for the better, we're thinking carefully about protected species and their habitats when designing the railway. We're mapping where the new railway may cross and border habitats used by important protected species, such as badgers, Great Crested Newts and bird species, in order to consider how best to avoid impacting them altogether or to mitigate impacts upon them. A programme of habitat surveys and species-specific surveys will be undertaken to help understand where species and habitats are in the landscape and how they are using the landscape, enabling the Project to avoid, reduce, mitigate and if necessary, compensate for identified impacts throughout the design of the railway. The PEIR will include information regarding the ecology and biodiversity baseline supported by survey data, preliminary construction and operation assessment of impact on designated sites, habitats and species. This will be presented at the statutory consultation with an ES being submitted as part of the DCO application.
We'll work to identify and reduce impacts on and to protect the countryside wherever reasonably practicable. We recognise that access to the countryside is important and will work to reduce impacts to PRoW. To help reduce impacts, we're following the environmental mitigation hierarchy by seeking to avoid significant adverse effects on the countryside and where this isn't possible, seeking to reduce and mitigate impacts and, if necessary, looking at environmental compensation measures. At this stage we're primarily focused on trying to avoid and reduce impacts, by making decisions that help us 'design out' the potential for environmental impacts.

We aim to deliver a net zero carbon railway, in line with existing and developing net zero carbon policy, legislation and commitments at a global, national and local level which requires the UK to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Any decision to grant development consent for the Project will need to demonstrate that it would not have a material impact on the ability of the Government to meet its carbon reduction targets. As the Project advances, we'll continue to develop our approach to delivering on our net zero carbon railway ambition and provide further information around the scope of the target at the statutory consultation. The PEIR will include information regarding the methodology used to assess the significance of the carbon emissions associated with the Project, the carbon management and reduction approaches already in place, and those which will be used during construction and operation. This will be presented at the statutory consultation. An ES will then be submitted as part of the DCO application and will include a full whole life assessment of carbon emissions, including the embodied carbon of the materials used to construct the Project, which will make up a significant proportion of the total emissions. The significance of those emissions against regional, national and/or international carbon budgets and targets will be set out.

6.1.6 Need for the upgrade

Respondents made a number of general comments around the need for the upgrade, including lack of passenger demand and high costs.

6.1.6.1 Passenger numbers

Respondents raised general concerns that the MVL is already underused, and that future use will be limited. The underutilisation of the MVL, paired with general trends of rail usage since Covid-19, led respondents to believe that passenger numbers did not justify the cost.
During the Covid-19 pandemic, rail demand was significantly impacted and passenger numbers decreased across the rail network. However, since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, rail passenger numbers have increased to 80% + of pre-pandemic levels. We continue to monitor these figures and to factor them into the iterative business case process.

EWR is addressing a fundamental lack of connectivity in the region, as the underlying infrastructure has not seen significant investment for decades and the communities that it serves have changed and grown considerably over that time. As mentioned in the Consultation Technical Report, six of the ten stations along the MVL are amongst the least used 20% of stations in the region (based on data from the Office of Rail and Road).

6.1.6.2 Costs

Respondents expressed general concerns over the cost of the proposals, commenting that they would prefer the lowest cost option.

We'll use a range of techniques to monitor and manage cost, including risks associated with costs, for example by applying commonly used approaches such as sensitivity analysis and optimism bias, in the business case.

Innovative approaches to design, construction and operation of the railway will also help us to ensure the likelihood of overspend is minimised.

The preferred options for infrastructrure on the MVL will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include consideration of the cost of the Project as part of the Assessment Factors for capital costs (3), operating costs (4), and overall affordability (5).

6.1.7 Marston Vale Line Level Crossings

Respondents commented on various aspects of proposals relating to specific level crossings; however there were also some general points made that can be applied to a number of the level crossings more broadly.

6.1.8 Overall themes

Respondents provided both support for, and opposition to, proposals to close level crossings as part of the Marston Vale Line (MVL) upgrade. Other comments covered a range of topics,

including accessibility, safety, impacts to local communities, businesses, properties and the environment.

6.1.9 General support and opposition to level crossing closures

6.1.9.1 Opposition

Respondents expressed their general opposition to the closure of the level crossings along the MVL. Respondents also expressed opposition for closures of all individual crossings on the MVL. Frequently mentioned concerns were that closures would impact communities, businesses and agriculture; that they would isolate parts of the communities along the route, cause increased levels of traffic, longer journey times and inconvenience to people's daily journeys including by impacting active travel.

We understand that closing level crossings raises concerns for local residents, which is why we've proposed several options at each crossing location. We appreciate that level crossings play an important role in local connectivity, allowing people to move around their communities. We're committed to providing a safe means to cross the railway and, where diversions are essential, minimising their impact on local communities as far as is practicable.

Since the 2021 consultation, the Department for Transport (DfT) and EWR Co agreed that we should set up the Affordable Connections Project (ACP). This was driven by two factors. First; increasing affordability pressures on Government funding, due to the impacts of Covid-19 and lower economic growth than previously anticipated; and secondly a focus on ensuring the benefits could be supported through local leadership in response to the Government's request that we explore opportunities for a more affordable railway. The ACP therefore 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 (please see the ETR published with this Consultation Feedback Report on our website).

As part of this Project, we've carried out further options analysis at each level crossing. Where analysis has identified further potential options including keeping the crossing open, these are confirmed within the ETR. Before preferred options can be confirmed, safety risk assessments and traffic assessments need to be completed. The preferred option will be selected for each level crossing following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This work will be carried out at the next stage and further information and proposals for mitigation will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.9.2 Support

There was general support for the closure of the level crossings along the MVL. Respondents also expressed support for closures of all individual crossings. A bridge or underpass would be acceptable for the replacement of level crossings along the MVL route as respondents felt that level crossings are bad for both road and rail traffic. There was some support of closures on the basis that a form of crossing remains in place, as well as suggestions that the level crossings are currently unsafe and experience limited use.

We note comments from respondents about their support for the closure of level crossings which was presented in both options at the 2021 consultation. We're committed to providing a safe means to cross the railway and, where diversions are essential, minimising their impact on local communities as far as is practicable.

6.1.9.3 Safety of level crossings

Respondents cited the safety of the public using the level crossings as a primary concern. Some concern was raised over the use of crossings by school children or closures of crossings making the journey longer and/or more dangerous due to higher traffic levels.

We're considering the safety of the public and workers during the Project's design, as well as the construction and operational phase. The safety of workers, road users, pedestrians, our supply chain and local people have been prioritised so that any risks can be identified and reduced wherever possible. The preferred option for each level crossing will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include consideration of safety as part of the safety risk Assessment Factor (13).

We understand that safe, accessible alternatives to level crossings are important for all users. We're committed to providing a safe means to cross the railway and, where diversions are essential, minimising their impact on local communities as far as is practicable. As outlined below further work has been undertaken since the 2021 consultation and as part of this work we've carried out further options analysis at each level crossing. Before preferred options can be confirmed, safety risk and traffic assessments must be undertaken. This work will be carried out at the next stage and presented for comment at the statutory consultation.

6.1.9.4 Impacts on communities

Respondents raised concerns about the impact on communities from level crossing proposals along the MVL, and the possibility of community severance as a result of level crossing closures.

We're aware that the proposed changes to level crossings and access across the railway would impact the local communities along the MVL. We understand that severance is a significant concern to people living in villages in the vicinity of the railway.

As far as practicable, we'll aim to reduce the impact to communities from any crossing closures by providing reasonable alternatives. During construction, provision would be made to maintain connections that are intended to be retained after the Project is completed, even if they have to be temporarily diverted, including to key community facilities. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

We'll prepare a CoCP or an equivalent document for the Project, which will explain the steps we would take to reduce or mitigate disruption to local people, communities and the environment during construction. Additionally, we'll explain our approach to construction and

operation of the railway and provide further details of potential effects of this at the statutory consultation.

6.1.9.5 Impacts on businesses, farms and properties

Respondents raised concerns about the impact on local businesses from the proposed level crossing plans.

At each stage of the planning and development process, we're assessing the impact on local businesses, including the loss or severance of land and the disruption to local businesses including farming practices. We'll seek to reduce the impact of the Project on business practices where possible. To better understand how local land is used, we'll continue to work with landowners and managers to gather information that will help inform the design process with more detailed proposals to be shared at the statutory consultation.

Respondents mentioned the need to engage with farmers and landowners and how their land access would be impacted.

Potential impacts and likely effects on agricultural land use and agricultural land holdings arising from land-take, demolitions of key agricultural infrastructure, severance and changes in accessibility will be presented as part of the PEIR and will be presented at the statutory consultation.

We recognise that in some locations the proposals may impact farmland, including access which is currently via level crossings. Ahead of the launch of the 2021 consultation, we identified, and wrote to, all potentially impacted landowners based on Land Registry records, inviting them to meetings with our Land team. Landowners will also be invited to feed back at the statutory consultation. Throughout the development and delivery of the Project, landowners are encouraged to engage with us via dedicated communication.

Concerns were raised over the demolition of houses and commercial properties that the works to level crossings may require.

We're aware that our proposals may affect people's homes and businesses. During the optioneering phase before the non-statutory consultation, work took place which seeks to reduce disruption for local communities as far as reasonably practicable. The optioneering work took into account the demolition of residential, community and commercial buildings within each option alongside other assessment factors. The relevant Assessment Factors are included in the Consultation Technical Report. The demolition of buildings is considered under environmental impacts and opportunities (14).

As we develop our plans, we'll aim to further avoid negative impact on people's land and property and mitigate any impacts that we cannot avoid. We will present further detail on our plans including any impacts on land and property at statutory consultation. At every stage in the project's development, we'll seek to talk to all those who may be directly affected by our proposals.

Where land is acquired or proposed to be acquired, the Compensation Code sets out the circumstances in which compensation is payable. More information is available in the Guide to Compulsory Acquisition and Compensation on our website.

We've also set up the Proposed Need to Sell (NTS) Property Scheme to support property owner-occupiers who have a compelling reason to sell their property but due to EWR, are unable to do so other than at a substantially reduced value. Applicants would need to satisfy five criteria including evidencing that they currently have a compelling need to sell. The Proposed Need To Sell Property scheme includes non-statutory consultation feedback and Need To Sell consultation feedback. More information can be found in the Proposed Need To Sell Property Scheme Guidance and Application Form on our website.

Compensation for when the railway is in operation falls under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973. This is for the possible devaluation of a property due to a number of physical factors such as noise. Part 1 compensation is explained in EWR's Guide to Part 1 Claims on our website.

6.1.9.6 Access for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs)

Respondents were concerned that community accessibility could be affected by the proposed plans for the level crossings along the MVL. Respondents also voiced concerns over access for NMUs of level crossings, including pedestrians (including wheelchair users, and older people), cyclists, horse riders and wheelchair users. Pedestrian crossings were of greatest concern.

