

## EWR Consultation June 2026 - Railfuture Response

Railfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network, for passengers and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities. We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in development and transport planning.

Railfuture has a vision for a railway which:

- delivers a better service to rail users – more punctual, reliable, fast, frequent, integrated, comfortable, easy to use and value for money
- offers more journey opportunities, with more capacity and connectivity, to encourage modal shift, support economic growth and reduce carbon emissions
- transfers more freight from road to rail to reduce congestion, carbon emissions and air pollution.

We welcome this opportunity to comment on the updated proposals for East West Rail as presented at this consultation; we broadly support the new plans as aligning with our long-term vision and are pleased to see several improvements from the 2024 plans, including several of which we raised at the previous consultation.

### **1. Please tell us which of the following describes your interest in the project: (Please tick all that apply)**

Organisation  
Interest/community group

### **2. If you have received a letter identifying you as having an interest in land affected by the project, please add your Party ID reference number in the box below:**

n/a

### **3. Please provide your contact details:**

**(If you would prefer to remain anonymous, we would be grateful if you could provide the first part of your postcode, so we can understand where you live in relation to the project)**

Title: Mr  
First name: Neil  
Surname: Middleton  
Email address: [eastwestrail@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:eastwestrail@railfuture.org.uk)

Telephone number

### **4. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, group or affected landowner, please provide further details below:**

Organisation/group/landowner name: Railfuture Limited  
Organisation/group/landowner address (First line): 3 Chandos Court  
Organisation/group/landowner address (Town/City): Martlesham  
Organisation/group/landowner address (County): Suffolk  
Organisation/group/landowner address (Postcode): IP12 4SU  
Your role in organisation, group or representing landowner: Vice Chair and member of Board of Directors

**5. Please provide your age range:**

**6. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our revised underpass proposals for London Road level crossing.**

We welcome the replacement of London Road level crossing with an underpass prioritising pedestrians and cyclists.

**7. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our proposals for a train maintenance depot and passing loops at Bletchley West.**

We agree with the provision of passing loops (both here and more generally) and support the provision of a train maintenance depot at this location.

**8. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our proposals for an eastern entrance at Bletchley station.**

We welcome this.

**9. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our connectivity proposals to the new stations including walking, wheeling, cycling and equestrian routes.**

We welcome these proposals, noting that third party funding is not yet confirmed (indeed in some cases development plans are more generally at an early stage. It will be important for EWR to keep up the pressure for the third party funding element.

**10. Please use the boxes below to provide any feedback you have on our proposals for these level crossings.**

Fenny Stratford (Simpson Road)  
Bow Brickhill (V10 Brickhill Street)  
Husborne Crawley 10  
Ridgmont (Station Road)  
Playing Field  
Millbrook (Station Lane)  
Wootton Broadmead (Broadmead Road)

**11. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our revised proposals for south Bedford and Bedford St Johns station.**

We welcome these proposals. As Bedford St Johns station will be an island platform – and serving a hospital, it is essential that two lifts are provided for the island platform to both improve availability and also to reduce delays for the less mobile.

**12. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our proposals to redevelop Bedford station.**

We strongly support inclusion of an Up Fast platform at the remodelled Bedford (Midland) station, allowing intercity trains to call and expanding interchange opportunities there.

We support the provision of multiple entrances.

As traffic numbers are expected to be high, whenever passengers only have a choice of stairs, escalators or lifts, we believe multiple lifts are required to platform to both improve availability and also to reduce delays for those unable to use stairs or escalators.

**13. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our proposals for Cambourne station.**

We support this.

**14. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our proposals for the new eastern entrance at Cambridge station.**

We support this.

