



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No: 4.1

East West Rail Consultation

To: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board

Meeting Date: 30 June 2021

Public report: Yes

Lead Member: Mayor Dr Nik Johnson

From: Paul Raynes, Director of Delivery and Strategy

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Recommendations: The Combined Authority Board is recommended to:

Agree a Combined Authority response to the East West Rail consultation.

Voting arrangements: A simple majority of members present and voting

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite Members to shape the Combined Authority's response to the East West Rail consultation. The submission deadline is 30 June.

2. Background

2.1 East West Rail is a proposed new rail link that would connect Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge with the aim of boosting growth through the creation of jobs and supporting more affordable new homes locally. In addition, it also aims to help spread prosperity across the UK by supporting opportunities for economic growth in towns and cities outside London.

2.2 The scheme is being delivered in stages and trains are already running between Oxford and Bicester. East West Rail Ltd (EWR Ltd) aim to have trains running the full length of the line between Oxford and Cambridge by the end of the decade.

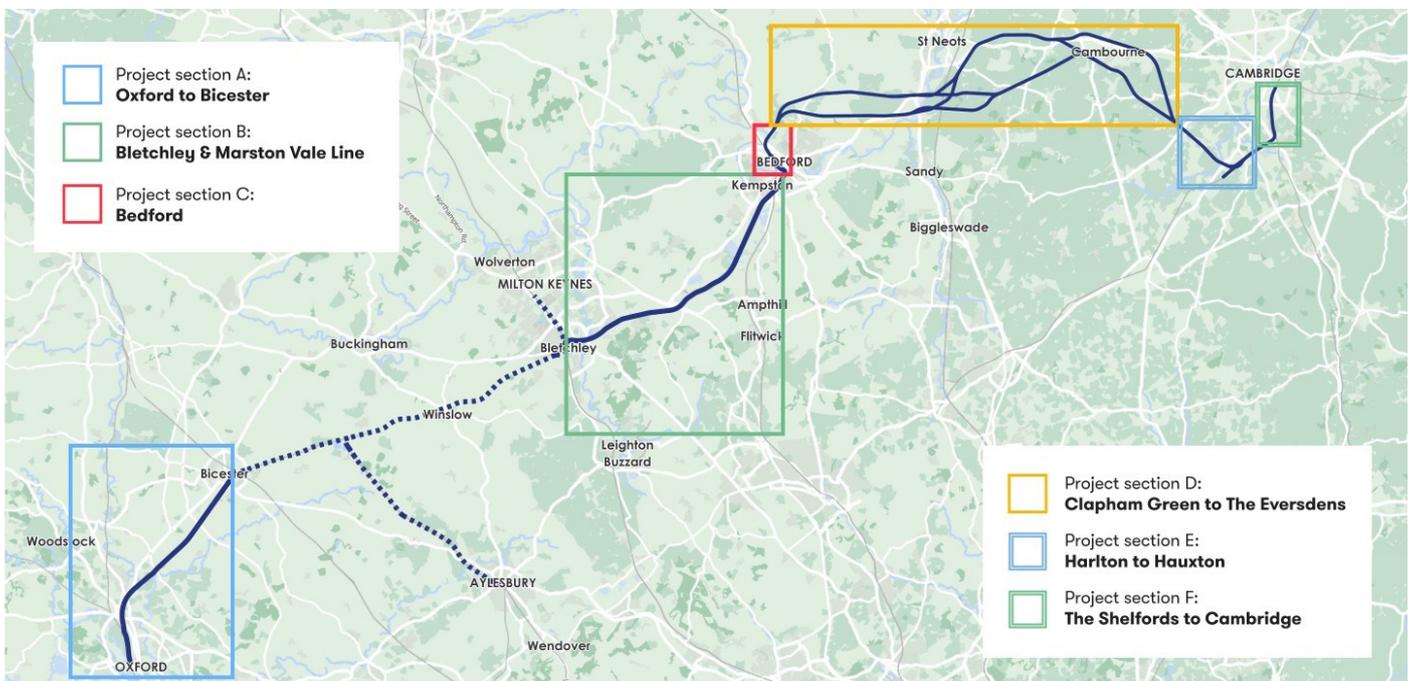


Figure 1: East West Rail Proposals (Source: EWR Consultation Material, 2021)