We want to provide proposals for level crossings that are suitable for a diverse range of end users, including disabled people, older people and people with young children. Therefore our proposals will follow current rail legislation and modern standards, driven by a requirement to consider a range of end user groups. An EqIA has been drafted which aims to capture potential impacts, both positive and negative, on protected characteristic groups (PCGs) as a result of the Project, and to detail how these have been taken into account. The EqIA process is an ongoing iterative process and will therefore be further developed and submitted as part of the PEIR at the statutory consultation and with the ES as part of the DCO application.

We appreciate that level crossings play an important role in local connectivity, allowing people to move around their communities, so recognise local people's concerns about our proposals for upgrades to level crossings along the MVL. Accessible and safe alternatives to level crossings are important for users so that everyone can make the journeys they require to access local facilities.

We provided several options for pedestrian connectivity during the consultation and have taken all consultation feedback into consideration as we developed the proposals, including how pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders can make their journeys. We'll continue to consider the NMU crossing integration as we progress the option appraisal and selection process at the next stage of design. Access across the railway and to the station, businesses, and residents in close proximity will be considered during the development of proposed options. These proposals will be informed by ongoing engagement with England's Economic Heartland on

door-to-door connectivity. We'll also endeavour to provide ongoing access during construction, subject to safety considerations.

We understand that horse riders have unique needs in crossing the railway. Temporary access during the construction phase would be planned carefully to provide suitable diversion routes for NMUs. Where equestrian routes may be affected we'll share alternative options with user groups in the development of our designs. We're committed to considering all users, including sensitivity to noise in respect of equestrian routes such as bridleways. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.9.7 Impact on roads

Respondents expressed concern around the closure of level crossings and new roads related to the Project leading to an increase in traffic, causing disruption on the roads.

We're aware that proposals for the MVL and crossings have the potential to impact traffic in the local road network. We'll prepare a Transport Assessment to consider the potential impact on the strategic and local highway network, road safety and local sustainable modes of transport, including public transport. Outcomes of this will initially be reported in the PIER published at the statutory consultation and then further developed within the ES submitted as part of the DCO application. The assessment will set out the impact of construction on the road network, including changes to existing traffic patterns because of predicted construction traffic. This will include consideration of possible congestion, access (including access restrictions), parking, and any health and safety impacts. It will also consider the option to keep the level crossing open and the impact this will have on traffic. The PEIR will include information regarding the baseline for transport, access and NMUs, together with a preliminary assessment of impacts and will be published at the statutory consultation.

6.1.9.8 Impact on emergency services

Respondents commented on the potential negative impact on emergency service response times if proposed plans for level crossings along the MVL go ahead.

Emergency service access across the railway is an important consideration as we develop the proposals for level crossings across the route. Emergency services were invited to participate in the 2019 and 2021 non-statutory consultations. Although they did not provide a response to these consultations, we'll continue to seek feedback from them as we progress our designs. The emergency services will also be invited to provide feedback at the statutory consultation.

6.1.9.9 Impacts on green spaces / PRoW

Respondents were concerned that green spaces and PRoW would be lost as a result of level crossing upgrades.

We recognise that the countryside, parks, and green spaces and access to them is important, and will work to reduce the impact on these areas. To help reduce impacts and protect the countryside wherever reasonably practicable, we're following the environmental mitigation hierarchy by seeking to avoid significant adverse effects on the countryside and, where this

isn't possible, seeking to reduce and mitigate impacts and, if necessary, providing compensation where this is feasible.

Our proposals for PRoW will be designed to the latest standards that will maintain or increase safety for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Information about the design standards will be provided at the statutory consultation.

6.1.9.10 Impact on the environment

Respondents expressed concern around the environmental impacts of the proposed plans for level crossings.

At this stage we're primarily focused on trying to avoid and reduce impacts, by making decisions that reduce the potential for environmental impacts. We've also committed to delivering 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, which requires that habitats for wildlife are enhanced and left in a measurably better state than they were pre-development. This approach supports the Government's 25-year Environment Plan and reflects the requirements introduced by the Environment Act 2021, although these are not yet in force.

Respondents felt that alternatives to level crossings and the associated works would create an unwanted visual impact in their communities.

Assessing the impact of the Project on the environment is a fundamental part of the design of the Project. This includes consideration of landscape and visual impacts. We're carefully considering how the Project can be designed to blend in with the local environment. This includes the consideration of visual impacts of new infrastructure such as bridges, potential ways to soften their appearance and integrate them into the wider landscape context or using sensitive placement of appropriate planting to either screen views from sensitive receptors, or to soften the appearance and presence of engineering earthworks.

The preferred option for each level crossing will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include consideration of the environment as part of the environmental impacts and opportunities Assessment Factor (14).

6.1.9.11 Interaction with wider development

Respondents suggested that we should engage developers and consider how their proposals interact with level crossing upgrades along the MVL.

Where there are already proposals (such as housing development proposals) in place, we're working with local planning authorities, developers and other stakeholders to align and coordinate our proposals as much as possible, while recognising that each project has its own timescales and constraints. Similarly, although highway improvements that are not directly related to the Project are outside of our scope, we'll continue to work with local highway authorities to understand any interdependencies and interfaces with the Project.

6.1.9.12 Impact of Construction

Respondents voiced concern over the impact of construction works required for the proposed plans for level crossings along the MVL. This includes the length of time and the scale of works.

The construction of the Project involves relatively straightforward and well-understood construction practices. To set out how we would manage the construction of the Project a CoCP or an equivalent document will be developed. This will contain provisions aimed at reducing disruption to local communities and mitigating impacts on the wider environment.

The CoCP or an equivalent document will include information about how land acquired for the Project would be properly managed during the construction phase, such as keeping compounds secure, avoiding contamination from worksites into neighbouring land, keeping areas near compounds tidy and free from mud or litter, along with other measures designed to reduce the impacts of construction on local communities. Compliance with the CoCP or an equivalent document will be secured through a Requirement within the DCO.

6.1.10 Specific level crossings

Respondents provided comments on proposals relating to specific level crossings. These comments included outlining specific reasons for supporting or opposing a particular level crossing closure and details of local concerns and certain considerations respondents feel need to be considered within specific designs and construction.

More information on the options put forward as part of the 2021 consultation for Section B can be found in the Section B Consultation Document. More details on respondents' comments on specific level crossings, including where opposition or support has been expressed for specific options, can be found in the tables in the Appendix.

6.1.10.1 Fenny Stratford level crossing (vehicular connectivity)

Respondents raised concerns that closure of the level crossing would divide Fenny Stratford and restrict access to local businesses and amenities. There was also concern that local congestion could increase without adequate off-street parking provision and affect upcoming road improvements in the area, in particular on Staple Hall Road, Simpson Road bridge, and Bilton Road.

During the 2021 consultation, we outlined several options for Fenny Stratford level crossing, which consider both vehicular access and access for pedestrians, cyclists and other NMUs. These will be assessed further as part of the preparation of the Transport Assessment and information will be provided in the PEIR published at statutory consultation. More information on this is included in the overall themes section above.

Although road developments not directly related to the Project are outside of our scope, we'll continue to work with local highway authorities to understand any interdependencies and identify potential mitigations where required as a result of the Project.

Responses also called for a vehicular bridge or underpass to replace the level crossing at Fenny Stratford to maintain vehicle access.

We're not considering these as options at Fenny Stratford due to the close proximity of homes and businesses to the existing level crossing; this is why the proposals in the 2021 consultation had vehicular diversions. A vehicle bridge or underpass would require extensive demolition and is therefore not being considered as an option at this location due to the excessive impact on the community.

The Canal and River Trust stated the need to engage with them and expressed concern over impact on the canal corridor as a result of changes to Fenny Stratford level crossing.

We recognise the important role the Canal and River Trust plays in maintaining and encouraging access to public space, particularly in the Fenny Stratford area. We consulted with the Canal and River Trust as part of the 2021 consultation and will engage in further discussions with the Canal and River Trust as designs are developed to consider impacts to the canal or access to it, including during construction. We'll further consult the Canal and River Trust at the statutory consultation. The impact on the canal corridor is one of the considerations if a pedestrian diversion route uses the canal as proposals are developed. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.2 Fenny Stratford level crossing (connectivity for pedestrians and non-vehicular road users)

Respondents voiced concern that the proposals for Fenny Stratford crossing would impact upon general access around the area for non-vehicular road users. Respondents felt that the lock gate and tow path would be unsafe for public use, specifically referring to cyclists and pedestrians, and particularly to the older demographic in the area.

We've taken all consultation feedback into consideration as we've developed the proposals, including the need for NMU access and how to use any diversion route provided. Access across the railway and access to the station, businesses, and residents in close proximity will be considered during the development of proposed options. These proposals will be informed by ongoing engagement with England's Economic Heartland on door-to-door connectivity. We'll also endeavour to provide ongoing access during construction, subject to safety considerations. Further information will be made available at the statutory consultation.

We've taken all consultation feedback into consideration during development of the proposals, and any design that uses the tow path will consider the safety of pedestrians and cyclists using the path, as well as how to reduce disturbance for the canal users. The proposals would not allow pedestrians to use the lock gate due to the safety issues this would present and would require them to walk on the eastern side of the canal on a designated footpath. Any footpath diversion would be designed to allow for pedestrians and cyclist use safe from hazards.

6.1.10.3 Bow Brickhill level crossing

6.1.10.3.1 Alternative options

Respondents suggested alternative options to the Bow Brickhill level crossing proposals, including:

- An extension of the V11 road seems more "sensible."
- An underpass instead of a bridge as they felt an underpass would reduce noise and may have lower maintenance costs.
- A crossing point for cars at Bow Brickhill to mitigate traffic issues, while others suggested a dual carriageway.

We'll consider the feasibility of an underpass and alternative alignments and diversions (such as extension or utilisation of other routes including the V11). An underpass was presented as Bow Brickhill Option 3 at the 2021 consultation. As presented under Overall Themes we're currently reviewing level crossing proposals along the MVL, including the possibility of keeping the crossing open at Bow Brickhill. This is being considered as part of the option appraisal and selection process in the next stage of the design.

The provision of a dual carriageway is outside of our scope and not something we would be providing. A Transport Assessment will be undertaken which will review the capacity of the road based on how our proposals could potentially affect the local road network. The PEIR will include information regarding the baseline for transport, access and non-motorised users, together with a preliminary assessment of impacts and will be published at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.3.2 Impact on community

Respondents voiced concern over the proposed plans for Bow Brickhill and the impact on development land in the area.

We recognise that the connectivity options for Bow Brickhill level crossing impact on potential development land. We're working with Milton Keynes Council to take into account plans for the area and are committed to working with affected stakeholders and landowners as the proposals are developed in order to limit the impact of the Project.

6.1.10.3.3 Maintain vehicle access

Respondents suggested that vehicle access must be maintained at Bow Brickhill, with suggestions that the proposed bridge is essential, while others were less specific, stating that a vehicular crossing is required either via bridge or underpass. There were comments on the closure of the V10 road at Bow Brickhill, due to increasing journey time and traffic.

We know that the V10 is an important road for the south Milton Keynes community, which is why the consultation included four potential connectivity options for all users at Bow Brickhill

using either a bridge or underpass to cross the railway. In the next stage of design, we'll be undertaking traffic surveys and modelling to understand current traffic flows relevant to the level crossing and how our proposals might affect the local area. This includes assessment of the traffic impact and mitigations if the selected option resulted in temporary closure of the V10 as for Bow Brickhill Option 4.

