

EWMLP Response

The East West Main Line Partnership (formerly the East West Rail Consortium) is a partnership of local authorities with a shared ambition for a strategic railway connecting East Anglia with central, southern and western England and into southern Wales. This would provide a step-change in east-west connectivity, linking Ipswich and Norwich with Cambridge, Bedford, Milton Keynes, Oxford and beyond towards Swindon and onwards to Bristol and South Wales.

Our technical work over the past 30 years has been pivotal in making the strategic case for East West Rail.

This response is focused on the strategic issues in relation to the proposals published by the East West Railway Company and its alignment with our six key strategic areas of interest:

1. Delivery of Oxford – Cambridge at the earliest opportunity
2. Coast-to-Coast Connectivity
3. North-South Connectivity
4. Interchange and Strategic Transport Hubs
5. A 21st Century Main Line
6. Freight

Importantly, individual partners wishing to comment on detailed aspects of the proposal will make their own representations.

The East West Mainline Partnership welcomes the Government's continued commitment to restore the rail link between Oxford and Cambridge. The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor is identified by the Government as a national economic priority, with delivery of East West Rail in full being critical to realising these ambitions. However, it is disappointing that the Aylesbury link continues to be omitted from the scope of the East West Rail scheme.

It is recognised that the East West Rail scheme is designated as an NSIP, and the planning process will be via a Development Consent Order. Along with the changes to the pre-application stage under the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, this has resulted in local authorities being treated as consultees rather than consenting bodies. Local authorities have a critical role to play in delivering the place-based benefits to maximise the socio-economic impacts of major infrastructure schemes. As yet, supporting guidance for the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 has not been published by government, nor the secondary legislation required for 'commencement' of the removal of the requirement for statutory consultation. It is therefore most disappointing that this consultation is being undertaken in the pre-election period for multiple local planning authorities along the route, as this has a significant impact on their governance and management processes.

Local authorities have the reasonable expectation of meaningful engagement on developments within their geographies, including the unfettered opportunity to respond to consultations. Without this, opportunities to improve the scheme will be missed and the full benefits of East West Rail will not be realised. The level of expectation is premised on the scheme's locally-derived history, as well as the mutually required trust between local planning authority, local transport and highways authority, and a developer. Effective collaboration requires co-design between the promoter and statutory consultees – and the communications approach to date has not reflected these aspirations and expectations.

Whilst it is appreciated that East West Railway Company is working to improve its engagement practice with local authorities, consistent feedback from partners across the corridor is the need for commitment to open, transparent and timely engagement throughout the planning and construction phases. East West Railway Company must ensure the needs of local communities most disrupted by the construction of East West Rail are considered and appropriately managed. England's Economic Heartland seeks assurances that lessons have been learned from the experiences of other major infrastructure programmes, such as National Highways' A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements Scheme.

East West Rail is considered a pathfinder in this respect and this must come with a demonstrable high standard in meaningful engagement, which has so far been lacking from the perspective of local authorities and their communities. As an exemplar project, East West Railway Company must go above and beyond simply the adequate discharge of legal responsibilities.

It is important to recognise that there are core differences between consultation and engagement. A consultation requests a formal, written response and position from the respondent. This is a different ask of a local authority than engagement, which could be with officers on technical matters to inform scheme development; with councillors as local political leaders; or with supporting local communities to have their say. These different engagement types require different styles, and all are important. Local authorities therefore need the opportunities to meaningfully engage in a fully informed manner at both political and technical (officer) levels. It is not clear that these needs are being met in the current engagement approach by East West Railway Company, particularly in dealings with locally elected members and leaders of local authorities.

It is necessary that the applicant is clear on what particular elements can be influenced by local communities and/or other stakeholders, and it is imperative that this is informed by an evidenced and trusted baseline. This then allows for efforts to be more focused, particularly when using consultations, and enable feedback to be received at the most optimal point in the design process (rather than waiting until the designs are nearing completion). In addition, engagement with communities and local authorities should be on-going, rather than saving everything for snapshot in

time (e.g. at one large consultation) to create an ongoing conversation between the parties (noting programme demands such as design freezes).

Having defined input opportunities with fixed dates on a forward look-ahead, or stakeholder engagement plan that maps out the programme plan and key milestones, supports local authorities to ensure adequate resourcing and governance procedures can be put in place to meet the timescales demanded by the project. Importantly, technical engagement should not prejudice the adopted council position. For example, there is a need for all parties to understand when conversations are 'exploratory', i.e. to informally test various positions or solutions, as opposed to when an 'official position' is being asked to be taken.

The East West Main Line Partnership understands the need for timely delivery of major infrastructure to support the growth of the region, especially the aspirations in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor. However, speeding up the process must not come at the expense of local authorities and communities having the opportunity to feed into and help steer development in their area.

The East West Rail scheme forms a core part of the ambition for an East West Main Line, and the scheme will need to deliver benefits on multiple scales: locally, regionally and nationally.

