

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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| Title/Subject Matter: | East West Rail Consultation |
| Meeting/Date: | Overview & Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) – 5th March |
| Executive Portfolio: | Housing, Planning and Economic Development |
| Report by: | Planning Service Manager (Growth) |
| Ward(s) affected: | All, with the potential most direct impact on Wards in the south of the District. |

Executive Summary:

On the 29th January a 6 week consultation on 5 broad route options for East West Rail (EwR) was launched. The consultation closes on the 11th March. The process is intended to inform a later decision on actual route alignment in 2020 and there will be a further statutory consultation on route alignment in 2021 if a route is progressed.

EwR consider that Oxford, Cambridge and the communities in between are renowned for their vibrant economy, educational excellence and scientific innovation. They deliver growth and prosperity both locally and for the whole country.

The National Infrastructure Commission identified in their report "Partnering for Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc", economic prosperity is not guaranteed. Without investment in new infrastructure designed to support housing growth and link communities, the area will fall behind and fail to attract or retain the talent which helps maintain its position in the UK economy.

To read the full consultation and technical report please follow the link:

[EWR-Consultation-Document](#)

Cabinet, on the 14th February 2019, authorised the Head of Development and Planning Service Manager (Growth), in consultation with the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader, to prepare and submit formal comments on the route options proposed on behalf of the Council. At the time of writing of this report, the options were still being considered. A further report detailing the preferred option(s) will be provided to the Panel in advance of the meeting.

Recommendation:

That, when received, the Panel makes comments on the report setting out the preferred option(s) and the rationale for selecting this option(s), which will then be considered by the Head of Development and Planning Service Manager (Growth), in consultation with the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader, in the finalisation and submission of the Council's formal comments on the route options.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 East West Rail (EWR) is proposing a new rail connection between Oxford and Cambridge. The Western Section between Oxford and Bedford can be built by reinstating and upgrading old rail lines, for the Central Section between Bedford and Cambridge an entirely new rail line will need to be constructed. For the last year, EWR has been developing route options and wants to hear public views on five options, known as A-E.
- 1.2 This consultation is about the section of East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge (often called the Central Section). The consultation commenced on the 29th January and closes on the 11th March. The process is intended to inform a later decision on actual route alignment in 2020 and there will be a further statutory consultation on route alignment in 2021 if a route is progressed.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 EWR consider that Oxford, Cambridge and the communities in between are renowned for their vibrant economy, educational excellence and scientific innovation. They deliver growth and prosperity both locally and for the whole country.
- 2.2 The National Infrastructure Commission identified in their report "Partnering for Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc", economic prosperity is not guaranteed. Without investment in new infrastructure designed to support housing growth and link communities, the area will fall behind and fail to attract or retain the talent which helps maintain its position in the UK economy. EWR will also improve journey times for existing residents. The aim is to complete this Central section in the mid-2020s.
- 2.3 EWR are seeking views on:
- The challenges and opportunities;
 - Whether they are right to focus on route options;
 - The approach into Cambridge from the south; and
 - The overall approach they have taken to developing route options.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

- 3.1 Prior to EWR Co being established, twenty potential route corridors were considered at a high level by Network Rail based on the priority journey pairs and conditional outputs developed by the EWR Consortium. These twenty corridors spanned the area from St Albans and Harlow to Peterborough and were discussed with a working group comprising representatives from DfT, the rail industry, local authorities and the EWR Consortium.
- 3.2 Having identified the corridor via Sandy as the preferred route corridor, the next stage in developing the EWR central section has been to consider route options within that corridor. The route corridor has defined start and finish points, beginning around Stewartby near Bedford and ending at Cambridge. It increases to around 15km wide along the East Coast Main Line and through South Cambridgeshire. Not all of this land will be required for the new railway.
- 3.3 A wide range of factors has been considered to inform the appraisal of route options within the preferred route corridor including:

- Transport user benefits;
 - Contribution to enabling housing and economic growth, including best serving areas benefitting from developable land;
 - Capital and operating costs and overall affordability; and
 - Environmental impacts and opportunities.
- 3.4 These might be given particularly substantial weight in decision-making, particularly where they differentiate strongly between route options.
- 3.5 The overall approach to identifying route options within the preferred route corridor via the broad area around Sandy for assessment against the factors in Chapter 4 of the technical report has been framed around three questions:
- Where could EWR provide an interchange with the Midland Main Line?
 - Where could EWR provide an interchange with the East Coast Main Line?
 - What route could EWR take through South Cambridgeshire, including where any potential additional stations might be located?
- 3.6 A number of route options have been ruled out and these can be found in the technical report in Chapter 6 (P21-24)
- 3.7 In reviewing the option for approaching Cambridge a number of options have been considered. EWR Co have re-visited the case for approaching Cambridge from the north in the context of the current strategic objectives for EWR and identified the following issues:
- It would require potential modifications to the new Cambridge North station and adding more tracks to a longer section of the West Anglia Main Line (four-tracking of the West Anglia Main Line immediately to the south of Cambridge is likely to be required anyway to support the proposed new Cambridge South station), both of which are likely to add significant cost.
 - It would be expected to incur higher capital and operating costs and result in slower journey times due to the greater route length. This would reduce the benefits for transport users and the wider economy across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and also have an adverse impact on opportunities to support new homes.
 - Existing local transport infrastructure (the guided busway) appears to cater for growth opportunities to the north of Cambridge and therefore an additional railway service to improve local connectivity to the north of Cambridge may not be required.
 - Approaching Cambridge from the north would not directly serve the proposed new Cambridge South station, thereby foregoing an opportunity to support growth, housing and employment.
 - It would require a reversing move and journey time penalties for any onward journeys to and from Norwich, Ipswich and other destinations to the east of Cambridge.
- 3.8 Based on the further, recent analysis of the options for approaching Cambridge, the previous decision to approach Cambridge from the south rather than the north is considered to remain sound when considered against the current strategic objectives for EWR. However, of the five route options that are being taken forward for consultation, Routes B and E could alternatively approach Cambridge from the north if new information is provided to EWR Co through the consultation that suggests this would be better than

approaching Cambridge from the south as currently shown in the indicative route maps.

