

Consultation feedback report:

Chapter 7: Section C

Version: Final
Date: 26/05/2023

7. Section C

7.1 Your feedback and our response

This chapter provides a summary of your feedback and our response to the main comments raised in relation to proposals for the Bedford area, including Bedford St Johns station, Bedford station and north Bedford.

Throughout this section text in *italics* is our response to the matters raised in your feedback.

7.1.1 Bedford St Johns station

Respondents provided feedback on the two options presented by EWR Co during the consultation for the relocation of Bedford St Johns station. Comments both in support of, and in opposition to, each option were received. Feedback was also received on issues concerning the design of, and access to, a relocated station. Suggestions for alternative relocation sites to those proposed by EWR Co were put forward by respondents.

7.1.1.1 Opposition

Respondents suggested keeping Bedford St Johns in its current location, or felt that station improvements were not necessary. Others felt that there is not enough space for a new or extended station. Respondents questioned whether Bedford St Johns station is needed, given the two Bedford stations are within walking distance of one another, suggesting that a single Bedford station would reduce costs and journey times by removing a stop on the line.

Respondents raised concerns that Option 1 (relocating the station to the west, closer to the hospital) could exacerbate road congestion, create pollution and negatively affect Bedford Hospital, its parking and pedestrian access to it. Respondents said Option 2 (relocating the station to the south) would impact the community by reducing accessibility, increasing road congestion and pollution, and disrupting residents. There were also concerns about the need to rebuild the bridge over the river and the associated costs.

At its current location, Bedford St Johns station would not be able to accommodate the proposed EWR train service since the existing single-track has a pronounced curvature which significantly limits capacity and train speeds. The track curvature would also prevent us from lengthening the platforms and space constraints at the current station location prevents us from providing a second track and platform on the current railway alignment. By moving the station, we can provide better connectivity, improved station facilities and enable trains to travel faster, reducing journey times.

Whilst some respondents felt Bedford station and Bedford St Johns station are too close to one another, both stations provide benefits and connectivity to different areas of Bedford. The [Consultation Technical Report](#) explained that removing Bedford St Johns station would degrade public transport services in the area to the south of the River Great Ouse and would

make Bedford Hospital less accessible by train. Similarly, if EWR services did not stop at Bedford station, the benefits from providing connectivity to the area to the north of the River Great Ouse and interchange opportunities to other national rail services would be lost.

We recognise that there are space constraints around Bedford St Johns station. As we develop our proposals further, we'll look for innovative ways to use the space available to provide an enhanced passenger experience with good access to the station while reducing the land required as far as reasonably practicable. More information will be shared at the statutory consultation which we expect to take place in the first half of 2024.

We understand there would be impacts on traffic and transport in the Bedford St Johns area from the construction and operation of EWR, and we'll work to ensure any disruption to the community is reduced as far as reasonably practicable. We'll explore how we can provide new opportunities for sustainable travel to and from the new station, and how we can make sure there is good access for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as good bus links. We'll undertake a Transport Assessment of potential impact on the strategic and local highway networks, road safety, and local sustainable modes of transport, including public transport. Outcomes of this will initially be reported in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) published at the statutory consultation and then within Environmental Statement (ES) submitted as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application. The assessment will consider the potential impact of construction on the road network, such as changes to existing traffic patterns because of predicted construction traffic and the suitability of roads, including those around the new station.

Any mitigation will be set out in the Code of Construction Practice (CoCP), or an equivalent document, which will be submitted as part of the DCO application.

Having considered consultation feedback, our emerging preferred location for the relocated station remains Option 1 – Hitchin Alignment (Hospital station). We'll continue to work with Bedford Borough Council and the NHS Trust to understand our impacts and to develop mitigation options where required.

7.1.1.2 Support

Respondents supported the relocation and upgrading of the station, with several saying it would encourage further regeneration in the area. Network Rail noted that both options would remove service constraints in the area, and welcomed this.

Respondents expressed support for Option 1, saying the site is better connected, close to existing bus routes, within walking distance of the town centre and Bedford station, and is close to the hospital. Respondents preferred this option because it is a brownfield site, which they said would have less impact on residential areas. This option is also supported by Network Rail, as they believe Option 2 would be more difficult to construct, and by Bedford Borough Council due to the opening up of a 'health link' to Addenbrooke's Hospital.

There was also support for Option 2, with respondents saying this location is easier to access for more people and is less congested. Some thought it would be less disruptive and more beneficial thanks to the faster journey times it would enable.

Respondents said that the current station is poorly located, space constrained, has poor access and is not well-used.

The emerging preferred location is Option 1 – Hitchin Alignment (Hospital station), to the west of the current location between Amphill Road and Cauldwell Street, closer to the hospital than the existing station. This would improve access between the hospital and the station and therefore benefit both patients and hospital staff, as well as being less disruptive during construction than Option 2 – St Johns South station.

Option 2 and its associated alignment would require a new bridge over the River Great Ouse, which would be challenging and complex from a construction logistics perspective. Additionally, when applying our range of Assessment Factors – which aim to ensure the options being developed and consulted on meet the Project objectives set by the Government – Option 1 performed better in respect of capital costs (3), environmental impacts and opportunities (14) and consistency with local plans (15).

We are pleased to see comments from respondents about their support for the emerging preferred option, Option 1, to relocate Bedford St Johns station to the Bedford Hospital location.

Option 1 compared more favourably than Option 2 (relocating the station south to Amphill Road/Elstow Road pedestrian link bridge) on capital costs, consistency with local plans and environmental impacts. This is explained in the [Consultation Technical Report](#).

7.1.1.3 Access

Respondents expressed concern about the impact that relocating Bedford St Johns station would have on access to Bedford Hospital, Bedford Station, and to the station itself.

One of EWR's core priorities is to improve connectivity across the Oxford to Cambridge region. We'll consider how we can improve local connections and the customer experience while travelling to EWR stations within our design work for the new Bedford St Johns station. We'll promote and prioritise sustainable transport modes, to and from EWR proposed stations, including the provision of secure cycle parking facilities. We'll also work with the local authority to maintain safe pedestrian and cycling routes from Amphill and Kempston Roads to the station as far as reasonably practicable.

Further information about how our access proposals have been developed as a result of continued design work and stakeholder feedback will be shared at the statutory consultation.

7.1.1.4 Station design

Respondents offered suggestions on aspects of the station design including platform alignment and access, sustainable design principles, and improved station facilities, and said that there should be uniformity between both Bedford stations. Network Rail believes that passenger requirements and Train Operating Companies considerations should be included in the design.

We'll consider these aspects at the next stage of design. Some suggestions would be considered and developed ahead of the statutory consultation with comments sought through the consultation, and some at the detailed design stage after the submission of the DCO application with comments sought through the statutory process.

7.1.1.5 Alternative station locations

Respondents suggested alternative locations for Bedford St Johns, including a station around the Kempston area and retail park; south of Ford End Bridge; or to its former location on the Varsity Line alignment.