For the East West Rail scheme to realise its full potential, direct services must extend beyond Oxford to Cambridge. Its potential should truly be 'coast to coast', and could support a future strategic pan-UK transport network, as outlined in the Union Connectivity Review. East West Rail is not just about improving east-west connectivity: it is integral to improving connectivity across the country. The intersection of East West Rail with the historic main lines centred on London provides a unique opportunity to provide new travel opportunities that are not only more relevant to residents and businesses across the region, but which avoid the inconvenience of having to travel into/out of London. East West Main Line Partnership seeks assurances that planning for onward rail connections will be given significant priority at all stages of the project, including as the detail of East West Rail service timetabling is developed. For example, there are aspirations for wider integration of services and direct rail connections between Universal United Kingdom Resort to destinations such as Luton Airport and Northampton. This work should also identify quick wins that would not require infrastructure investment and could be achieved through minor retimetabling, building on the work undertaken by EEH looking at connections between Oxford, Swindon and Bristol.

Realisation of the scheme's full potential will create opportunities for new multi-national freight and passenger flows. Therefore, it is welcomed that an additional service is proposed that could support potential service extensions beyond the East West Rail scheme route. The East West Main Line Partnership would urge East West Railway Company, Network Rail and the Department for Transport to embed

this proposal as part of the East West Rail service core offering, rather than as “possible”.

East of Cambridge, the East West Main Line Partnership has found there is a strong strategic and economic case for investment for direct services from Ipswich and Norwich via Cambridge – both strategic and local connections. For example, an extension of East West Rail services further east would support sustainable growth in places like Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds. It is critical that the designs chosen and the eventual DCO permissions granted (for example around track layouts at Cambridge) would not prejudice the aspirations of local authorities and stakeholders in the East of England. Such considerations are in addition to, and complement the work associated with delivering the programme of improvements required on the Felixstowe to Nuneaton corridor, including Ely Area Capacity Enhancements.

In May 2026, Great Western Railway started running a 2-hourly Monday-Saturday service between Oxford, Swindon, Bath and Bristol, following a successful Saturday-only trial service in 2024. The East West Main Line Partnership strongly supports the reintroduction of this service, which last ran regularly in 2003, and supports GWR’s ambition to ultimately increase the service to an hourly frequency. The East West Main Line Partnership has worked with partners to demonstrate the benefits that would be derived from improved connectivity between the Bristol region and the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor. As such, the East West Main Line Partnership would support further discussions on the possibility of these services being extended onto East West Rail.

The design and operation of the East West Main Line (and the East West Rail scheme as part of that) should take into account and contribute to the delivery of the requirements of the national rail freight strategy. In due course Great British Railways will have a statutory duty to consider the needs of rail freight and to take those needs into account in planning the future of the rail network. It is therefore important that the East West Main Line is designed and delivered with the capability of supporting rail freight services without the need for additional works. It is welcomed that the design of the East West Rail railway scheme considers the gradient, gauging, train length and weight specification required for freight trains, as well as providing freight paths within network capacity work. However, due consideration must be given to ensuring that the impact on local communities of rail freight movements is minimised.

It is disappointing that the East West Rail scheme will only be electrified for ‘discontinuous’ traction power. Electrification of the East West Main Line offers the only realistic traction technology for high-speed, longer-distance passenger services and freight services that will operate on it. With the West Anglia Main Line, East Coast Main Line, West Coast Main Line and parts-of Midland Main Line all electrified, the case for electrification is heightened from an operational perspective, particularly for freight. Experience shows that the cost of retrofitting infrastructure for electrification once a rail link is operational will be significantly higher than if the investment is made at the same time as the initial construction works.

The East West Main Line's potential to connect to services on other main lines is significant. But for this to be realised, our strategic transport hubs on the main line should ensure seamless interchange between rail services for all users. Frictionless interchange not only applies not to onward rail journeys, but with other modes, including for the 'first mile, last mile' of journeys.

Our local communities – both urban and rural – located near the East West Main Line must benefit from it. This means improving sustainable local connectivity to and from stations to nearby communities, ensuring as many people as possible can access the opportunities it unlocks. Therefore, the East West Main Line Partnership particularly welcomes the focus on integration of new and replacement stations delivered by the East West Rail scheme into the wider transport network, including door to door connectivity, and the use of stations as mobility hubs. East West Railway Company, supported by Government, needs to work with England's Economic Heartland and local authority partners to plan, secure funding and deliver relevant improvements alongside delivery of the core railway.

Enhancing the user experience of the stations located on the East West Main Line should be afforded a high priority. The design of stations on the Marston Vale Line (and on the Bedford to Cambridge section) should be consistent with this ambition. It is expected that where necessary existing stations between Oxford and Bletchley will be retrofitted to the same standard. It is expected that, as a minimum, each station will provide a rich blend of future proofed facilities, enabled by new digital services that make the user experience simpler and more comfortable. In addition, the East West Railway Company is encouraged to explore opportunities to re-establish the station as a focus for the local community where appropriate. This may include provision of additional facilities – such as meeting/workspace, or commercial activities – that give rise to added value.

It is expected the East West Railway Company will ensure that station design, including from street to platform and from platform to train, is completely accessible for all. Users with impaired mobility are less likely to use stations that do not have level-boarding between platform and train when compared with stations that provide both ramp provision and level boarding. It is essential that a 21st century railway meets the needs of modern travellers and accessibility should ideally be accommodated by improved platform and rolling stock rather than manual ramp provision.

