

East West Rail 2021 Public Consultation Feedback Form

The response from APTU, a Rail User Group

Please use this form to share your views on our consultation on the East West Rail Project.

The feedback we receive during this consultation will be considered as we refine our proposals before seeking government approval for its construction.

For more details about the Project, please refer to our consultation document which can be found online at www.eastwestrail.co.uk.

You can also fill in this form:

- Online at www.eastwestrail.co.uk/feedback
- Return a paper copy to **Freepost EAST WEST RAIL**
- Scan electronic copy to consultation@eastwestrail.co.uk

For large print copies of this form or versions in alternative languages, please email contact@eastwestrail.co.uk or call **0330 1340067**.

Please submit your feedback by 9 June 2021 when this consultation will close.

You can fill out as many or as few questions as you would like. If you require more space, please attach any extra pages to this form.

The following questions are in the same order as they appear in the Consultation Document.
The main headings show which section the questions relate to.

APTU is the Rail User Group for passengers on Thameslink North between West Hampstead Thameslink and Harlington (Beds) inclusive. As such our main interests are:

1. Bedford station as our “gateway” to East West Rail – and also Midland Mainline longer distance services
2. EW Train services, including facilities at stations, most notably interchange ones.

Our website is at www.aptu.org.uk and we can also be found on Twitter at [@ThameslinkUsers](https://twitter.com/ThameslinkUsers). We are affiliated to Railfuture, but this response is independent to Railfuture’s.

Introduction to the project 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.**

As this choice increases options for through services to destinations beyond Cambridge (such as Norwich and Ipswich), we are supportive of this option. The option will also ensure that the to be built Cambridge South station will be served by direct services. This station, serving the biomedical campus, will be an important destination and will probably have an above average portion of less mobile travellers for whom an additional change is particularly unwanted. Serving this destination directly will also increase its catchment area for staff through reduced journey times.

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 members will change to / from EW Rail services at Bedford. We believe that the main destinations will be (in no particular order, other than geography):

- Destinations beyond Cambridge
- Cambridge
- Milton Keynes
- Destinations beyond Milton Keynes on the WCML
- Oxford
- Destinations beyond Oxford (particularly relevant for anyone who wishes to avoid a cross London change of trains).

(we do not include Bedford, nor stations beyond it on the Midland Mainline as our members will not use EW Rail for these journeys).

Our members are likely to travel on EW Rail services for business, leisure, commute to work and for managing their life – eg travel for medical appointments.

In terms of the practical experience, it will be essential that EW Rail is fully integrated into National Rail / GB Railways – eg seamless ticketing, travel advice etc. Our members are unlikely to take rail journeys solely by EW Rail, instead taking at least Thameslink (occasionally EMR) and EW Rail trains. Some of the time, they will take a third operator – eg London Northwestern to reach Northampton.

EW Rail will offer our members new journey opportunities in two broad ways:

1. By reducing journey times and distance travelled (and thus fares) – eg Luton to Cambridge via Bedford rather than St Pancras.

2. By creating 'lower hassle' journeys that do not involve crossing London – eg Harpenden to Oxford, avoiding the Underground (or in time, CrossRail / The Elizabeth line) in London.

As a part of a journey it will be important to us that there is a frequent service on EW Rail, so as to reduce time spent waiting and increase confidence that small delays will not result in big journey time increases through missed connections. As commuting to the workplace is likely to reduce in importance (although many roles, including at locations like the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, will remain mainly or wholly workplace centred) and leisure traffic increases in importance, it will be important for the railway to offer similar service levels on all 7 days.

For services from the east that are currently planned to terminate at Bletchley, these should instead run to Milton Keynes Central.

As regards 'net zero carbon ambitions' we take the view, that whichever solution is chosen, then all trains that routinely use the EW Railway from day 1 must emit zero pollution from the train – other than noise, which needs to be minimised and should be regarded as a critical factor in traction selection.

We further believe that it is appropriate for EW Rail motive power to have a high carbon efficiency during the act of energy creation and/or conversion (away from the railway) as well as use on the train.

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?

