

Category 12 – Other

Abbreviations used in the responses below include the following;

- BBC – Bedford Borough Council
- EWR – East West Rail (generally refers to the project)
- EWRC – East West Railway Company
- EIA – Environmental Impact Assessment

1. **What are the plans for Thameslink (Jowett) sidings? I understand that these will need to be relocated. Where?**

EWRC has suggested in the consultation documentation that the Jowett sidings are likely to be relocated, but we have not yet seen any proposals for an alternative site.

2. **How many tracks will there be between Bedford station and the new St John's station – specifically around Cauldwell St Bridge area, i.e. between Prebend St car park and Palgrave Road? I am aware that the consultation documentation states "a minimum of 2 tracks". What is the exact number? Or when will the exact number be known if not known yet?**

Our understanding is that there will be two tracks from St John's station past the Prebend Street Car Park and over the river bridge. EWRC may decide to increase that number on the approaches to Bedford Midland Station.

3. **How does EWR and Bedford Borough Council intend to compensate for the displaced flood water when building any kind of structure on the flood plain between Bedford and Clapham? The Nationally reported floods that occurred over Christmas may have been exceptional but the area regularly floods with the fields taking the brunt of the excess water, surely Bedford flood defence needs to be protected not hampered.**

EWRC will undertake a full Environment Impact Assessment, which will include flood risk assessment, prior to submission of the Development Consent Order.

4. **What research has been undertaken to support the claim that travellers will use this route to access the Science Park at Cambridge? From what I gather after a 40min journey by train visitors will still require a further 30 minute bus ride (or an hours walk) according to Google**

EWRC has not shared any information of this type with the Council.

5. **Will the council be publishing a copy of all the questions submitted to them regarding the proposed meetings on 12th and 13th May?**

Yes

6. **I was most surprised / perturbed to read the document "Making Meaningful Connection" posted through Bedford letter boxes last week. Although it is good that this project appears to be marching on at pace, I am**

not sure it will take the locals of Bedford with it, as it appears to be driven solely on a Railways point of view that we want to deliver an East West link, using the current rail infrastructure with little thought for the impact that the proposals would have upon the residents of Bedford and in particular those that would be impacted by the proposed changes.

EWRC is responsible for the project, not the Council. However, the Council will put pressure on EWRC to minimise any adverse impact, and a full Environmental impact Assessment will be carried out in accordance with UK legislation.

- 7. Are there plans that the Blakemore distribution centre being built at Manton Lane could use the East West Rail line for transport in the future, as it is right behind them?**

We are not aware of any such plans.

- 8. Is there any indication as to the frequency of the proposed East West service?**

EWRC is proposing four passenger trains per hour in each direction. The number of freight trains that can be accommodated is limited by access arrangements at either end of the new line – currently nine per day in total at the Cambridge end, and five per day in total from the Marston Vale end.

- 9. Will the high speed rail service going North to South and vice-versa stop more frequently at Bedford Station (like it used to), thereby making the town potentially more attractive for people?**

We agree that the north-south connection must also be improved. We are, therefore, pressing for improvements at Bedford Midland Station (such as the construction of an “up fast” platform), which will enable the north-south express train services to the station to be resumed.

- 10. With regard to the present proposals, wouldn't it be worth considering the addition of a railway station close to Addenbrooke's / Papworth Hospital, as many persons would then have a greater access to these facilities.**

We agree that such a connection would be useful, and are pleased to see that the proposed Cambridge South station could provide such a function.

- 11. Please outline the quantitative research conducted by the council to ascertain likely visitors to Bedford from Oxford and Cambridge as a result of the train line running into Bedford town centre. I work extensively in both Cambridge and Oxford and am yet to meet anyone with an interest in visiting Bedford by train.**

EWRC has not shared any information about this type of research with the Council, but it is worth noting that EWRC would only propose a link to Bedford if there was a strong business case to support the proposal.

- 12. Will the Council publish all questions submitted highlighting the ones they have chosen to respond to in the public meetings so the selection of questions can be viewed in an open and transparent manner and residents can be assured that the Council has not cherry picked the easiest questions and those least critical of their preferred position?**

The full list of questions is being published.

- 13. Will the Mayor prominently publish all his links and appointments with transport committees, groups and organisations, their position on and interests in the proposed routes through Bedford, and itemised remuneration from all such appointments?**

The Mayor's Declaration of Interests is at [mgConvert2PDF.aspx \(bedford.gov.uk\)](http://mgConvert2PDF.aspx(bedford.gov.uk))

- 14. How many people is it expected will interchange between EWR and MML? Not enough to justify the disruption!**

EWRC has not shared any information of this type with the Council but it is worth noting that EWRC would only propose a link to Bedford if there was a strong business case to support the proposal.

- 15. Have any "conflicts of interest" been declared for those who are involved in the planning, or may benefit from the construction of the train line? Where is this published?**

The Council is not involved in the planning of the line. However, for reference, the Mayor's Declaration of Interests is available at [mgConvert2PDF.aspx \(bedford.gov.uk\)](http://mgConvert2PDF.aspx(bedford.gov.uk)) and other Councillors' declarations are also available on the Council's website.

- 16. What is the projected time schedule trains will be running after 8pm and before 6am every day if the week? Where is such information published?**

This information is set out in section 5.2 of Appendix B to the Consultation Technical Report published by the EWRC. The proposed operating periods vary depending upon the day of the week, generally with a six-hour gap without trains each night.

- 17. For trains running between 8pm and 6am, what is the expected noise volume and potential public night-time quiet / peace disturbance for a. light passenger trains and b. heavy freight trains? Where is such information published?**

EWRC has no shared any information of this type with the Council, but will undertake a full Environment Impact Assessment, prior to the submission of a Development Consent Order. EWRC.

- 18. Bedford Borough Council had an undemocratically large influence on the decision and cited a tiny incremental economic gain (0.05% - 0.13% p.a.) of using a route through Bedford. However, they have so far failed to perform a traffic, congestion, air quality or noise pollution study for Bedford Midland station.**

Bedford Borough Council is only one of the 19 local authorities on which EWR will have an impact. As a member of the East West Rail Consortium, the Council is able to express views, although it should be noted that this is not a decision-making body. All decisions about routing and related issues have been taken by the Government and its “arms-length” organisation, EWRC. The studies mentioned in the question have not yet been undertaken, as the location of the station is still to be determined.