Whilst the government confirmed in November 2025 that East West Railway Company would "install high-capacity fibre along the line of route including the Marston Vale Line, which has spare capacity designated for third-party telecommunications such as to provide 5G mobile signal for passenger use", it is surprising that there is no mention of this within the consultation document. The transformational benefit of the East West Main Line to the region, its residents and businesses, will be enhanced further by ensuring it is delivered as a digitally enabled corridor, one that provides improved digital connectivity for both passengers and

communities close to the rail corridor. The East West Main Line Partnership and England's Economic Heartland have worked closely with the East West Railway Company and government departments to enable the section between Bicester and Bletchley to be delivered as a digitally enabled infrastructure corridor, providing access to high quality broadband and 5G for nearby rural communities through the England's Connected Heartland 5G Railway project. Future stages of the East West Main Line should be specified as digitally enabled infrastructure from the start, with the cost of that provision included within the overall cost of the scheme. The cost of providing enhanced digital connectivity as a percentage of the overall scheme cost is marginal. However, unless it is included within the specification of the works from the outset it can be difficult to secure the provision. Experience with the Bicester to Bletchley section suggests that enhanced digital connectivity can be delivered at 10% of the cost of retrofitting once the railway infrastructure is operational.

Experience of the Bicester-Bletchley section shows that in some instances the impact of the works has been exacerbated by decisions taken at the design stage which ultimately served to increase the impact on the adjacent local highway network during construction. To deliver transport integration and maximise the benefits of East West Rail requires close collaboration with the local transport, highways and planning authorities along the line of route.

Experience throughout the development and delivery of previous sections of the East West Main Line (particularly Bicester to Bletchley) have served to highlight the risk of underestimating the level of engagement necessary with local communities and businesses to minimise the impact of construction works. The implications for local authorities – both in terms of cost and resources – of managing the impact of construction works need to be taken into account in finalising the detail of the proposed works.

Construction impact is keenly felt by local residents. There is a need to make sure that the costs of repair caused by East West Rail scheme traffic (such as heavy construction traffic onto rural and residential roads) are adequately covered by the project and cannot be allowed to fall to the local authorities. In looking at the learning from phase 1 of East West Rail construction, there was benefit in the delivery body working with councils to identify and agree strategic roads/routes in advance and upgrading poor roads ahead of construction starting.

England's Economic Heartland expects East West Railway Company to put the needs of local businesses at the forefront of planning for the construction phase, particularly ensuring any commercial impacts are captured and mitigated accordingly. It is imperative that the rail industry adequately recognises the potentially detrimental impact that road closures in town centres can have on the local economy, such as has been seen at Botley Road in Oxford and Bromham Road in Bedford.

Cumulative impacts need to be carefully considered and mitigated – working with highways authorities, local planning authorities and other major developments on issues such as diversions, routing agreements and sequencing. Additional construction projects within the same locality (planned, in progress or recently delivered) can lead communities to feeling ‘under siege’ and wary of further development. This will be particularly critical around the Universal United Kingdom Resort site and other NSIPs in proximity to East West Rail works, as well as in locations where East West Railway Company need to return to undertake additional works (such as on the Oxford – Bicester line). It is not clear from the consultation how East West Railway Company propose to coordinate and work alongside local authority partners to minimise disruption for all.

The East West Main Line Partnership has concerns around the resulting timescales from the change of approach to ‘phased delivery approach’. It is both possible and essential to the ambitions of the region that Bletchley-Bedford services are operational prior to the completion of the Bedford to Cambridge section, recognising that the Marston Vale Line is an existing railway. It is disappointing that services to Bedford are proposed to be delayed until mid-2030s, given this was envisaged by East West Railway Company as being operational by 2030 (under CS2). It is not clear from the consultation what transitional arrangements are being proposed for Marston Vale Line services and stations. For example, it is not clear from the consultation documentation how the impact of station closures is being modelled, assessed and mitigated across all modes. It is expected that East West Rail would provide public transport connections from closed stations to new stations, including the pump priming of bus services if required.

Further to this, it is essential that East West Railway Company have open conversations with local authorities around the delivery timescales. The phased delivery approach changes the expected timeline in comparison to the previous Connectivity Stages based programme. As written in the consultation, there is a lack of clarity around the detail – in particular:

- Construction of a new station at Tempsford on the East Coast Main Line is not contingent on services between Oxford and Milton Keynes – it is not clear why it is being presented as such (page 18).
- It is inferred that the retrofitting of infrastructure necessary for increased train capacity to Milton Keynes would be completed by 2030, but it is not made explicit what elements these would be (other than platform extensions at Winslow and Milton Keynes Central). For example, do these requirements include the additional stabling, sidings, turnbacks, passing loops, traction power compounds, depot, supporting buildings, level crossing closure, utilities diversions and electrification proposed by this consultation? If not, what is the timescale for their delivery within the phased delivery approach.
- EEH seeks assurances that should the third-party funding for improvements to the London Road level crossing in Bicester not come forward, an

underpass for non-motorised users and appropriate mitigations on local roads would be provided as a minimum by EWR.