EW Rail stations connected to other railway lines should be designed so the process of changing trains is seamless and pain free; this includes:

- Resilient services – eg lifts & escalators (provide more than one per route)
- Sufficient space for pedestrian flows
- Good signposting
- Sufficient waiting areas (warm [in winter]) and dry
- Catering and other outlets
- Sufficient seating
- Encouragement to travellers to spread over the length of the train (eg long canopies, distributed waiting shelters)

This requirement applies to the incremental works at Oxford, Bletchley, Bedford and Cambridge. And to the new stations at St Neots / Tempsford and to Cambridge South (recognising in this latter case that EW Rail is an influencer, not an owner).

More generally, EW Rail needs to go beyond the station with a door to door plan developed in conjunction with local communities and councils, to maximise the likelihood that public transport -possibly with an active travel element is seen by potential travellers as a credible – or better, the preferred option. Thus:

- Local Bus services are integrated (in terms of timing [frequency and times of operation], stopping near stations, sufficient waiting areas, through fares, etc.
- There are good footpaths and cycle paths to connect the station to the community.
- There is sufficient secure cycle storage, including of a quality suitable for e-bikes.
- Cycle hire is available.

The Beds and Herts CRP, with which we are fully involved has expressed a desire for Bedford station to have extensive community space and we endorse this.

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?

EW Rail trains need to be comfortable & usable; noticeably:

- Comfortable seats, placed sufficiently far apart – both width wise and leg room and in a mixture of airline and facing seats. 5 across seating is to be avoided.

- Seats in line with windows
- Tables
- Walkthrough trains (eg as for Thameslink Class 700s)
- Wifi (and this needs to extend to the trackside infrastructure so a reliable internet connection is always available).
- Power / USB sockets
- Cycle storage
- Level Boarding – as exists on new trains for Greater Anglia and Merseyrail
- Best in class information provision, including platform information for connecting services at interchange stations.

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.

A regular challenge in the rail industry is how to ensure a greater proportion of staff are good to outstanding in their customer service skills and activity. We do already encounter great examples of customer service on the railway – the challenge is that this isn't often enough and sometimes staff display the diametrically opposite skill set. EW Rail's challenge is to drive up the portion of staff with the right attitude.

As far as possible information provision etc should be automated to free staff up for complex questions and those travellers who struggle with automated information consumption.

A particular focus area needs to the quality of the passenger assistance service.

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?

EW's information provision should be seamless with the rest of National / GB Railway.

The change to/from an EW Rail train needs to be a 'non event' – eg Apps have data for all TOCs.

Infrastructure development

Section A: Oxford to Bicester

7. What do you think is important to consider when developing our proposals for the railway in the Oxford to Bicester area?

In particular, we would like to know about:

- a. Anything we should consider in relation to our proposals for Oxford station
- b. Your views on our proposals for Oxford Parkway and Bicester Village stations
- c. Anything we should consider about the level crossing at London Road in Bicester and the options we are considering.

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

8. Please rank your preference for the proposed concepts for the level crossing at London Road in Bicester.

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

9. Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed concepts above and provide any other comments.

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

Do you have any alternative suggestions?

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

Section B: Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line

10. What do you think is important to consider when developing our proposals for the Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line area?

In particular, what do we need to take account of:

- a. In relation to the existing stations on the Marston Vale Line and whether they should be kept open or consolidated through closure and relocation
- b. When we provide alternatives to existing level crossings
- c. In delivering the improvements to the Marston Vale Line

- d. In delivering works to Bletchley station
- e. In relation to the impact of reinstating a second track between Bletchley and Fenny Stratford.

With one exception, it is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic. That exception is that we believe Milton Keynes Central, rather than Bletchley should be the preferred mid-route destination for services commencing at Bedford and/or Cambridge and infrastructure design should cater for this in terms of reversing at Bletchley and/or a chord to allow direct access.

11. Please rank your preference for the proposed options for the existing stations on the MarstonVale Line.

Please use a scale of 1 to 2 to indicate your preferences where 1 indicates your preferred option and 2 the option you favour least.

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

12. Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed options for the existing stations above as you have and provide any other comments:

- a. In relation to option 1, please provide any comments on the search area for the relocation of Ridgmont station and the new passing loops
- b. In relation to option 2, please provide any comments on the search areas for the relocated stations:
 - i. Woburn Sands (relocated)
 - ii. Ridgmont (relocated)
 - iii. Lidlington (relocated)
 - iv. Stewartby (relocated).

