

## Category 6: Roads, traffic and car parking

Abbreviations used in the responses below include the following;

- BBC – Bedford Borough Council
- DCO – Development Consent Order
- EWR – East West Rail (generally refers to the project)
- EWRC – East West Railway Company

- 1. Bedford road and public transport infrastructure is of a very poor quality. There does not appear to be a planned integrated public transport system within the town with little linkage between important locations i.e. Train Station / Bus Station / hospitals etc. As a result the majority of personal travel is made by private car when available, or even taxi.**

We will work with EWRC to ensure an integrated approach to the road and public transport network within the Borough. Improved facilities and services at the two stations in Bedford present opportunities to integrate all transport modes.

- 2. The main road artery from the South of the town is by Ampthill Road, the A6. This road carries large volumes of traffic, whilst serving the town at one end and the Retail Park at the other it also has two large Supermarkets in between. Unsurprisingly the road resembles the M25 at certain points of the day with little hope for side roads to gain access to the route. According to this draft document, it is into this environment that the East West Rail link is planning to place a new (replacement for St Johns Station) station! As I have already said bus services are poor within the town, so it would follow to use this station we would be increasing the level of car journeys if the public are to use this station, if that is possible. The station would also require substantial supporting car parking facilities, not evident on the plans.**

The proposals for Bedford St John's Station are in their infancy. There are two possible locations suggested for the station and, until EWR select an option, it is unlikely that detailed plans will be made. It is expected, in due course that, as the plans for the station are advanced, the situation regarding car parking will become clearer.

- 3. Parking at Bedford Midland station is already at a premium. The loss of parking caused by the redevelopment of the station and the possible extra requirement created by EWR makes the situation worse. The parking at Wixams could also be used as a Park & Ride for Bedford.**

There are no firm plans for Bedford Midland Station or its supporting infrastructure at this stage. It is very unlikely that when the station is rebuilt that there will be fewer car parking spaces. What is far more likely is that there will be considerably more car parking spaces, enhanced integration with local public

transport systems, improved public open space and better facilities in respect to cycle storage. The advent of Wixams station may well alleviate some of the Bedford Mainline Station bound road traffic.

**4. What impact analysis for traffic flow has been completed for the increase in heavy goods traffic construction for the train line in Bedford? Where is this published?**

Until such time as EWRC's plans are more refined it is not possible to model construction traffic flows. When more is known about the precise alignment of the route, the precise location, and scale of infrastructure, and the timings of work it will be feasible to understand the potential impact on local roads. At this stage we will work with EWRC and press for the involvement of local residents in the development of a construction traffic plan.

**5. EWR have no local knowledge?**

**One comment in the Technical report published recently suggested that Ford End Road bridge may not be viable to be rebuilt and that alternative routes may have to be found for traffic?? Anyone from Bedford would know that what they have just said is the most ridiculous suggestion. It would cause traffic carnage forever. However, Councillor Headley of BBC confirmed that no traffic survey/impact study has been carried out of either short term disruption from construction OR longer term if it does indeed attract more passengers. All of these "new" passengers who drive into the town centre could of course circumvent the town centre and jump on a train from an edge of town location with ample space for parking. (Did I mention parking is a nightmare at Bedford Station? After 7.15am there are zero parking spaces available)**

We understand that EWRC's comment regarding Ford End Road Bridge relates to its possible replacement and not its total removal. What is clear from the Technical Report is that there is a range of options for the future station and the best use of land around the station. These options have yet to be developed and only then will there be clarity on the relative costs and benefits of those options. Ford End Road Bridge may well be a factor. The key point is that if there are to be works carried on in respect to this bridge there will need to be a temporary replacement to ensure that traffic can still flow.

Until such time as EWRC's plans are more refined, it is not possible to model construction and other traffic flows. When more is known about the precise alignment of the route, the precise location, and scale of infrastructure, and the timings of work, it will be feasible to understand the potential impact on local roads. At this stage we will work with EWRC and press for the involvement of local residents in the development of a construction traffic management plan.