- 19. An Oxford – Cambridge rail link makes sense to many for both freight and passenger services. Although, the latter will undoubtedly be far less in demand by 2030 with the fallout from Covid-19 and the move to remote working by possibly millions of people. Any plans should make allowances for this. Having been vaguely aware of a consultation process in 2019 I was unable to attend the single consultation session in an obscure Community Hall on the south side of Bedford. There was no likelihood of a northern route being chosen at the time due to the excessive costs and environmental impacts. Enter (stage left) Bedford Borough Council and Mayor Dave Hodgson. Without any consultation with Bedford Borough residents the Mayor decides to spend £75k of Council Taxpayers money on an engineering report that will give him the answer he wants (after two attempts) proving that Route E is actually affordable. (to hell with the environmental impact) Why would he do this?**

EWRC made it clear in the 2019 consultation that each of the five proposed route corridors would provide an acceptable route for the railway. It is a longstanding policy of the Council to support a route for EWR that passes through Bedford Midland Station, in order to realise benefits for the town and the whole Borough. The Council commissioned consultants to help it make the case for such a route (Corridor E) and responded to the consultation to that effect. The decision to choose Corridor E was, however, taken by EWRC and the Government, not by the Council.

A review of benefits will need to be conducted by EWRC, in relation to the whole route, taking account of the Covid impact, and its updated business case prior to submitting it to the Government for funding approval.

- 20. Has a safeguarded area (i.e. distance from the proposed line) already been set for EWR? (For example, I believe that with HS2, anyone within 60 metres of the proposed line could apply for compensation under Statutory Blight). And how do these rules apply if you already live near the existing Marston Vale Line and the new EWR will use the same alignment so it is not necessarily any closer to your house, but clearly having faster / more frequent / freight trains clearly completely changes the impact the train line has.**

The EWR Co has proposed a “Need to Sell” scheme that covers these issues; this can be viewed at: <https://eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west->

2.amazonaws.com/public/ListsBlockMedia/133c0f934f/Guide-to-the-proposed-Need-to-Sell-Scheme.pdf

However, the Council believes that the current proposals do not go far enough and has made this point in its response to the consultation.

21. What's the approx. number of trains expected to run daily?

EWRC is proposing four passenger trains per hour in each direction. The number of freight trains that can be accommodated is limited by access arrangements at either end of the new line – currently nine per day in total at the Cambridge end, and five per day in total from the Marston Vale end.

22. I fervently hope this project fails! There are local elections. I usually vote for Conservatives but this time I am going to vote for anyone, absolutely any party who opposes this abomination. I live 150 metres from the railway line in question, Belfry Close. I bought this house as a quiet corner within the town but this horrible project is going to ruin it. I am disabled and don't have energy to move house otherwise I would be gone.

Your comments are noted.

23. Whichever route is chosen and bulldozed through the planning procedure and public enquiry, what provisions have been made to; Minimize the visual pollution; Above ground railways are ugly, proposed 15mts viaducts are visible from a long distance, no one wants a rail track in their back garden; Minimize the audible pollution; Houses some distance from any proposed track with be affected adversely. Great Barford already has noise pollution from the Southern Bedford Bypass which is getting worse as traffic volumes build up. The proposed Black Cat flyover system will only increase vehicle numbers and this noise pollution. The simple solution for this and any further increase in noise from the railway tracks would be to put it in a cutting blow surface land levels or build a mounds of earth / embankment alongside the tack high enough to hide all construction and trains. This would also smother any vehicle noise from the road system. Added benefit of being environmentally friendly and ecologically sound. Noise is a vibration, the earth would absorb the vibration, deadening the sound, high enough to visually hide all train traffic and construction. Trees, bushes and grasses would soften the damage to the countryside, provide wildlife habitat and filter emission pollution. Any cost would be small in comparison of the overall cost of the project. Stop ignoring people and where they live.

A full EIA will be carried out by EWRC for the next consultation, prior to submission of the Development Consent Order.

24. We did not receive any notification back in 2019, what happened? After speaking to our neighbours they have confirmed that they didn't receive any notification either.

Formal notification regarding the consultation was the responsibility of EWRC. The documents setting out how EWRC managed the consultation in 2019 can be found [on this page](#).

- 25. Will the council actually do anything with the information and questions it gathers? Or is this consultation by BBC just to pay lip service to the people of Bedford with no action?**

We have considered all representations in developing our response.

- 26. I am so disappointed with the route E decision for north Bedford. It should not go ahead.**

This decision was taken by EWRC and supported by the Government in 2020. Your comment is noted.

- 27. As the viaduct across the A6 will be such a visible part of the railway is it possible to have an iconic design which will draw people to Bedford to see it and will the people of Bedford have any say in the chosen design or will it be imposed upon us?**

If the viaduct proposal is confirmed, we will press for the design to be suitable for its location.

- 28. Given the already poor air quality in town, particularly around Midland Road, Ashburnham Road and Prebend Street, has the impact on air quality of increased road traffic, a multi-storey car park and diesel trains as a result of route E been formally assessed particularly on low-income households, and also the elderly in St Bede's and other nearby residential care home residents?**

EWRC has not yet undertaken any formal assessment of the effect of the proposed railway on air quality. A full EIA will be carried out by EWRC for the next consultation, prior to submission of the Development Consent Order.

- 29. Will the council ensure that as a result of further deterioration of air quality as a result of route E that firms or organisations providing air quality consultation or improvement implementations that have links to either the Mayor or his wife (or any of his family) will be allowed to bid for or be granted any work as a result? As there is a clear and direct conflict of interest (hence please forward this email to your Head of Internal Audit, and copy me in - who I expect, under their professional standards, will help ensure).**

The procurement of any services relating to air quality will be undertaken by EWRC. It is the responsibility of the Mayor and all Councillors to declare any potential conflicts of interest.

The Mayor's Declaration of Interests is at [mgConvert2PDF.aspx \(bedford.gov.uk\)](#)

Cllr McHugh's Declaration of Interests is at mgConvert2PDF.aspx
(bedford.gov.uk)

- 30. Will there be any investigation as to why Councillor Headley failed to tell Harpur councillors of the potential of a six track solution, or any investigation as to the extent of how Harpur councillors have put their self- interests (by serving on Exec committee and getting additional allowances) ahead of those of their constituents, by failing to even ask how the proposal would affect us.**

We do not consider that an investigation is required. BBC made clear in August 2019 to EWRC that our support for a route through Bedford was based on a solution within the existing railway land. As soon as the Council was made aware that there was a possibility of the railway requiring six tracks (in July 2019), we commissioned research that showed this was not the case, and wrote to EWRC accordingly. The announcement of the route corridor choice in Jan 2020 did not mention six tracks north of Bedford Midland Station, and we were not aware that EWRC were intending to publish information relating to six tracks until March 2021.

- 31. "The investment into Bedford Station(s) is greatly needed and the economic benefits to the area and Oxford-Cambridge Arc in general are huge, it was a mistake to close the line 50 years ago and the quicker EWR get on and compete this project the better! This will mean more jobs/Investment and less traffic on the roads and less pollution. It's very disappointing that a minority few want to delay or try and postpone/cancel a major project that will benefit our children and grandchildren.**

Your comments are noted.