We consulted on two options for relocation which aimed to provide a balance between serving local communities to the south and north of the town centre and reducing the cost of the EWR project, its impacts on local communities and on the environment. We considered alternative station locations as suggested by respondents, including:

- The relocation of Bedford St Johns station to Kempston: although this station location would provide benefits to the Kempston area and retail park, it was not taken forward as it would not serve communities in the centre of Bedford, nor south of the River Great Ouse, such as Bedford Hospital.*
- Moving the proposed station south of Ford End Bridge: this was considered but was not taken forward as it would bring Bedford St Johns station within close proximity of Bedford station so limiting its benefit, and having two stations north of the River Great Ouse would reduce connectivity to EWR services south of the river, and hence reduce connectivity to EWR stations.*
- Moving the station to its former location on the Varsity Line: this alternative station location for Bedford St Johns would likely require additional track and introduce a set of reverse moves, which would significantly impact journey times of the proposed EWR services. Additionally, this option would not fit with the planned track layout where the line toward Cambridge leaves the Midland Main Line to the north of Bedford. This station location would only be compatible with an alignment which would re-use the former Varsity Line. However, the re-use of the former railway has been ruled out for various reasons as detailed in Chapter 4.*

7.1.2 Bedford station

Respondents provided feedback on the emerging preferred option presented by EWR Co during the consultation for a new Bedford station, including comments relating to station design, access, capacity and facilities.

7.1.2.1 Support for proposals

Respondents were supportive of Route E and the emerging preferred option to redevelop Bedford station. Specific reasons for support included Route E being seen as the fastest route; improved connectivity and integration with the Oxford-Cambridge region; the need for improvements to the station; providing opportunities for regeneration and development; and bringing economic benefits to Bedford. Respondents felt that Route E would have fewer environmental impacts than other routes. Network Rail supported the preferred solution in the form of the North Concept for Bedford.

We were pleased to see support for the proposed route and our plans for redeveloping Bedford station.

7.1.2.2 Platforms

Respondents requested an additional platform on the fast line at Bedford to allow ‘fast’ trains to call at Bedford, with some also suggesting that the introduction of additional platforms for non-EWR trains should be considered because additional platforms could remove the need for the six-track approach. Others stated that this would also allow Midland Main Line long distance services to stop. Respondents supported the proposals for separate platforms for EWR services at Bedford to support the resilience of the railway and to allow for extra space at the station. In addition, respondents suggested that EWR platforms may need to be curved to link in with the existing infrastructure.

Since the 2021 consultation, we’ve reviewed our designs for Bedford station in line with EWR and broader industry requirements. Our emerging preferred option remains a Bedford station North Concept with a station to the north of Ford End Road. As part of our proposals, three new EWR-dedicated platforms would be created on the east side of the station close to the existing platforms. As part of the platform design, we’ll consider straight and curved platforms at Bedford station and our proposals will be presented in more detail at the statutory consultation.

Other suggestions by respondents seeking to improve capacity for all station operators at Bedford station have been considered, however these suggestions were assessed as not being required as part of the EWR Project. This includes the suggestion to provide a platform on the Up Fast Line, for non-EWR trains. We modelled this to test whether the removal of East Midlands Railway services from the Slow Lines would remove the need for the construction of two additional tracks north of Bedford station. Although proposals for an Up Fast Platform were found to maximise capacity on the Slow Lines, as EWR would only be sharing these two lines with freight, the modelling showed that this positive impact was limited by the regular turnaround of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) services in-platform and Network Rail’s plans

to uplift freight on the Midland Main Lines (MML). Consequently, although we are supportive of the need for the Up Fast Platform at Bedford station in general terms, we've not included it in our proposals as it would not remove the need for a six-track approach north of Bedford station.

We'll continue to work with Network Rail, who operate and maintain Britain's railway infrastructure, and train operators to enhance our designs for Bedford station to maximise capacity and platforms whilst minimising disruption.

7.1.2.3 Bedford station redevelopment – location and design

There were comments both supporting and opposing the emerging preferred option for redeveloping Bedford station.

Respondents said that the station is too small, and that they support plans to increase its capacity. Respondents recommended that proposals for the station should consider specific safety concerns related to issues with small passenger spaces (particularly on the bridge and steps), queuing, and overcrowding. Respondents raised concerns that additional passengers will negatively impact the local area. Respondents felt the existing building is small and congested with poor facilities such as a lack of parking and ticket machines. Respondents also referred to poor access by bus and a lack of parking.

Respondents suggested the location of the current station is poor, with the surrounding area being poorly maintained and concern for high crime rates locally. Respondents also suggested that, as the station is not in the centre of Bedford, it is too far from key destinations.

The station was seen by many as no longer fit for purpose. Respondents felt that its redevelopment would support wider regeneration of the area and would be an opportunity to rethink public space in the town centre. Many felt that modernisation and an enhanced design is needed. There was also support for upgraded and improved facilities, including enhanced retail, a bigger concourse, a plaza entrance, and better passenger flows around the station building. Network Rail supports redesign of Bedford station and National Highways believes the upgraded stations would boost development of the area.

Respondents called for ambitious architecture and attractive design, while others called for local heritage to be reflected. Respondents suggested that the station should be built with high-quality, long-lasting materials and others suggested that the appearance of the station and the area surrounding it should be improved.

Respondents suggested alternative solutions for Bedford station, including connecting EWR to the Midland Main Line at Ampthill Road/A6, moving Thameslink trains standing at the existing platforms to free capacity, downgrading the existing station and building a more “impressive” station that links rail and road.

Respondents suggested that half of EWR services could serve Bedford station with others by-passing the town and stopping at Bedford Borough Council's proposed station at Wixams, whilst others suggested half of GTR services should terminate and turnaround at Wixams.

There was some opposition to the redevelopment of Bedford station, however. Respondents said that the current station facilities are acceptable and redevelopment is not necessary. Others did not want EWR services to serve Bedford station due to potential disruption and negative environmental impact. Respondents also highlighted that the station and surrounding area is space constrained, which they felt would limit EWR proposals. Respondents also suggested that Bedford station doesn't need to be rebuilt but should be upgraded.

We are pleased to see support for proposals for the redevelopment of Bedford station. As we continue to develop designs to a greater level of detail we'll engage with stakeholders to align the designs with wider aspirations, regeneration and development proposals for the area.

We'll continue to work closely with Network Rail in the development of designs for Bedford station and recognise the need to seek to reduce any potential disruption to other train operators, rail users and communities as far as reasonably practicable. This includes consideration of disruption during construction of EWR, as well as during operation.

Our proposals to date have focused on increasing capacity and improving the way passengers move around Bedford station. Three platforms would be created on the east side of the station close to the existing platforms. We'll continue to consider a variety of aspects including footbridges, sizing of ticket hall and station entrance and how these station components can operate efficiently and safely.

The station is located to the west of the town centre and we note comments that it does not currently provide good connectivity. Bedford town centre is approximately 15 min walk away from both Bedford and Bedford St Johns stations. For people travelling to and from the town centre via rail, it is anticipated that the former will provide access to the town centre and other key destinations from the north of the River Great Ouse and the latter will provide connectivity for those to the south of the river. We also note comments about access to Bedford station by bus and lack of parking in the station area. We'll consider these aspects as we develop our designs for the station area and will share our proposals at the next consultation.

Due to the increase in train services and passenger numbers as a result of additional EWR services, Bedford station would experience capacity issues that would need to be addressed through the redevelopment and construction of a bigger station. The current railway and platform configuration in the station does not provide enough capacity to allow for the projected increase in service levels for EWR. Detailed information about the redevelopment requirements is included in the [Consultation Technical Report](#). Enhancement of the station would also be an opportunity to improve the station facilities and for Bedford Borough Council

to use the redevelopment as a catalyst for the regeneration of the surrounding area. We are committed to delivering a functional station that is fit for EWR's proposed level of service at Bedford station and which meets industry accepted norms and standards. Our aim is to align with Bedford Borough Council's plans, most notably under the Bedford Town Deal projects, to transform the station and gateway to the town with a focus on ease of interchange and improving the overall customer experience. However, any proposals seeking additional improvements to the station that are not required for the operation of EWR are not within the scope of EWR Co.

