

## **DRAFT Outline response to EWR Consultation**

### **Introduction**

East-West Rail has invited responses to its consultation on the new railway between Oxford and Cambridge. This document is a proposed outline of Bourn Parish Council's response. The Parish Council will discuss and agree the main contents of the response based on this outline, and the agreed statements will form the basis for a formal response using the template provided by EWR [here](#). The deadline for responses is 9 June 2021.

### **Background**

East-West Rail was set up by the Department of Transport in 2017 to design and build a new railway between Oxford and Cambridge as a key enabler of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. The aim of the Arc is to "build a better economic, social and environmental future for the area. With high-quality, well-connected and sustainable communities making the Arc an even more beautiful place to live, work and visit."

In January 2019 East-West Rail consulted on five route options between Bedford and Cambridge and chose "Option E", which started north out of Bedford, passed south of St Neots, south of Cambourne and entered Cambridge from the south. Since then, vigorous campaigning from local parishes, lobbying groups (notably CamBed RailRoad and Cambridge Approaches), councillors and our MP argued that a station north of Cambourne and a northern approach to Cambridge be evaluated equally alongside route alignments chosen within Option E.

The current consultation includes an option for a north Cambourne station and an evaluation of the northern approach along with alignments consistent with Option E.

Bourn Parish Council held an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) in public to inform residents of the key elements of the consultation and the impact on Bourn. Questions were invited from the 70 residents who attended. The council went into session and agreed the broad scope of its response. The presentation, discussion and outline response were all reported on the website.

### **Outline consultation response**

The proposed outline response is based on the seven points agreed at the EGM. However, these points will need to be reformatted into the required layout of EWR's consultation document before submission. It is felt at this stage that it is easier to reach agreement on the main points using the headings agreed at the EGM.

#### **1. Location of Cambourne station**

- Of all the options raised in the consultation document, the location of Cambourne station has the greatest impact on Bourn.
- Arguments in favour of a station north of Cambourne
  - More accessible to residents of Cambourne, Bourn Airfield and nearby villages as it is adjacent to the A428 and close to the A1198. There would be less traffic passing through Bourn to a north station than to a south station.

- A north station could integrate with any future park and ride/bus route into Cambridge to provide a transport hub for residents in the area
- A north Cambourne station is favoured by Cambourne residents
- A north station would offer EWR the option of locating passing loops and sidings nearby, which is not possible with a south Cambourne station.
- While we do not welcome the progressive “concretisation” of valuable countryside along the A428 corridor, we do understand the argument put forward by EWR, that there is more potential for housing development near a station to the north of Cambourne than to the south, which adds to its attractiveness from an overall benefits point of view. This would also make a better town shape, oval, rather than sausage-shaped as would result if the station was to the south.
- Arguments against a south Cambourne station
  - Seven houses will be demolished on the Broadway and many others will be blighted by noise and vibrations. This will incur direct cost to residents: loss in house value, difficulty in selling homes etc. and significant disruption to all Bourn residents during the construction phase. At this stage EWR has not shared which houses will be demolished.
  - The line would cross through historic land with significant Roman and Iron Age archaeology, still to be discovered.
  - The line would pass within 500m of a conservation area, including the historic Bourn Hall clinic, where IVF was pioneered.
  - A south Cambourne station would be located close to Bourn’s historic open trestle post windmill, over 400 years old and one of the oldest in England. The station would seriously impair the rural aspect of the windmill.
  - The station would also be located in valuable recreational land used by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders and is considered a valuable part of Cambourne’s green space.
  - The approach to the south station from the west passes over a groundwater source protection zone, which would be avoided by a north station.
  - The south station railway line beyond Bourn would cross the B1046, Caldecote Rd and Church Lane (into Kingston) via a large and unsightly viaduct and it may also impact negatively on the Kingston Cutting Nature Reserve, a protected area where the old Varsity line ran and which features an historic old railway wagon.
  - Bourn Broadway residents would lose the children’s playground

## **2. Northern approach to Cambridge**

- We want EWR to make an unbiased and objective assessment of the northern approach before dismissing it as impractical. This is because:
  - The northern approach serves the major new housing developments which are north of the A428 and the many businesses congregated within and to the north of the city
  - Provides the opportunity for an additional station near Northstowe, giving benefit to far more people than a southern approach to Cambridge would

- We appreciate the objections EWR has put to the northern approach (more complex road and flood zone crossings, four-tracking the line into Cambridge etc) but there are equally convincing counter-arguments put forward by CamBed RailRoad and CA (e.g. passing under the A14, using trenches and using advanced signalling to avoid four-tracking the West Anglia Main Line (WAML) into Cambridge).
- EWR assesses the impact on houses by counting those that would be demolished, rather than a more realistic calculation of houses blighted by noise and vibrations. We would like EWR to compare the impact on both approaches to Cambridge based on the number of houses within 200m of the line, ignoring those impacted by the four-track section into the city if that can be avoided.