- From the consultation document, there is not sufficient certainty in the narrative to support the assertion that EWR would not need to carry out any further works at Oxford station, given the increased train service aspirations. The reopening of the Cowley Branch Line is presented only as a proposal, rather than as a firm commitment. There are clear interdependencies here and assurances are sought that the timescales for the Network Rail work align with EWR's needs to deliver 4tph between Oxford and Stewartby by early 2030s.
- There is no information provided on the transition arrangements for Marston Vale Line stations or services. This should be discussed with local authorities ahead of DCO submission so that protective measures and adequate mitigations can be secured. For example, will the existing hourly Marston Vale Line service between Bletchley and Bedford be guaranteed until the 4tph from the west can be introduced? Will closed stations be provided with a pump prime bus service to the new consolidated stations?
- Highways infrastructure to access Ridgmont station is conditional on part-funding by speculative housing development. However, there is no allocated site or extant planning permission in this area.
- It is unclear what the timescales for improvements at Bedford St John's station are proposed to be – the station is on the Marston Vale Line, but not on the stretch between Oxford and Stewartby.
- Further clarity is sought on the timeline for electrification of the section between Stewartby and Bedford, and whether this would be done at the same time as the remainder of the Marston Vale Line.
- There is a need for clarity on timescales associated with realigning the track south of Bedford St Johns station and changes to sidings in the Bedford area.
- It is unclear what provisions East West Railway Company are proposing at the consolidated Stewartby station to ensure local community usage continues to be recognised and serviced, alongside Universal United Kingdom Resort visitors. Given the proposed location in the heart of the UDX complex, segmentation into differing passenger/journey types could be challenging and may result in conflict points.
- East West Railway Company are proposing major changes to Cambridge station and the track layout in its vicinity. There is insufficient clarity regarding the train service specification used to underpin these changes. This is particularly important given the scale of disruption that these changes will entail and the wider ambitions for more services at Cambridge station. East West Railway Company should confirm:
 - As a minimum, that the proposed changes can accommodate existing timetabled services alongside new East West Rail services;

- What, if any, additional capacity is unlocked by the proposed changes that could facilitate other new services.
- The East West Main Line Partnership expects that East West Railway Company will liaise with Network Rail/Great British Railways on potential opportunities for blockades at Cambridge to be utilised for delivery of other improvements not associated with East West Rail, with the efficiencies and minimised disruption that this entails.
- The East West Main Line Partnership welcomes East West Railway Company's proposals to run services to a new station at Cambridge East, which will be vital in unlocking new housing and development for this area of the city. Further clarity is required on several points:
 - East West Rail envisages a 2tph frequency to Cambridge and a 2-3tph frequency to Cambridge East – is this service specification determined by available capacity or forecast demand?
 - The total available capacity that East West Rail changes will unlock between Cambridge station, Coldhams Lane Junction and Cambridge East station. This is in the context of long held ambitions for service improvements between Cambridge, Newmarket and Ipswich (acknowledging that this also relies on other upgrades beyond the East West Rail geography).
- East West Railway Company states that delivery of Cambridge East station is contingent upon receipt of third-party funding. East West Railway Company should clarify the alternative service proposition in the event that Cambridge East is not delivered, including any further interventions that this triggers.

Location-based questions

Bicester – London Road Underpass

The East West Mainline Partnership has long supported the need to deliver a solution that addresses the implications of increased barrier down-time at the London Road level crossing in Bicester, arising from the East West Rail scheme. London Road is an important access route within the local highway network serving Bicester, and it is essential that connectivity between the station, town centre and significant housing growth is ensured. To offset the impact of restrictions on the London Road will require a package of investment in local connectivity.

It is welcomed that an underpass, rather than a footbridge, is proposed as the severance solution in this location. The East West Rail Partnership seeks assurances that should the third-party funding not come forward, an underpass for non-motorised users and appropriate mitigations on local roads would be provided as a minimum by East West Railway Company. However, it is disappointing the proposed scheme would be subject to

third-party funding contributions, as it potentially presents a good fit for the work East West Railway Company is undertaking with local authorities to identify and support access for stations and mitigations.

East West Railway Company should continue to work closely with Oxfordshire County Council to develop a safe design for the underpass and mitigating infrastructure, recognising that this is a highly pedestrianised area. Given a single-lane for motorised traffic is proposed and the physical constraints on turning large vehicles in this area, further consideration must be given to how the risk of collision can be minimised. The design will also need to be future proofed, taking into consideration planned development in the area and the impact these will have on vehicle flows, including bus routing and high-use cycle routes through to the town centre and Bicester North station.

Bletchley West Train Maintenance Depot

Given the significance of the decision and specific impact on the local communities in the Newton Longville area, it is for the local authorities to respond on these proposals.