In the selection of Route Option E in 2020, we took into account whether EWR should by-pass Bedford to the south, such as the respondents' suggestion for EWR to connect to the Midland Mainlines at Ampthill Road/A6. Any route passing to the south of Bedford would need to overcome a significant number of sensitive and complex environmental constraints, including floodplain, the new Wixams development, contaminated historic landfill sites, high quality agricultural land, heritage assets and ancient woodland. These difficult, risky and costly works would not be required for the preferred route alignment, which passes through Bedford station.

Respondents suggested that half of EWR services could serve Bedford station with others by-passing the town and stopping at Bedford Borough Council's proposed station at Wixams. This would significantly reduce the number of trains serving Bedford station, undermine the ability for passengers to interchange with EMR and Thameslink trains, reduce connectivity to Bedford town centre and consequently result in a significant reduction in Project benefits. Additionally, an alignment option that would pass by Wixams would also require the demolition of property in the Bedford urban area in order to build the additional tracks and junction to enable the new EWR trains to serve Bedford St Johns and Bedford stations. The need for EWR trains to enter the town centre and reverse direction before continuing their journeys to Cambridge would increase journey times for through passengers and make train operations and timetabling more difficult.

Respondents also suggested half of GTR services should terminate at Wixams, effectively reducing the number of GTR services turning around at Bedford station and reducing congestion of the through lines caused by the dwell times of 4 to 6 tph GTR trains. This is not a feasible option because the proposed station at Wixams, as promoted by Bedford Borough Council, would not have the necessary infrastructure, such as additional tracks and platforms or traincrew facilities that would be required for trains to terminate here. Even if this infrastructure was to be provided, and the capital costs incurred, GTR would only be providing half of the current level of service to Bedford station Bedford town centre which would be a significant worsening in terms of connectivity to and from London.

7.1.2.4 Station access and facilities

Respondents suggested enhanced retail facilities, cycle parking, a cycle shop, a bigger ticket hall and better customer information provision.

Many suggested that bus services from the station are inadequate and limited, especially to and from the suburbs. They also said that the area surrounding the station becomes congested during peak times, suggesting that there should be multiple entry and exits to the station car park, as well as easy access to the ring road. National Highways suggested that a wider access solution should be considered to accommodate for all planned growth in demand.

Respondents expressed significant support for building a high-quality intermodal transport interchange at Bedford station. They suggested that there should be good cycle and pedestrian access to the station from the town centre. Respondents suggested that the safety of cyclists be prioritised in the design of the station, and that there should be safe storage for bikes. Developing an interchange hub with pedestrian and cycle access is also supported by Bedford Borough Council.

There was also support for providing an additional entrance on the western side of the station, to help improve pedestrian access to the Queens Park area of Bedford. Bedford Borough Council supports the provision of the new entrance.

We will consider the suitability of all existing facilities as we develop our designs for the station. Any proposed facilities will aim to improve the customer experience by focusing on the areas that people have told us matter the most to them. This may include waiting areas, retail facilities, toilets, and ticket halls, as well as considering how passengers change platforms, move around the station and connectivity beyond the station.

The consultation was undertaken at an early stage of design, with various proposals presented at a high level. As we develop designs to a greater level of detail, we'll engage with stakeholders to seek to align the designs with wider regeneration and development proposals for the area, ensuring that safety, accessibility, usability for a range of different users and sustainability are considered.

One of our core priorities is to increase connectivity across the Oxford to Cambridge region, and we'll consider local connectivity, bus services and the customer experience while travelling to EWR stations. We'll work with local stakeholders to aim to develop an integrated planning approach, promoting and prioritising both active and sustainable transport modes, including the provision of secure cycle parking facilities and safe pedestrian and cycling routes.

As part of the station design, we'll consider pedestrian and cycle access in and around the station, based on user needs. This will be presented in more detail at the statutory consultation.

We'll also continue working with other organisations, including bus operators, to seek to improve facilities, including interfaces and interchange with bus services at stations, and the provision of onward travel information. Although we are not responsible for bus routes, we've noted requests to consider access to the station from rural areas and surrounding villages, including Clapham and Great Barford. We'll include these matters in our discussions with Bedford Borough Council.

Although sustainable modes will be prioritised, we recognise that access by car will still be required, so we'll also consider the local road network around Bedford station and any potential alterations required, as well as how much parking the new station will need.

We recognise the importance of accommodating planned growth in traffic levels and will carry out traffic surveys and transport modelling to help inform our design process. As part of the ES that will form 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. This will also set out the potential impact of construction on the road network, including changes to existing traffic patterns because of predicted construction traffic. The likely environmental impacts of the proposals will be described in the PEIR, which will be presented at the statutory consultation. Our approach to construction, and the mitigation of impacts during construction, will be set out in the CoCP, or an equivalent document, which will be submitted to the Secretary of State as part of the DCO application.

7.1.2.5 Traffic surveys

Respondents noted that traffic surveys had not yet been carried out to support the proposals for the station. National Highways expressed concern over impact of the stations' development on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and its junctions and requested further detailed information about traffic modelling and forecasts to assess the potential impact.

We'll undertake traffic surveys and modelling of the Bedford station area to support the design work and inform decision making, and to help us to mitigate any negative impacts on traffic from the chosen option. Our findings will be presented at the statutory consultation.

7.1.2.6 Thameslink (Jowett) Sidings

Concerns over the impact on Jowett Sidings (used by Thameslink to stable their trains) were expressed by Network Rail and the need to provide alternative stabling facilities. There was some opposition to EWR Co's proposals to relocate the Jowett Sidings, including concerns over the environmental impact of the move.

The railway around Bedford has several complex interfaces that require careful consideration. We've been engaging with Thameslink (GTR) and Network Rail to understand the implications

of our proposals on the Jowett Sidings, Bedford Carriage Sidings level crossing, and Bedford station to seek to identify potential impacts and possible mitigations.

It is likely that the Jowett Sidings would need to be relocated to ensure sufficient capacity on the lines in and out of Bedford to allow EWR and other rail services to operate reliably. If the sidings have to be relocated, we've identified a site adjacent to the existing Cauldwell Depot which is located off the MML to the south of Kempston road, south of the river as a suitable site for the relocation of the 12-car stabling capability required for GTR trains.

Construction-related impacts of the relocation of the sidings 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, air quality, contaminated land, ecology, historic environment, construction traffic, tree protection, surface and groundwater management, waste management and general site operations.

More detailed plans will be produced during the next stage and shared at the statutory consultation.

7.1.3 North Bedford

Respondents commented on EWR Co's proposals to build additional tracks at North Bedford and the plans for rebuilding Bromham Road bridge; and raised concerns regarding the potential negative impacts of the proposals on the countryside.

7.1.3.1 Building additional tracks

Respondents opposed proposals to build two additional tracks due to the need to demolish property, costs and impacts on the community. Respondents suggested considering a smaller number of tracks or alternative solutions such as platform changes. Bedford Borough Council supports a four-track option between Bedford station and the Midland Main Line.

Respondents also expressed support for the proposals to build two additional tracks. A six-track option is supported by Network Rail, which also stated that the functionality of the railway, constructability and cost should be considered while developing a preferred option.

The capacity of the rail infrastructure in and around Bedford is currently constrained, due to the high volume of traffic currently passing through or terminating at Bedford station. Therefore, the addition of EWR services would be very challenging and would have significant operational risks related to potential knock-on delays and disruption to EWR services from other service operators and vice versa. It is extremely difficult to fit the new EWR services into the timetable on the current four-track MML. This is because the timetable is driven by constraints further afield, for example the timing of the Thameslink services through central London to the south coast, and the need to 'weave' freight services through the station area on specifically timed paths because of the high occupancy of platforms by Thameslink services.