6.1.10.3.4 Engagement

Milton Keynes Council stated they are developing options for these level crossings and EWR Co should work closely with them on a common proposal.

We're aware that there are development proposals in the Bow Brickhill area and are working with Milton Keynes Council to take into account the potential options at this location through regular meetings. We'll continue to work with the Council to discuss level crossing proposals and assess impacts. We're also committed to working with affected stakeholders, including landowners, as proposals are developed, in order to understand and limit the impact of the Project where reasonably practicable.

6.1.10.4 Browns Wood level crossing

Respondents expressed concerns around the different options presented at consultation:

- Browns Wood Option 1 (New stairs only footbridge). Concern was noted that this would not offer comprehensive accessibility for all and as such would not be a viable option.
- Browns Wood Option 2 (New footbridge with stairs and ramps). Respondents noted opposition due to cost and concern that the footpath could be difficult for people with limited mobility. Additionally, the potential negative visual impact resulting from Option 2 is a concern.
- Browns Wood Option 3 (Underpass). Respondents noted concerns about potential impacts to green space and flood risk. They also felt that underpasses are dark and could potentially be vandalised.

Respondents proposed that the V11 road could be modified to become a dual carriageway across the railway line from the H10 road southwards to meet the new H11 road, providing an alternative to the V10 route and Bow Brickhill level crossing.

Browns Wood Option 1: The current Browns Wood level crossing does not provide an accessible level crossing and Browns Wood Option 1 replicates the existing crossing. Browns Wood Option 2 and Browns Wood Option 3 provide an accessible solution as described in the Consultation Document.

Browns Wood Option 2 (Accessible bridge at existing level crossing) would have a similar level of disruption to Browns Wood Option 1 (Step only bridge at existing level crossing) but would

cause less disruption to the railway than Browns Wood Option 3 (Underpass at existing level crossing). Browns Wood Option 2 provides an accessible solution for less mobile users. We've taken all consultation feedback into consideration during design development, including the need for the proposed solution crossing the railway to be accessible and suitable for cyclists and a diverse range of end users including disabled people. Assessing the impact of the Project on the environment is a fundamental part of the design of the scheme's development, including possible mitigations. This includes consideration of landscape and visual impacts. The PEIR will include information regarding the impact on landscape and visual impacts. This will be presented at the statutory consultation with a full ES being submitted as part of the DCO application.

Browns Wood Option 3 (Underpass at existing level crossing) would provide a similarly accessible solution as Browns Wood Option 2 (Accessible bridge at existing level crossing).

Browns Wood Option 3 would be the most disruptive solution for the operation of the railway. It would also be the most expensive option but would have less visual impact than Browns Wood Option 1 and Browns Wood Option 2. As the design progresses, we'll consider safety at the crossing, including lighting requirements and how to reduce the risk of vandalism. This information will be made available at the statutory consultation.

There is very little usage of the Browns Wood level crossing. A 2016 survey recorded four pedestrians a day using the crossing. It would not be appropriate, in terms of cost and impact to the environment, to replace this level crossing with a road extension and a road bridge.

We're aware of the Milton Keynes Council (MKC) V11 Tongwell Street development proposals in the vicinity of this crossing and are working with MKC to ensure the potential EWR options take account of changes to the highway and rights of way networks that could occur in connection with that development. This will include undertaking an assessment of the potential traffic impacts associated with EWR with a view to reducing disruption as far as reasonably practicable. This information will be made available at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.5 Pony level crossing

Respondents were concerned about the impact a new crossing could have on the local community. Specifically, the potential impact on access to housing developments on both sides of the track.

We're aware that there are various developments proposed in the Southeast Milton Keynes area and recognise that there may be opportunities to work alongside these developments to deliver wider benefits to the area or to enhance proposals and remain open to discussions. Where there are already development proposals published by developers and local authorities, we're working with local planning authority, developers, and other stakeholders to align and coordinate proposals as much as possible, while recognising that each project has its own timescales and constraints.

Respondents provided details on good practice for designing crossings for equestrian users, including guidance on surfaces, gradients and other factors. In particular, the potential for horses to be 'spooked' on the bridge as trains pass underneath them. The potential noise generated from a bridge crossing is also a concern for respondents.

We understand that Pony level crossing is a bridleway crossing used by equestrian users, and this will be considered as we continue to develop the proposals for the crossing. As we identify an emerging preferred option, the good practice advice provided will be considered, along with the guidance provided by the British Horse Society. This will be further considered in the development of the detailed design.

Respondents suggested that any underpass should be well lit, at an appropriate gradient and have a suitable non-slip surface. The length should also be kept to a minimum with the exit remaining visible. The underpass should be accessible for horse riders, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Access by NMUs and particularly horse riders is a key consideration. We'll work to ensure that the proposed design is safe for all users, including suitable lighting and considering accessibility, surfaces and gradients as part of the design development. We recognise that Pony crossing is a bridleway that is used by horse riders and any crossing proposed at this location will therefore consider horse riders' accessibility as part of its design.

6.1.10.6 Woburn Sands level crossings

6.1.10.6.1 Alternative options

Respondents suggested alternative options for the level crossing. These included:

- Building a footbridge at the old School Crossing to improve safety for pedestrians, especially school children, to cross the railway without interacting with heavy traffic at Woburn Sands level crossing.
- Rerouting the railway to pass under Newport Road, as this would remove the need for a crossing.
- Only two trains per hour should pass through Woburn Sands.

We'll consider the feasibility of a footbridge design and its location (such as the School Crossing location) as we continue to develop our proposals. Moving the MVL away from the village centre is not a feasible option as the increased amount of design, engineering works, materials and land take required would not represent good value for money for the taxpayer. This would also have significantly higher environmental impacts than upgrading the current line.

For the railway to pass underneath Newport Road this would require it to be within a cutting or tunnel and so would need to be lowered over a length of several kilometres to provide acceptable gradients for trains. This would result in greater environmental impacts than the proposals presented at the consultation.

Further research on potential future level of demand for our services suggests that the optimum train service for travellers to meet the demand between Bletchley and Bedford is up to three trains per hour. This is lower than that originally identified in the consultation. We'll continue to look at the timetable for trains and where they would stop, which stations would remain open and what service would be provided at each station.

6.1.10.6.2 Hybrid option

Respondents suggested a combination of Woburn Sands Option 1 and Woburn Sands Option 2, with a new road built to bypass the crossing and the level crossing remaining open for local traffic. Others suggested keeping the level crossing open (Woburn Sands Option 2) but adding a footbridge to assist pedestrians.

The two options presented at the 2021 consultation were for a road bridge to the west or to keep the crossing open. These options are presented to keep connectivity between the two sides of the railway. Woburn Sands Option 1 (road bridge) would need to be adopted if we need to close the crossing. If Woburn Sands Option 2 (keep the crossing open) is selected we would not look to provide the road bridge as connectivity would be provided by the level crossing. Before preferred options can be confirmed safety risk assessments and traffic assessments need to be completed. This work will be carried out at the next stage and presented for comment at the statutory consultation.

We did not include a footbridge at the crossing in Woburn Sands Option 2 because the early design work demonstrated that a footbridge at this location would cause significant disruption to the local community during construction and require us to purchase both homes and local businesses. In Woburn Sands option 2 the crossing would remain open and would be providing connectivity across the railway. However, following feedback received during the consultation many people asked us to revisit this issue. The feedback received will be considered as designs are developed and further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.6.3 Appraisal process

Respondents suggested an independent risk assessment for both options for Woburn Sands level crossing.

Any proposed changes to level crossings will be supported by a risk assessment and traffic assessment. In addition, and to ensure that both options meet the Project Objectives set by Government, a range of 15 Assessment Factors have been developed. These have been agreed with the Government and were outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report.

For level crossings, such as at Woburn Sands, we've identified the likely differentiating Assessment Factors as: transport user benefits (1), capital costs (3), operating costs (4), short distance connectivity (6), and environmental impacts and opportunities (14).

Engagement with key stakeholders, consultation feedback and further concept development, will inform the designs for Woburn Sands level crossing, which will be tested against these factors to help determine the preferred option at this location.

6.1.10.6.4 Bridge

There was some opposition to the suggestion of having a road bridge or underpass at the current level crossing site. Respondents felt that the visual and physical impact of the structure would be significant and would negatively impact the Woburn Sands community.

Respondents suggested that a bridge would be a good solution to solve issues related to the closure of the level crossing.

We did not include either of these options in the consultation, as early design work demonstrated this would cause significant disruption to the local community during construction, would leave lasting visual and environmental impacts and would require us to purchase both homes and local businesses for the additional land required. However, following feedback received during the consultation process many people asked us to revisit this issue. The feedback received will be considered as designs are developed and further information will be presented at the consultation.

6.1.10.6.5 Alternative footpaths

Respondents raised suggestions regarding alternative footpaths; specific details on locations can be found below.

Respondents suggested a ramped bridge or underpass at Mill Farm.

Woburn Sands Option 1 proposes a new footbridge (with stairs and ramps) to maintain connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists in place of Woburn Sands and Mill Farm crossings. This would be located near to the existing Woburn Sands level crossing.

Woburn Sands Option 2 incorporates a bridge at Mill Farm. The land around the crossing is rough terrain and not easily accessible and, as a consequence, a footbridge with stairs has been considered at this location. We've not put forward an option for an underpass at Mill Farm level crossing due to a combination of factors including: the very low current usage of the level crossing; the costs associated with the construction and operation of the underpass; and the increased risks such as flooding and lighting, all of which outweigh the benefits of providing an underpass instead of a bridge.

Respondents suggested a single pedestrian/Redway (a Redway is a shared-use path for pedestrians and cyclists) crossing between Pony level crossing and the new Woodleys Road bridge.

The suggestion of a single pedestrian/Redway crossing would remove the road crossing, which is required at Woodleys Crossing to replace Woburn Sands level crossing in Woburn Sands Option 1, or as a private farm crossing in Woburn Sands Option 2. Moving the crossing to this location would require a larger land take for the new access routes and crossing infrastructure and which would have a higher environmental impact.

Respondents suggested EWR need to provide a new section of footpath connecting existing footpaths to Cranfield Road.

We would only alter footpaths where necessary as a result of the new services we would provide to the local area. A connection to Cranfield Road is currently not required as part of the proposals to retain connectivity with the footpaths across the railway.

6.1.10.6.6 Upgrade crossing

Respondents recommended that to maintain the crossing, it must be upgraded and barrier down time must be reduced.

There are several factors that influence barrier down times, including the protection and warning arrangements in place at the crossing. The configuration of the protection and warning arrangements are governed by legislation. All options, including the option of keeping the crossing open (Woburn Sands Option 2), will be subject to further design development. Barrier down time modelling and level crossing risk assessments will be undertaken so that we can have an accurate understanding and can consider if there are potential upgrades which can reduce barrier down time.

