

# EWR Consultation

31 March - 9 June 2021

This feedback is submitted on behalf of 2G3S<sup>1</sup>. We are a local green group which aims to promote a positive vision of a society that enhances, rather than degrades, the natural environment on which we all depend. We are based in the green-belt south of Cambridge around Great & Little Shelfords, Stapleford and Sawston<sup>2</sup> and hold events locally to raise awareness of green issues and to show how we can work together, both at an individual and at an organisational level, to make changes to our way of life that will lead to a more stable and sustainable future. Since the proposed 'Route E' will pass through two of our villages, we feel that we have a stake in this project and would like to point out specific considerations that are relevant to our community.

We strongly support the proposed East-West main line in terms of meeting the need for sustainable local and national transport options in the face of the climate emergency for the following reasons:

- Rail travel is energy efficient<sup>3</sup> - Investing in rail infrastructure (if appropriately connected to bus and active travel routes) would replace road journeys made by private vehicles and heavy goods vehicles with a more efficient transport mode thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Rail is future-proof - We will be expected to make fewer car journeys in future if we are to meet legally binding targets for emissions<sup>4</sup>.

Although we do not favour one approach over another, we feel that if the EWR were indeed to take the 'Southern Approach', this would bring benefits to the local area by creating opportunities for developing sustainable transport options through improved rights of way for pedestrians and cyclists, and by limiting motor vehicle traffic through small villages. We have some concerns regarding the local and global environmental impact of the project and look to EWR for assurance that sustainability has been given the necessary consideration.

We welcome this opportunity to give our feedback on the proposal and would welcome an electrified railway that gives improved travel opportunities, without the need for private vehicles, from Ipswich and Norwich in the East, via Cambridge and Cambridge South, to Bedford, Oxford and beyond. The development must also however create a better environment with trees to mitigate noise and visual effects, with open space and routes for cycling and walking to compensate for disturbances to both the environment, and local people both during the construction, and afterwards.

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<sup>1</sup> 2G3S, Mission Statement, viewed 23/05/21, <http://2g3s.staplefordvillage.org.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> Given our location, the scope of our response is limited to considering the area from immediately north of the A603 crossing to the intersection of this line and the West Anglia Main Line at Shepreth branch junction.

<sup>3</sup> David Mackay, Sustainable Energy without the hot air, UIT (2008)

<sup>4</sup> UK Government, UK becomes first major economy to pass net zero emissions law, published 27/06/19,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law>

## Part 2: Introduction to the Project and story so far

### The approach to Cambridge

1. Please share your view on:

*Because EWR alignments closer to north Cambridge are now being considered, we have looked again at whether we were right to have favoured Route Option E and approaching Cambridge from the south as we confirmed after our last consultation. In particular, we have reviewed our previous assessment that concluded approaching from the south was the better option taking account of a Cambourne North Station outside of Route E to see if we would have made a different decision. We consider that the advantages of approaching Cambridge from the south continue to support this conclusion and that a number of challenges remain for a northern approach even with a Cambourne North station. We'd welcome your comments on our assessment.*

The Wildlife Trusts have concluded that the northern route would have less impact on the local environment<sup>5</sup>. We agree that before a final decision on which potential route is chosen a full Environmental Impact Assessment should be undertaken to ascertain which option provides maximum benefits to the environment and minimises harm. We support the development of rail infrastructure to deliver sustainable travel in the face of a climate emergency and catastrophic biodiversity loss<sup>6</sup>, provided that appropriate mitigations are undertaken to minimise harm to the local environment. We believe that it is imperative for such a construction project to undertake considerable efforts to mitigate impacts on the local environment, such as additional tree planting and where possible biodiversity enhancement close to the line to create wildlife links and assist the Nature Recovery Network<sup>7</sup>. If, after an appropriate Environmental assessment has been undertaken, the southern route is confirmed we can foresee opportunities for our local area in terms of mitigation and compensation such as repurposing land from adjacent agriculture to open space, and improving pedestrian and cycle routes through the affected villages.

We should be mindful that a project of this scale will indeed lead to large amounts of embodied carbon associated with moving large amounts of earth to make cuttings and embankments, or building large concrete structures. For comparison, it is estimated that the crossrail project will deliver net savings in CO<sub>2</sub> between 9 to 13 years after construction once the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted in its construction is offset by savings in emissions from displaced car journeys<sup>8</sup>. Your technical report considers the case for building the railway however it appears to be focussed solely on economic growth and business opportunity. Moreover, the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated that remote working is in fact a highly effective means of conducting business - a fact that has not been considered in your analysis. We invite you to revisit this issue and reflect on how the railway might best meet our national

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<sup>5</sup> The Wildlife Trusts, East West Rail need to change track, created 8/02/202, viewed 23/05/21, <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/news/east-west-rail-need-change-track>

<sup>6</sup> K. Willis & S. Bhagwat, Science, Vol. 326, Issue 5954, pp. 806-807 (2009)

<sup>7</sup> DEFRA, Nature Recovery Network, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-recovery-network/nature-recovery-network>, updated 26/11/20

<sup>8</sup> Crossrail, ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CARBON, <https://learninglegacy.crossrail.co.uk/learning-legacy-themes/environment/energy-efficiency-and-carbon/>, viewed 09/06/21

emissions targets for example by (1) minimising emissions during construction and operation through careful route selection and railway design and (2) ensuring that it can be accessed by a significant number of travellers to replace car journeys. The project should not go ahead without careful consideration of environmental risks and rewards.