**6. There are lots of issues about which route and why they are being proposed. Lots of comments about the countryside being ripped up and ruined. This will lead to more infill housing, more vehicle traffic on already inadequate roads (Bedford western 'bypass 'is a joke). Houses being**

**demolished, homes being blighted by being close to but not close enough for compensation. If this proposed East to West rail link is so important and so valuable for businesses and communities, do it properly, do it well, with forward thinking. The Southern Bedford bypass solved a problem but also created more by throwing extra traffic onto the Black Cat roundabout that could not and has not coped. Sixteen years later we are still waiting when everyone (drivers especially) knew it would be a problem from day one. Is this East/West rail proposal going to be an equally poor example of lack of forward thinking?**

Major infrastructure such as new roads and railways takes many years to plan and deliver. Current timescales for the opening of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements is 2025/26, and EWRC is suggesting that trains will be running between Oxford and Cambridge by 2030. This is all subject to Government funding being made available.

Any major infrastructure project has to go through the Environmental Impact Assessment process in accordance with UK legislation, and EWRC will publish and EIA to support the Development Control Order (similar to a planning application).

The cost and complexity of this project would suggest that EWRC and the Government are confident in its ability to bring benefits along the whole route, and specifically to Bedford.

**7. Are there any quantified predictions, assumptions or targets about how much traffic will be removed from the roads when the EWR service is up and running and consequently what reduction in emissions is expected.**

EWRC may have made such assumptions within its business case, but we have not seen those assumptions. Any assumptions that might have been made to date are likely to consider the route as a whole, rather than the localised impact in any one town. EWRC is obliged to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with UK legislation to support the Development Consent Order, and this will consider the impact on traffic and transport.

**8. Considering Bedford Town Centre is dying, the town is gridlocked whenever a road is closed for work to be done. How is the Council going to keep the traffic moving once they close Bromham Bridge and other roads again?**

Managing traffic flow during the construction works is bound to be challenging and will require a very carefully considered plan, which takes into account the necessity to provide access to and through the town. It is not possible to predict how this plan might work, because we have no idea of the proposed sequencing or length of impact on any of the infrastructure. We will work closely with EWRC, as its plans develop, to ensure that traffic management within the town is high on their agenda. At this stage we will work with EWRC and press for the involvement of local residents in the development of a construction traffic management plan.

- 9. Little consideration for road traffic/parking, we understand Bedford Borough Council is funding the development of the Bedford Station site and multi storey parking... but the approach roads are already extremely busy in the morning, even during lockdown. We also hear there is an issue with Ford End Road bridge and it could be closed/removed. Clearly the person who suggested this does not live in Bedford or understands the wider traffic issues on that side of town**

We understand that EWRC's comment regarding Ford End Road Bridge relates to its possible replacement and not its total removal. If works are required on this bridge, a temporary replacement will be needed to ensure that traffic can still flow.

BBC is not funding the replacement of the station or the provision of station car parking. We have submitted a bid to central government asking for £6.25M to be allocated to the provision of a top-quality public square outside the new station. We now know that around 90% of funding has been approved; this will be additional funding and not at the expense of any normal expenditure.

- 10. Parking could be better managed e.g. move the Bedford park and ride to the site - Bedford residents could drive to the station and change trains from Bedford at Wixams. Much of the land in the Wixams area is former industrial/MOD property so again the environmental impact is minimal. Also being near to the A6 and A421 commuters in the villages south of Bedford would not need to drive into Bedford station.**

The new station at Wixams has a role in providing connectivity for the residents of Wixams to London and Bedford. This station will also provide an interchange capability which will give some customers an alternative to Bedford Midland Station. In such cases, the migration of customers to Wixams Station will relieve some of the current pressure on roads to, and facilities at, Bedford Midland Station.

- 11. The massive viaduct by Clapham will be an eyesore. Also, on an EWR web meeting they indicated a viaduct will be required by Graze Hill, how true is that?**

As EWRC has not decided on the final alignment of the route, the precise location of railway infrastructure, such as cuttings, embankments and viaducts, remains unclear. Thus, we are unable to comment as to whether a viaduct will be required at Graze Hill. However, we are concerned about the impact of the proposed viaduct at Clapham, and in our consultation response we have suggested an alternative, which may lessen the environmental impact of EWRC's current proposal. If EWRC amends the plans as a result of the feedback received from BBC and others, this may result in an alteration of route alignment and the location and scale of infrastructure requirements.