- 32. Thank you for the opportunity to input into the consultation on the East West Rail route around Bedford. We do support the need for an east west rail link but have strong reservations on the nature of how the initial consultation was conducted, the limited and in some cases non-existent impact studies into pollution and traffic for Bedford that this will cause and the current preferred northern routes. Our primary objections are:**

- The original consultation was not very public, in fact we only learnt that it had even been conducted earlier this year. Any project that has such an impact on an area should be actively publicised by the relevant authorities**
- The original consultation did not say freight would come through the town and that it would be diesel. This will impact the town through both noise and smoke pollution.**
- Our final reservation, overall is whether there is the same call for the route, in the post lockdown environment there will be less commuting, this will likely lead to higher fares and/or additional freight trains, this needs to be accessed in the light of world changes.**

Formal notification regarding the consultation was the responsibility of EWRC. The Council also publicised the EWR consultation, on its website and via various media.

EWRC was responsible for the description of the proposal. A full EIA will be undertaken by EWRC, prior to the next consultation exercise.

EWRC has not shared any information relating to future demand for rail services with the Council

33. What is the projected passenger vs. freight payload over the next 20 years?

EWRC has not shared any information of this type with the Council.

34. Background. In the 2019 Consultation EWRC have been unable to say how many responses came from the Bedford Borough and have published maps showing returns in the 2019 Consultation from areas across the whole of UK. Residents in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon seeking new stations serving St Neots and Cambourne may have favoured Option E, but this should not be seen as supporting a particular alignment through Bedford Borough. This grouping of all the results together in this way distorted the data and allowed EWRC (and the Bedford Mayor) to claim that a preference was declared for a route through Bedford Town centre and across north Bedfordshire. Clearly, the recent upsurge in public protest around Bedford indicates this is not so. Question. Can the Mayor use his good offices to demand that in the current (2021) round of EWRC consultation all responses include information indicating the first 4 characters of the responders Post Code, to give local identity to data without infringing privacy requirements?

The Council cannot demand that EWRC should collect or record such information.

35. There is so much data and information and knowledge, from many different communication channels. To evaluate and assimilate, and give a coherent response, is very challenging within the consultation period. The consultation period seems very short and is being terminated before we are allowed to have physical meeting this also seems to be an unfair decision. You can communicate a point of view fully when in the same room with the person with whom you are communicating. It is far too structured and controlled in a virtual environment and does not allow for the spontaneity that is required for a full debate of a subject. Q: Will Bedford Borough Council ask for the consultation period to be extended?

EWRC originally planned an eight-week consultation period. The Council suggested that a longer period would be more appropriate and this period was increased to ten weeks.

36. Councillor Headley has confirmed he was aware of a 6 track requirement to exit Midland Road Station to the north of Bedford before the 2019 Route Consultation. There is a Network Rail report of October 2018 that

details the requirement to demolish houses to enable an additional 2 tracks. Q: Why did Bedford BC not make Bedford Borough residents / voting electorate aware of this requirement, before or during the 2019 Consultation?

The Council was not made aware of any “requirement” for six tracks, prior to the 2019 consultation, and was only made aware of a potential option for six tracks in July 2019. The Network Rail report from 2019 concluded that six tracks would not be needed.

- 37. The lack of community awareness regarding the biggest capital investment project we will see in our lifetime I feel is an indication that the efforts to communicate have been insufficient and the impacts have not been adequately explained. I feel this is a failure of process. This is the biggest investment in this area for decades and the majority of people, including myself, were unaware of the action BBC was taking to promote Route E to EWR Co. Q: Does BBC think they have engaged sufficiently, in a transparent and open manner, with the Bedford Borough residents/voting electorate, ensuring they were fully informed, prior to the selection of Route E as a preferred route?**

It is a longstanding policy of the Council to support a route for East West Rail that passes through Bedford Midland station, bringing with it economic benefits for the whole Borough. In 2019, the Council undertook communication with residents of the Borough through various media, in order to promote both the consultation and its preference for Corridor E. However, the decision to choose Corridor E was taken by EWRC and Government, not by the Council.

- 38. The Kilborn Report of March 2019 states “Bedford South options are “more direct, less complex” and that Route E has “significant interface complexity with the local highway network” BBC then paid Kilborn to cost engineer Route E. BBC would welcome the opportunity to continue to work with EWRCo to reduce the costs and risks of Route E in order to build a stronger financial and business case and lead to the development of a scheme that can win wide political support...”**

- **Why did BBC select Route E for special treatment with public money and not the other Route Options?**

It is a longstanding policy of the Council to support a route for EWR that passes through Bedford Midland Station, in order to realise economic benefits for the town and the whole Borough.

- **Given this is a “once in a generation investment” Would it not have been fair to all residents of Bedford Borough to adopt an even handed approach, rather than push the political agenda? Why wasn’t an even handed approach adopted?**

This approach was supported by all political parties represented on the Council at the time.

- **Why was this not debated at full council in 2019 for a decision?**

There was no need for such a debate given that the response submitted to EWRC reflected existing Council policy.

- **Given that this report advocates EWR making concessions with regard to gradient north of Bedford and the implications that has with the lower accommodation of freight on the network: How does this reconcile with BBC's Climate Emergency and the reduction in getting freight traffic off our roads? (Declared the same month – March 2019)?**

The Council believes that EWR will still provide an excellent opportunity for getting both lorries and cars off the roads and onto rail.

39. Network Rail put forward the six track option in October 2018. East West Rail had visibility of this in February 2019. In the recent Parish Council meetings Cllr Headley admitted to first knowing of this in August 2019.

- **What was the precise date that anyone at Bedford Borough Council, (employee, elected representative or consultant – even if they have since left BBC) first know of the six track option?**

The six track option was first mentioned as a possibility by EWRC in a meeting with Council officers on 17th July 2019. The Council made clear to EWRC that it supported route E on the assumption that it retained as four track north of Bedford Midland Station, and commissioned some technical work which was sent to EWRC to support that position.

- **Why was this not mentioned to the impacted residents at the time that this information first came to light, thereby giving them the opportunity to raise a challenge? (Bear in mind if they wanted to raise a Judicial Review, there is a time limit) - An unacceptable response would be: "It was only a rumour, or a possibility and we didn't want to raise any undue concerns." The whole rail project was only a possibility in 2019 – it didn't stop BBC spending public money on a response.**

There was no further mention of six tracks in the 2020 announcement by EWRC and Government. Having heard in March 2021, that there was an option for six tracks, the Council reiterated its position that it was possible to deliver EWR within the existing railway infrastructure. It is now known that Network Rail also concluded that six tracks were unnecessary in its own report drafted earlier in 2019.

- **What other "possible" projects with negative consequences are BBC NOT sharing with the residents because Councillors deem it not in the best interests of the individuals? Should others be preparing to defend their homes against unknown threats that BBC currently think are "just a rumour"?**

It is not the Council's policy to restrict information regarding proposed infrastructure schemes. However, the Council may not know about all plans being developed, and options being considered, by third party organisations. Also, it would be inappropriate for us to publicise unconfirmed proposals prior to formal consultation exercises. The Council continues to publicise any consultations that relate to firm proposals, such as that recently undertaken by EWRC, as soon as it becomes aware.