**15. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our proposals for Cambridge East station.**

We support provision of an additional station in the east of Cambridge on the Newmarket line, however the currently proposed site – at the southern end of Cambridge City Airport – would overlap in catchment with Cambridge (central) station, especially when the eastern entrance to the latter is opened. We recognise that redevelopment of the airport site is imminent within the next decade but note that the linear nature of the site means that much of the redevelopment would be at a distance from the proposed station. Therefore we instead propose that Cambridge East is built further east, adjacent to Yarrow Road in Cherry Hinton. A station on this site would expand rail access to a greater population, as well as connecting to the significant employment area at ARM Holdings and Peterhouse Technology Park. This site would also connect with existing bus routes 1 and 3, as opposed to the Coldhams Lane site which currently sees no bus service.

**16. Please use the box below to provide any feedback you have about our proposals for Cambridge Eastern train care centre.**

We support this.

**17. Please use the box below to provide any further feedback you have about the project and our proposals for East West Rail. Please include relevant location information to help us understand your feedback.**

You can also use this box to provide any comments you may have on our approach to:

- The assessment and mitigation of environmental impacts
- Construction
- Door-to-door connectivity and active travel
- Good design

We welcome this opportunity to comment on the updated proposals for East West Rail as presented at this consultation; we broadly support the new plans as aligning with our long-term vision and are pleased to see a number of improvements from the 2024 plans, including several of which we raised at the previous consultation.

However, there are still some significant points we wish to raise, as detailed below and in our responses to specific questions.

Above all, as at the previous consultation we emphasise the importance of considering EWR in relation to the wider national network, rather than as a single isolated line. From its inception as a proposal by the East West Main Line Partnership in the 1990s, to the publication of Network Rail's *'East West Main Line Strategic Statement'* in 2022, EWR has always been envisaged as not just an Oxford-Cambridge link but a main line facilitating new connections from further afield, and this thinking must continue to inform the development of the project to ensure it delivers the maximum benefits.

We anticipate EWR becoming a key route for freight traffic, and so are strongly supportive of the plans for freight loops and provision of an hourly freight path across the full route, pending other third-party infrastructure interventions.

**A. Full conventional electrification of the entire route**

East West Rail must be fully electrified between Oxford and Cambridge East (with a view to extension to Didcot and Newmarket). Discontinuous electrification is unsuitable for what is to

become a busy mixed-traffic main line; freight traffic would need to be hauled by diesel locomotives to cross the gaps in overhead electrification, leading to slower freight journeys, higher noise levels and avoidable carbon emissions; network flexibility would be lost as through-running services from intersecting electrified main lines (as envisioned in Network Rail's Strategic Statement) would not be possible; and while discontinuous electrification may reduce short-term

construction costs, it would also result in higher 'rolling' costs due to increased track wear from heavier battery units – a bespoke fleet of which would be required to operate the line.

Noting that the consultation states that full electrification would not be precluded in future, we maintain it is much cheaper and less disruptive to build an electrified railway from the start than to open a new railway and then close it for electrification work at a future date.

## **B. An additional station for St Neots**

An additional station must be provided to the east of St Neots to serve the town directly. The proposed active travel route between St Neots and Tempsford station would take upwards of 60 minutes, making it an unattractive option for residents of the town; driving to the station is also likely to be unappealing due to the extra distance and journey time involved, particularly for journeys toward Cambridge. We do not agree that the costs and disruption of such a station would outweigh the benefits; no additional land take would be needed under the proposed Draft Order limits and construction will be occurring in the area regardless, and the station would add upwards of 36,000 people to the catchment of EWR, while supporting the major developments at Wintringham and Love's Farm East, which are expected to deliver a combined ~4,000 new homes.

Local authorities in the region have long recognised the benefits an EWR station would bring to St Neots, and following the 2024 consultation EWRC acknowledged that there is a strong desire from stakeholders that St Neots should be more directly served by the new railway – and that there are no major obstacles preventing a station being built in the area under the current plans. We believe the justification for this station already exists and so it should be included, or provision made for it as a minimum.