- 12. As a Council, you were unable to answer the questions around the congestion to the road network around Bedford Midland or near Clapham. This has to be paramount in being a deciding factor. The impact of works**

**when Bromham bridge closed, the road works to Manton Lane, has been a nightmare and still is, around the badly designed roundabout by Brewpoint. What investigations are taking place to road congestion to Route E vs a southern route?**

EWRC, supported by the Government, has selected Route E as the route corridor for this scheme, making the decision after assessing a number of criteria. At this point in the process, there is not enough available information to understand the full impact of the options within Route E on local traffic and junctions. EWRC will have to set out this information as the scheme progresses through the Development Consent Order process. BBC will press EWRC for clear and transparent information on the local impacts and encouraging engagement with the local community.

**13. How many roads will be permanently cut off as a result of the route, and what will you be doing to support residents who are effected?**

It is not clear yet whether EWRC intends that any routes should be permanently closed. We are not aware of any roads being stopped up and we will press for all current roads and accesses to remain open. During construction, we will press EWRC to liaise with the local community and to deliver clear communications.

**14. BBC objected to the proposed Rushmoor School development mainly on the grounds of increased traffic problems. How can you then support the inevitable increase in traffic congestion, especially near the Sainsburys/Aldi roundabouts, that would result from the additional traffic generated by the EWR trains stopping at Bedford Midland Station rather than a new Southern Station?**

EWRC, supported by the Government has selected Route E as the route corridor for this scheme. BBC supports EWR coming through Bedford because of the transformational impact the new station and new rail services will have on the local economy, and the new opportunities which will become available for Bedford Borough residents. A new station at Bedford Midland will enable different transport modes to be provided in an integrated manner, and we are working with EWRC to ensure that this is delivered as part of the improvements.

All major infrastructure projects have impacts which vary according to local geographies and circumstances, and BBC is aware that managing congestion is high on the project delivery list.

**15. The Sainsbury's roundabout near Aldi and going into Clapham. Just now at rush hour the traffic backs up was beyond Towers but when construction starts - it feels as though Clapham won't be an attractive place to live. Route Clapham residents to Paula Radcliffe Way and into Bedford. That's just as bad. What is your solution?**

As part of the DCO, EWRC has to provide an Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with UK legislation. This will examine the impact of a number of variables such as the impact on traffic and transport during construction and

operation on local roads and at key junctions. BBC will continue to work with EWRC to deliver the optimum solutions for all residents, and will encourage EWRC to undertake extensive local stakeholder engagement.

**16. Why does Bedford Borough insist that the northern route would benefit future house building under their local plan for the northern fringes when there are no stations planned for that area and all footfall and traffic will have to come into an already congested Bedford and Midland Road area?**

The Council does not insist that Route E will lead to house building. If a new station was to be built on this line, then it is likely that it would be a focus for growth; but this was put forward as an option, not a requirement. The opportunities for redevelopment around St Johns and Bedford Midland Stations and will help to deliver new, sustainable housing within the town centre. Improved access to the stations for buses, cycles and pedestrians will be provided which will help to offset the impact of increased demand from outside the town – as will the creation of a new southern “parkway” station at Stewartby Hardwick. In addition, the number of parking spaces around the stations will be increased to help residents and visitors alike.

**17. Increased passenger numbers at Bedford station will deliver increased traffic on the roads heading to and from the station notably at rush hour. This area of town is already heavily congested at peak times despite the building of the new by pass. The infrastructure simply will not cope.**

As part of the DCO, EWRC has to provide an Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with UK legislation. This will examine the impact of a number of variables such as the impact on traffic and transport during construction and operation on local roads and at key junctions. BBC will continue to work with EWRC to deliver the optimum solutions for all residents, and will encourage EWRC to undertake extensive local stakeholder engagement.

**18. 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 Hardwick and the Wixams is likely to reduce the need for passengers from the south and west of Bedford to drive into Midland station to access their trains.

**19. How can the change in expenditure on the alignments be explained between the change in route choices?**

BBC responded to the 2019 Consultation Document by advancing a proposal that the EWR route should come through Bedford. We have no particular insight as to the relative costs between the original routes, or the current range of possible

route alignments. Our knowledge is limited to what is published in the EWR documents.