If the lines north of Bedford are shared between EWR and non-EWR services, these constraints mean that Thameslink and freight services would likely be prioritised in times of disruption and perturbation, because of the need to reduce knock-on effects across the wider network, increasing the performance risk to EWR. The punctuality of EWR services is critical to minimising congestion and performance issues for other operators who route share in and around the Bedford area- which is already categorised as congested infrastructure due to the amount of trains that pass the area per hour. The impact of delays has the potential to affect the wider geographical railway network due to interactions with services on numerous corridors running out of London to destinations across England, Wales, and Scotland. The risk of delays transferring from EWR to MML or vice versa is substantially decreased with additional track capacity and a consequential reduction of direct contact with the MML. Also, through the addition of tracks it would be less complex to develop a timetable that's flexible enough to work around the existing services on the approaches to both Cambridge and Oxford.

In developing the proposals for North Bedford, several track options have been explored (as detailed in the [Consultation Technical Report](#)). The application of Assessment Factors, which include capital cost (3), transport user benefit (1), performance (11) considerations as well as environmental impacts and opportunities (14) has resulted in our emerging preference for the construction of two additional track to the east of the existing MML tracks. The information that respondents have provided has not changed our emerging preference at this location.

Since the 2021 consultation, we've undertaken further timetable and performance modelling of the level of service that can be provided using the existing four-track railway north of Bedford station. The modelling assumptions and scope were validated and agreed with various stakeholders including train operators and Network Rail. The findings indicate that, even with the freight capacity growth enabled by previous investment by Network Rail on the Midland Main Line (MML) as part of the Corby enhancement scheme, operating EWR services on the existing four MML tracks north of Bedford station remains poorer in operational terms than the six-track option and would form a 'bottleneck' on the MML, constraining future growth of rail services in the area. Consequently, the six-track infrastructure option remains the emerging preferred option due to increased confidence in the integration of the EWR timetable. We'll continue dialogue with key stakeholders including the local authority during the development of the options and design.

We absolutely recognise that the emerging preferred option of six tracks has the potential for significant impact on communities, property and land in North Bedford.

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 EWR Co 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 EWR Co 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 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 EWR Project. The NTS 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](#).

7.1.3.2 Bromham Road bridge

Respondents raised concerns about the amount of time and disruption related to rebuilding the Bromham Road Bridge, as well as the cost. Respondents also suggested providing a safe cycle track on the bridge.

We agree that Bromham Road is an important route for travel, including active travel, and our proposals aim to improve connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. A new span of Bromham Road Bridge, north of Bedford station, would be required to make provision for a wider railway corridor to pass underneath the bridge. We recognise concerns about the disruption that this may cause and will undertake a Transport Assessment which will inform the development of the proposals. The assessment will help to inform our approach to reducing and mitigating the potential disruption of any works to the bridge and roads as far as reasonably practicable. Outcomes of this will initially be reported in the PEIR published at statutory consultation and then within the ES submitted as part of the DCO application.

7.1.3.3 Environmental impact

Respondents voiced concerns over the potential environmental impact of the proposals, such as the removal of trees and impact on habitats and wildlife. Respondents were concerned about damage to the natural environment and the scale of this damage, and requested that the environmental impact should be minimised. Network Rail stated that environmental impacts and mitigation measures should be considered in response to building new additional tracks and the station development.

We understand concerns regarding potential impacts on the environment. Environmental sustainability is central to the decisions we make, to ensure that the Project is designed, constructed, operated and maintained in an environmentally responsible manner that not only reduces negative impacts but seeks to enhance the environment. We aim to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment; to be a net-zero carbon railway; to ensure the resilience of the infrastructure; and to contribute to the wellbeing of communities and customers. We'll identify elements of the Project that could result in significant environmental effects, primarily by undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with UK legislation, which will be informed by assessments and surveys.

At this stage, we'll focus on trying to avoid and reduce environmental impacts through careful design, as far as reasonably practicable. We are also committed to delivering 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) across the whole Project, which requires that habitats are enhanced and left in a measurably better state than they were pre-development. This approach supports the Government's 25-year Environment Plan. One way in which we are working to ensure we can achieve this, is through continuing to prioritise avoiding high value and priority habitats.

Further information on plans for achieving 10% BNG will be provided during future phases of consultation.

The PEIR will describe the likely adverse and beneficial environmental effects of the proposals. An ES will then be submitted as part of the DCO application for the Project.

7.1.4 Bedford area

Respondents commented on the potential impacts of the proposals on property in Bedford, including compulsory purchase, demolition and blight; on the proposed route through Bedford; the benefits of EWR to the town; issues such as parking and emergency vehicle access; and also made suggestions for alternative EWR stations.

7.1.4.1 Impact on heritage sites and historic buildings

Respondents expressed concern that heritage sites and historic buildings in the area may be impacted by the Project. Historic England advised the consideration of impacts on heritage assets, including the area of historic landscape and character around Clapham.

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 direct impacts on the most sensitive nationally designated heritage assets as far as reasonably practicable. We'll consider the setting and context of historic and cultural assets including conservation areas, archaeology, listed buildings and structures, historic views, and landscapes. The environmental impacts will be described in the PEIR, which will be shared at the statutory consultation. These impacts will be further assessed and reported on in the ES to be submitted as part of the DCO application.

7.1.4.2 Impact on property: compulsory acquisition

Respondents had concerns about the impact of EWR on properties in Bedford, including the potential compulsory purchase and demolition of houses. Respondents raised concerns about compensation and whether properties would be acquired below market price. Respondents said that they were not made aware of the potential demolition of homes in previous consultations. Respondents said that the solution that involves minimal land use/loss should be selected, which could involve an alternative route to that proposed. Specific properties referenced included the Polish House and the assisted living facility on Sidney Road whilst Ashburnham Road, the Poets area and northern villages were also frequently mentioned.

Bedford Borough Council voiced their opposition towards the demolition of houses and suggested use of some gardens would be more acceptable. Bedford Borough Council also requested limiting the use of land for temporary construction and providing sound and visual buffers.

Concerns were raised regarding impacts on homes and people living near to the railway, with specific references to decreases in property values and potential difficulties with selling their home in the future, noise, vibration, pollution and general disruption.

We recognise that the emerging preferred option of six tracks has the potential for significant impact on communities, property and land in North Bedford. We are aware that EWR may affect people's homes and businesses, particularly in the Poets area of Bedford, and we'll aim to reduce and mitigate negative impacts such as those raised in the consultation feedback as far as reasonably practicable. At every stage of the Project, we are committed to talking to all those who could potentially be directly affected by the railway.

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 EWR Co 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 EWR Co 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 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 EWR Project. The NTS 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](#).

In terms of impacts on homes during the construction process, further details on how we would monitor, control and manage these will be provided in the CoCP (or an equivalent document) which will be submitted to the Secretary of State as part of the DCO application. This will include measures to control impacts related to construction noise and vibration, air quality, contaminated land, ecology, historic environment, construction traffic, tree protection, surface and groundwater management, waste management and general site operations. In addition, it will state permissible contractor working hours. Our teams will continue to engage with local people and communities to understand the arrangements which are least disruptive to people's lives and businesses and will ensure that appropriate measures are in place to protect the flora and fauna of the corridor through which construction works will take place. Often this will involve the use of physical barriers to reduce noise and the visual impact of the railway.