- 40. Will Bedford Borough Council commit to ensuring that the East-West Rail follows existing transport corridors (as encouraged by East-West Rail themselves) rather than creating new ones?**

The Council is unable to ensure that the EWR route follows existing transport corridors, as this will be a decision taken by EWRC.

- 41. How is the scheme if it goes ahead, going to compensate people for sound disturbance as the tracks move closer to their homes? Are they going to pay for triple glazing? What is the qualifying criteria?**

EWRC has not shared information of this type with the Council.

- 42. What environmental impacts did / have you asked EWR to consider for their routes?**

The consideration of environmental impact is governed by statutory procedures and will be examined by the national Planning Inspectorate, as part of the Development Consent Order process currently expected to take place in 2023/24. However, the Council will work with EWRC to minimise any adverse impact of the proposed scheme.

- 43. What level of confidence do you have in the cost models from Kilborn Consulting, and also from EWR?**

The Council has full confidence in its consultants. However, the consideration of costs is a matter for EWRC.

- 44. What impact assessment has been done on the impact to air quality of driving diesel trains through Bedford Midland station, considering air quality in Bedford already breaches the levels per the Air Quality Management Area?**

Diesel trains have been using Bedford Midland station since the 1960s, and continue to do so. All current freight trains, and passenger trains to the Midlands and the North, are operated by diesel traction.

EWRC will undertake a full EIA, which will include air quality assessment, prior to the next consultation and submission of the Development Consent Order.

- 45. Why are Bedford Borough intent on damaging the health of local people by insisting on bringing the EWR route through the centre of Bedford because of the increase in pollution, traffic congestion and the total lack of present and planned road infrastructure?**

Constructing the East West Railway will enable thousands of current vehicle movements to be taken off the road and transferred to more environmentally friendly rail. Additionally, the construction of new stations at Stewartby/Kempston Hardwick and the Wixams is likely to reduce the need for passengers from the south and west of Bedford to drive into Bedford Midland Station to access their trains.

- 46. Why is Bedford BC not working with EWR to revisit the 2019 consultation as it is perfectly clear that it was seriously flawed due to lack of correct information, poor public notification, undeclared facts and biased instructions from Bedford Borough Council to their consultants?**

EWRC was responsible for the consultation documentation and proposal description. The Council instructed its consultants to advise it in developing a response to that consultation, on the basis of its longstanding policy to support a route that passed through Bedford Midland Station.

- 47. How could the general public be expected to come to an informed decision with the lack of proper and up-to-date information, poor quality maps and staff at the time unable to adequate answers at the time of the 2019 consultations? Bedford Borough Council appears not to have all the relevant information at the time of the consultation when they made their decision.**

EWRC was responsible for the consultation documentation and proposal description. BBC has a longstanding commitment to support a route which runs through Bedford Midland Station.

- 48. Why are Bedford Borough Council only discussing the northern routes at local meetings when Cambridge are still discussing both northern and southern approaches?**

The consultation questions in respect of the route through Bedford Borough are both northern routes. We have therefore discussed which of these options is preferred by each Parish Council. Both northern and southern options are available for the route as it approaches Cambridge.

- 49. Have you conducted a review of the proposed benefits of the EWR plans, post COVID, given the changes that are almost certainly to happen, whereby many workers will not commute 5 days a week, to a city centre office? Has this been factored in and how it effects the proposals - the line we are advised is predominately passenger.**

Such a review will need to be conducted by EWRC, in relation to the whole route, taking account of the Covid impact, in preparation of its updated business case prior to submitting it to the Government for funding approval.

- 50. Why are you only consulting residents now? Is it because of the possible demolition of houses that has been announced by EWR? What were the reasons for not consulting residents about the original 5 proposed routes in 2019 before sending the official Borough Council response where it was stated that you preferred route E over all other route options?**

The Council encouraged residents to respond to the 2019 consultation. The Council did not consult residents on its own response to that consultation as it already had a longstanding publicised policy of supporting an EWR route that passed through Bedford Midland Station.

The most recent EWRC consultation related to which route EWR would take through Bedford, so the Council was keen to hear views before it submitted its final response which can be found [here](#).

51. Why are BBC only now having more detailed consultation arrangements and have not beforehand when the 5 route options were being consulted upon?

The Council encouraged residents to respond to the 2019 consultation. The Council did not consult residents on its own response to that consultation as it already had a longstanding policy of supporting a route for East West Rail that passed through Bedford Midland Station.

The most recent EWRC consultation related to which route EWR would take through Bedford, so the Council was keen to hear views before it submitted its response which can be found [here](#).

52. We believe that EWR are using Bedford to its detriment and this has not been realised yet by the Borough Council. We are concerned that given the disturbing developments since the original Routes were mooted, the people and the councillors of Bedford are being duped and the process will have gone too far before it is realised. Also the world and its requirements have changed significantly since the EWR first began the process and it very much appears that as information comes to light, Bedford and its representatives will be shown up as having sold the town down the river. Can you please listen to your people and stop this now, before it is too late?

The decision to proceed with the EWR scheme, within Corridor E, was taken by the Government and EWRC. The Council has no power to “stop” this, nor would wish to, as it has a longstanding policy to support a route for EWR that passes through Bedford Midland Station, in order to realise benefits for the town and the whole Borough. We are working with EWRC to maximise possible benefits and we believe these are best achieved by a route which comes through Bedford and creates a nationally important hub at Bedford Midland Station.

A review of benefits will need to be conducted by EWRC, in relation to the whole route, taking account of the Covid impact, prior to submission of its updated business case to the Government for funding approval.

53. Is there really any point in having these consultations? Mayor Dave, can you put your hand on your heart and tell us that there is a chance you might change your and the BBC’s collective mind on the Route choice? We hear that councillors are now changing their minds, as information has become available on the realities of the impact and lack of benefit to the town. Will you do the same?

We are using these events to seek the views of residents and local councils on the best route for Bedford Borough out of those offered by EWR.

The Council has a longstanding policy to support a route for EWR that passes through Bedford Midland Station, in order to realise benefits for the town and the whole Borough.

Following consultation in 2019, it was decided by the Government and EWRC that EWR should pass through Bedford. The latest consultation relates to which route through Bedford it should take. Therefore, we felt it important to seek public views ourselves, in order to represent these in our own response to the consultation.

A review of benefits will need to be conducted by EWRC, in relation to the whole route, taking account of the Covid impact, prior to submission of its updated business case to the Government for funding approval.

- 54. We are not hearing any reasons why people would want to begin travelling into Bedford if there were to be a town centre station connection East to West. At best, those being asked on TV or radio are saying that it might be useful for them to get to or from Cambridge or Milton Keynes. No mention of anyone heading for Bedford as a destination making Bedford no better off than it was before and significantly and permanently harmed. I cannot accept the “Master Plan” as a sensible response. It is possible to invest in the town centre and run down areas and also build more homes/create more jobs without destroying huge areas of Bedford and permanently harming the lives of thousands of others.**

It is the Council's view that the creation of a nationally important rail hub at Bedford Midland Station will provide a major boost for the Borough and its economy. The improved connectivity to all corners of the country will attract inward investment to the town, in preference to other towns or cities. It will also boost sustainable transport modes, in favour of private car use.