2.3 EWR Ltd's stated objective for the scheme are:

- Improve east-west public transport connectivity by providing rail links between key urban areas (current and anticipated) in the OxCam Arc;
- Stimulate economic growth, housing and employment through the provision of new, reliable and attractive inter-urban passenger train services;
- Meet initial forecast passenger demand;
- Consider and plan for future passenger demand, making provision where it is affordable;
- Contribute to improved journey times and inter-regional passenger connectivity;
- Maintain current capacity for rail freight and make appropriate provision for anticipated future growth; and

- Provide a sustainable and value for money transport solution.

2.4 The consultation sets a number of potential alignments, which are shown in the summary map at page 22 of the consultation document. EWR Ltd have outlined a preference for Alignments 1 and 9. Their justification is:

- Joined up infrastructure – benefit from a shared ‘travel corridor’ with the proposed A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement Scheme, meaning they already cover a route used regularly to connect people to places;
- New housing and communities – more potential for new homes and communities in the area (particularly for Cambourne North compared to Cambourne South);
- Economic growth – alongside the development of new housing, a new station could bring economic growth to the community, creating more jobs and prosperity; and
- Value for money – expected to be less costly to deliver than other alignments.

2.5 In addition, EWR Ltd have proposed that the new railway between Bedford and Cambridge enters Cambridge from the south via the West Anglia Main Line. To accommodate this alignment, EWR Ltd would need to build a new railway junction to join the proposed new railway to the existing Shepreth Branch Royston line (the King’s Cross line), which then connects to the West Anglia Main Line at the Shepreth Branch Junction to the north east. Within the documentation, EWR Ltd state that the construction of the new junction would allow fast and reliable East West Rail services to run into Cambridge connecting communities and businesses across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

2.6 The consultation papers also outline that additional modifications are required to the existing network, including:

- Changes required at Cambridge station to help with the anticipated increase in passengers;
- Improvements or closure of a level crossing on Hauxton Road, between Little Shelford and Hauxton;
- Maintaining the existing two track railway of the Shepreth Branch Royston Line (the King’s Cross line) to Shepreth Branch Junction;
- An additional two tracks in some areas to create four tracks on the West Anglia Main Line between Shepreth Branch Junction and Cambridge station, and modification of Shepreth Branch Junction; and
- Additional platforms at Cambridge station and the opportunity to stop at the proposed Cambridge South station.

CPCA’s Response: Key Principles

2.7 As a key, strategic transport scheme for Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and OxCam Arc, the Combined Authority continue to be supportive of the East West Rail scheme. The CPCA’s Local Transport Plan (LTP) outlines the Combined Authority’s position stating that *“East West Rail, a new rail link from Cambridge to Bedford, Milton Keynes and Oxford, will transform public transport connectivity along the Oxford to Cambridge corridor, [and create] new journey opportunities”*.