6.1.10.6.7 Impact on community

Respondents voiced concern over the impact of construction on the community, including community severance, increased traffic flow and safety for pedestrians, cyclists and school children. There was significant concern about potential impacts on Edgewick Farm and the allotments.

We're committed to ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable that the Project is able, to mitigate disruption during the planning, construction and operation of the Project. This includes reducing the impact to communities from any crossing closures by providing reasonable alternatives where possible. During construction, provision will be made to maintain connections that are intended to be retained after the Project is completed, even if they have to be temporarily diverted, including to key community facilities such as the school. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

We recognise the importance of agriculture, community facilities, recreational facilities and open space such as the allotments and Edgewick Farm and are focused on finding solutions that avoid, reduce or mitigate adverse impacts on these. The new road within Woburn Sands Option 1 would connect to Bow Brickhill Road south of the railway. However, as presented, it may be necessary to provide an extension of the new road that would pass through the allotments and connect to The Leys. This is one of the negative impacts from this option and a consideration in the assessment of preferred options as part of the environmental impact and opportunities Assessment Factor (14). Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.6.8 Impact on traffic

Respondents were concerned about traffic in and around Woburn Sands; delays caused by the level crossing; and the potential increase in traffic due to proposed housing developments in the area. There were also concerns about existing issues, including with parking.

We recognise that Newport Road/Station Road is an important local road link which carries much of the local traffic through Woburn Sands and the surrounding area. As part of the ES that will be part of the DCO application, we'll prepare a Transport Assessment to consider the potential impact on the strategic and local highway network, road safety and local sustainable modes of transport, including public transport. It will also set out the potential impact of construction on the road network. Consideration will include congestion, access (including access restrictions), parking, and any health and safety impacts. The PEIR will include information regarding the baseline for transport, access and non-motorised users, together with a preliminary assessment of impacts and will be published at the statutory consultation.

Where there are already proposals (such as housing development proposals) in place, we're working with local planning authorities, developers and other stakeholders to align and coordinate across projects as much as possible, while recognising that each project has its own timescales and constraints. Similarly, although highway improvements not directly related to the Project are outside of our scope, we'll continue to work with local highway authorities to understand any interdependencies and identify potential mitigations where required as a result of the Project.

6.1.10.6.9 Maintain vehicle access

Respondents stated that maintaining vehicle access is vital. It was suggested that an underpass or bridge should replace level crossings to help reduce local traffic.

Both options presented at the 2021 consultation would maintain vehicle access across the railway. We presented options for Woburn Sands level crossings that considered both vehicular access and access for pedestrians, cyclists, and other NMUs. This included an option for the closure of the level crossing, which included an offline bridge and new road, and an

option for retaining the level crossing. A bridge was proposed as part of Woburn Sands Option 1 in favour of an underpass. This is due to the cost associated with construction and operation of an underpass at Woburn Sands, along with the increased complexity, being outweighed by the transport benefits compared with a bridge at this location.

6.1.10.6.10 Weight restrictions to reduce HGV traffic

Respondents suggested weight restrictions to limit HGV access to the town centre.

Highway restrictions not directly related to the Project are outside our remit, but we'll continue to work with National Highways and local highway authority to understand any interdependencies and potential mitigations where required as a result of the Project.

6.1.10.6.11 Cost

Respondents voiced concern over the cost of upgrades in Woburn Sands.

The preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include consideration of the cost of the Project as part of the capital cost (3), operating costs (4) and overall affordability (5) Assessment Factors.

6.1.10.6.12 Proposed country park

Respondents raised concerns about the impact of Woburn Sands level crossing proposals on the proposed country park as outlined in the South East Milton Keynes (SEMK) development.

We recognise local concerns about access to green space, which will be factored into the development of our proposals. We're working with Milton Keynes Council to understand their plans for the area and are committed to working with them and other stakeholders to align our proposals with planned development as part of the SEMK as far as possible.

We're aware of the Woburn Sands Town Council request for a country park. This is not currently included in the SEMK proposals, but we'll continue to engage with Milton Keynes Council to understand whether these proposals are to be progressed.

6.1.10.6.13 Cuttings and tunnels

Respondents suggested that the railway should be in a cutting or tunnel at Woburn Sands.

For the railway to pass underneath Newport Road, this would require it to be placed within a cutting or tunnel and would need to be lowered over a length of several kilometres to provide acceptable gradients for trains. This would result in greater environmental impacts than the proposals presented at the consultation.

To provide adequate width within the railway corridor for emergency evacuation routes and to accommodate the necessary retaining structures on each side of the railway if one was to place the railway within a cutting, it is likely that we would need to acquire additional land on either side of the railway, potentially including land within the gardens of houses neighbouring the railway.

The cutting or tunnel would form a low point in the local topography and would therefore be prone to flooding. It is likely that a pumped drainage system would be required to remove water from the cutting or tunnel, which would incur on-going maintenance costs and may require additional land to accommodate the pumping equipment and possibly an attenuation facility (which might be required to avoid the risk of overwhelming the local drainage network).

Therefore, while a cutting or tunnel may deliver some benefits to the community such as being visually less intrusive during operation, there would also be extensive negative impacts and additional costs. We don't consider that these benefits are great enough to justify the considerable cost and adverse impacts.

6.1.10.7 Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley level crossings

6.1.10.7.1 Alternative options

Respondents suggested an alternative option in which Salford Road is terminated at the crossing as per Aspley Guise/Husborne Option 2, but a link road from a part of Salford Road called 'The Slype' is directed back toward the village, interacting with Berry Lane, bridging the railway as suggested by Aspley Guise/Husborne Option 1, and emerging on Bedford Road alongside Wendsden Drive just west of Mount Pleasant.

The proposal suggested would be similar to the bypass of the level crossing as per Aspley Guise/Husborne Option 1. We'll develop options, including road alignments, as the design is progressed. Part of the consideration for the road alignment will be to reduce interference on and impact to residential properties and priority habitats, as we consider where the road bypass could join the existing road network.

Respondents also suggested an Aspley Triangle Development connection from Bedford Road, or a road from Crawley Truck crossing through to Aspley Triangle, bringing the route nearer to the A421 or connecting Salford Road to Bedford Road as alternative solutions.

We recognise that these proposed alternative routes could be beneficial to the local community, both south and north of the railway once the Aspley Triangle is developed.

However, these alternative routes were not presented at the consultation and were not put forward during option selection as they would not provide suitable mitigation for the closure of Aspley Guise (Salford Road) level crossing. As a result, they do not form part of the scope of the Project, but we, will continue to work with the local highway authority to understand any interdependencies and identify potential mitigations where required as a result of the Project.

6.1.10.7.2 Footpath 12

Respondents stated that the use of Footpath 12 increased during the Covid-19 lockdown. There was also a suggestion that EWR Co should consider an underpass at this location.

In the next stage of developing the proposals, we'll undertake surveys and modelling to further understand current usage levels of level crossings, including Old Manor Farm Level Crossing (Footpath No. 12) and how the proposals might affect the area. Information obtained will be used in the Assessment Factor process, under the environmental impacts and opportunities (14) Assessment Factor.

6.1.10.7.3 Maintain vehicle access - bridge/underpass

Respondents suggested that the only solution for maintaining vehicle access would be to deliver a bridge or underpass.

We did not include an option for a bridge or underpass at the site of the level crossing in Aspley Guise because the early design work demonstrated that this would cause significant disruption to the local community to construct and would require us to purchase both homes and local businesses for the necessary land. Aspley Guise/Husborne Option 1 provides a new road around Aspley Guise Village to the east, providing vehicular accessibility.

6.1.10.7.4 Impact on community

Respondents raised concerns about the impact of the proposals for Aspley Guise and Hubsorne Crawley on the local community, village history and character.

We'll seek to avoid or reduce direct impacts on historic and cultural assets including the Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley (Church End) and listed buildings. As far as is reasonably practicable we'll aim to avoid harm to the setting of designated heritage assets, prioritising those of the highest sensitivity such as Scheduled Monuments, Grade I and Grade II listed buildings, parks and gardens. In order to do this, early identification and surveys of those assets most likely to be affected will be carried out so the Project can be designed to avoid these and, where this is not possible, incorporate appropriate mitigation measures into the design.

We understand that severance is a significant concern to people living in villages in the vicinity of the railway. Aspley Guise/Husborne Option 1 would provide a road bridge across the railway to mitigate any severance. Aspley Guise/Husborne Option 2 would close the crossing and provide a footbridge at Old Manor Farm traffic would need to use the existing road network to travel between locations on either side of the railway. We're committed to providing a safe means to cross the railway and, where diversions are essential, minimising their impact on local communities as far as is practicable.

6.1.10.7.5 Impact on roads

Respondents raised concerns about the impact of proposals on roads and the potential for congestion.

We're aware that the closure of level crossings and road developments related to the Project have the potential to impact traffic on the local road network. If Aspley Guise/Husborne Option 2 (road closure with no replacement) were to be adopted it is expected that traffic would use the existing road network at Woburn Sands or Bedford Road. We'll prepare a Transport Assessment which will include an assessment of local roads around Aspley Guise (which may be considered by respondents to be quieter and less used) and the potential effects the proposals could have on them. Outcomes of the assessment will initially be reported in the PIER published at the statutory consultation and then further developed within ES submitted as part of the DCO Application.

We're aware that there are several proposed developments around Aspley Guise and are in discussion with the local authority, developers and other stakeholders to consider their proposals and to help ensure that the benefits of EWR are delivered for both new and existing communities.

6.1.10.7.6 Environment

Some concern was expressed around the impact level crossing closures would have on the countryside, wildlife, mature trees, and biodiversity within the conservation area.

We understand respondents' concern on the effects on the countryside, wildlife, mature trees, and biodiversity within the Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley (Church End) conservation areas. Aspley Guise/Husborne Option 1, presented at the consultation would impinge on the conservation area as the road access would join at Berry Lane at the top of the conservation area. Potential impacts from the Project on the countryside, wildlife, mature trees, and biodiversity will be considered under the environmental impacts and opportunities Assessment Factor (14) and we'll identify potential mitigations where required as a result of the Project.

We recognise the importance of biodiversity and protecting the habitats of local wildlife including priority habitats such as woodland and ancient woodland as well as parks and greenspaces. As part of our commitment to changing the environment for the better, we're

thinking carefully about protected species and their habitats at the design stage. The PEIR will include information regarding the ecology and biodiversity baseline supported by survey data, preliminary construction and operation assessment of impact on designated sites, habitats and species. This will be presented at the statutory consultation with an ES being submitted as part of the DCO application.

6.1.10.8 Husborne Crawley Footpath No 10 and Station Road in Ridgmont level crossings

Respondents expressed concern that none of the proposed options provide sufficient access across Ridgmont for NMUs, specifically horse riders and wheelchair users.

We appreciate that level crossings play an important role in local connectivity, allowing people to move around their communities, so we recognise local people's concerns about our proposals for Husborne Crawley No. 10 and Ridgmont level crossings. This is why we provided a total of three connectivity options to replace the existing crossings at Husborne Crawley No. 10 and Ridgmont.