We will work with EWRC to minimise any adverse impact of the scheme and EWRC will undertake a full EIA, before the next consultation exercise.

- 55. We have seen and heard only high level and vague claims of investment, jobs, improved traffic and homes but there is a complete absence of supporting evidence. This is particularly unpalatable given the significant changes brought about by the pandemic as commuting, office locations and workplace use has been changed forever. Where is the evidence of the alleged benefits for the people of Bedford and surrounds? Is this not just a vanity project? Who are the companies who will be relocating to the new Bedford?**

It is too early to say which specific companies might be looking to relocate to or invest in the Borough. However, the construction of EWR will provide the town with better connections to all parts of the country, rather than other towns which could be our rivals in attracting this economic growth and associated prosperity.

A review of benefits will need to be conducted by EWRC, in relation to the whole route, taking account of the Covid impact, prior to submission of its updated business case prior to submitting it to the Government for funding approval.

- 56. Please explain why the Bedford Borough Council chose to ignore the advice given by the publicly funded independent reports into the**

suitability of the different routes? Route E was considered the least favourable on many counts, not least cost, yet after questionable intervention by members of the Bedford Borough council (directly, or by association with the EWR Consortium) AFTER the first, unlawfully short consultation closed, it unfathomably became the preferred route. This is not fair, logical nor transparent and we deserve better from our elected representatives.

The consultation period provided in 2019 by EWRC was approved by Government.

The decision to select Corridor E was taken by the Government and EWRC (not the Council or the EWR Consortium of which it is a member) on the basis of consultation feedback and a review of costs, carried out by Network Rail. The Council did not ignore any advice received from its consultants.

- 57. Did the Borough Council support Route E because it shares EWR Cos view that the key project objectives of EWR are to deliver economic growth and support large scale housing growth in North Bedfordshire, and that environmental concerns are way down the pecking order? If that is the case, isn't it clear that without consulting Bedford residents, the Borough Council has pre-determined a very significant element of the Local Plan Review, where in theory such matters are to be decided with the benefit of public consultation?**

The Council believes that Corridor E supports the economic growth of the Borough, and that railway stations can act as a focus for growth. However, there are no plans for large scale housing growth in north Bedfordshire, as evidenced in the Council's draft Local Plan 2040, which will be subject to consultation later this summer. There has therefore been no pre-determination of the Local Plan review.

- 58. Why are passing points to cater for slow trains being built in to both route options?**

Information of this type has not been provided to the Council by EWRC.

- 59. How can Bedford Borough Council support the building of a diesel train line given the sustainability expectation that the country will become significantly carbon neutral by 2035 and this line is due to be running in 2030?**

The Council supports the construction of an electrified railway and has made this view known to EWRC in its recent consultation response.

- 60. We had serious flooding of properties and the main road in Clapham at Christmas 2020. Have the Borough Council done a flood risk assessment on the impact of building a railway viaduct across the floodplain between Clapham and Bedford?**

EWRC will undertake a full Environment Impact Assessment, which will include flood risk assessment, prior to submission of the Development Consent Order.

- 61. Has there been any provision for increased cycle commuting to Bedford station? New cycle ways, secure cycle parking (my bike was also stolen from the station on one of the rare occasions I cycled to the station)**

Such provision will be a key part of the station's redevelopment, once planning of the new facility gets underway.

- 62. Has there been any consideration to tunnelling instead of cutting?**

As part of its response to the consultation, the Council has put forward proposals for the use of tunnels rather than cuttings as the line passes Carriage Drive in Clapham.

- 63. Is BCC going to pay for the multi-storey car parks and extended platforms which reduced the cost of route E? What is the cost of this and if so how do you expect to pay for this in a post-pandemic time of austerity?**

The Council has no plans to pay for extended platforms or a multi-storey car park, so there is no implication for the cost of Corridor E. If the Council were to develop plans to construct a new car park in the future, then any such plans would have to produce a positive rate of return on any funds invested.

- 64. First and foremost, we were not consulted in 2019 and DID NOT receive the postcard EWR tell us they sent out. The first we knew about it was when I joined the local Facebook page in January 2020. We immediately expressed our concerns to our local councillor and have also made contact with EWR on several occasions. We were told to attend the local meeting with EWR which was cancelled due to Covid and has never been reorganised. If we had been consulted and given the opportunity to object we would have done so. We understand we are now being given the opportunity to comment on the alignment of route E. As there is only one route out of Bedford through the Clapham countryside our only option is to object to route E altogether.**

Your comments are noted. Any complaint about consultation should be directed to EWRC.

- 65. Could you please explain how you expect Bedford hospital to cope with the influx of people needing its services with all the housing that will come after EWR is built? What about schools, local shops and access roads?**

The provision of health services for Borough residents is managed by the NHS, and the Council works closely with the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to provide information and support. Planned future housing development and associated facilities are included in the Council's draft Local Plan 2040, which will be subject to consultation later this summer.

- 66. Can you explain why the original consultation in 2019 wasn't held again following BBC's input and support, which changed the costings for route**

E.? Full transparency was non-existent and the goal posts had moved. We should have been presented with the new costings and been made aware of your support and commissioning of your own costings for route E, and had the opportunity to vote again. Wherever the train line is built, can you assure me that access to the countryside via byways, bridleways, and footpaths, will be kept open during and after the building of the EWR line. My village of Ravensden uses such paths daily.

You would need to seek an answer from EWRC in relation to your first question.

The Council is unable to make any assurances about future countryside access, as these considerations must be made by EWRC, when the final route has been decided. We will encourage EWRC to minimise disruption to existing access.

67. Why did the Mayor deny the parish council's request for the public to be able to attend the parish council meetings in 2021?

Given the relatively short consultation period set by EWRC, we met with elected representatives of each Parish Council through whose administrative area the line might pass, and held two further public meetings open to every resident of the Borough.

68. Why did it take nearly two weeks before the Mayor's office would release the recordings of the parish council meetings (for example Ravensden)? It is noted that the recordings weren't released until the subsequent meetings had passed.

The officer who recorded the meetings was unable to send copies to the relevant Parish Councils for a few days, as the file size was too large for his computer to deal with. As soon as this issue was rectified the recordings were sent out. The meeting with Ravensden was held on the 12th April and the recording was issued on the 21st April.

69. On what date was Cllr Headley given responsibility for railways in addition to finance? Was there a public notification?

Cllr Headley has led on railway matters for several years, and has represented the Council on the EWR Consortium since 2012. Cllr Headley is the Portfolio Holder for Finance, but has other responsibilities, including rail matters, but this has not been announced publicly

70. What oversight is in place for the allocation of portfolio holder responsibilities and changes to responsibilities?

This is overseen by meetings of the Full Council.