To mitigate impacts on local communities through which the line will travel it is important to realise opportunities to improve local active transport options alongside the railway line. To quote from the Department of Transport's 'Gear Change' guidance, "Major new rail corridors will be designed to support local and National Cycle Network plans for improved traffic free links between communities within the corridor. This will help lock in benefits to communities disrupted by construction of new railways with a legacy of new greenways offering better connections between places".

## Part 3: Customer experience and railway operations

### The train service

#### 2. Please share your views on:

- How you might use EWR services - for example for work, to visit friends and family, or to get to leisure destinations?
- Based on your experience of rail travel in the UK what do you think are the main areas that could be improved?
- If you don't currently travel by rail, what are the reasons for this? Is there anything that would persuade you to use rail services?
- Are there ways in which we could help improve your entire journey? For example:
  - How and where you research your trip
  - The actual rail journey itself
  - Getting from your home at the start of the journey, to the point that you reach your end destination
- How could we support our net zero carbon ambitions through the delivery of services to customers? For example, through the design of stations, the trains we operate or through forms of active travel, for example cycling or walking.

#### Our response:

- Train services must be well integrated with local bus services and active transport options if they are to truly provide a sustainable travel option. A train service which can only be accessed by car is not environmentally sustainable; we feel that consideration must be given to the connectivity of the proposed service with existing local transport routes and facilities eg. bike parks and local bus services. This would guarantee the value of this investment by ensuring that those using the service could travel efficiently from door-to-door. As such, work on the railway could indirectly improve cycle and bus links which would be of great benefit to local communities.
- We note your intention to deliver a 'net zero carbon' railway and the fact that you have not decided how you intend to do this yet. We assert however that electrification of the line via overhead cables is the only proven way to do this at present. This

measure should consider this from the outset of the project in order to avoid costly retrofitting at a later date and therefore minimise costs to the tax-payer. In addition, freight on the line could be of great benefit in displacing freight from the roads to rail; specifying the railway with this intention could have great sustainable benefit.

- Major construction projects have an environmental cost. We are in a climate and biodiversity crisis. The potential benefits of this project, in a time when many are working more from home and reducing their commutes, can only be realised if it is accessible to a maximum number of travellers. Train services must be accessible to all, including wheelchair users and families with young children. This does not only mean avoidance of steps, it must also consider luggage requirements and safety issues. Please see below for ideas on 'family friendly carriages'. Consider how passengers who have difficulty walking are assisted in airports.
- Please consider whether it is possible to have luggage passed from one connecting train service to another like on aeroplane services. This will make longer train travel journeys involving connections much more accessible.
- There should not be such disparity in train ticket prices for longer journeys, if several different 'legs' of a journey are bought separately. Ticketing should be clear and transparent.

## Station experience

### 3. Please share your views on:

- Thinking about your experience of stations, how would you like your rail journey to link with other parts of your journey? For example, arriving or leaving the station on foot, by bike, car, or bus.
- How can station forecourts and approaches be designed to offer the most convenient access for walking, cycling and bus services?
- What sort of facilities would you like to see at stations – both those that contribute to the overall journey experience, as well as those that might serve a wider community purpose?
- Are there any particularly good examples, either in the UK or abroad, of stations with good facilities or facilities for changing between different transport modes?
- Are there specific factors that you would like us to consider that may improve safety and security at stations?
- How can stations be better designed to manage customer flows around the station environment?
- How can customers be guided through the station experience (particularly during busy periods)?
- How should we ensure inclusivity, for example in terms of accessibility and the broader station experience?

### Our response:

- Train stations must be integrated with local bus services and active travel routes.
- Secure bicycle storage must be available.
- Access must be step free. Consider how customers with difficulty walking are supported in airports.
- Bathrooms and sheltered, safe waiting areas must be provided wherever possible for passengers waiting for connecting services, and these should be clearly identifiable when pre planning journeys.

- Limited short stay parking or 'drop off zones' should be provided.
- Consider identifying the correct area on the platform to wait in for loading bikes etc to avoid delays.
- Consider 'child safe' waiting areas on the platform e.g. with a safety barrier between platform and train track

## On-train experience

### 4. Please share your views on:

- How can we create an engaging environment that suits the unique needs of our customers, for example, working effectively, relaxing or being entertained?
- What types of things should we put in place to create a clean, safe and secure environment for you and your belongings on your train journey?
- What facilities and services would provide the optimal train experience for customers on the EWR route?
- What types of areas/spaces would you like to see on EWR trains beyond seating and standing space?
- What on-train experience(s) might encourage customers to switch to rail from other modes of transport?
- Are there any examples, either from the UK or from abroad, of good seating layouts or on-train facilities?
- How might we consider sustainability in the on-train environment?
- How can the on-train environment support customers' wellbeing throughout their journey?