We want to provide proposals for level crossings that are suitable for a diverse range of end users, including disabled people, older people and people with young children. Therefore, our proposals will follow current rail legislation and modern standards, driven by a requirement to consider a range of end user groups. An EqIA has been drafted which aims to capture potential impacts, both positive and negative, on protected characteristic groups (PCGs) as a result of the Project, and to detail how these have been taken into account. The EqIA process is an ongoing iterative process and will therefore be further developed and submitted as part of the PEIR at the statutory consultation and with the ES as part of the DCO application.

Non-statutory consultation Husborne/Ridgmont Option 3 provides an accessible NMU crossing at the existing Ridgmont level crossing, however, it is not proposed to cater for horses. If Ridgmont crossing is closed, horse riders could use the existing bridleway as a diversion. As the design is developed a Traffic Assessment will be undertaken which will assess the crossing usage and different user's needs. This will be used to assess whether options provide suitable accessibility for users where reasonably practicable. Further information will be provided at the statutory consultation.

Respondents raised concerns that the M1 J13 is already congested and would be worsened by planning in Ridgmont.

We note the respondents' concerns that there are existing capacity issues with Junction 13 of the M1.

We'll prepare a Transport Assessment which will set out the potential impact of construction on the road network, including changes to existing traffic patterns because of predicted construction traffic. The assessment will consider the impact on the strategic and local highway network, including the M1 J13. Outcomes of the assessment will initially be reported in the PIER published at the statutory consultation and then further developed within ES submitted as part of the DCO application.

Respondents stated that there was not enough explanation about Husborne/Ridgmont Option 2 and it was hard to fully understand it.

Husborne/Ridgmont Option 2 in the consultation was to provide a footbridge across the railway at the site of the current foot crossing for Footpath No.10. A stepped footbridge was proposed as the current footpath network is suitable for all potential users, including wheelchair users and people who require level access. At this stage, the proposals presented in the consultation indicate options which could be developed further. More detailed plans will be produced at the next stage of design and shared at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.9 Lidlington level crossings

6.1.10.9.1 Alternative approach

Respondents suggested combining Lidlington Option 1 and Lidlington Option 2: the footbridge could be sited further east to serve the new station, which would allow an underpass to be built near the old School Crossing on Bye Road/Hurst Grove.

We'll consider the feasibility of alternative alignments and locations of bridges and diversions (such as a footbridge to the east or an underpass near the old School Crossing on Bye Road/Hurst Grove) as we continue the option appraisal and selection process into the next level of design. Further information about the option appraisal and selection will be published at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.9.2 Access

Respondents were concerned about access for NMUs in Lidlington, as the proposed alternative footpaths, which includes footbridges, would not be usable for people who require level access, some disabled people, older people, people with very young children, some people travelling with luggage, or cyclists and horses.

We've taken all consultation feedback into consideration during development of the proposals, including how pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders can make the journeys they require to access local facilities. Access across the railway will be considered during the development of proposed options.

We want to provide proposals for level crossings that are suitable for a diverse range of end users, including disabled people, older people and people with young children. Therefore, our proposals will follow current rail legislation and modern standards, driven by a requirement to consider a range of end user groups. An EqIA has been drafted which aims to capture potential impacts, both positive and negative, on protected characteristic groups (PCGs) as a result of the Project, and to detail how these have been taken into account. The EqIA process is an ongoing iterative process and will therefore be further developed and submitted as part of the PEIR at the statutory consultation and with the ES as part of the DCO application.

In addition we will be consulting and involving the EWR Accessibility Advisory Panel, which is made up of disabled end users with extensive personal experience of barriers faced in the environment in question, and provide invaluable user based input into schemes and proposals.

We're still considering a number of options at this location. The preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process which includes consideration of community and accessibility as part of the environmental impacts and opportunities Assessment Factor (14).

6.1.10.9.3 Impacts on community

Respondents were concerned about the impact on the local community of closing the Lidlington level crossings, with specific reference to isolating Lidlington. Respondents also expressed concern that if the village were to be divided, access to amenities such as the Thomas Johnson Lower School and The Green Man pub would be limited.

We're committed to ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable that the Project is able, to mitigate potential severance during the planning, construction and operation of the Project. This includes minimising the impact to communities from any crossing closures by providing reasonable alternatives where possible. This includes the access to the areas including Thomas Johnson Lower School and The Green Man pub.

6.1.10.9.4 Impacts on roads

Respondents believe that having a barrier down of 40 minutes in every hour would cause disruption to road users and pedestrians.

There are several factors that influence barrier down times, including the protection and warning arrangements in place at the crossing. The configuration of the protection and warning arrangements are governed by legislation. The Consultation Document stated an estimated a maximum 40-minute barrier down time relating to Lidlington Option 2, which was to keep Lidlington crossing open. We recognise that increasing barrier down times raises concerns for local residents. We are looking closely at the feedback from the consultation as we continue to develop the options for the level crossing and to mitigate negative impacts on the community including minimising the impact of diversions. The effects of the barrier downtime will be considered in the selection of a preferred option, under the Assessment Factor for short distance connectivity (6).

It was also mentioned that closing level crossings in Lidlington may increase road traffic and the impact that this would have on residents of Whitehall (a private road maintained by its residents) was highlighted as well as concerns stated around safety for cyclists and pedestrians. Some concerns were raised regarding the impact on traffic for residents of Bye Road due to proposals to make it a narrower, one-way road. Respondents also expressed concern about access to the village and the potential lack of car parking facilities at the proposed new Lidlington station.

We're aware closure of the crossing has the potential to impact traffic in the local road network. As part of the ES that will be part of the DCO application, we'll prepare a Transport Assessment to consider the potential impact on the strategic and local highway network, road safety and local sustainable modes of transport. This will include consideration of potential congestion, access (including access restrictions), parking, and any health and safety impacts. This will include consideration of the impact on Whitehall & Bye Road, and the overall impact on access for motorised vehicles across Lidlington.

At the next stage of design, we'll be undertaking modelling work to further understand if additional parking is required at Lidlington station. Further detail will be presented at the statutory consultation.

The options presented at the 2021 non-statutory consultation have been proposed as these would still provide access to Lidlington.

6.1.10.9.5 Lidlington bypass

Respondents suggested that the railway bypasses Lidlington, which would benefit the local community by minimising disruption and severance.

We've previously explored the possibility of creating a rail 'bypass' at Lidlington, whereby the line would be re-routed away from the village centre. As explained in the consultation materials, this option was not taken forward because the preliminary design work demonstrated this had significant cost and environmental implications that could not be justified by the benefits that the option would deliver.

Respondents offered suggestions for diverting traffic, including retaining the level crossing and building a railway bypass, and diverting road traffic via the A507.

Diverting traffic along the A507 would not provide connectivity between the north and south of Lidlington which is an important consideration for any proposals at this location. A Traffic Assessment will be undertaken of the area and further information will be provided at the statutory consultation.

Respondents suggested that EWR Co deliver a road bypass for Lidlington - Thrupp End across to Marston Road.

This option was not considered at the consultation stage. As we develop proposals we're considering the feasibility of alternative alignments and diversions (such as a bypass between Thrupp End and Marston Road) if the level crossing is to close as part of the option appraisal and selection process. Further information will be provided at the statutory consultation stage.

6.1.10.10 Millbrook level crossing (Station Lane)

Respondents expressed concerns about the visual impact of a new road bridge and the land that would be required to construct the bridge, including the impact on farmland and the

country park. There were also concerns around the closure of the level crossing increasing traffic in the village.

Milbrook Option 1 and Millbrook Option 3 propose a new road bridge over the railway. We're carefully considering how the Project can be designed to blend in with the local environment. This includes the consideration of where to locate a proposed road bridge, if this option were selected. Further examples of where visual impacts are being considered are the potential use of landscape earthworks to soften the appearance of embankments and integrate them into the wider landscape context or using sensitive placement of appropriate planting to either screen views from sensitive receptors, or to soften the appearance and presence of engineering earthworks. Our response regarding impacts on traffic is included under Impacts on Roads above.

Respondents expressed concern regarding the safety of a 400KV overhead line running through the village.

We note that there are existing power lines within the vicinity of Millbrook Level Crossing. These will be factored into any design decision we make. Any design will include assessment of utilities in the area, including overhead lines, to make sure proposals are safe. This will include consideration as part of the safety risk Assessment Factor (13), as described in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report.

6.1.10.11 Green Lane level crossing

Respondents suggested that the proposed highway bridge within the new development of Stewartby becomes the amended highway route for the public across the railway, with the existing, already upgraded level crossing, becoming a private level crossing with no PRoW, for access to and from the Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) only.

We acknowledge that any solution provided at Stewartby needs to consider access to the ERF which is in close proximity to the crossing. If a new highway bridge is built with the new development this could become the main route across the railway. Keeping the existing road open as a private road for the ERF alongside this proposed bridge is a potential option and we'll consider this carefully as proposals are developed for the Green Lane crossing. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

Respondents were concerned about HGV routes to Covanta disrupting the local community. Respondents also mentioned wider development issues and suggested the need to consider visual impact.

We aware of the restrictions on HGV traffic through Stewartby to the Rookery South site and will consider this carefully as we continue to develop the proposals for the Green Lane crossing. We recognise that both options for the Stewartby level crossing presented at the consultation impact on development land and are open to discussions with stakeholders on opportunities to find alternative solutions where these support the overall project objectives and provide mutually beneficial outcomes.

Respondents also mentioned wider development issues and suggested the need to consider visual impact.

Assessing the impact of the Project on the environment is a fundamental part of the design development, including possible mitigations. This includes consideration of landscape and visual impacts. We're carefully considering how the development can be designed to blend in with the local environment including integrating into the wider landscape context or using sensitive placement of appropriate planting to either screen views from sensitive receptors.

Respondents stated their concern that the proposals could be disruptive to or impact on safety for local college students.

Kimberley College is a significant source of rail passengers as many students use the MVL services to access the college currently. We recognise that there must be ongoing access to the college and the safety of students is paramount as we develop the proposals for Stewartby level crossing to provide a suitable route to the college. Proposals will be developed and presented at the statutory consultation.

Concerns were raised about the potential access issues to the ERF with suggestions that access to the new ERF may be compromised and HGV access should be considered. Respondents suggested that that Rookery South Energy Recovery Facility should be consulted on detailed designs for potential new road layouts, as the new access road on the north side of the realigned Green Lane would encompass a 90 degree left-turn that could form a tight turning circle for vehicles.

We recognise that the level crossing at Stewartby is the main access point to the Rookery South site and that the site has specific requirements. We're also aware of the restrictions on HGV traffic through the village of Stewartby, as described on pages 176 to 178 of the 2021 Consultation Document and will consider this carefully as the proposals are developed. Both options presented at the consultation included a road bridge with HGV access to the ERF.

A bridge replacement may impact development land and we'll work with landowners and stakeholders to mitigate the impacts as we proceed through the appraisal process. We're also aware of the potential for a railhead to be developed at Rookery South and, while this is out of the scope, will work with stakeholders to seek to ensure our works don't preclude this being delivered in the future. We're further exploring options for the crossing, including keeping Green Lane crossing open. Further information will be made available at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.12 Wootton Broadmead level crossing

The comments on proposals relating to Wootton Broadmead have been raised and responded to under Overall Themes above.