Bletchley Station

The East West Main Line Partnership welcomes the inclusion of an Eastern Entrance to Bletchley station (an England's Economic Heartland priority), alongside capacity enhancements to meet anticipated future demand. Enhancing the user experience of the stations located on the East West Main Line should be afforded a high priority, and the revised designs for Bletchley station should be consistent with this ambition including retrofitting accessibility provision as required. We expect the East West Railway Company to ensure that station design, including from street to platform and from platform to train, is completely accessible for all. We also expect all stations to meet the collectively agreed ambition of the England's Economic Heartland region's local authorities around improvements to facilities at and around stations enhancing accessibility and place-making. Given Bletchley station sits at the intersection of East West Rail and the West Coast Mainline, the station infrastructure should allow for an easy interchange between the lines. Step-free access should be provided from train to train (in the case of interchange), street and onward multi-modal connection (e.g. to bus stops).

It is, however, disappointing that at the time of consultation material being published that the Eastern Entrance scheme would be subject to third-party funding contributions. While the Chancellor's recent announcement of Growth Mission Fund investment is to be welcomed, the East West Main Line Partnership feels it continues to be appropriate to highlight their concerns that decisions are not being revisited given the change in scope of the project in recent months.

It is recognised that as of Autumn 2025, East West Railway Company did not deem that this entrance was required to accommodate East West Rail passenger demand. However, the East West Main Line Partnership requests a review of this decision and consideration as to whether it could be included within the station access and mitigations funded schemes (buckets 1 and/or 2). This is based upon:

- Confirmation of the consolidated stations option with the closure of Fenny Stratford station. A reduced walking distance by 600m is significant, particularly when considered in the context of a “reasonable walking distance” from a station. Whilst this term is not well defined, this could either represent 12% of the distance used to determine free school transport (5km); 46% of the distance between the existing Fenny Stratford and Bletchley stations; or 75% of the widely-adopted measure of acceptable walking distance to a railway station of a 10-minute walk (800m). Construction of an Eastern Entrance is therefore a proportionate response to the resulting loss of amenity and rail access to users of Fenny Stratford station, alongside improvements to the pedestrian and cycle routes. As has been identified throughout engagement on consolidating stations, there will be an impact on local communities and businesses including potential economic detriment, which must be mitigated alongside the local connectivity disbenefits to achieve broader scheme-wide positive outcomes.
- Confirmation of Universal United Kingdom Resort’s Special Development Order – and is therefore now a committed development in planning terms. This is a major change since Autumn 2025 and will significantly increase the demand for interchanging between East West Rail and West Coast Main Line services at Bletchley station. Clarity is sought as to whether the increased demand and projected future growth around the station can be safely met with the proposed capacity enhancements, and whether there would be additional passenger safety, operational resilience and performance benefits to having a secondary entrance.
- East West Railway Company’s commitment to stations being mobility hubs – which would only be enhanced by direct access to the Bletchley bus station, recognising that door-to-door connectivity is not limited to active travel alone. This should build on the improvements made to Saxon Street, supporting the wider realisation of economic benefits within Bletchley as a result of East West Rail services.

The improvements to integrate Bletchley station with the bus and active travel networks are to be welcomed. To further enhance the proposals, East West Railway Company is encouraged to continue to work with relevant parties to provide onward travel information including live departures for bus stops serving the station. The cycle parking provided should be sheltered and secure, and consideration must be given to providing electric vehicle chargepoints.

In addition, there is a potential requirement in the longer term for a new chord connecting East West Rail (from the east) with the West Coast Main Line. Enabling the provision of such a chord will enable direct rail services between Milton Keynes (Central), Bedford, Stewartby (for Universal United Kingdom Resort) and Cambridge. The design of improvements in and around Bletchley should safeguard the option for this chord to be delivered at a future date.

Fenny Stratford to Kempston Station Connectivity

The East West Main Line Partnership's support for the consolidation of stations on the Marston Vale Line has long been conditional on two factors: firstly, East West Railway Company working with the relevant local authorities to agree an appropriate package of complementary measures to ensure the stations are well connected to their communities (both existing and future); and secondly, that additional funding to implement the agreed package is made available by Government. Such a package of measures would need to both improve connectivity for existing residents and be available to residents of new developments from day one. The latter is particularly important in order to enable the adoption of sustainable travel patterns from the beginning of new developments. It is crucial that the consolidated stations enjoy best in-class connectivity with their surrounding areas, and the region considers the four consolidated stations (at Woburn Sands, Ridgmont, Liddington and Stewartby) plus Bedford St John's to be the minimal viable solution for supporting the economic development opportunity presented by the Marston Vale Line, with all stations and associated infrastructure delivered in a coordinated manner and not deferred or made contingent on future development.

The East West Main Line Partnership recognises the work the East West Railway Company has been undertaking in developing a door-to-door strategy and resulting interventions with local authorities, which are to be delivered through the scheme. It is absolutely critical that highways access to the new consolidated stations is in place ahead of station opening, including where there are dependencies on other developers to provide this. It is not clear on the maps whether the "planned route by others" are committed new highways, or are only walking, wheeling and cycling routes.

It is not clear from the consultation what transitional arrangements are being proposed for Marston Vale Line services and stations. For example, it is not clear from the consultation documentation how the impact of station closures is being modelled, assessed and mitigated across all modes. It is expected that East West Rail would provide public transport connections from closed stations to new stations, including the pump priming of bus services if required, with such provision secured and in place prior to any closures taking effect. Further, the phased approach appears to be a slippage from the original Connectivity Stage 2 proposals for

upgrading the Marston Vale Line by 2030. A rationale for this is not provided within the consultation documents.