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

Please provide us with your view on the options for the level crossings on the Marston Vale Line:

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

- 13. Fenny Stratford:** vehicular traffic – three options
- 14. Fenny Stratford:** pedestrians and other non-vehicular road users – three options
- 15. Bow Brickhill (V10 Brickhill Street)** – four options
- 16. Browns Wood** – three options
- 17. Pony** – three options
- 18. Woburn Sands existing crossings** – two options
- 19. Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley level crossings** – two options
- 20. Husborne Crawley Footpath No. 10 and Station Road in Ridgmont level crossings** – three options

- 21. Lidlington level crossings – two options
- 22. Millbrook (Station Lane) – three options
- 23. Green Lane – two options
- 24. Wootton Broadmead (Broadmead Road) – two options
- 25. Wootton Village – one option
- 26. Kempston Hardwick – three options
- 27. Woburn Road – two options
- 28. Bedford Carriage Sidings – options to be developed at the next stage

29. Please rank your preference for the proposed options for the Marston Vale Line upgrade.

Please use a scale of 1 to 3 to indicate your preferences where 1 indicates your preferred option and 3 the option you favour least.

[It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.](#)

- 30 Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed Marston Vale Line upgrade options above as you have and provide any other comments.**

[It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.](#)

- 31. Please rank your preference for the proposed options for the Fenny Stratford additional track.**

[It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.](#)

- 32. Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed Fenny Stratford additional track options above as you have and provide any other comments.**

[It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.](#)

Section C: Bedford

- 33. What do you think is important to consider when developing our proposals for the Bedford area?**

In particular, what do we need to take account of:

- a. Regarding changes to Bedford St Johns station and the area around it
- b. Regarding changes to Bedford station and the area around it
- c. Regarding our emerging preferred option for the area to the north of Bromham Road bridge (North Bedford).

[See 34 to 36 \(in 36, we also address 33c\)](#)

34. Please rank your preference for the proposed options for Bedford St Johns station.

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

35. Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed Bedford St Johns options above and provide any other comments.

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

36. What do you think is important to consider when developing our emerging preferred option for Bedford station?

We think Bedford station needs to be considered as ‘a whole’, not just as an EW Rail bolt on. It has the potential to be a more important source of traffic for EW Rail if it is fit for purpose for all 3 traffic streams (currently separate operators) to be there: EW Rail, EMR and Thameslink.

It is essential that Bedford station can meet the needs of passengers and the community. Specifically, this includes:

1. The need to recognise that Bedford station will be an interchange station and that the new demand stimulated by EW Rail should lead to changes to the timetabling approach on the Midland Mainline. Thus, the current design from East Midlands Railway (as mandated by the Department for Transport), whereby longer distance services do not stop at Bedford can be expected to need to change to add stops from longer distance services so as to allow substantially more destinations to be served with just one change from EW Rail (the current design, which requires a second change at Kettering is a significant disincentive to travellers).
2. Thus, Midland Mainline ‘fast’ services need to be able to stop at Bedford with minimal time penalty and without needing to share running lines with Thameslink.

The current proposals for Bedford involve both a substantial impact on the community through 6 tracking and fail to deliver the best benefit for the community, by not being able to take advantage of extra stops added to Midland Mainline long distance services due to demand, as there will be no suitable platform.

Thus, we believe that a fundamental revisit to arrangements at Bedford station and to the north thereof is needed.

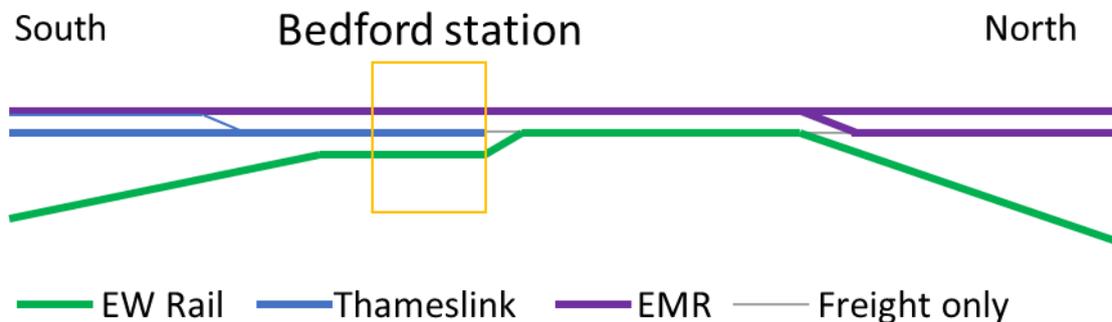
We see 4 broad train flows through a future Bedford:

1. Thameslink, arriving from the south and terminating there.
2. East West Rail, both stopping on through journeys and potentially (option 1 for Marston Vale) terminating there from the west.
3. East Midlands Railway, both stopping and passing on through journeys.
4. Freight services.

This review might well enable a move from “bolting” East West Rail on the east side of the

station and railway north thereof towards a solution that both avoids the need for 6 tracking north of Bedford and allows a much greater portion of EMR services to call at Bedford without a significant time penalty.

The goal would be to deliver a properly developed layout based on this concept:



Each line represents 2 pairs of tracks (and in the station, possibly, a third platform)

Within this concept:

- EMR would change from using a 4 track railway to being a 2 track one well north of Bedford and would cease to use 3 tracks though Bedford, which leads to interaction with Thameslink at the station and south thereof and which limits the volume of London bound EMR services that can call at Bedford – and after the arrival of EW Rail will also interact with your services.
- EW Rail could use the existing slow lines north of Bedford, which during normal operation would not be used by EMR.
- No passenger service would conflict with any other passenger service, except for Thameslink services which need to use the fast lines immediately south of Bedford.
- Only freight services would generate conflict as they will need to cross between lines normal dedicated to other operators, most notably north of Bedford on the slow lines.

Whilst this option does require significantly more work to the existing MML trackwork, it stands a significantly greater chance of only requiring 4 tracks north of Bedford and the savings from this could be reallocated to fund this work. Subject very much to detailed planning, key topics to be considered include:

- Whether the best solution for EMR is a platform for the existing London fast line (currently without a platform) or connections for the existing platform 3 to the London fast in the vicinity of the station that mean that EMR services calling there do not interfere with either EW Rail or Thameslink.
- How many platforms Thameslink need, and if the existing platform 3 is to be used for London EMR services whether there is any capacity on it (and suitable infrastructure) for some Thameslink services as well. Our instinct is that a dedicated platform is preferred as it will help insulate EMR and Thameslink from each other's disruption.
- We believe that the planning assumption should be that most or all EMR services call at Bedford (because of its value as an interchange station).
- One delivery option for the use of the existing Platform 3 expands on the existing SLC proposal for Bedford BC by adding a matching cross over south of the station.
- Whether the design for Thameslink would be 'n' platforms, or less than 'n' platforms, and better reversing facilities immediately north of the station.

For the options for the station remaining north of Ford End Road rail bridge, the possibility of the station buildings and main entrance being located at the south of the site should be considered.

37. What do you think is important to consider when developing our emerging preferred option for the area north of Bromham Road bridge (North Bedford)?

[It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.](#)

Section D: Clapham Green to The Eversdens

38. Please rank your preference for the proposed Clapham Green to The Eversdens alignment options.

[It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.](#)

39. Please tell us why you have ranked the proposed alignment options above and provide any other comments.

[It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.](#)

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).

[It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.](#)

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.

It is not appropriate for APTU to express an opinion on this topic.

We will collect and process the information you provide to us in order to record and analyse any feedback or questions you raise during the Consultation. If you give us personal information about other people you must first make sure that you have obtained all necessary permission from that person for you to pass this information on to us. We may need to share personal information with third parties which could include public bodies and third parties working with us on the Project. You have the right to object to the processing of your personal data in certain circumstances and you may ask us to delete your personal information if you believe that we do not have the right to hold it. For further information in relation to how we process personal data, please see our Personal Information Charter at www.eastwestrail.co.uk/personal-information-charter

And finally, please tell us a bit about yourself

APTU - The Association of Public Transport Users
Harpenden
Herts

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Responding as "Other": Rail User Group
Age: Not relevant.
Receive further information Y/N: Already on mailing list