- 2.8 The East West Rail scheme is a key component of the Combined Authority's overarching transport (rail) strategy. With the potential development of the freeport on the East Coast and as the scheme continues to develop, it is important to understand how the movement of rail freight will be proactively managed. The East West Rail scheme, Ely Area Capacity Enhancement and North London Line improvements are all critical in the effective management of freight.
- 2.9 To deliver a truly, sustainable rail scheme that is fully integrated and embedded within the region's transport network, local geographies and urban fabric, it is essential that a number of key overarching principles are adhered to.
- 2.10 To assist the government's and the Combined Authority's aspirations to address climate change through proactive measures, it is important that the East West Rail makes a contribution to achieving a net zero position. To deliver against this aspiration, the scheme needs to be electrified from day one of operation. This will reduce the subsequent cost of retrofitting the network in due course, whilst providing a sustainable form of connectivity thereby reducing the impacts on the environment.
- 2.11 As a result of its strong economy, the world-class education offer and good living environment, this part of Cambridgeshire has seen rapid growth in both employment and households (but also increases in house prices as supply has not kept up with demand). To cater for that growth, local councils in the area have plans in place for an additional 61,000 homes by 2031. East West Rail is critical to delivering sustainable transport to support the anticipated growth up to 2031 and beyond. One of the key, overarching objectives of the East West Rail scheme is to stimulate economic growth (housing and employment) through the provision of new, reliable and attractive inter-urban passenger train services. The scheme must therefore be a catalyst for growth and ensure that the region's growth potential is realised in the most sustainable manner possible.
- 2.12 Transport can impact both positively and negatively on health and health inequalities. It is important that EWR Ltd consider ways to maximise the health benefits for all the people of Cambridgeshire's through improving access to employment and services; providing opportunities to be physically active from the scheme's various interchanges; and positively contributing to positively to lively communities and a liveable environment. In addition, EWR Ltd must endeavour to minimise the adverse impact on the region's health by addressing concerns around poor air and noise quality, and community severance.
- 2.13 If planned and co-ordinated successfully, it is possible for housing, mineral extraction and infrastructure development to create large areas of new green space and rich wildlife habitats, that is good both for nature and residents of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Natural Cambridgeshire estimates that the planned housing growth over the next 30 years could provide another 2,000 hectares of land for nature. The doubling of nature is a critical part of responding to the climate challenge, with nature providing an essential role in our ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The East West Rail scheme should give due consideration to doubling nature within its construction, maintenance, and operational phases.
- 2.14 It is crucial that East West Rail is integrated into the overall transport network and offer seamless, high quality interchange with other modes. Due consideration needs to be given to provide connectivity and integration between East West Rail and the A428, the current

Bus Reform work of the Combined Authority in relation to the future framework for public transport, as well as the scheme's inter-relationship with the wider rail network. The LTP states that "the *Combined Authority will continue to work with the East West Rail Company, together with the DfT, to deliver the new railway and ensure that it best serves Huntingdonshire through interchange with existing East Coast Main Line services*".

- 2.15 The Combined Authority is currently developing schemes within the East West Rail / A428 corridor and examining how connectivity can be improved along and through the corridor, with a particular focus on improving the public transport offer to the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Any improvements to the transport network need to fully integrate with the local public transport network and the A428 to ensure a seamless network is delivered with adverse impacts minimised wherever possible.
- 2.16 EWR Ltd need to take into account the emerging Local Plans thereby ensuring that the scheme will unlock and serve the growth potential through the provision of safe, high-quality, accessible and sustainable interchanges. These interchanges should provide step free access ideally located at either major attractors or generators of passengers and within 10 to 15 minutes' walk to key locations. This should ensure there is ease of access to major attractors and located at the optimum location for accessibility helps to reinforce the sustainable transport message.
- 2.17 EWR Ltd should clarify the evidence in support of its preference for the alignment of the proposed section between Clapham Green and Cambridge. Improving access to St Neots itself and the East Coast Mainline could provide a catalyst for regeneration, growth and investment in the area. Further consideration should be given as to whether the line could pass through the town with an assessment of the key challenges that this alignment may pose in relation to cost, engineering and the environment.
- 2.18 The Combined Authority request sight of the evidence to support the southerly approach to Cambridge, as an alternative northerly approach to the city could have been considered in addition to the southerly one outlined in the consultation. Sight of this evidence and detailed information would allow the Combined Authority and the people of Cambridgeshire to feedback on the options with the potential to finalise a preferred alignment chosen in due course.
- 2.19 The Combined Authority will continue to co-operate with EWR Ltd on the development of the scheme and providing a resolution to the issues outlined in this paper in a timely and effective manner.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 None at this point.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 None at this point.

5. Other Significant Implications

5.1 None.

6. Appendices

6.1 None.

7. Background Papers

7.1 [East West Rail consultation document](#)