East West Railway Company and Network Rail must work together to minimise disruption on local residents from the acceleration works on the Marston Vale Line, alongside decommissioning work and commissioning of new station buildings. Cumulative impacts need to be carefully considered and mitigated – working with highways authorities, local planning authorities and other major developments on issues such as diversions, routing agreements and sequencing.

Additional construction projects within the same locality (planned, in progress or recently delivered) can lead communities to feeling ‘under siege’ and wary of further development. This will be particularly critical around the Universal United Kingdom Resort site and infrastructure schemes in proximity to East West Rail works. It is not clear from the consultation how East West Railway Company propose to coordinate and work alongside local authority partners to minimise disruption for all.

Given the consolidation will result in new, replacement stations, there is opportunity to embed exemplar integration into their design. The East West Railway Company should ensure that the design of its stations, and the surrounding public realm, prioritises access by active travel and local bus services. This extends beyond the provision of accessible routes to/from the station by considering the ways in which the need for passenger drop-off/pick-up and parking are managed to avoid the creation of streetscapes that are dominated by motorised transport. For example, cycle lane approaches to stations could be segregated, and pedestrian approaches could be well-lit with wayfinding to settlements and places of interest. Approach roads to stations could have bus lanes or bus priority. Stations should have bus stops located adjacent to the station entrance, with step-free access. East West Railway Company should work with local authorities and bus operators to ensure that bus stops are equipped with real-time passenger information, seating, shelters and lighting, and explore the opportunity for bus driver welfare facilities and electric bus charging facilities to be provided at the stations.

Enhancing the user experience of the stations located on the East West Main Line should be afforded a high priority. The design of stations on the Marston Vale Line (and on the Bedford to Cambridge section) should be consistent with this ambition. It is expected that where necessary existing stations between Oxford and Bletchley will be retrofitted to the same standard. As a minimum, each station should provide a rich blend of future proofed facilities, enabled by new digital services that make the user experience simpler and more comfortable. In addition, we encourage the East West Railway Company to explore opportunities to re-establish these stations as a focus for the local community. This may include provision of additional facilities – such as meeting/workspace, or commercial activities – that give rise to added value.

It is expected that the East West Railway Company will ensure that station design, including from street to platform and from platform to train, is completely accessible

for all. Empirical research undertaken by England's Economic Heartland has demonstrated that users with impaired mobility are less likely to use stations that do not have level-boarding between platform and train when compared with stations that provide both ramp provision and level boarding. It is essential that a 21st century railway meets the needs of modern travellers and accessibility should ideally be accommodated by improved platform and rolling stock rather than manual ramp provision.

It is not clear how the aspirations around retaining existing station infrastructure for community or legacy uses balance with the proposals to fully decommission and demolish remaining station infrastructure after consolidation. Clarity is sought regarding the process being used for this, noting that Network Rail has obligations to HM Treasury around disposal of redundant assets.

The closure of Fenny Stratford station will require enhanced connections for existing users to Bletchley station. However, it is disappointing that the Eastern Entrance scheme, which reduces the walking distance by 600m, was previously subject to third-party funding contributions (noting that this is not made explicit in the narrative around Fenny Stratford station decommissioning which presents it as being "jointly provided" rather than funding conditional). 600m is significant, particularly when considered in the context of a "reasonable walking distance" from a station. Whilst this term is not well defined, this could either represent 12% of the distance used to determine free school transport (5km); 46% of the distance between the existing Fenny Stratford and Bletchley stations; or 75% of the widely-adopted measure of acceptable walking distance to a railway station of a 10-minute walk (800m). Construction of an Eastern Entrance is therefore a proportionate response to the resulting loss of amenity and rail access to users of Fenny Stratford station, alongside improvements to the pedestrian and cycle routes, and the East West Main Line Partnership requests a review of this decision and consideration as to whether it could be included within the station access and mitigations funded schemes (buckets 1 and/or 2).

It is unacceptable that highways infrastructure to access Ridgmont station is conditional on part-funding by development, given that there is currently no allocated site or extant planning permission in this area. It is also disappointing that this has not been made explicit in the same way as third-party funded scheme options have been.

In designing, constructing and then operating the new Stewartby station, it is critical that the local community usage continues to be recognised and serviced rather than the station being envisioned as entirely to service visitors of the Universal United Kingdom Resort. The integration of the station with the wider public transport system needs to be preserved to provide access to local people. The station's fit for the needs of the local community will need to be sensitively balanced with the needs of Universal United Kingdom Resort visitors. Given the proposed location in the heart of the UDX complex, segmentation into differing passenger/journey types could be

challenging and may result in conflict points. For example, if the station car park is significantly cheaper than parking within Universal United Kingdom Resort's car park, there is a risk that visitors could displace local people in its utilisation.

In addition, clarity is sought over whether the car parking assumptions for East West Rail consider that people may seek to park elsewhere on the Marston Vale Line to avoid car parking fees at the Universal United Kingdom Resort, and what measures will be secured to mitigate potential overspill parking impacts on surrounding communities.