71. Why is Cllr Headley better qualified to lead on railways than the Deputy Mayor & portfolio holder for environment & transport Cllr Headley?

Responsibility for emerging issues is given to the most appropriate Member of the Executive, based on experience and knowledge?

- 72. In the week that it was announced that 50-100 houses were to be effected in the Harpur and Castle Wards, in addition to the North Beds, why did Mayor Hodgson and the Deputy Mayor Royden, portfolio holder for environment & transport, not find time to meet or communicate? When was there first communication after the 31st March announcement?**

The Mayor raised this issue in his website and in his column for the Bedford Independent on 7th April 2021. A meeting was held with the "Protect Poets" residents' group on April 18th 2021.

- 73. Given the council's budget crisis and the council's current government ranking (337/354 councils nationally), does Cllr Headley have sufficient bandwidth to manage both finance and railways?**

Cllr Headley has successfully overseen both finance and rail issues for many years.

- 74. After the Mayor and Cllr Headley found out about six-track proposals on 31st July 2019, why did they conceal it from full council and the public?**

Having heard that there was an option for six tracks in July 2019, the Council commissioned research that showed four tracks would be sufficient, and wrote to the EWR Co accordingly to state that its support for a route through Bedford Midland Station was based on the assumption that the railway could be provided within the existing infrastructure. There was no further mention of six tracks in the 2020 announcement by EWRC and the Government. BBC first heard that EWRC were considering the possibility of six tracks through Bedford in March 2021.

- 75. Was the Mayor and Cllr Headley aware of Network Rail's 2018 six track proposals in 2018 that involved CPOs and demolition in the Poets area and referenced EWR?**

Having heard that there was an option for six tracks in July 2019, the Council commissioned research that showed four tracks would be sufficient, and wrote to the EWR Co accordingly to state that its support for a route through Bedford Midland Station was based on the assumption that the railway could be provided within the existing infrastructure. There was no further mention of six tracks in the 2020 announcement by EWRC and the Government. BBC first heard that EWRC were considering the possibility of six tracks through Bedford in March 2021.

It is now known that Network Rail also concluded that six tracks were unnecessary in its own report, drafted earlier in 2019.

- 76. Did the Mayor and Cllr Headley ever discuss the six-track proposals with Cllr Royden, Cllr Atkins or Cllr Jackson before the 31st March 2021 announcement?**

Although six tracks were raised at a meeting in advance of the release of the 2021 consultation documents, there were no plans shared by the East West

Rail Company at that point. Any discussion in advance of details would have been based on assumption and speculation.

77. Will you publish the brief/scope of work for the engagement with the consultants?

No detailed brief was issued to our consultants, who had already been appointed to provide general support and advice on all rail matters.

78. Has the full council been given an opportunity to contribute to the consultant's scope of work?

No, but that would not be an appropriate activity for the Full Council to be involved with.

79. Why did Cllr Headley and BBC lobby EWR Co for a consultation extension that would allow them more time but deny the public an opportunity to attend physical meetings?

The Council asked EWRC to extend its consultation period from the initially proposed eight weeks, and did so for the benefit of all respondents. Any physical meetings would have been limited by the Covid restrictions in place at the relevant time.

80. The Liberal Democrats have been distributing party political campaign material designed to look like genuine editorial. What is BBC doing to monitor this to ensure that the public is not misled on EWR?

The Council is not aware of this and has no governance responsibility or powers regarding such matters? If true, this would need to be referred to the Electoral Commission.

81. There are concerns that some councillors are concealing information and making misleading comments to distort the public's understanding on EWR. What is the council doing to monitor this?

The Council is not responsible for monitoring politicians' comments. Politicians are held accountable by the electorate for any statements that they make. The Council is not aware of this and has no governance responsibility or powers regarding such matters?

82. In the 2019 consultation, EWR Co only included two of the seven Bedford parish councils effected by the northern routes vs seven of seven effected by the southern routes. Does BBC think this was adequate?

The Council had no influence on EWRC's 2019 consultation approach, but understood it was open to all.

- 83. On 24th February 2021, Cllr Headley moved a motion that had 7 bullets of council notes, 3 bullets on the motion itself and was 341 words in total. Did he prepare it before listening to the statements from members of the public?**

In accordance with policy, Cllr Headley drafted the motion prior to the meeting.

- 84. Given the motion Cllr Headley moved, why didn't he disclose the information on six-track discussions?**

The Council was unaware that EWRC was going to propose six tracks as its preferred option.

- 85. EWR Co's engineering director, Simon Scott publicly commented in December 2020 that they chose to approach Bedford from the north to maintain grade separation. When did BBC first become aware of this?**

We have no knowledge of a public comment, but would clarify that EWR approaches Bedford from the south, not the north, and there is no grade separation being proposed.

- 86. Had Cllr Headley disclosed the information on six-track discussions, the comments, questions and potentially voting by other councillors may have been different. What democratic oversight is in place at BBC? Is this being looked at?**

BBC adheres to the oversight mechanisms that apply to all councils.

- 87. BBC is denying petitions related to EWR because of previous petitions. Given the 24th February 2021 discussion at full council was compromised because of the Mayor and Cllr Headley's failure to be transparent with material information, will future petitions on similar topics now be considered?**

The rules governing the presentation and acceptance of petitions are available on the Council's website.

- 88. If the council were to vote again on support of route E, would the Mayor allow Lib Dem councillors to vote independently this time?**

All Councillors are free to vote as they see fit on any motion.

- 89. On 24th Feb Cllr Charles Royden, Deputy Mayor and portfolio holder for environment & transport sat through a 3 hour plus meeting without making any comments or asking any questions. Is that satisfactory conduct given his role and responsibilities?**

Cllr Headley, not Cllr Royden, is responsible for railway issues. Cllr Royden will have made decisions on whether or not to intervene in any debate as he deemed appropriate.

- 90. Why is BBC denying freedom of information requests for details on their discussions regarding a railway station at Twinwoods?**

No valid FOI requests are being denied.

- 91. Why was Biddenham not included in the 2019 consultation? Did BBC raise this with EWR Co? Given there are plans for 3,000 plus houses in Biddenham do you think they should have been included? Is the closure of the Great Denham Golf Course related to EWR and related housing plans?**

The Council had no influence on EWRC's 2019 consultation approach, but understood it was open to all.

There is no known connection between EWR and the Great Denham golf course.

- 92. Why did BBC grant planning permission for a high density housing development inside, new road access and roundabout on the B660, inside the route E corridor just weeks before EWR Co's announcement? BBC had knowledge of their timelines and had been lobbying for route E - what was the rush?**

The Council is obliged to determine all planning applications submitted to it within central government-mandated timeframes. EWRC did not submit any objection to the Graze Hill scheme.

- 93. Who at BBC was responsible for suggesting the "other organisations and interest groups" to EWR Co? On reflection was this done fairly?**

The Council had no influence on EWRC's consultation approach?