**20. How can the already congested town centre roads and station parking cope with the increased demand brought by the new railway?**

The model used to calculate the demand for new railways considers the impact of new journey opportunities. In this case, the new opportunity for residents living in Bedford to travel to Oxford and Cambridge and intermediate points along the line. Using a complex set of algorithms, a calculation is made to estimate the change in propensity to travel, as a result of the scheme. To some degree, the model assumes a change in the behaviours of existing residents. Existing residents may be able to access work, for example, in Cambridge, or undertake a leisure visit. Many of the existing residents will be within walking or cycling distance of the station, or have access to local public transport. The growth in demand may not result in a proportionate increase in congestion.

Detailed work on the future Bedford Midland Station is still to be undertaken. The design will include an interchange with public transport and it is likely that it will also include considerably more car parking spaces.

Wixams station will provide an alternative access to the rail network, which may offset any increase in demand from more distant stations. This may also be the case for other new stations, such as Stewartby / Kempston Hardwick.

**21. How then can development plans for Bedford that are not practical, due to space and congestion, be used to justify the destruction of rural areas for both residents and wildlife?**

The integrated vision for the station and its hinterland is still to be developed. We hope that in the fullness of time it will be shown that the plans are not only practical and deliverable, but that they help to make a substantial positive impact on the town. The development of the station is a tremendous economic opportunity for the town and one that comes about very rarely.

The construction of the new line, through the north of the Borough will, inevitably, bring some inconvenience, disturbance and disruption. BBC will work with EWRC to ensure that plans are in place to minimise such inconvenience. We will also work tirelessly to ensure that, where possible, the environmental impact of the new infrastructure is minimised. We will also seek ways to enhance the environment where it is practical.

We are determined to work with EWRC and with local residents to minimise the potential impact to residents, the countryside and wildlife. We acknowledge the concerns and apprehension that many residents have about the scheme. We believe that engagement with EWRC will prove fruitful and that that we will be able to allay some of the fears that people may have.

As part of the ongoing development process, EWRC will undertake detailed environmental investigation in accordance with UK legislation, to identify protected species and other habitats and species of note, in order develop plans to mitigate the environmental impact of construction and operation of the railway.

BBC is encouraging EWRC to avoid historic woodland and other environmentally important sites. BBC also supports the use of nature friendly construction methods.

**22. If Bedford St John's Station is relocated to Britannia Road, where the current hospital car park is, and a multi storey car park is built, as suggested, to make up for the lost parking spaces, who would be paying for this, Bedford Borough Council or East West Rail?**

EWRC will be paying for the station relocation, which should include an adequate provision for car parking.

**23. How will the station at St Johns or nearby be accessed? The Ampthill road area is already very congested.**

St John's Station serves a purpose of providing local access to the railway network. It is envisaged that this role will continue when the station is relocated. In the future it seems likely that a large proportion of users will access the station by foot, bike or public transport. The precise means of access remains to be determined.

**24. However, I feel there is an huge opportunity being missed in the consultation options as they stand for an out of town station. Wouldn't more stations be better in terms of enabling people to travel by train rather than driving in their cars to access the rail network?**

There is always a balance and a trade-off in respect to the optimum location of railway stations. Out of town stations certainly serve a function in providing access to the railway network without entering the town. A town centre location, though, offers connectivity to the residents of the town.

The number of stations along a railway line is limited by cost (they are not cheap to build) but also because of the impact on the timetabling, scheduling and revenue of increasing the number of stations. Each additional station increases journey-time which makes rail travel less competitive than say car travel. Longer journey time reduces the amount of trains that any route can accommodate and also can have an impact on the amount of trains needed on a route, or the number of crew.

There will be a number of new stations along the Marston Vale Line which may be able to provide the benefits of out-of-town connectivity to EWR. As a separate project, Wixams Station which is currently in the development stage, will provide a means to access trains between Bedford and London. A new Bedford Midland Station will provide the main access to the railway system for residents of and visitors to Bedford and the Borough.