Marston Vale Line level crossing updates

Given the significance of the decisions and specific impact on the local communities on and around the Marston Vale Line, it is for the local authorities to respond on these proposals.

South of Bedford and Bedford St Johns station

The relocation of Bedford St Johns station to the west of its current location is supported if this realignment of the rail infrastructure would remove the existing speed restriction and support growth in the area.

Enhancing the user experience of the stations located on the East West Main Line should be afforded a high priority. The design of the new Bedford St Johns should be consistent with this ambition. As a minimum, each station should provide a rich blend of future proofed facilities, enabled by new digital services that make the user experience simpler and more comfortable.

It is expected that the East West Railway Company will ensure that station design, including from street to platform and from platform to train, is completely accessible for all. Empirical research undertaken by England's Economic Heartland has demonstrated that users with impaired mobility are less likely to use stations that do not have level-boarding between platform and train when compared with stations that provide both ramp provision and level boarding. It is essential that a 21st century railway meets the needs of modern travellers and accessibility should ideally be accommodated by improved platform and rolling stock rather than manual ramp provision.

Given this is a replacement station, there is opportunity to embed exemplar integration into its design. The East West Railway Company should ensure that the design of its stations, and the surrounding public realm, prioritises access by active travel and local bus services. This extends beyond the provision of accessible routes to/from the station by considering the ways in which the need for passenger drop-off/pick-up and parking are managed to avoid the creation of streetscapes that are

dominated by motorised transport. For Bedford St Johns station, this should include keeping vehicular access, bus stops and pick-up-drop-off points on the hospital side of the station. The bus stops should be located adjacent to the hospital-side entrance with step-free access. East West Railway Company should work with the local authority to explore whether the approach roads on this side could have bus lane or bus priority. In addition, East West Railway Company should work with local authorities and bus operators to ensure that bus stops are equipped with real-time passenger information, seating, shelters and lighting, and explore the opportunity for bus driver welfare facilities and electric bus charging facilities to be provided at the stations.

In particular, the active travel route crossing the railway is welcomed – tying in with local authority plans for development in the local area and for connections onwards to the river and town centre. East West Railway Company should continue to work with the local authority to explore whether cycle lane approaches to the station could be segregated (on both sides of the station), and pedestrian approaches could be well-lit with wayfinding to settlements and places of interest.

Bedford Station

The East West Main Line Partnership welcomes the recognition of the opportunity for improvements at Bedford Station to support wider proposals for the regeneration of the town. We support local aspirations that seek to connect a newly regenerated station with economic redevelopment opportunities nearby. In meeting the regeneration objectives there is a need to be proportionate in the extent of redevelopment proposed – the local authority is best placed to advise on this balance given it concerns the local impact on residents as well as local economic aspirations.

The construction of an ‘up fast’ platform that would enable interchange with express services on the Midland Main Line is welcomed. However, assurances are sought to ensure the new platform will be pick up and set down, as well as clarity on the opportunity for northbound fast services to call at Bedford to enable return journeys.

Enhancing the user experience of the stations located on the East West Main Line should be afforded a high priority, and the revised designs for Bedford station should be consistent with this ambition including retrofitting accessibility provision as required. It is expected that the East West Railway Company will ensure that station design, including from street to platform and from platform to train, is completely accessible for all. Given Bedford station sits at the intersection of East West Rail and the Midland Mainline, the station infrastructure should allow for an easy

interchange between the lines. Where possible, step-free access should be provided from train to train (in the case of interchange), street and onward multi-modal connection (e.g. to bus stops).

East West Railway Company should continue to work with relevant parties to provide onward travel information including live departures for bus stops serving the station. The cycle parking provided should be sheltered and secure, and consideration must be given to providing electric vehicle chargepoints.

Cambourne Station

Enhancing the user experience of the stations located on the East West Main Line should be afforded a high priority. The design of Cambourne Station should be consistent with this ambition. As a minimum, each station should provide a rich blend of future proofed facilities, enabled by new digital services that make the user experience simpler and more comfortable. In addition, we encourage the East West Railway Company to explore opportunities to re-establish the station as a focus for the local community. This may include provision of additional facilities – such as meeting/workspace, or commercial activities – that give rise to added value.

It is expected that East West Railway Company will ensure that station design, including from street to platform and from platform to train, is completely accessible for all. Empirical research undertaken by England's Economic Heartland has demonstrated that users with impaired mobility are less likely to use stations that do not have level-boarding between platform and train when compared with stations that provide both ramp provision and level boarding. It is essential that a 21st century railway meets the needs of modern travellers and accessibility should ideally be accommodated by improved platform and rolling stock rather than manual ramp provision.

Given this is a new station, there is opportunity to embed exemplar integration into its design. The East West Railway Company must ensure that the design of its stations, and the surrounding public realm, prioritises access by active travel and local bus services. This extends beyond the provision of accessible routes to/from the station by considering the ways in which the need for passenger drop-off/pick-up and parking are managed to avoid the creation of streetscapes that are dominated by motorised transport. For example, cycle lane approaches to stations could be segregated, and pedestrian approaches could be well-lit with wayfinding to settlements and places of interest. Approach roads to stations could have bus lanes or bus priority. Stations should have bus stops located adjacent to the station entrance, with step-free access. East West Railway Company should work with local authorities and bus operators to ensure that bus stops are equipped with real-time passenger information, seating, shelters and lighting, and explore the opportunity for bus driver welfare facilities and electric bus charging facilities to be provided at the stations.