6.1.10.13 Wootton village level crossing

Access was a concern for respondents, who said that the Wootton Village level crossing bridge should be suitable and usable for disabled people and have ramps in place. The need to accommodate horse riders and all NMUs was also highlighted.

A stepped footbridge was proposed at Wootton Village as the current footpath network is not suitable for all potential users, including wheelchair users and people who require level access. At this stage, the proposals presented in the 2021 consultation indicated options which could be developed further. More detailed plans will be produced at the next stage of design and shared at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.14 Kempston Hardwick level crossing

Respondents suggested closure of Kempston Hardwick station and constructing the bridge replacing the level crossing at the south end of the station site, on an alignment that would link Manor Road to the roundabout at the eastern end of Fields Road, Wootton. There was some opposition to building the bridge.

We'll consider the feasibility of alternative alignments and diversions such as extension and connection to Fields Road as we continue to progress into the next level of design. Such a connection between Manor Road and Fields Road would not necessarily require the closure of Kempston Hardwick station. There are other considerations as to whether Kempston Hardwick station should be closed, remain open, or be relocated and any crossing proposal would need to be compatible with proposals for the station.

We've carried out further options analysis at each level crossing. Analysis has identified Kempston Hardwick level crossing as having the potential to remain open, as confirmed within the Economic and Technical Report on our website.

Respondents requested improvements for cyclists, including segregated cycle track and cycle parking at Kempston Hardwick level crossing.

We'll consider the NMU level crossing integration opportunities as we continue through the option appraisal and selection process into the next level of design. We understand that accessible alternatives to level crossings are particularly important for NMUs. This is why we provided several options (each of which provide a bridge) for pedestrian connectivity during the consultation. Development of these proposals will be informed by ongoing engagement with England's Economic Heartland on door-to-door connectivity.

6.1.10.15 Woburn Road foot level crossing

Access for NMUs to the footbridge was a concern for respondents, with concern expressed regarding access for disabled people and/or people who require level access. The Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum suggests that the bridge should be built to cycling standard with ramps. Respondents also requested that an upgrade is made to create a cycle/footway at Woburn Road to link both sides of the railway to existing cycle routes on either side.

We recognise local people's concerns about proposals to close crossings, which is why during the consultation we provided two options for people to consider for each level crossing, both

of which provided a footbridge. Woburn Road is currently a foot crossing, so access by NMUs is the key access consideration in this location.

A stepped footbridge was proposed at Woburn Road as the current footpath network is not suitable for all potential users, including wheelchair users and people who require level access. At this stage, the proposals presented in the 2021 consultation indicated options which could be developed further. More detailed plans will be produced at the next stage of design and shared at the statutory consultation.

6.1.10.16 Bedford Carriage Sidings

Various comments were made on the proposals for Bedford Carriage Sidings, including:

- Suggestions for various alternative locations for the sidings: north of Bedford, St John's area, near the A421 and Wixams, an area of unused railway land between Cauldwell Street and Ampthill Road.
- Support for relocating the carriage sidings.
- A lack of information or detail in the consultation materials to provide informed feedback.
- Opposition to the siding's relocation.
- Concern about relocating sidings, any required CPO and demolition, its impact on other services residents and commuters.

We are not proposing to move the Bedford Carriage Sidings and no alternative locations are being considered. Keeping the Bedford Carriage Sidings in their current location aligns with the EWR project objectives; including the objective to provide a sustainable and value for money transport solution to support economic growth in the area (see page 40 of the Consultation Document).

Respondents requested further consultation with impacted stakeholders, including GTR and NR.

We've engaged, and will continue to engage, with NR to understand the impact of the proposals on their operation, to identify mitigations and to address their non-statutory consultation feedback. Going forward, we'll also engage with GTR to discuss their non-statutory consultation response and the EWR proposals.

6.1.11 Marston Vale Line Blockade Strategy

Closing the railway for an extended period of time is known as a blockade. Respondents provided comments on the considerations and the potential impacts, and stated their concerns around the blockade strategy that would be required to enable the construction of works to the MVL. Respondents also commented on the three specific options put forward for a potential blockade strategy. Option 1 was for a series of short blockades, Option 2 for one prolonged blockade and Option 3 for a mix of short and long blockades; more

information on the options put forward can be found in the Section B Consultation Document.

6.1.11.1 General concerns around disruption from the proposed blockades

Some overall opposition was raised to all the options proposed at the consultation for blockade strategies required to support the construction of the MVL. Respondents raised concerns about the potential disruption to local communities such as Woburn Sands, Lidlington and Bow Brickhill during the construction phase of the Project and suggested that works should take place at weekends and during the evenings to reduce disturbances to local communities.

We understand that construction works are likely to cause disruption to local communities along the route, and we'll develop a CoCP or an equivalent document which will include provisions aimed at reducing disruption to local communities such as Woburn Sands, Lidlington and Bow Brickhill and the wider environment. This will include details on how acquired land would be managed during the construction phase such for example, keeping compounds safe and secure, avoiding contamination to neighbouring land, and keeping adjacent roads free of mud and litter.

Our planning ahead of construction will consider the most efficient way to deliver the Project whilst reducing disruption, including considering working during the evenings and at weekends. The preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors which have been identified on p.190 of the 2021 Consultation Document.

Respondents opposed blockades as a potential construction strategy, highlighting that the loss of regular rail services would impact rail usage encouraging people to use cars. It was also noted that train services could be affected and a regular timetable for bus replacement services should be put into place.

We're undertaking work to understand the level of service that needs to be provided during construction which will depend upon the construction strategy we choose to adopt. We'll aim to tailor services to meet the needs of existing users and local communities. For example, we're aware that many school and college children use these services to travel to institutions such as Kimberley College, so will work with key stakeholders to reduce and mitigate the potential impacts for key user groups. Further details of the service patterns for trains and bus replacement services during construction will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.11.2 Maintaining access during the blockade(s)

Respondents suggested that while the blockade is in place some roads and paths along the line must remain open for local accessibility.

We recognise the importance of providing reliable travel for local people during construction, and we'll prepare a Transport Assessment which considers the impact of construction work on the strategic and local road network.

During construction, we'll aim to reduce the impact on road networks and PRoW. Where these are affected, we'll consider options including: closing the route temporarily, providing temporary diversions or opening a new permanent route. The CoCP or an equivalent

document will set out provisions aimed at reducing disruption to local communities. Proposals for PRoW will be designed to the latest standards that would maintain safety for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Responses expressed concern that under the proposal for a blockade we would close all level crossings simultaneously. We wouldn't close all level crossings at the same time and works would be carefully planned and coordinated to provide a suitable diversion route while each level crossing is closed. We've put forward proposals which don't follow the exact line of the existing roads, which would allow the existing roads and crossings to remain open for most of the construction period. For example, we would programme any required closure of the level crossings at Lidlington and Millbrook to ensure a diversion route is available between Ampthill and Flitwick. We recognise that proposals for the crossings at Broadmead Road and Green Lane at Stewartby would need to be coordinated as they provide key access to Stewartby and any closure would need to be programmed to ensure a diversion route is available. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

Respondents requested that accessibility is maintained between the northern and southern side of Lidlington when blockades are in place.

We note that that Lidlington level crossing connects the north and the south of Lidlington. If we were to choose Lidlington Option 1, which closes the level crossing, we would aim to keep the crossing open for as long as possible during construction. If complete closure is required, we would aim to plan and coordinate this so that a suitable diversion route is in place.

6.1.11.3 Opposition to the different blockade strategy options

Respondents opposed the different options presented at consultation:

- Respondents opposed Option 1, suggesting a series of short blockades is not feasible. Respondents raised concern about lack of certainty over the length of the proposed blockades and potential costs.
- Respondents opposed Option 2, suggesting that the blockade would cause continued disruption to freight, road users, students and the emergency services. It was also suggested a prolonged blockade is not a practical option as it would impact long-term passenger numbers.
- Respondents opposed Option 3, as a mixture of short and long blockade would be confusing.

Work is underway to determine the preferred construction and blockade strategy for the MVL and this will be assessed in terms of time and cost effectiveness. We recognise that all options presented at the consultation would cause disruption in differing ways. For example:

- *Option 1 would result in weekend disruption over a longer period of time.*
- *Option 2 would cause disruption every day over a set period, but work would be undertaken quicker than Option 1.*
- *Option 3 would be complicated to plan and deliver due to using a combination of two strategies and potential third-party influences; however, it can provide other benefits*

of targeted blockades to help reduce overall disruption to running services whilst we undertake construction works.

We'll focus on positive customer experience, drawing on best practice and lessons learned from similar projects, to provide a strategy for replacement services whilst the railway is closed. A long blockade is not expected to have an impact on long term growth along the MVL as the improved services once constructed would provide greater long-term growth than the current services in place.

The preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include consideration of cost, commuters, and disruption to roads as part of the capital costs (3), environmental impacts and opportunities (14) and safety risk (13) Assessment Factors.

We'll provide further details of the proposed construction plans, including rail replacement services at the statutory consultation stage.

6.1.11.4 Support for the different blockade strategy options

Respondents expressed support for the different options presented:

- Respondents expressed support for Option 1, allowing for continued service throughout construction as it would be the least disruptive proposal.
- Respondents support Option 2, as it allows for work to be completed in a shorter time frame, which would be more cost effective. It was expressed that a prolonged blockade would enable users to plan around the blockade and a high-quality bus replacement service would be sufficient to support local people.
- Respondents supported Option 3, expressing that it would enable local residents to continue to use the train line at certain times, balancing an efficient delivery and the needs of the community.

We note the support from respondents for the different proposed options for the MVL. The benefits and challenges of each of the options are set out in the 2021 Consultation Document. We're investigating different ways to undertake the work required in a timely and efficient manner whilst considering the current use of the railway by passengers and freight. We'll provide updated proposals at the statutory consultation.

6.1.11.5 Importance of consultation

Respondents highlighted the importance of working alongside local communities and businesses to decide the best solution for level crossings in the area. Central Bedfordshire Council requested that EWR Co engage with them prior to any decisions made in respect of the temporary closure of the MVL.

We recognise that the temporary closure of the MVL is of key importance to local communities and therefore encouraged people to respond to the consultation. We already utilise several communication methods to keep in touch with local communities and key stakeholders through regular email newsletters, the Project website and via local media. We'll continue to

hold local drop-in events and meetings with Local Representative Groups, keeping our communication channels under review to provide local communities with updates as the Project progresses.

As part of the DCO process, we'll ensure that significant consultation is undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders throughout the area affected by the Project, including local communities and local authorities such as Central Bedfordshire Council and Milton Keynes Council. We've held two non-statutory consultations and will be holding a statutory consultation to share further details with residents, stakeholders and service users.

6.1.12 Bletchley station

Respondents commented on various aspects of the proposals for Bletchley station, including the need for the improvements considered within consultation material, comments on specific elements of the station design, its facilities and the impact of the proposals on the local area and community more widely. More information on the proposals put forward can be found in the Section B Consultation Document.