7.1.4.3 Impact on property: statutory blight

Respondents who would remain in their properties were concerned this would negatively affect their wellbeing, particularly due to the potential duration of the construction period.

Where land is not required, residents may be eligible for compensation under a Part 1 claim. Alternatively, they may be eligible to serve a Statutory Blight Notice which would compel EWR Co to buy the property. More information is available in the Guide to Compulsory Acquisition and Compensation on [our website](#).

7.1.4.4 Disruption to rail users

Respondents shared concerns that the construction and operation of EWR would disrupt current rail users. Network Rail stated that impact on train services, especially disruption on Midland Main Line should be considered and minimised.

We are aiming to reduce disruption to existing train services and passengers as far as reasonably practicable. We'll work with train operators and Network Rail to seek to plan our

work and communicate any changes clearly to help people to plan their journeys. We'll share more details about this at the statutory consultation.

7.1.4.5 Impacts on roads

Respondents commented on the potential impacts of EWR on exacerbating traffic, reducing parking availability, affecting air quality and disrupting vehicle access to stations in Bedford. Respondents said that existing road infrastructure should be improved before EWR services begin operating. Concerns were expressed about the duration of potential disruption to roads.

Respondents were concerned about an increase in traffic resulting from the construction of EWR, saying that the small roads are not adequate for the large construction vehicles.

There were concerns that rebuilding the Cauldwell Street Bridge would bring disruption to the roads and the community. It was suggested that a new bridge could be constructed 'offline' (away from the construction area) to reduce the time the road would be closed.

National Highways requested to assess impact on the SRN, especially the A421 for both construction traffic and traffic management. National Highways proposed that modelling should also include economic impacts. National Highways also stated that a strategic study of the region's road network is underway and the collaboration with EWR will be needed.

We'll carry out traffic surveys and transport modelling to help inform our design. 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. This will also set out the potential impact of construction on the road network, including changes to existing traffic patterns because of predicted construction traffic. The likely environmental impacts of the proposals will be described in the PEIR, which will be presented at the statutory consultation. If required, mitigation measures will be set out in the CoCP (or an equivalent document) which will be submitted to the Secretary of State as part of the DCO application.

In terms of air quality, we take our commitment to delivering sustainable transport seriously and we'll develop the Project in line with the policy and law of the Government, such as the Clean Air Strategy. Our team will work with Bedford Borough Council to seek to understand the current situation in communities and how to consider the Bedford Town Centre Air Quality Management Area. The PEIR will include information about the baseline air quality environment and identification of the relevant air quality standards and targets. It will look at the likely risks from construction activities and potential impacts from operation, including identification of mitigation and control measures. An ES will then be submitted as part of the DCO application and will assess changes in nitrogen oxides (NOx), fine particulates (known as PM2.5 and PM10) and dust. This assessment will follow best practice and guidance such as the guidance set by the Institute of Air Quality Management and other recognised bodies. We'll seek to reduce the impact of EWR on air quality as far as reasonably practicable by

considering what vehicles and equipment will be used during construction and operation, as well as how to manage work sites to avoid or reduce dust.

Construction of a new offline bridge at Cauldwell Street has been considered as part of the development of the designs and has not been included in the EWR proposals due to the difficulty in building a parallel bridge which can connect with the existing road alignments. There would also be significant capital costs and disruption associated with the extensive rebuilding of the road intersection in the approaches to Cauldwell Street.

In terms of impacts on roads during the construction of EWR, we'll work closely with local stakeholders, including Bedford Borough Council, to seek to programme our work alongside other projects. We'll look at which roads may not be suitable for construction traffic and how we would aim to avoid key community locations, such as schools. We'll work hard to reduce disruption and consider innovative construction solutions as far as reasonably practicable. Our approach will be set out in a CoCP or equivalent document.

We'll undertake traffic modelling to assess the impact of EWR on the road network, including economic impact and on the A421. EWR will continue to liaise with National Highways on future National Highways initiatives.

7.1.4.6 Emergency services access

Respondents expressed concern about possible disruption to access for emergency services in Bedford, during construction and operation of EWR.

This is an important consideration for us and we'll consult with the emergency services as our proposals are developed. The emergency services were invited to participate in the 2019 and 2021 consultations. Although, they did not provide a response to these consultations, we'll continue to seek feedback as the design progresses and will also invite the emergency services to provide feedback at the statutory consultation stage.

7.1.4.7 Suggestions for alternative station locations

Suggestions for alternative station locations included an out-of-town/'parkway' station south of Bedford or near the A421; a new station near Wixams; and a station around the Kempston area and retail park.

Route options passing to the south of Bedford were considered before the selection of a preferred route option in 2020. It was found that these routes have a significant number of sensitive or complex environmental constraints which are likely to be difficult and expensive to overcome, including either demolition of homes and commercial property in Wixams or crossing the former landfill site at Elstow. Bearing in mind the consultation feedback received, we have also revisited the case for promoting a route alignment to the south of Bedford in since close of the non-statutory consultation as part of the Economic and Technical Report – which is available on [our website](#). We considered scheme options potentially including a

station such as a Bedford South parkway. We found that when compared to central Bedford station locations, a Bedford South parkway station would not provide the same benefits from connection to existing population centres, nor would it enable a level of future housing growth and development that would be sufficient to outweigh the benefits of connectivity achieved by serving existing population centres. We are working on local connectivity proposals, with a focus on first/last mile travel to and from stations and will consider how we can enable access to EWR stations from Wixams.

Consequently, a station near Wixams would not be compatible with the preferred route option for EWR, which uses the existing line from the Marston Vale into Bedford station. Although a station at Kempston would provide benefits to the Kempston area and retail park, it would not serve Bedford Hospital or communities south of the River Great Ouse. Similarly, it would not serve the town or provide connectivity with other train services for onward journeys.

7.1.4.8 Parking

Respondents said that parking provision at Bedford St Johns and Bedford stations need to be increased, with suggestions including a multi-storey car park, a long stay car park, drop off areas, electric vehicle charging points, and additional disabled persons parking bays. Respondents said parking should be better lit and cheaper than it is currently.

At the next stage, we'll undertake modelling work to help inform parking requirements. We'll consider electric vehicle charging points and disabled persons parking spaces, as well as passenger drop-off and taxi facilities.

We'll also look at how we can improve sustainable transport links to Bedford and Bedford St Johns stations to encourage more people to walk, cycle or travel by bus to the stations, to reduce pressure on parking and levels of road congestion.

7.1.4.9 Proposed route of EWR

Respondents expressed their opposition to Route E, saying that taking EWR through Bedford town centre and then through north Bedford would negatively impact communities (including Clapham, Brickhill, Renhold, Carriage Drive, and the Poets Estate) and provide little benefit to residents. Many said other routes could be chosen and questioned Bedford Borough Council's support of the route.

Specific concerns included increased congestion, noise and vibration; disruption from construction; demolition of houses; environmental impacts; negative impacts on villages; and impacts on the landscape and heritage features. Respondents also felt that EWR would encourage further development in and around Bedford, and this would put strain on the local environment and public services.

Respondents felt that Route E would be the most expensive route option due to the length of the route and the challenging topography, and that the benefits would not justify the cost.

Some queried the difference in costs for each option between the 2019 and 2021 consultations.

Respondents said they would prefer EWR to take a southern route, saying the topography to the south is less challenging; it would be less disruptive to the town, homes, and communities; it would offer shorter route and journey times; it would have fewer environmental impacts; it would offer lower capital and operating costs; it would use brownfield sites; there would be more space for parking; and it would be able to connect into existing infrastructure and stations. Others felt that a southern route would fit with the strategic development already planned for south Bedford.