Further detail is requested around the level of connectivity through the station that would be provided by EWR and the additional elements subject to additional funding. The East West Main Line Partnership request consideration as to whether these could be included within the station access and mitigations funded schemes (buckets 1 and/or 2).

It is welcomed that consideration is being given to linking Cambourne station with the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge Busway. Integration between services will enhance user choice and increase the attractiveness of both services.

Cambridge Station

The East West Main Line Partnership welcomes the inclusion of an Eastern Entrance to Cambridge station, alongside capacity enhancements to meet anticipated future demand. Enhancing the user experience of the stations located on the East West Main Line should be afforded a high priority, and the revised designs for Cambridge station should be consistent with this ambition including retrofitting accessibility provision as required. We expect the East West Railway Company to ensure that station design, including from street to platform and from platform to train, is completely accessible for all.

Given Cambridge station sits at the intersection of East West Rail and the West Anglia Mainline, the station infrastructure should allow for an easy interchange between the lines. Where possible, step-free access should be provided from train to train (in the case of interchange), street and onward multi-modal connection (e.g. to bus stops).

The East West Railway Company is encouraged to explore opportunities to re-establish the station as a focus for the local community. This may include provision of additional facilities – such as meeting/workspace, or commercial activities – that give rise to added value.

East West Railway Company should continue to work with relevant parties to provide onward travel information including live departures for bus stops serving the station. The cycle parking provided should be sheltered and secure, and consideration must be given to providing electric vehicle chargepoints.

East West Railway Company are proposing major changes to Cambridge station and the track layout in its vicinity. There is insufficient clarity regarding the train service specification used to underpin these changes. This is particularly important given the scale of disruption that these changes will entail and the wider ambitions for more services at Cambridge station. East West Railway Company should confirm:

- As a minimum, that the proposed changes can accommodate existing timetabled services alongside new East West Rail services;
- What, if any, additional capacity is unlocked by the proposed changes that could facilitate other new services.

It is expected that East West Railway Company will liaise with Network Rail/Great British Railways on potential opportunities for blockades at Cambridge to be utilised for delivery of other improvements not associated with East West Rail, with the efficiencies and minimised disruption that this entails.

Cambridge East Station

The addition of a Cambridge East station to the East West Rail project is welcomed, particularly that it would be opened ahead of East West Rail services arriving. This would help alleviate platform constraints at Cambridge Station, whilst significantly improving connectivity for East Cambridge. The East West Mainline Partnership is supportive of local and regional aspirations for delivery of 2tph between Ipswich and Cambridge – and seeks reassurance that the proposed two-platform Cambridge East station would have sufficient capacity to both terminate East West Rail services and serve a 2tph Ipswich-Cambridge service.

Enhancing the user experience of the stations located on the East West Main Line should be afforded a high priority. The design of the Cambridge East should be consistent with this ambition. As a minimum, the station should provide a rich blend of future proofed facilities, enabled by new digital services that make the user experience simpler and more comfortable. In addition, we encourage the East West Railway Company to explore opportunities to establish the station as a focus for the local community. This may include provision of additional facilities – such as meeting/workspace, or commercial activities – that give rise to added value.

It is expected that East West Railway Company to ensure that station design, including from street to platform and from platform to train, is completely accessible for all. Empirical research undertaken by England's Economic Heartland has demonstrated that users with impaired mobility are less likely to use stations that do not have level-boarding between platform and train when compared with stations that provide both ramp provision and level boarding. It is essential that a 21st century railway meets the needs of modern travellers and accessibility should ideally be accommodated by improved platform and rolling stock rather than manual ramp provision.

Given this is a new station, there is opportunity to embed exemplar integration into its design. The East West Railway Company should ensure that the design of its stations, and the surrounding public realm, prioritises access by active travel and local bus services. This extends beyond the provision of accessible routes to/from the station by considering the ways in which the need for passenger drop-off/pick-up and parking are managed to avoid the creation of streetscapes that are dominated by motorised transport. For example, cycle lane approaches to stations could be segregated, and pedestrian approaches could be well-lit with wayfinding to settlements and places of interest. Approach roads to stations could have bus lanes or bus priority. Stations should have bus stops located adjacent to the station

entrance, with step-free access. East West Railway Company should work with local authorities and bus operators to ensure that bus stops are equipped with real-time passenger information, seating, shelters and lighting, and explore the opportunity for bus driver welfare facilities and electric bus charging facilities to be provided at the stations.

East West Railway Company states that delivery of Cambridge East station is contingent upon receipt of third-party funding. East West Railway Company should clarify the alternative service proposition in the event that Cambridge East is not delivered, including any further interventions that this triggers.

Cambridge Eastern train care centre

Given the significance of the decision and specific impact on the local communities in the Fulbourn area, it is for the local authorities to respond on these proposals.