6.1.12.1 Accessibility of the station

Respondents highlighted that Bletchley station is currently inadequate from an accessibility perspective. Respondents made requests for improvements to pedestrian access and crossings, as well as taxi and bus stations outside the station. There were also requests that all platforms should have step-free access.

We understand that ensuring stations are accessible to all is important to railway users, and we're considering how stations can facilitate an easy end-to-end journey for all passengers. To promote active travel, we're working alongside local authorities to understand how we can support local plans and improvements to footpaths around the station.

In terms of step-free access to all platforms, we're considering the upgrades which would be required at Bletchley station beyond the current works being undertaken. Current works are underway by the East West Rail Alliance, who under the 2020 Order were authorised to expand the station by adding two additional step free platforms for trains between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Bedford. Accessibility on platforms will be considered. The existing platforms 1-5 are already step free access, with platform 6 currently not being step free. We're considering what upgrades are required for the platform for its continued usage, such as lifts for step free access and further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

We'll also continue working with other organisations, including bus operators and the local authority, to understand facility requirements including interfaces and interchange with bus services and taxis at stations and providing onward travel information.

6.1.12.2 Station design

There was support for the addition of a new eastern entrance to the station, which would provide a better connection to the town, bus station and college as well as support for the retention of the current western entrance.

We note the support from respondents for both an eastern and western entrance to the station, and whilst providing an eastern entrance to Bletchley station does not currently form part of our scope, we continue to consider if there are opportunities to take such an option forward in future. Further information and proposals for station facilities at Bletchley Station will be presented at the statutory consultation.

There were suggestions that the improved station could include artwork and elements related to local heritage.

We understand that the heritage of the local area is important to local communities, particular around Bletchley Park and the significance of the codebreakers in WW2. As the design of the station progresses, we'll work with local stakeholders to explore opportunities to celebrate this heritage at the station.

6.1.12.3 Platforms and station capacity

Respondents suggested the need for the integration of high-level platforms into Bletchley station at platforms 7 and 8, along with an easy interchange between East West Rail and West Coast Main Line services.

NR and East West Rail Alliance have begun construction work on new high-level platforms 7 and 8 at Bletchley station. These platforms are programmed for completion in 2024, in time for the start of services between Oxford and Milton Keynes and ahead of works east of Bletchley. The platforms will connect to the existing footbridge at Bletchley station to provide an easy interchange to West Coast Main Line services.

Respondents expressed concerns about the capacity of Bletchley station, suggesting a need to provide platforms which enable 8-carriage trains to stop, or providing additional platforms to prepare for potential increases in train services.

We're currently conducting modelling to forecast and understand the demand for rail usage at each of our stations. This includes the consideration of the layout and design features such as the positioning of shelters, waiting areas and information screens to minimise potential future crowding within the station.

Based on the proposals shown at the consultation, our services would utilise 4-carriage trains. However, the new high-level platforms being constructed by NR and East West Rail Alliance have been designed so that in the future, platforms could be extended to allow for 8-carriage trains.

6.1.12.4 Station facilities

Respondents made suggestions for improvements to the existing Bletchley station, including the need for better toilet facilities, lighting, waiting areas, retail shops and ticketing areas.

As we continue to develop our design proposals for Bletchley station, any facility upgrades will be designed to improve customer experience. As we would not be the station operator it is not

within our remit to deliver changes to facilities such as toilets, lighting, waiting areas, retail shops and ticketing areas. However, we'll be sharing communities' feedback with London North-Western Railway who would be the operator of the station.

Respondents expressed the need for better parking facilities at Bletchley station, stating that the current infrastructure is insufficient to meet levels of demand.

We recognise that the ability to access the station by car is important to individuals and we're undertaking modelling as described above to consider the local road network around the station and how much parking may be required at the new station. We'll also consider providing suitable parking facilities for motorcycles and provision of electric vehicle charging points, as well as parking for disabled people. Further information on these proposals will be available at the statutory consultation.

6.1.12.5 Connection with Milton Keynes Central

Respondents stated that infrastructure for a direct chord connecting Milton Keynes Central station should either be provided as part of the EWR project or that the EWR project safeguard this option for development in the future.

We've been tasked by the Government to deliver much-needed transport connections for communities between Oxford and Cambridge. A direct connection from Cambridge and Bedford to Milton Keynes Central does not currently form part of our remit to provide these transport connections.

There are no proposals to provide a Bletchley Chord as part of the Project, however the delivery of EWR does not preclude this option from being developed in the future.

6.1.12.6 Impact of the proposals

Respondents felt that more detail is required about the potential impact on station proposals on the Cemex Plant.

We're aware of the Cemex plant to the northeast of the train station and will consider any potential impacts on the plant within our proposals. We'll engage with Cemex along with other relevant stakeholders so we can develop proposals that limit any potential impacts of the Project.

Respondents expressed concerns that the potential impact proposals for Bletchley station could have on the local community, including the level of noise from construction works.

We recognise concerns about the impact of noise and vibration from construction and will develop a CoCP or an equivalent document which will include provisions aimed at reducing disruption to local communities and the wider environment. This will also include our noise policy, which will set out plans to mitigate potential noise and vibration from construction and avoid any adverse impacts on health and quality of life to local communities.

Respondents raised concerns about the potential impact the proposals could have on local road networks, making it difficult to travel around Bletchley. There was particular concern about the impact to Saxon Street.

We understand the concerns respondents have about the local road networks and congestion in the Bletchley station area, including Saxon Street. We're aware that certain proposals could impact the local traffic network. We'll prepare a Transport Assessment which will consider the potential impact on the strategic and local road network, changes to existing traffic patterns as a result of construction related traffic, congestion, access, parking and health and safety impacts. Outcomes of the assessment will initially be reported in the PIER published at the statutory consultation and then further developed within the ES submitted as part of the DCO application.

Respondents expressed general support for the proposed plans for Bletchley station. Notably respondents commented that the proposals would boost the local economy, be utilised by a number of local students and commuters, as well as maintaining rural connectivity. Respondents emphasised that accessibility is more important than journey speed.

We're committed to putting people at the heart of EWR, delivering a railway that is inclusive and a positive experience for all. We note respondents' preference for accessibility over the journey time. The preferred option will be selected following consideration of a range of Assessment Factors. Accessibility is considered with the transport user benefits Assessment Factor (1), while journey time is considered within the short distance passenger services Assessment Factor (7). Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.12.7 Support for Bletchley Depot

Respondents stated their support for proposals to use Bletchley train maintenance depot.

We note comments from respondents about their support for the use of Bletchley Depot.

6.1.13 Fenny Stratford Additional Track

Respondents commented on various general aspects of the proposals for additional track at Fenny Stratford and the impacts on the local area and community.

Respondents also provided their views and comments on specific elements of Option 1 and 2 and made suggestions for alternative approaches to the proposals for additional track:

- Option 1 proposes to build new bridges next to the existing bridges to carry the new track.
- Option 2 proposes to replace the existing bridges with wider bridges that would carry both tracks. More information on the options put forward can be found in the Section B Consultation Document.

6.1.13.1 Support for dual tracking

Respondents expressed support for the proposals to reinstate the second track between Fenny Stratford and Bletchley, because it would support future service capacity and reliability, increase train capacity and help mitigate delays.

Further information on the option of reinstating a second track at Fenny Stratford will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.13.2 Oppose dual tracking

Some opposition was voiced regarding the proposals for dual tracking at Fenny Stratford.

We note opposition to additional tracks. However, between Bletchley and Bow Brickhill the section of single track would not be able to cope with the additional trains proposed and would affect both capacity and reliability of the EWR service and other services on the route. This section of track was originally dual track but one track was removed in the early 1970s. Therefore, we would need to reinstate the second track to help us to achieve the Project objectives of improved journey times and inter-regional passenger connectivity.

Further information on dual tracking will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.13.3 Requirements for new bridges

Respondents suggested that a proposed new chord and two through tracks across the low-level bridge would increase capacity in the area and remove the need to build new bridges over Saxon Street or expand the existing ones.

We've considered several options for Saxon Street to find a solution that works for both the wider rail network and the communities affected. The use of just the existing bridges would not enable us to provide the level of service expected, as it would leave a section of railway as single track and create clashes with the existing rail sidings at Bletchley, which are in close proximity. The suggested track design would cause capacity issues and potential safety risks with train movements.

Suggestions were made that EWR Co should retain and use the existing infrastructure already in place for the railway, such as bridges.

We note that some respondents oppose the creation of additional tracks and bridges. Between Bletchley and Bow Brickhill, there are four existing bridges that allow the trains to run over the River Ouzel and local roads (the V7 Saxon Street dual carriageway in Bletchley (2 bridges) and the A5 dual carriageway east of Fenny Stratford), all of which were built to carry only one track. Due to the increased number of trains needed for our services, we would need to create additional tracks to avoid affecting the capacity and reliability of the EWR service and other services on the route.
Option 1 would retain the existing bridges and infrastructure and place additional bridges next to existing bridges, which would allow us to retain as much of the existing infrastructure as possible. The preferred option will be selected following consideration of a range of Assessment Factors including the retention of existing railway as part of the environmental impacts and opportunities (14), performance (11) and safety risk (13) Assessment Factors.

6.1.13.4 Views on Option 1

Respondents supported Option 1 (building new bridges next to existing bridges), regarding it as a less disruptive option which avoids demolishing existing bridges and allows services to continue running whilst newer bridges are being built. It was suggested that this option would cost less than altering existing structures.

There was some opposition to Option 1, respondents noting that they did not favour two bridges and that it would have a more negative visual and environmental impact on the local area.

We're assessing the impact of the Project on the environment, including the landscape and visual impacts, and how the Project can be designed to blend in with the local environment and surrounding areas. We'll develop mitigation measures that are integrated with ecological requirements in the wider area to support our commitment to 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

We're developing the options for Fenny Stratford additional track and the preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include visual and environmental impact as part of the environmental impacts and opportunities Assessment Factor (14). Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.13.5 Views on Option 2

Respondents supported Option 2, (replacing existing bridges with wider bridges), as it would be easier to implement and provide new modern bridges. Respondents suggested that new wider bridges could use less land, support electrification and require less maintenance than Option 1.

Some concerns were raised about the potential disruption caused by the construction of Option 2.

If Option 2 was taken forward as the proposed option for Fenny Stratford, and we needed to build replacement bridges, we would aim to mitigate disruption during the planning, construction and operation phases. We'll work alongside affected communities and their representatives to keep those impacted by the Project up to date with activity and progress. A wide range of matters as discussed throughout this chapter will be considered, including noise, air quality, PRoW and land and property requirements. This will aid in the preparation a CoCP or an equivalent document, which will set out how we plan to reduce or mitigate disruptions to the local community. At the statutory consultation we'll provide further details on our approach to construction and operation of the railway, including details of the potential disruption to local communities and how this would be mitigated.