### Our response:

- Please make it easier to book space on trains for bikes. These should not be spaces that are also used for wheelchairs. It is mortifying to have a buggy/bike on a train and realise you are blocking the path of a wheelchair user. Ideally please identify where on the platform the bike loading zone will be, to avoid delays in traversing the length of a busy platform trying to work out where the bike should be put on the train, thus avoiding delays.
- Please consider 'family friendly carriages'. This could include designated space for buggies, and ramps to access the train, increased storage near seating areas (so that nappies, refreshments, entertainment are all easily accessible without having to leave seats), child friendly bathrooms (clean! Because little hands go everywhere), safety harnesses for young children, shaded windows, easily accessible refreshments (consider a call bell like on a plane or a phone text/app service), assistance when embarking/disembarking the train with luggage so that parents can ensure safety of children. The carriages should be clearly identifiable, bookable in advance and ideally the position where the carriage will be on the platform identified so that families can wait at the right spot and avoid delays embarking.
- All refreshments provided on the trains should be in reusable/compostable packaging and appropriate recycling facilities should be provided.

## Interaction with colleagues

### 5. Please share your views on:

- What types of attitudes and behaviours would you like to
- see our staff displaying to make your experience with EWR a positive one? This may relate to contact you have online, over the phone, at the station or on the train.

- How and where would you like to have access to staff members on your journey and why? Again, this may relate to virtual support or face to face contact.

**Our response:**

- Consider providing assistance to families with small children and luggage when embarking/disembarking the train to ensure safety.
- Consider a call bell/phone app to request assistance like on a plane for those with additional needs
- Please provide real people available to assist passengers and provide information.

## Customer information

**6. Please share your views on:**

- What sort of information do you find most critical when you are making a train journey?
- What ways of communicating travel information do you think will be most effective as you arrive at the station or on the train?
- Are there other types of travel information, not directly relating to the train journey, that you think it would be valuable for EWR to provide before or during your journey?
- How could we provide better or different customer information, to help our customers be more relaxed and feel in control throughout their journey?

**Our response:**

- Please identify which stations will have available bathrooms for passengers connecting to other services, so that comfort breaks can be planned in advance
- Staff should be on hand to deal with unusual events and emergencies.

## Part 4: Infrastructure development

### Section E: Harlton to Hauxton

*40. What do you think is important to consider when developing our proposals for the Harlton to Hauxton area? In particular, what do we need to take account of:*

*a. In relation to building a new railway junction which would join our new railway to the Shepreth Branch Royston existing railway*

*b. In relation to our emerging preferred option to build a new junction which uses a bridge to connect the railways (a grade separated junction) and to extend the existing railway to connect to the new junction (using an offline construction).*

With reference to our comments above, regarding carbon emissions associated with construction, we consider option (a) to be the most attractive since this would appear to be the most energy-efficient; it would remove the need for a large concrete structure and would reuse existing track. However, we await the outcome of the environmental assessment before making this judgement.

Closing Newton Road level crossing to cars could in fact have great benefits to the local area in terms of reducing the volume of traffic passing through the small villages of Newton and Fowlmere by displacing traffic onto surrounding main roads where cars tend to run more efficiently. Those who cycle could also benefit from the reduced traffic if the level crossing between Newton and Harston were to remain open to them. Further mitigations could be considered such as upgrading the public right of way connecting Town St, Newton to Mortimers Ln, Foxton to a cycleway.

## Section F: The Shelfords to Cambridge station

*41. What do you think is important to consider when developing our proposals for the The Shelfords and Cambridge area? In particular, what do we need to take account of:*

- a. In relation to our options for the Hauxton Road level crossing*
- b. In relation to our proposed modifications to the Shepreth Junction*
- c. In relation to our emerging preferred option to increase the existing railway line between Shepreth Junction and Addenbrooke's bridge from two tracks to four tracks*
- d. In relation to our emerging preferred option to increase the existing railway line between Long Road Sixth Form College and Cambridge station from two/three tracks to four tracks*
- e. Anything we should consider at Cambridge station.*

We feel that proposal (a) is appealing because it would prevent dangerous, fast-moving traffic along Hauxton road. This would protect cyclists and pedestrians, some of which are school and nursery school children, and by keeping the crossing open to cyclists and pedestrians we could maintain the historic link between Hauxton and Little Shelford. Clearly closing this busy road would have an effect on local traffic flow which would need to be given further consideration. As a potential mitigation, we suggest that a cycleway between Little & Great Shelford could be considered that would provide a welcoming environment to cyclists compared to the existing road and would encourage active travel options in line with the new government initiative<sup>9</sup>.

We welcome proposal (c) as it presents an opportunity to rebuild and improve the important 'DNA path' that links Granham's Rd with Addenbrookes. This shared cycle and pedestrian footpath is too narrow at present to accommodate the volume of cycling traffic and pedestrians safely.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Department for Transport, Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking (2007)

<sup>10</sup> CTC Cambridge, Sawston Greenway: our detailed comments, viewed 30/05/21, <https://ctccambridge.org.uk/blog/2019/07/sawston-greenway-our-detailed-comments>