**25. I would like to know if the meeting on Wed 12 May will be open to the public; if so how do you join or view? The questions I would also like to ask however, are:-**

**1. Does Bedford Borough Council favour Bedford (Midland) Station regeneration in it's present site? Will it include a bus interchange as well as larger spaces for taxis and cycles?**

It is too early to have a view on the development of Bedford Midland Station. Its regeneration provides a tremendous opportunity for the town. The next stage should be that BBC works with EWRC and other parties, such as the train companies, to scope out the various options. Our view is that this station should, and will, be transformational for the town. To achieve these aspirations, it will need to include a bus interchange, better space for taxis, enhanced cycle storage space and more.

**2. Does Bedford Borough Council favour Bedford St Johns to be closer to Bedford Hospital South Wing? (Both locations will presume the building of multi-story car parks in both locations)**

Yes, the Council is in favour of moving St John's Station closer to Bedford Hospital South Wing site.

**3. What are the views of Bedford Borough Council for the north junction of EWR and Midland Lines; in other words would Great Ouse Way and Paula Radcliffe Way need to be rebuilt/re-located to make room for the EWR? What would be the visual impact of a railway (or new roads) viaduct have on the environs.**

We know that the development around Paula Radcliffe Way and Great Ouse Way is likely to be sensitive. We have a strong view that EWRC must keep these routes open, whilst it undertakes its works. We believe that it is possible to minimise the environmental, visual and traffic impact, by re-aligning the route and utilising an existing arch of Paula Radcliffe Way bridge. We will engage with EWRC to see whether they can design the route in accordance with our feedback.

**4. What route would the EWR take to circulate around Bedford to regain the Easterly alignment towards Cambridge?**

The only information that we have is that which is included within the EWR Consultation Document. The line of the route is not clear. We have asked a number of questions concerning the alignment and the infrastructure requirements (cuttings, embankments, viaducts etc.). We believe that such information needs to be shared as soon as is possible.

**26. As an aside, I assume the preference is to keep the lines northbound as a 4 track railway. Demolition of property, rebuilding (again!) of Bromham Road and Ford End Bridges to accommodate a 6 line railway is completely over the top for a distance of 2 miles and also prohibitively expensive.**

Yes. The Council believes that the railway and service can be delivered with the existing four tracks in the area north of Bedford Station and has presented this to EWRC.

**27. Would an alignment slightly further north, permit the option of Bedford Parkway Station between Clapham and Milton Ernest. This would reduce inbound commuter traffic to the existing Bedford Midland, and do away with the need to rebuild and extend the existing station, The EW line would then stop at Bedford St Johns and Bedford North**

The alignment north of Bedford will not negate the need to rebuild Bedford Midland Station, which must be rebuilt for EWRC to operate services. In addition, the whole principle of the line coming through the town is for the trains to stop there. In respect to a Bedford North Parkway station, the more stations on a line, the longer the journey time, which makes train travel less attractive and less competitive. Whilst a Bedford Parkway station to the north of the town would be attractive, it would introduce a further journey time penalty.

There is always a balance and a trade-off in respect to the optimum location of railway stations. Out of town stations certainly serve a function in providing access to the railway network without entering the town. A town centre location, though, offers connectivity to the residents of the town. The number of stations along a railway line is limited by cost (they are not cheap to build) but also because of the impact on the timetabling, scheduling and revenue of increasing the number of stations. Each additional station increases journey-time which makes rail travel less competitive than say car travel. Longer journey time reduces the amount of trains that any route can accommodate and also can have an impact on the amount of trains needed on a route, or the number of crew.

**28. Please take my comments below as my response to BBC's request for views to inform their response to the ongoing EWR consultation. I do not agree with the EWR line going through Bedford mainline and out to the North to get to Cambridge. The claimed benefits of EWR going through the centre of Bedford are negligible and do not justify the destruction of the beautiful countryside to the North of Bedford especially given the longer route that would entail and the extensive and expensive engineering works required when a shorter, quicker, flatter, cheaper Southern route is available along an existing transport corridor. My preference is for a southern route option, with a new parkway station to the South of Bedford, either separate to or joined with the new Wixams station. The lack of transparency on this subject to date is outrageous as well as the lack of proper consultation in 2019. I am also appalled by the use of taxpayers money by BBC to skew the position to their own ends by employing consultants to review only certain of the possible routes in order to obtain the outcome desired by BBC. As a Putnoe resident I have concerns we will suffer from disruption through construction in the operational phase of this project with the major roads -in and close to Putnoe - Wentworth Drive, Kimbolton Road, Putnoe Lane being made the designated route for any construction traffic. I am also concerned that we will suffer from noise**