- 94. Why did EWR Co only look at BBC owned South Bedford venues (Scott Hall selected and Faraday Hall also considered) for the 2019 consultation event? Did BBC discuss venue selection? Did BBC flag that there are more suitable venues in Bedford? Why is BBC not responding to freedom of information requests on this?**

Questions about venue selection should be directed to EWRC. The Council was not happy with the selection of Scott Hall and made its views known to EWRC. We are responding to all valid FOI requests.

- 95. Why did Cllr Royden tell Brickhill residents that route E doesn't go through Brickhill?**

Corridor E does not run through the Brickhill ward; it is proposed to run through the northern part of Brickhill Community Parish area. Cllr Royden is the elected Member for Brickhill ward and not the whole of the Parish Council area.

- 96. Great Barford Lib Dems posted in 2019 “it is clear that East West Rail favour a route that runs south of Bedford”. On 24th February 2021, Cllr Headley commented that that is a misreading. Who should we believe?**

The quote from 2019 is a question for the Great Barford Liberal Democrats, not the Council.

- 97. Is there any more information that the Mayor and Cllr Headley been withholding from the public (for example, the recent the six track revelations)?**

There was no proposal for six tracks before the 2021 consultation, and therefore no information to withhold. There is no further information to share at this time.

- 98. The article you recently posted on Facebook (J Kell) notes that the midland mainline passing through Bedford is one of only three places in the country to have been officially designated as “congested infrastructure” and that Bedford is known to be a particular bottleneck”. This must have been known to Bedford Borough Council at the time it campaigned for EWR to pass through Bedford town meaning 6 tracks was more than just a remote risk but a reality of your support for Route E. Why has this been covered up by the local authority and your office?**

Our research shows that it is not necessary to install six tracks to accommodate EWR services. Network Rail agrees with this view.

- 99. I have been advised by Dave Hodgson the Mayor of Bedford that we were supposed to have received a post card from EWR in 2019 alerting us to your proposals? I categorically swear that I have never had any post card, letter, email or leaflet posted or hand delivered to my property.**

Your comment is noted. Any complaint regarding this should be directed to EWRC.

- 100. Considering my location and the proximity of the proposed 95 metre CUTTING spitting the road and fields in this area of natural beauty I am staggered that this can be lawful without public consultation in a country of democracy? Is it not law to have advise residents hugely impacted by your train line? Please provide the correspondence that was sent to me but not received.**

Missing correspondence from EWRC should be taken up with that body. Non-statutory consultation is occurring now, and a further, statutory, consultation is planned for 2022.

- 101. I believe the Mayor consciously chose not to advise the affected residents of Clapham, Brickhill and those who are having their homes demolished in the town centre as he is under pressure to build homes and by sneaking this train line in i.e. backing your train line WITHOUT adequate**

open public consultation and during the biggest pandemic the world has ever known, when people were off guard fighting to survive themselves. It feels like underhand dealing has and is taking place by him and I would be grateful to be told, truthfully what meetings you have had with our Council and the Mayor and when those meetings were please?.

Public consultation by EWRC did take place in January to March 2019.

Your question appears to be addressed to EWRC, not the Council.

- 102. Summary: No consultation to me smack bang on the train line - why please? Why are you choosing route E when it is the most expensive and most challenging from a landscape point of view? Will it be diesel? How many trains per hour? There needs to be no trains from midnight to 6am minimum - please advise? How long would engineering works take to complete the line in the Clapham area? Do you know, really know, about the wildlife here? What surveys have you done and could I see them please?**

EWRC's consultation undertaken in 2019 was open to all.

It is a longstanding policy of the Council to support a route for EWR that passes through Bedford Midland Station, in order to realise benefits for the town and the whole Borough. The construction of EWR will provide the town with better connections to all parts of the country, rather than other towns which could be our rivals in attracting this economic growth and associated prosperity.

The Council is pressing for EWR to be electric.

EWRC is proposing four passenger trains per hour in each direction. The number of freight trains that can be accommodated is limited by access arrangements at either end of the new line – currently nine per day in total at the Cambridge end, and five per day in total from the Marston Vale end.

The proposed operating periods vary depending upon the day of the week, generally with a six-hour gap without trains each night.

Your question about the duration of engineering works will need to be directed to EWRC.

EWRC will undertake a full EIA, prior to the next consultation exercise.

- 103. Please can I meet someone as I cannot cope living without knowing what is really going to happen and why you have chosen to do this here? I am pleading with a representative to come and discuss your intentions please as I am living on a knife edge with extreme anxiety. I am not some nutter I am a professional woman passionate to understand what is going on and would appreciate being taken seriously.**

Until a final decision is made by EWRC and the Government about the exact route, within Corridor E, there is no definite information to offer. All the options are set out on the EWRC website: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/>

104. When did the Mayor first discuss the potential for “six tracks” with the executive?

There are no records of this being discussed.

105. I live in a prominent listed building on Sunderland Hill, which is situated less than 500 metres away from one of the preferred route to alignments through Ravensden. The EWR technical report states that my property will suffer residual noise impact from EWR. The Grade II listed status prohibits double glazing and the planting of any trees adjacent to the B660 and EWR to buffer the noise from the railway will take decades to grow. What immediately effective measure will BBC lobby EWR for in order to minimise the noise and visual impact of the railway on my home?

Please see our response to the EWR consultation which can be found [here](#).

106. How can consultees effectively engage with EWR when much of the data pertaining to this area is not available in the technical report? For reference, section 1D 14.3 Climate data associated with operational Greenhouse Gas Emissions measured by track gradients, states 'data not available'. The reports provide insufficient detail regarding the structures that will be required for any route to traverse the undulating topography of this area. How can consultees reasonably determine a preference for any route in the absence of the required technical data?

The Council is unable to answer your questions, which will need to be directed to EWRC. EWRC have to prepare an EIA in accordance with UK legislation to support the Development Consent Order. This will set out the impact of the proposal on the environment and will suggest mitigation. The information will be publicly available.

107. I believe Beds Borough Council have carried out investigations into the existing track usage and capacity with a view to supporting the four track option. Has that now been concluded and when will the findings be available to the public? In particular campaign groups such as Protect Poets.

This research has been concluded and a copy of the report has been passed to the Protect Poets group.

108. How can the residents of the rural communities have confidence that the Council will acknowledge their concerns, and fairly represent these perspectives in any consultations, when it is led by a Mayor who has had no discernible engagement with these communities over his time in office, nor supported policies that benefit these areas?

The Mayor regularly engages with rural communities and is available for further meetings.

109. In all five options for Section D of the route presented in the current EWR consultation, I was disappointed to find that all follow the same route out

of the north of Bedford. Do you know why various possibilities are being considered for the north Beds villages, St. Neots and Cambridge (which seem to have been developed since the 2019 consultation) but there are no other route alignment options being considered for Bedford?