Conversely, respondents felt it was vital for Bedford to be served by EWR directly, rather than by a southern route.

In 2019, we consulted on five possible route options for EWR. Our decision to choose Route E as our preferred route reflected the feedback we received from local communities, in which it was identified as the most popular option. Route Option E also received the highest score on four of the five key Assessment Factors: transport user benefits (1), environmental impacts and opportunities (14) (equal to Route Option B), and contribution to enabling housing and economic growth (2). Detailed economic modelling indicated that Route E would provide the greatest benefits for transport users and would contribute to wider economic benefits. For Bedford, Route E would serve Bedford station and Bedford St Johns station directly, providing convenient access to other rail services, transport modes, local homes, businesses and facilities, such as Bedford Hospital. Having reconsidered in light of 2021 consultation feedback, the preference remains unchanged to select Route E.

The area south and southeast of Bedford contains a significant number of sensitive or complex environmental constraints which would be difficult and expensive to overcome if the railway was to be constructed in this location, including: large areas of floodplain which would require significant stretches of viaducts; large areas of best-grade agricultural land; and heritage assets and areas of ancient woodland. It would also require either demolition of homes and commercial property in Wixams or crossing the former landfill site at Elstow which would be complex and more expensive for the remediation costs alone, exclusive of any new infrastructure required.

Bearing in mind the consultation feedback received, we have also revisited the case for promoting a route alignment to the south of Bedford in since close of the non-statutory consultation as part of the Economic and Technical Report – you can read about this in Economic Technical Report which is available on [our website](#). We considered scheme options potentially including a station such as a Bedford South parkway. We found that when compared to central Bedford station locations, a Bedford South parkway station would not provide the same benefits from connection to existing population centres, nor would it enable a level of future housing growth and development that would be sufficient to outweigh the benefits of connectivity achieved by serving existing population centres.

While respondents have suggested providing new connecting lines south of Bedford to allow some EWR services to serve the town centre, this would still have disadvantages. Bedford town centre would see a reduction in services per hour to Cambridge, Bletchley and Oxford, reducing the attractiveness and convenience of the new railway for prospective passengers. A significant amount of additional infrastructure would be needed, including a viaduct over the River Great Ouse and the A421 dual carriageway south of Bedford. Timetabling would be more complex due to there being multiple junctions in close proximity which would adversely affect performance and reliability of EWR services.

Following the estimating work undertaken for the 2019 consultation, we undertook further assessments of the ground conditions in the Bedford area which indicated that the ground conditions to the north of Bedford would be more suitable for embankment construction than those in the river valley to south and east of Bedford. Assumptions relating to cost estimates were therefore amended in light of the new information on ground conditions and this was factored in to our decision to select Route Option E in 2020.

We assessed anticipated capital costs associated with Route Options A, B, C, D and E ahead of the Preferred Route Announcement in 2020. This assessment included consideration of the infrastructure needed to support the railway, in particular the use of embankments and viaducts, earthworks and different earthwork profiles and gradients (height and slope). At the time, Route Option E was estimated to incur upfront capital costs of £3.7bn, which was the second lowest cost of all route options and offered significantly more benefits than the cheapest option (Route A). Since we identified Route Option E as the preferred route in 2020, we've given consideration to 2021 consultation feedback, however, our preference remains unchanged. Work will continue to assess the costs associated with EWR, including mitigation measures and capital costs as the design of the route continues. More information on cost estimates will be presented at the statutory consultation.

You can read more about our decision to select Route E in Chapter 4 of this report.

7.1.4.10 Benefits

Respondents questioned whether EWR would bring economic, tourism and retail benefits to Bedford, and said that evidence was needed in relation to demand.

One of our reasons for selecting Route E was so that Bedford would receive the benefits of four EWR trains per hour stopping in the town centre – with its housing, jobs and local facilities such as Bedford Hospital. Also, connections to other transport modes and rail services, including Thameslink and Midland Main Line services are more convenient. We are updating our business case as the Project develops, which demonstrates the project benefits. Further details will be shared at the statutory consultation.

7.1.4.11 Regeneration

Respondents suggested that EWR Co should provide funding to improve the areas around Bedford station, Bedford St Johns and the wider Bedford area. They also suggested that EWR Co will need to consider local development projects, including hospital upgrades and development plans for Ford End Road. Respondents said that the regenerated stations should aim to encourage new housing in the immediate area or within the railway corridor.

Whilst the direct regeneration of the wider area and housing development is outside the specific remit that EWR Co has been set by the Government, we'll work with Bedford Borough Council and other stakeholders to seek to derive maximum benefits from the station improvements and to support regeneration of the local area. For example, we are aware of proposals for development south of Ford End Road, and we'll continue to engage with the local authority to seek to align with plans for the area as far as reasonably practicable.

7.1.4.12 Community impacts

Respondents raised concerns over the impact of EWR Co's proposals for the Bedford area on local communities, including general disruption, changes to the character and heritage of the town, safety issues, negative effects on wellbeing, and potential community division. Respondents also said that the countryside in and around Bedford should be maintained as part of the Project, along with existing access to green spaces.

We'll plan our work to reduce disruption to the community and the local environment as far as reasonably practicable, and we'll put forward proposals to eliminate, reduce and mitigate potential negative impacts like those raised in the consultation feedback. We'll also mitigate the effects on or the potential loss of community facilities as a result of land required for EWR as far as reasonably practicable. We aim to leave a positive legacy and we'll seek to work with local stakeholders to help communities derive maximum benefit from the Project.

We recognise that access for those not travelling by car is important, including for some disabled people using disabled persons parking, and will work to reduce any disruption to, and to seek to maintain, public rights of way as far as reasonably practicable. To help reduce environmental impacts, we are following the environmental mitigation hierarchy which first seeks to avoid significant adverse effects on the countryside and, where this isn't possible, then seeks to reduce and mitigate adverse effects and if necessary, provides compensation where feasible.

7.1.4.13 Railway bridge

Respondents requested provision of safe cyclist/pedestrian access under the railway bridge across the river.

If works are required to replace the bridge, we'll consider cycle and pedestrian accessibility in the design process.

7.1.4.14 Stakeholder engagement

Respondents said EWR Co should cooperate with Bedford Borough Council and other key stakeholders to ensure a collaborative and integrated approach to the Project that could help to achieve wider benefits for Bedford.

We'll work with stakeholders, including Bedford Borough Council to seek to maximise the benefits of EWR in Bedford. We are fully supportive of third party efforts to regenerate Bedford, and believe our proposals for stations would serve as a catalyst for that development. We'll continue to work with stakeholders to develop our proposals and aim to align them with others to deliver a multi-modal transport interchange at Bedford and to support sustainable travel in and around the town.

7.1.5 **Other comments relating to Section C**

Below is a summary of additional matters raised and our responses. Key themes include active travel, accessibility and environmental impacts.

7.1.5.1 Accessibility

Respondents voiced the need for maintaining access for pedestrians and cyclists at Bedford station, as well as providing drop off areas and connectivity to public transport.

Respondents suggested that accessibility should be considered as part of the plans for the redevelopment of Bedford station. This included access for a range of users including disabled people, people with mobility requirements, elderly people, carers, parents and cyclists. It also included recommendations for working lifts, step free access, design to benefit people with vision impairments, and an environment that is usable by a diverse range of users.

One of EWR's core priorities is to increase connectivity across the Oxford to Cambridge region, which includes consideration of local connectivity, bus services and customer experience while travelling to EWR stations. We'll work with local stakeholders to seek to develop an integrated planning approach, promoting and prioritising both active and sustainable transport modes, including the provision of secure cycle parking facilities and safe walking and cycling routes.