We're developing the options for Fenny Stratford additional track and the preferred option will be selected following a rigorous process using a range of Assessment Factors, outlined in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of the Consultation Technical Report. This will include disruption during construction as part of the safety risk (13) and environmental impacts and opportunities (14) Assessment Factors. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

There was some consideration that Option 2 would be the least disruptive to the environment.

Option 2 does not necessarily provide less disruption to the environment. Removing existing bridges and installing larger bridges can cause more disruption than installing smaller new bridges alongside. We'll select the preferred option using a range of Assessment Factors including the environmental impacts and opportunities Assessment Factor (14), which can be found in the Consultation Technical Report.

6.1.13.6 Details of bridge design

Respondents suggested that if a new bridge is required at Caldecotte A5, as a result of additional tracking, it should be a landmark bridge rather than a plain concrete design.

We're currently reviewing our options for the bridge at the A5 to determine whether a new bridge would be built or if we could expand the existing bridge.

We recognise that the community is interested in how the railway and associated infrastructure will look in relation to its surroundings and want infrastructure to look attractive. These considerations are part of the detailed design process which is undertaken at a later stage of project development. We'll continue to consider the aesthetics of the designs as they develop and will continue to discuss design with key stakeholders as proposals progress. Further information will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.13.7 Impact on roads, cycleways and footpaths

Respondents suggested that a fundamental requirement of designing the A5 rail interface will be ensuring spatial provision (futureproofing) for future Strategic Road Network widening, stating that a failure to provide additional space would permanently constrain National Highways' ability to provide additional capacity for future demand. Respondents recommended engaging National Highways ahead of statutory consultation.

We're committed to working with National Highways to understand the impacts on the strategic road networks as a result of our proposals in and around Bletchley and Fenny Stratford, both in the short term from construction, and long-term changes in traffic flow in the area. We note the spatial issue concerns raised around the A5 and will continue to engage with National Highways, ahead of statutory consultation on their plans for future proofing the area.

Concerns were raised around the impact the proposals could have on roads, footpaths, and cycleways. In particular, it was felt that more space is needed for cyclists and pedestrians, and the Project would result in increased traffic levels.

We'll prepare a Transport Assessment, which will include consideration of changes to existing traffic patterns as a result of construction traffic and considerations of congestion, access, parking and health and safety impacts. The PEIR will include all preliminary information regarding transports, access and non-motorised users. We continue to work with local

highway authorities to understand and identify any potential mitigations that would need to be put into place.

Respondents commented that they could not support the proposal unless it can ensure that spatial provision for future road widening requirements would not be impacted.

As we develop our options for Fenny Stratford, we'll consider the wider network requirements such as future road widening.

Concerns were raised about the proposals presented cutting off the footpath which connects Fenny Stratford to the wider countryside.

With the exception of Simpson Road, we're not proposing to permanently remove access to any existing PRoW in Fenny Stratford. Proposals for alternative rights of way for both vehicles and pedestrians to mitigate the proposed stopping up of Simpson Road at the site of the current Fenny Stratford level crossing were presented in the consultation report. If Simpson Road level crossing is to be closed, there would not be a loss of access to the wider countryside from Fenny Stratford. We may have to provide temporary diversions or closures of other rights of way while construction is underway.

There were suggestions that redundant bridges be made into pedestrian and cycle paths, and that safety is a consideration.

We're committed to the encouragement of active travel and integrating this with existing and future regional and local plans and planning strategies. We're committed to delivering a real step-change in the quality of active transport infrastructure throughout the EWR corridor, so that travelling by bike and on foot becomes a realistic and attractive choice for short journeys. It is not expected that there will be any redundant bridges, so it would not be possible to convert bridges into pedestrian and cycle paths.

6.1.13.8 Impact on environment

Respondents noted that they opposed the proposal for dual tracking due to the impact this might have on the local community and environment, including heritage buildings and railway.

We're committed to ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable that the Project is able, to mitigate disruption during the planning, construction and operation of the Project. We'll continue to consider the impact of planned work as the Project progresses and work with affected communities and their representatives to ensure people impacted by the work are kept up to date with activity and progress.

We're considering potential impacts on the community and how to reduce or mitigate disruption to local people, communities, the environment, and heritage buildings. The company is considering how to avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life. We're also considering a range of matters including potential impacts on PRoW and land and property requirements.

The CoCP or an equivalent document will explain the steps we'll take to reduce or mitigate disruption to local people, communities and the environment during construction. Additionally, we'll explain our approach to construction and operation of the railway and provide further details of potential effects of this at the statutory consultation.

We understand concerns about the potential impact of the proposals on local historic buildings and heritage sites, and we'll aim to avoid or reduce physical impacts on these where possible. This will include the setting and context of historic and cultural assets such as conservation areas, archaeology, listed buildings, and historic views and landscapes. As far as is reasonably practicable we'll aim to avoid impacting the setting of designated heritage assets, prioritising those of the highest sensitivity such as Scheduled Monuments, Grade I and Grade II listed buildings, parks and gardens. We'll undertake surveys and early identification of those assets most likely to be affected, so that the Project can be designed to avoid these and, where this is not possible, incorporate appropriate mitigation measures into the design.

The PEIR will describe the likely adverse and beneficial environmental effects of the proposals, including the impact on the canal, the local community and environment, heritage buildings and railway. The PEIR will include available baseline data and a preliminary construction and operation assessment of impact on residential properties, community facilities, recreational facilities, open space and PRoW. This will be presented at the statutory consultation with an ES being submitted as part of the DCO application.

The Forestry Commission responded that, although the additional track would be on the site of a previous track, there are trees present within the footprint. Additionally, there is a 0.53ha conifer plantation to the south of the line adjacent to the A5.

We're following the environmental mitigation hierarchy by seeking to avoid significant adverse effects on woodland and ancient woodland and where this isn't possible, seeking to reduce and mitigate impacts and if necessary, looking at compensation. At this stage the Project is primarily focused on trying to avoid and reduce impact, by making decisions that help 'design out' the potential for environmental impacts. So, for example, as a result, all alignments (including options in Section B) have avoided direct impacts on key national features including known ancient woodland.

There is the potential for the individual trees and conifer plantation referred to by the Forestry Commission to be impacted by the proposals for the additional track. However, further assessment work and further work on the design is required in order to confirm the nature and extent of any impacts, along with any potential mitigation or compensation.

This will be considered in the selection of a preferred option as part of the environmental impacts and opportunities Assessment Factor (14). Construction-related impacts on the environment would also be identified and managed, as far as reasonably practicable, by the CoCP or equivalent document, submitted as part of the DCO application. This would include measures to control impacts related to tree protection.

In addition, the Project has committed to delivering 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, which requires that habitats for wildlife are enhanced and left in a measurably better state than they were pre-development. This includes woodland.

Further information on impacts on woodlands will be presented at the statutory consultation.

6.1.13.9 Impact on Grand Union Canal

Respondents raised concerns about the delivery of the additional tracks and how this could affect the canal, towpath and swing bridge.

We recognise that the additional tracks at Fenny Stratford may potentially impact the Grand Union Canal and its users during the construction phase. Some temporary disruption is likely and we would seek to maintain access and mitigate any impacts as far as is practicable. We don't, however, anticipate that there would be any long-term impacts to the canal following construction. Our PEIR and ES will set out the likely adverse and beneficial environmental effects on our proposals, including impacts on canals, and how these would be mitigated where appropriate.

We'll work with local stakeholders, including the Canal and River Trust, to develop our designs and construction methodology and will comply with processes set out by DEFRA and other key statutory bodies.

6.1.13.10 Lack of detail in proposals

Concern was raised about the lack of detail in the consultation documents, particularly related to Fenny Stratford bridges, including the A5, the Grand Union Canal and River Ouzel. Respondents asked that track layout and bridge designs are presented to stakeholders at the earliest opportunity.

During the consultation, the plans we shared indicated options that could be developed further, and we're utilising the feedback received, as well as the Assessment Factors set out in consultation material to choose which options to progress. This includes consideration of infrastructure, construction activity and the service provided during and after construction. At the statutory consultation, the public will have the opportunity to comment and provide feedback on more detailed plans including designs for track options and bridges.

6.1.14 Other comments

Respondents provided comments around the level of information and engagement from EWR Co on the proposals for the MVL.

6.1.14.1 Requests for further engagement

There were requests that EWR Co and Milton Keynes Council consider the views of the community and respect their needs. Respondents proposed further analysis and consultation involving the local community, Milton Keynes Council and Woburn Sands Town Council. Respondents stated that EWR Co must work alongside the local community to develop proposals for the MVL.

There are a range of stakeholders who may be affected by the proposals for the MVL including residents, businesses, rail users and others. Consulting early has helped us to identify any key issues and concerns and start to consider how we can potentially avoid or reduce them. As previously stated, we've already held two non-statutory consultations and will be holding a statutory consultation in due course.

The DCO process ensures that significant consultation is undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders throughout the Project's development, including with local communities. Regular stakeholder engagement is ongoing with key stakeholders, including with local authorities and town councils.

The need to listen to local residents was highlighted, claiming that Aspley Guise Parish Council does not effectively represent local feelings on alternatives to the level crossing.

We don't assume that the parish councils along the route represent the views of all local residents, which is why we invite local communities to provide us with feedback during formal consultation, at both the non-statutory and statutory stages. Individuals will have further opportunity to provide feedback on our proposals at the statutory consultation and then subsequently during the examination of our DCO application.

6.1.14.2 Lack of information and evidence on proposals

It was highlighted that the consultation material provided at the consultation lacked information including on the proposed blockades; closures of roads; details on specific level crossings and station locations; and about the improvement works and the design of Bletchley station.

At this stage, the proposals presented at the 2021 consultation indicated options which could be developed further. More detailed proposals and assessment of impacts will be produced at the next stage of design and shared during the statutory consultation.

It was stated by respondents that some of the arguments for the railway do not provide enough evidence, including the predicted traffic demand and impacts on jobs and economy.

In terms of traffic demand, we'll prepare a Transport Assessment to consider the potential impact on the strategic and local highway network, road safety and local sustainable modes of transport, including public transport. This will include consideration of traffic demand. Traffic demand impact will be considered as part of the transport user benefits (1) and environmental impacts and opportunities (14) Assessment Factors. Further information and proposals for mitigation will be presented at the statutory consultation.

With regards to the impact on jobs and the economy we expect the new rail link to support significant local economic growth that would benefit individuals, communities, educational and research establishments, and businesses, with EWR providing increased connectivity to households and businesses across the route. When businesses become closer in effective

proximity (e.g., you can travel between businesses quicker than you previously could), then productivity gains can be made through closer links to suppliers, a more dynamic and specialised labour market, and an increased opportunity for knowledge sharing. Furthermore, businesses would be able to attract an increased pool of labour due to the reduction in journey time from areas along the EWR route. For households, residents would benefit from decreased journey times to areas along EWR, and workers would be better connected to additional job opportunities along the route.

Jobs and economy impact will be considered as part of the contribution to enabling housing and economic growth Assessment Factor (2), and further information on this will be presented at the statutory consultation. Further information about the impact on jobs and the economy will also be presented in the EWR business case, an early version of which will be submitted as part of the DCO.