This information may be available on the EWRC website:

<https://eastwestrail.co.uk/>, but otherwise, your question will need to be directed to EWRC.

110. What impact assessment has been done on the impact to air quality of driving diesel trains through Bedford Midland station, considering air quality in Bedford already breaches the levels per the Air Quality Management Area?

There has not yet been any formal assessment of the effect of the proposed railway on air quality. The Council is pressing for EWR to be electric from the start of operation.

EWRC will undertake a full EIA, prior to the next consultation exercise.

111. Why is it assumed by Bedford Borough Council that a southern A421 corridor route will infringe on the RSPB at Sandy and Whimpole Hall?

This view is based on the content of the EWRC response to the 2019 consultation.

112. Now that Bedford Borough Council knows the full content of the EWR most recent consultation, will the Council now release the latest version of the Local Plan which has been postponed until July? What justification is there for delaying this release now that the EWR consultation is out, given that no further information will now be received that will influence the Local Plan document between now and its release?

The Council's draft Local Plan 2040 has been published and which will be subject to consultation later this summer.

113. Which part of the Bedford to Bletchley line be it affect?

All of the Bedford – Bletchley line will be affected.

114. Is it true houses in Spencer road Bedford will be affected or even demolished?

The EWRC consultation documentation suggests that houses in this area would be affected. However, research that we have had undertaken leads us to believe that land for additional tracks would not be needed, and that therefore demolition in this location would not be required. In 2019, Network Rail came to a similar conclusion.

EWRC will undertake a full EIA, prior to the next consultation exercise, and the Council will work with EWRC to minimise any adverse impact.

- 115. How could the general public be expected to come to an informed decision with the lack of proper and up-to-date information, poor quality maps and staff at the time unable to adequate answers at the time of the 2019 consultations? Bedford Borough Council appears not to have all the relevant information at the time of the consultation when they made their decision.**

Your question will need to be redirected to EWRC. BBC considers that it had sufficient information to inform its response to the 2019 consultation.

- 116. Why has the Mayor and Bedford Borough Council always insisted that the consultations and the final route selection is a Government and EWR decision when The Mayor and BBC have always championed the northern route and insist they are blameless.**

The Council has promoted Corridor E because it accords with our longstanding policy to support a route that passes through Bedford Midland Station. However, it is the case that the decision to select Corridor E was indeed taken by the Government and EWRC.

- 117. Are there plans that the Blakemore distribution centre being built at Manton Lane could use the East West Rail line for transport in the future, as it is right behind them?**

We are not aware of any such plans.

- 118. I am aware of EWR plans to build a new railway line from Oxford to Cambridge, and felt compelled to send my thoughts particularly on the Bedford section in particular, and the line end to end in general.**

a) Regarding the entire plan, I have first hand experience of the change in commute activity following Covid 19 (C-19). Both my daughter and son-in-law commuted into London every day for work. Both were encouraged to work from home throughout the pandemic. As things started to improve in early spring 2021, and after their respective employer noted how their business prospered during the 'work-from-home' phase, both family members have been given the option of working from home post pandemic. They have both accepted.

I am now retired, but historically I also commuted by train for 30 years. I live close enough to Bedford station to see first hand that daily demand has dropped off significantly since C-19. It will of course recover in part, but as my own family experiences indicate, long distance rail travel is no longer a necessity for many. Demand patterns have changed since your consultation data was captured. Many things will no longer be the same post C-19, but work locations is one of the most material as companies see opportunities to reduce costs and yet maintain services.

b) Regarding the Bedford station section, and as mentioned I confirm my interest given our family home location, it seems against all logic that a station with limited road access, poor affordable parking options and

central to residential and established business properties in all directions would be the preferred option?

Road access to Bedford station was (pre C-19) terrible as queues existed for all road users coming into Bedford from the north pre C-19. If the high level intention is to move EW commuters off roads onto rail then why make it even worse for other road users in the already stricken Bedford congestion points?

c) I am not confident that that Bedford town centre will benefit from new EW visitors. I suspect there is no evidence to support aspirational models. I suspect whilst you perceive change would be good for Bedford, I challenge you to identify one other UK town of comparable size where the town centre is vibrant and growing at this time, or even the last five years? In the unlikely event you can identify one, I am confident that additional rail travel was not a material factor.

It's a national fact that out-of-town retail trends witnessed by all towns across the UK. Why would Bedford be able to buck national trends? Change is a constant, but aligning with future needs is not an art, it's a science. It's also a national challenge. Bedford is a nice town, but it's not going to become the York of the Midlands. If the majority of new EWR traffic is planned to be commercial (not commuters or visitors) then an out-of-town station option is surely the best option so even more freight can move throughout the day and night.

Thank you for your comments. I would ask you to read through the Council's response to the EWRC consultation which can be found [here](#). This sets out the Council's view on many of the points raised in your comments. A review will need to be conducted by EWRC, in relation to the whole route, taking account of the Covid impact, prior to submission of its updated business case to the Government for funding approval.

119. I recently wrote to you regarding my concerns about EWR based on 2019 gathered data, and the associated negative impact on Bedford. That concern was brought into focus by my own family's multiple long term change in rail commuting needs after Covid-19. In case you think I am just a single voice raising alarm, the link below is a BBC article reflecting 50 (fifty) major firms. Imagine the change to commuting generally if this, as I suspect, is replicated nationally?

Imagine the enormous waste of money spent on something that the population could see was not required before it was even committed by those who could not wait to get the most accurate data possible to support any business case, or not as I perceive it will be.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-56972207>

In these unprecedented times, you must make decisions based on data, not aspiration. Any saved monies could do significant good elsewhere, and for that the population would thank you.

A review will need to be conducted by EWRC, in relation to the whole route, taking account of the Covid impact, prior to submission of its updated business case to the Government for funding approval.

120. What is Bedford Borough Council specifically planning to do to start and maintain viable reasons for passengers to get off the train at Bedford and spend £6millions of pounds over and above currently been spent?

Bedford has no Retail outlet as Bicester or Milton Keynes, nor a centuries old university with research spin off companies as with Oxford or Cambridge. Why should anyone get off a train at Bedford and cumulatively spend these sums of money?

The value of the improved connectivity is less about whether Bedford town centre currently has department stores or university facilities, and more about the relative attractiveness of journey opportunities. The economic case for public transport investment is that better connectivity causes a spiral: whereby businesses are attracted; which encourages more residents; which increases economic activity; which drives prosperity; which makes the place an attractive location for businesses; which encourages more residents. The logic is probably no different than when the railways were built nearly 200 years ago. Locations with good connectivity grew and prospered. Locations with no stations did not really change. The economic case is simply that with the improved connectivity Bedford will benefit. Without the new connectivity somewhere else will benefit. Arguably, if the benefits are elsewhere, then overtime there will be a positive pull from places that lack such connectivity.

121. What is the source (document and page number) of the long extract that Cllr headley read at about 1.35 pm?

The information referred to can be found [here](#).