We'll be exploring pedestrian and cycle access in and around stations in more detail in the next round of consultation.

A key element of EWR Co's strategy is providing a service that provides access for a range of users. Our proposals for Bedford St Johns and Bedford stations will seek to align with current rail legislation and modern standards. This will include considering access for disabled people and the needs of a wide range of different users.

7.1.5.2 Active travel

Respondents suggested providing safe pedestrian and cyclist access to the town centre. Respondents also suggested providing a safe cycle track on the Bromham Road bridge that will be a part of the Project. Respondents suggested that Bedford station would benefit from improved cycle facilities and cycling access.

Respondents requested access to and between both stations, including a safe link for non-motorised users and connections to public transport.

Respondents felt there is a lack of sustainable methods to access Bedford station which would be detrimental to its success.

Respondents touched on active travel, suggesting that the Project should include provision for, or at least enable, cycling, walking, and horse riding and, in some cases, that this should be a priority.

Natural England suggested that walking and cycling routes should be considered. Bedford Borough Council proposed a Bedford Green Wheel of cycling routes along the tracks.

The suitability of all existing station facilities will be considered as our proposals develop. Any proposed station facilities will be designed to seek to improve the customer experience by focusing on the areas that people have told us matter the most to them, including cycling facilities. We'll work with local stakeholders to seek to develop an integrated planning approach, promoting and prioritising both active and sustainable transport modes, including the provision of secure cycle parking facilities and safe pedestrian and cycling routes.

We are committed to encouraging active travel and we'll focus on seeking to integrate this with existing and future regional and local plans and planning strategies. Our aim is to deliver a real step-change in the quality of active transport infrastructure throughout the EWR route, so that travelling by bike and as a pedestrian becomes a realistic and attractive choice for short journeys. Such facilities would bring the associated health and economic benefits to the communities that EWR will serve.

We'll promote and prioritise both active and sustainable transport modes, including the provision of secure cycle parking facilities and safe pedestrian and cycling routes where reasonably practicable. We'll continue working with organisations, including bus operators to seek to improve facilities, including interfaces and interchange with bus services at stations and providing onward travel information.

Although sustainable modes will be prioritised, we recognise that access by car will still be required, so we'll also consider the local road network around the Bedford stations and any potential alterations required, as well as how much parking the stations will need.

More information will be provided at the statutory consultation.

7.1.5.3 Air quality

Respondents were concerned about the effect the Project would have on air quality and questioned whether this had been considered. Respondents felt that the use of diesel trains would create more pollution, and several responses noted that Bedford has an active Air Quality Management Area which would be negatively impacted by EWR. Respondents highlighted the potential for construction work to reduce air quality in Bedford.

We take our commitment to delivering sustainable transport seriously and we'll develop the Project in line with the policy and law of the UK Government, such as the Clean Air Strategy. Our team will work with local authorities to seek to understand the current situation in communities and how to consider the Bedford Town Centre Air Quality Management Area. The PEIR will include information about the baseline air quality environment and identification of the relevant air quality standards and targets. It will look at the likely risks from construction activities and potential impacts from operation, including identification of mitigation and control measures. An ES will then be submitted as part of the DCO application and will assess changes in nitrogen oxides (NOx), fine particulates (known as PM2.5 and PM10) and dust. This assessment will follow best practice and guidance such as that produced by the Institute of Air Quality Management and other recognised bodies. We'll seek to reduce the impact of EWR on air quality by considering what vehicles and equipment will be used during construction and operation, as well as how to manage work sites to avoid and reduce dust as far as reasonably practicable.

7.1.5.4 Construction

Respondents stated the need for a construction management plan, specifically requesting that construction be mindful of the disruption it will cause to pedestrians and people local to the Project. Concerns regarding disruption included noise, potential obstruction to access to certain areas such as Public Rights of Way (PRoW), pollution, traffic congestion and building demolition. Several referred to the significant disruption they experienced during the reconstruction of Bromham Road bridge by Network Rail.

Construction-related impacts would 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 construction noise and vibration, air quality, contaminated land, ecology, historic environment, construction traffic, tree protection, surface and groundwater management, waste management and general site operations. In addition, it will state permissible contractor working hours and will set out proposals to maintain PRoW as far as is reasonably practicable. Our teams will continue to engage with local people and communities to understand the arrangements which are least disruptive to people's lives and businesses and to seek to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to protect the flora and fauna of the corridor through which construction works will take place. Often this will involve the use of physical barriers and occasionally will require the relocation of species to an alternative location.

Where a PRoW is affected, we'll consider proposals that include closing the route temporarily, providing a temporary diversion, or opening an alternative permanent route before the existing one is closed. How disruption to access is mitigated will depend on factors such as the type of works in the area and the safety implications. We expect to set out what the potential impacts could be at an early stage, detailed within the PEIR, which will be shared at the statutory consultation, with more detailed findings presented within the ES submitted as part of the DCO application.

7.1.5.5 Environment

Respondents were concerned about the potential environmental impact of the Section C proposals on Priory Country Park, habitats, countryside, conservation areas, woodland and heritage, including carbon emissions, negative visual impact (particularly from concrete) dust creation, light pollution, diesel emissions, and the potential flood risk. Respondents were also concerned about the lack of an EIA for the Project.

Natural England supported the principle of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and advised on considering the improvements to green infrastructure.

Central Bedfordshire Council requested that we include local authority standards in design and stated the Sustainable Drainage System is currently lacking in the proposals through Central Bedfordshire.

We understand concerns regarding potential impacts on the environment. As mentioned, environmental sustainability is central to the decisions we make, to ensure that the Project is designed, constructed, operated and maintained in an environmentally responsible manner that not only reduces negative impacts but seeks to enhance the environment as far as reasonably practicable. We aim to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment; to be a net zero carbon railway; to ensure the resilience of the infrastructure; and to contribute to the wellbeing of the communities and customers. We'll identify elements of the Project that could result in significant environmental effects, primarily by undertaking an EIA in accordance with UK legislation, which will be informed by assessments and surveys. This will be reported in the ES which will form part of the DCO application.

We are committed to delivering 10% Biodiversity Net Gain across the whole Project. One way in which we are working to ensure we can achieve this, is through continuing to prioritise avoiding high value and priority habitats. Further information on plans for achieving Biodiversity Net Gain will be provided during future phases of consultation.

We'll develop a PEIR to be presented at the statutory consultation which will describe the likely adverse and beneficial environmental effects of the proposals, including the impact on drainage. An ES will then also be submitted as part of the DCO application.

7.1.5.6 Freight

Respondents were opposed to the idea of routing freight trains through Bedford, particularly through the town centre and residential areas and during the night, mostly on the grounds of noise, vibration, and reduction of air quality. Specifically, the use of diesel rather than electric-powered freight trains was considered to be an issue by respondents, whilst others questioned the capacity for increased freight services. Respondents felt that the topography of the land was too challenging for use by freight trains. There were also concerns about freight trains using the line during off-peak hours.

EWR is principally intended to be a passenger route, although EWR Co has been asked by Government to accommodate existing freight services that are already running through places like Oxford, Bicester, the Marston Vale Line and Bedford and to make provision for potential future freight demand by designing the infrastructure so that it does not preclude freight operation.

We haven't yet confirmed the exact operating hours for the railway. However, as set out in the 2021 consultation, it is currently envisaged that EWR could accommodate roughly one freight train per hour, in each direction, although the actual number of freight services which run is a matter for the wider industry and freight operators.