**pollution and vibrations created by the railway. I feel highly disappointed that there seems to have been no effective attempt to inform your residents about the EWR 2019 consultation which has ended up bringing this line to our front door. Should EWR go ahead along a Northern route, the Mayor and the majority of Borough Councillors should hang their heads in shame.**

EWRC carried out a statutory consultation process on the proposed routes to the east of Bedford in 2019 and the report of the consultation exercise can be found [here](#). BBC responded to this consultation recommending a route through the town. Individuals were free to respond to EWRC in the same way. Irrespective of whether the proposed railway line was to the north or the south of the town there would be impact on the countryside. The impact would have been different depending on the mix of cuttings, embankments, viaducts and tunnels, but there would be an impact nevertheless. The route through Bedford will bring benefits to the town which would not have occurred if the town had been bypassed. We are doing out utmost to ensure that the environmental impact and disruption of construction and operation are minimised.

BBC responded to this consultation recommending a route through the town. Individuals were free to respond to EWRC in the same way. During the 2019 EWRC consultation, Mayor Dave Hodgson encouraged local residents to take part in the consultation and made the case publicly for a route via Bedford station in a wide range of ways, including:

- Featured articles on his website and restating his position
- Three of his regular email updates, each of which promoted awareness of both the consultation and the Council's support for a route through Bedford Station
- Two of his monthly columns in the Bedford Independent, including one shortly before the close of the consultation headlined 'I'm encouraging everyone to have their say on East West Rail'
- Various press Releases
- Numerous social media posts on Twitter and Facebook
- The Council produced a leaflet explaining and promoting a route via Bedford station and encouraging people to take part in the consultation.
- The Council also emailed its Council emailed everyone on its 'Consultations' email list on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019, to promote the consultation, including a link to it.

**29. Assuming a northerly route is chosen, is there any way to ensure that preparatory works (maybe bridge abutments and any necessary grading works) are undertaken as part of the major works on the A421/A1/Black Cat roundabout? Given the two years of traffic misery that those works are likely to cause the road network to the east of Bedford, it seems crazy to a short time later have to undertake new viaduct or tunnel works for crossing the A1 that will cause further, possibly unnecessary, chaos and delay due to a lack of joined up thinking and a little planning.**

According to the latest project plans, the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement scheme will be under construction for two to three years prior to

opening in 2025/26. We understand that EWRC intend to start running trains along the new EWR line by 2030.

We are aware that EWRC is talking to Highways England about major structures within the same locality, but until the route of the railway between Bedford and Cambridge is selected and designed, it is difficult to fully integrate the two schemes.

Both schemes have to provide a full Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with UK legislation and these will set out the impacts on the built and natural environment, and how they can be mitigated.

**30. Heard nothing further but, hopefully the council can comment on road, particularly Midland Road/Prebend St improvements that will be allied to a new central station plus funding streams for same.**

Redevelopment of Bedford Midland Station will provide the opportunity to regenerate a wider area than just the station, and BBC is working with EWRC on how to maximise the benefits from the proposals. One of the schemes we are working on with Government and EWRC is a reconfiguration of Prebend Street, but progress is dependent on the detailed design for the alignment of the railway, which is still under consideration.

The Council submitted a separate bid to central government asking for £6.25M to be allocated to the provision of a top-quality public square outside the new station. We have recently heard that this bid has been successful and we have been awarded 90% of the funding we asked for. At this point, the Council is still considering what this means for the Bedford Midland Station, but please note that this is additional funding specifically for the scheme and is not at the expense of normal Council expenditure.

**31. 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. 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.

**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?**

**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.**

**I submit my points in the hope that those in elected power within Bedford will reconsider both its underline need for a new EW connection at this time of radical commute change, and in particular its thoughts regarding the Bedford section when compared to brown field options that could be built (if needed at all) at less overall cost, with less inconvenience to existing rail travellers (who may not come back if inconvenience is too great) and with minimal impact on established businesses and private dwellings in the town of Bedford and no doubt other affected areas. I commend my thoughts to you the decision makers.**

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.