## **C. Extension to Newmarket**

We welcome improvements east of Coldhams Lane Junction to the Fulbourn area; however there is an opportunity to further increase the benefits of EWR by extending double-track and electrification to Newmarket, with eastbound EWR services terminating there at a redeveloped station. Despite its proximity to and economic links with Cambridge, demand on the Newmarket line is stifled owing to the low service frequency (1tph in each direction); the arrival of EWR presents an opportunity to deliver service improvements, increasing connectivity and passenger numbers. Alongside traffic towards Cambridge, Newmarket is a significant destination in itself with a high-tech cluster in veterinary science and regular events held at Newmarket Racecourse, which would both bring significant passenger usage to the line.

We note that the existing rail service between Ely and Cambridge – similar to that which is proposed for EWR west of Cambridge – is highly successful and carries approximately 48% of all passenger traffic between the two cities; we believe this can be replicated between Cambridge and Newmarket if the investment is made.

## **D. Acceleration of the project and a commitment to avoid 'value engineering'**

The current projected completion date of East West Rail is in the mid-2030s – around 25 years since EWR began development and meaning that we are still up to a decade away from the start of full Oxford-Cambridge services. We do appreciate that efforts have been made to accelerate delivery of the project since the previous consultation, particularly with an earlier expected start date for services to Bedford, in recognition of the fact that the railway is needed now to serve the existing population, support economic and housing growth and help reduce carbon emissions and

encourage modal shift; however our contacts with industrialists and science parks, particularly in the Cambridge area, are concerned about the prospective 10-year wait for services to reach Cambridge. This area is growing rapidly and there are concerns that investment opportunities will be lost to elsewhere or even abroad if the transport infrastructure is not there to support them. Therefore every effort must be made to speed up delivery of the full route wherever possible, to ensure that new jobs and housing in Cambridge are supported.

Crucially, any such acceleration must not come at the expense of quality or a 'minimum viable product' approach. Recent railway projects across the country, such as the Borders Railway and the Northumberland line, have vastly outperformed passenger predictions, leading to infrastructure being inadequate to cope with the higher-than-predicted passenger numbers; this must not be allowed to happen with such a major new main line.

In recent years new stations have often been built with minimal facilities, including little or no shelter; with the effects of climate change now becoming apparent it is clear that this approach will not do. Stations must be attractive and comfortable for passengers to use. To this end, at stations where no other option for step-free access is possible (i.e. on island platforms), we strongly recommend the provision of two lifts rather than one. This would improve passenger flow at busy stations, for example at Stewartby and the extended platform 7/8 at Cambridge.

#### **E. Other matters**

Our comments in 11 (Bedford St Johns station) and 12 (Bedford station) on provision of multiple lifts are generally applicable at all stations when no other level access is available.

Our comments supporting multiple entrances / exits are also generally applicable, including at the main Cambridge station.

#### **F. Provision for an east-to-north connection at Bletchley**

We support the plan to double-track the line between Bletchley and Fenny Stratford, during which provision should be made for a new curve linking the Marston Vale line north to the West Coast Main Line. Such a connection has previously been identified by Network Rail as key to the East West Main Line strategy, and we strongly support this link as it would facilitate new direct services between Cambridge/Bedford and destinations such as Milton Keynes Central, Northampton and Birmingham International Airport. Furthermore, it would provide an alternative route for intermodal trains between Felixstowe and terminals in the West Midlands, including Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal, thus relieving cross-London routes for other traffic and contributing towards the incoming GBR's rail freight growth target.

#### **G. Provision for a future connection to Aylesbury**

While we understand the Aylesbury link remains excluded from current EWR plans, we believe it is still an important project which would further enhance transport links and connectivity in the region. HS2 works have already made provision for the section between Quanton and Calvert to be built, and so EWR works between Bicester and Winslow must not preclude construction of the link in future.

#### **18. Please tell us how you found out about this consultation: (Please tick all that apply)**

East West Rail website

"Keeping you Connected" East West Rail digital newsletter

#### **19. Please tell us how helpful you found our consultation material:**

Very helpful