We proposed operational hours for passenger services in Appendices A and B of the 2021 Consultation Technical Report, which referred to a potential public facing timetable (planned trains in passenger service), to provide some initial guidance. There will also be less intensive train movements as required outside these hours for infrastructure maintenance, inspection, freight, and other activities as part of the national rail network. We'll continue to work on the concept of operation to inform the operational timetable.

7.1.5.7 Funding

Respondents wanted transparency around funding, particularly how much Bedford Borough Council will be expected to put towards the build of the Project.

EWR Co and the East West Rail Project are funded by the Government. The Department for Transport (DfT) is EWR Co's sole shareholder and is responsible for monitoring the governance and performance of EWR Co, as well as the delivery of EWR. As is common with infrastructure projects of this nature, funding is allocated in tranches to ensure proper financial controls. It is not intended for local authorities such as Bedford Borough Council to fund EWR.

7.1.5.8 Impact on the proposed solar farm

Respondents highlighted that proposals should consider potential impacts on the proposed Anglian Water Solar Farm.

Based on current proposals, we anticipate the need to acquire the land of the proposed Anglian Water Solar Farm site to support construction of the proposed viaduct crossing the

Great River Ouse near Clapham Road. We continue to work with developers, including Anglian Water, landowners and the local planning authority, throughout the development process to identify opportunities and reduce any impacts as far as reasonably practicable.

7.1.5.9 Impact on roads

Respondents raised concerns about the impact of the construction of Section C on the road network at Bromham Road Bridge, Clapham Green and the A421. They requested assessments of the impact of the station proposals on the SRN.

They also stated that EWR Co must consider all the cumulative impacts of EWR and its construction on the SRN, especially the A421, and with consideration also being given to potential economic impacts of disruption.

We acknowledge there may be traffic and transport impacts associated with building and operating EWR. In the next stage of the design work, we will undertake traffic surveys and modelling to support the decision making and to help us to mitigate any impacts from the chosen option.

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. Outcomes of this will initially be reported in the PEIR published at the statutory consultation and further developed within the ES submitted as part of the DCO application. The mitigation of construction stage impacts will be set out in the CoCP (or an equivalent document) which will be submitted to the Secretary of State as part of the DCO application.

7.1.5.10 Disruption

Respondents raised concerns over the potential level and duration of disruption resulting from EWR, with specific concerns including noise, pollution, traffic congestion and building demolition. They said that EWR proposals would be particularly disruptive to the town centre, exacerbating congestion and pollution.

Respondents made suggestions about how disruption could be minimised during construction, such as considering constructability in design, phasing, optimising traffic and access, reducing construction timescales and building a new bridge at Cauldwell Street before demolishing the existing bridge. They also requested further discussion about potential disruption to the Poets area.

We are committed to developing proposals that aim to reduce disruption during the planning, construction and operation of EWR. We are considering potential impacts on the community, such as the building of a bridge at Cauldwell Street, and how to reduce or mitigate disruption to local people, communities and the environment and how to avoid significant adverse

impacts on health and quality of life. We'll work with affected communities and their representatives to keep people impacted by our work up to date with activity and progress.

As mentioned, we'll prepare a CoCP, or an equivalent document, which will explain the steps we'll take to reduce or mitigate disruption during construction. This will include measures to control impacts related to construction noise and vibration, air quality, construction traffic and general site operations. In addition, it will state permissible contractor working hours. Our teams will continue to engage with local people and communities to understand the arrangements which are least disruptive to people's lives and businesses.

We'll explain our approach to the construction and operation of EWR, including how the potential impacts would be avoided or mitigated, at the statutory consultation.

Potential environmental impacts, including noise and pollution, both during the construction and operation of EWR, will be assessed to inform the development of the design and will be presented within the PEIR at the statutory consultation and within the ES that forms part of the DCO application.

We recognise that homes and businesses north of Bedford will be affected by the construction of two additional tracks north of Bedford, whether through demolition or the loss of garden areas and we continue to revise our proposals from those we presented at non-statutory consultation in 2021 in order to reduce this impact as far as is practicable. Through design development, we've reduced the overall number of properties that are likely to be directly affected by the construction of the two additional tracks north of Bedford from 98 (97 residential properties and one business property) to 66 (65 residential properties and one business property). We'll continue to seek further opportunities to refine our proposals to limit the amount of land we would need at the next stage of design.

During the consultation we contacted all potentially affected landowners, and we also ran a separate consultation, which included specific questions around land, including the Proposed Need to Sell Property Scheme. At every stage, we are committed to talking to all those potentially directly affected by the proposals to ensure we are addressing their issues and concerns where practicable.

7.1.5.11 Safety

Respondents stated that EWR Co need to ensure a safe environment is created for passengers. Respondents were concerned about accessibility and safety at night at the station. Recommendations included installing CCTV around the pickup area, addressing begging and mugging, and improving lighting.

As we develop designs to a greater level of detail, we'll seek to engage with stakeholders to align the designs with wider aspirations, regeneration, and development proposals for the

area where possible. The design will seek to consider safety and security for passengers and the local community.

7.1.5.12 Station locations

Respondents suggested that the location of the stations should be close to where passengers live and work.

The station location options proposed provide benefits and connectivity to different areas of Bedford. Bedford station provides interchange opportunities with the wider railway network and serves the town centre and communities north of the River Great Ouse. Options for Bedford St Johns will improve public transport connectivity with Bedford Hospital and serve communities to the south of the river.

7.1.5.13 Support

Respondents expressed support for the proposals for Section C. Reasons for this included the benefits it would bring to people in Bedford, as well as the potential environmental benefits that could come from encouraging rail travel. Respondents cited the long-term positive impacts this will have on the social and economic profile of the area.

We were pleased to see comments from respondents about their support for EWR, the route options, and the specific proposals.

7.1.5.14 Viaduct

Respondents are concerned about the proximity of the viaduct to other buildings and are particularly concerned with the environmental and visual impacts. National Highways expressed concern over impact on the A421 from construction between Bromham Road Bridge and Clapham Green and requested more information to assess if current capacity will be enough.

In Section C, we've proposed a viaduct which would start north of Bedford near the existing A6 Great Ouse Way and would extend across the River Great Ouse, turning east to cross above the A6 Paula Radcliffe Way, before recrossing the River Great Ouse and connecting to the proposed embankment to the east of Clapham Road. The height of the viaduct is yet to be determined but would be required to provide sufficient clearance heights over the A6 and Paula Radcliffe way and River Great Ouse. We'll assess the environmental impact of our proposals, including visual impacts and during construction, as part of the EIA. The initial outcomes of this assessment, alongside further details of the viaduct, will be published at the statutory consultation. Currently, the proposed alignment is located at a sufficient distance from local buildings that we do not anticipate directly impacting them.

We recognise concerns about the disruption that the proposed construction works may cause and will undertake a Transport Assessment which will inform the development of our proposals. This assessment will factor in, amongst other things, the potential for additional traffic on the A421. The assessment will help to inform our approach to reducing and

mitigating the disruption of any works to the bridge and roads as far as reasonably practicable. Outcomes of this will initially be reported in the PEIR published at the statutory consultation and then within the ES submitted as part of the DCO application.

7.1.5.15 Wider industry connectivity

Respondents were concerned with having good access to Midland Main Line and freight services. Respondents also felt that it would be beneficial for EWR to interchange well with GTR services.

Through the Project, Bedford station is being redeveloped to drive increased benefit to wider rail users and increase resilience on other services. This includes working with rail industry partners to develop a service that provides interconnectivity between the various passenger services that operate at Bedford station, such as GTR.