ROUTE A

Bedford South – Sandy (re-located south) – Cambridge (via Bassingbourn)

- 3.9 This route would support economic growth across the OxMkCam corridor but is not proposed to route through Huntingdonshire and cannot be said to offer direct future opportunities for the District. Furthermore, while the MOD may have plans to vacate Bassingbourn Barracks it is not a current allocation within the South Cambridgeshire adopted Local Plan. Indicative costs are c.£2 billion (2015 prices) but given the uncertainty around Bassingbourn and the timescales involved to investigate the suitability and capacity of Bassingbourn, while the online construction costs are lower (because of the more direct alignment) it offers less potential than other options for future growth. The environmental impact is not quantified but will affect Wimpole Hall and the RSPB nature reserve.

ROUTE B

Bedford South – Sandy (re-located north) / Tempsford area / south of St Neots – Cambourne – Cambridge

- 3.10 Again, this route would support economic growth across the OxMkCam corridor and provides for future opportunities for the district. It would give residents the opportunity to access faster journey times between Oxford and Cambridge. Furthermore, the ECML passes through St. Neots while it is not currently possible to access Cambridge via Rail. This proposal would allow for both east-west and north-south rail travel, while also having regard to the routing of the Expressway (orange Route; announced 17th Feb) unlocking future potential in St. Neots and across the wider District. Cambourne is an existing settlement and also has opportunities for expansion whereas Bassingbourn, favoured in other route options, has a high degree of uncertainty attached to growth potential. The cost is c. £2.6b but this should be weighed against future opportunities.

ROUTE C

Bedford South – Tempsford area – Sandy – Cambridge (via Bassingbourn)

- 3.11 This route would support economic growth across the OxMkCam corridor but is not proposed to route through Huntingdonshire and cannot be said to offer direct future opportunities for the District. Furthermore, given the nature of the route it is likely to be less attractive for travellers as it calls into question the actual commuting time between Oxford and Cambridge. Again, similar questions arise in relation to Bassingbourn which are already discussed under Route A above. The cost of Route C is estimated to be £2.5b.

ROUTE D

Bedford Midland – Tempsford area – Sandy – Cambridge (via Bassingbourn)

- 3.12 This route would support economic growth across the OxMkCam corridor but is not proposed to route through Huntingdonshire and cannot be said to offer direct future opportunities for the District. This route is similar to Route C with the exception of routing out of Bedford. The cost of Route is c.£2.6b. This route raised similar questions in relation to journey time concerns relating to concerns relating to Bassingbourn.

ROUTE E

Bedford Midland – south of St Neots / Tempsford area – Cambourne – Cambridge

- 3.13 Similar to Route B this proposal offers the greater opportunity for the district to improve connectivity across the Arc but also on a local scale, namely St. Neots, Bedford, Cambridge, improving sustainable alternatives to use of the private car, unlocking greater economic potential across the district. Similarly to Route B this also offers the opportunity to provide a strategic link to the ECML outside of London along with the Metro that is currently being considered by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). The estimated cost is c.£3.4b.
- 3.14 A further report detailing the preferred option(s) will be provided to the Panel in advance of the meeting.

4. TIMETABLE FOR FURTHER CONSULTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 A public exhibition took place in St. Neots on the 11th February.

4.2 Indicative timetable (from consultation document P11)

- Early 2019 Consultation on potential route options
- 2020 Develop a detailed route alignment
- 2021 Statutory consultation on a route alignment
- 2021 Development consent application submitted
- 2023 Development Consent Order secured

5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND / OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

5.1 The Corporate Plan includes a work programme and actions that include:

- Supporting new and growing businesses and promoting business success
- Supporting economic growth in market towns and rural areas
- Promoting inward investment
- Influencing the development of the Highways and Transport Infrastructure Strategy
- Facilitating the delivery of infrastructure to support housing growth
- Improve the supply of new and affordable housing, jobs and community facilities to meet current and future need

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None. This is a consultation response.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 At this time no additional resource is required.

8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

8.1 The preferred option(s) and the rationale for selecting this option(s) will be detailed in the further report to be provided to the Panel in advance of the meeting.

9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix – Route Options Map

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- East West Rail Bedford to Cambridge Route Option Consultation
<https://eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/public/Central-Section-Consultation/fe0f74c338/EWR-Consultation-Document.pdf>
- East West Rail Bedford to Cambridge Technical Report
<https://eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/public/Central-Section-Consultation/db652106d4/EWR-Technical-Report.pdf>
- NIC - Partnering for Prosperity: a new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc (2017)
<https://www.nic.org.uk/publications/partnering-prosperity-new-deal-cambridge-milton-keynes-oxford-arc/>

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