### **3. Issues with southern approach to Cambridge**

- A key aspect of the southern approach is the number of viaducts and the distance the railway line will be raised above ground level on embankments. The line will also pass through a cutting through Chapel Hill.
- One of those viaducts crosses the new and old A428 roads, passing very close to Highfields Caldecote. Quite apart from the blight this places on local residents, we object to the height this viaduct would have to built, in order to pass over the roads and would ask that consideration be given to move the crossing further east if that could reduce the height of the viaduct and the negative impact of Caldecote. We note this viaduct would not be needed at all if the line approached Cambridge from the north (point 2 above).
- As users of the roads, bridleways and paths in the countryside between the A603 and Harston, we are concerned by the impact on the environment by these proposals:
  - It would create 17km of elevated track between Kingston and Harston, which would be a major eyesore and create far more noise than a track at or below ground level. We would implore EWR to consider tunnelling under Chapel Hill and lower the heights of the proposed embankments. Consider also building a road bridge for the A603 to pass over the railway line, rather than using a viaduct.
  - We are concerned that the line would sever footpaths and bridleways, and even if culverts are built through the embankments, some of these tunnels could be up to 70m long and be dark, frightening and dangerous to walk/cycle through.
- We are concerned for the ongoing preservation of the barbastelle bat colony near Wimpole and want more assurance than the consultation document offers that “we are confident that we can mitigate the risks”
- We also understand that around 200 acres of valuable farming land could be lost, significantly more than is the case with the northern approach.

### **4. Public rights of way**

- We applaud EWR’s decision not to sever any road (except between Harston and Newton). However, the consultation document is silent on how many public rights of way (paths, bridleways and byways) would be severed. South Cambridgeshire is well-served with an excellent network of public rights of way. For example, the proposed

route alignment crosses the Harcamlow Way, part of a very popular bridleway from Bourn to Cambridge, via Caldecote, Hardwick and Coton. We ask that EWR to preserve access to the countryside via all existing public rights of way.

- **To be added:** exactly which paths/bridleways are severed by each route option. Perhaps also list these in two groups based on frequency/popularity of use (if we know that).
- As part of its commitment to the environment and compensating residents directly affected by the railway, we ask EWR to upgrade the bridleway between Bourn and Cambridge, referred to above, into a high-quality gravel-tracked cycleway.

## 5. Zero-carbon railway

- EWR is committed to a zero-carbon solution to its railway, yet it will continue to run diesel trains without any date committed to electrification or alternative carbon-free solution. As a minimum commitment, we ask that EWR only operate non-diesel passenger trains by the time it opens the Bedford to Cambridge section of the line. As diesel trains will be banned by 2040, it makes no sense for EWR to be running diesel trains on a brand-new line for just ten years. This will create a very poor public image of the company and its railway.

## 6. Freight

- We understand that EWR is not in control of the freight usage on the line. While residents support the principle of freight travelling by train rather than road, they are concerned about how frequent the trains will run and during what times of day and night. They are also concerned by how long a train will be and its speed and vibration characteristics. We want EWR to make certain commitments to placing limitations on the amount of freight the line will be allowed to carry. At a minimum these would be:
  - No freight traffic between the hours of 11pm and 7am.
  - No more than the current freight-load on the Oxford-Bedford section (24 trains per day).
  - While travelling, no train should take longer than a minute to pass any particular location
  - Noise/vibration limits?

## 7. Business plan

- The absence of a business plan makes it difficult to understand what parameters EWR is working to. For example, what level of passenger numbers are required, how much freight is needed, what impact will Covid have on commuter usage, and how much flexibility is there in developing alternative, perhaps more costly solutions which may be more acceptable to local residents.
- We request EWR make public its business plan at the earliest convenience and by the latest before the statutory consultation.
- We suggest EWR consider offering a discount to key workers, eg those commuting into Addenbrooke's.