

## Category 1: Choice of Corridor E

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

- 1. Please tell me why the possible route via the original St John's Station and out of Bedford along the old Varsity Line (before quite probably turning along the A421 towards Tempsford) as suggested in the 12/2/19 initial report from Kilborn Consulting was never put to East West Rail. Kilborn explained how connectivity for passengers to Bedford Midland could quite easily be provided.**

The EWR consultation of 2019 proposed 5 possible routes of which two (Routes D and E) came through the town centre and the remainder ran to the south of the town. The Council objective was that EWR served Bedford Midland Station which would provide connectivity with the Midland Main Line and stimulate the regeneration of the surrounding area of the town. Although we commissioned the Kilborn report, we concluded that it would not aid us in making a persuasive case for EWR to integrate with Bedford Midland Station. Ultimately, EWR were consulting on 5 routes and were not seeking feedback on alternatives.

- 2. Please explain, using a simple annotated plan, why a southern route direct into Bedford Midland cannot be achieved, whether it be geometry; land constraints; environmental impact or other factors**

East West Rail Company selected Route Corridor E as their preferred route in January 2020, and have explained their choice of corridor selection in this [document](#)

- 3. I believe an earlier consultation was carried out by EWR in 2019, however, it seems that one of the worst impacted areas, i.e. Cauldwell Ward was not included in that consultation. Many homes in this area are only 10-20 metres of the existing Marston Vale Line so will be seriously impacted by these plans, yet none of us were included in the 2019 consultation. Looking at the map of the consultation area (attached), there is a strange gap / wedge omitting this area from the consultation - why is that?**

The 2019 and 2021 consultations were undertaken by EWRC in order to obtain feedback from interested parties regarding their proposals for the intended railway scheme. The 2019 consultation focused on the route corridor options between Bedford and Cambridge because at that time the section between

Bletchley and Bedford was considered to be part of the Western Section of EWR. Review of the scheme by ERWC has brought this section into the Central Section (now referred to as Connection Stage 2).

BBC fed back the views of the Council as part of these consultations. Further details of the consultation exercise which was undertaken by EWRC in 2019, and the feedback which was obtained can be found [here](#).

**4. Why in 2019 did the council back a Southern Route and then change their minds in 2020? What's the reason behind this flip?**

The Council has consistently supported a route which serves Bedford town centre.

**5. Option 2 for the relocation of St John's Station sees it located into a purely residential area with access via congested residential streets. Currently there is no space to add the infrastructure for such a project without the loss of homes and causing continued disruption to the residents of the area. How can the council allow this to even be considered?**

BBC does not exert any control over the EWR project or the subject matter on which EWRC chooses to consult. We have responded to the consultation document and in respect to St John's Station we have made our views very clear, that we prefer Option 1. We are not aware that the relocation of St John's Station will lead to any homes being demolished, and we consider that the relocation would allow currently underused land to become available for redevelopment.

**6. Can the BBC explain why no routes south of Bedford are part of this consultation? There has been a huge investment already in the development of the A421, a major east west road link, surely this will provide better access to a station and have less impact on the local environment? We need to avoid even more traffic congestion, to and from the Midland Road site. Wasn't there a promise of a Wixam train near the A421?**

The EWR 2019 consultation process was to enable stakeholders and interested parties to feedback on five possible route choices between Bedford and Cambridge. Subsequent to that consultation process, the government and EWRC selected one route for further, more detailed, project development. At that point government and EWRC selected Route E, which is a route which comes through Bedford. The 2021 consultation process is a further step in the project development process and specifically examine options in relation to possible route alignment along the corridor of Route E.

Locating a station away from the main population centre means that people are likely to access the station by motorised transport which would not necessarily reduce the number of vehicles accessing the railway. A main interchange station in the middle of an area with established transport networks and the opportunity to walk and cycle has a greater potential for reducing vehicles.

The Wixams station which is currently in development is a station on the Midland Main Line, primarily for access to London. An interchange which enables north south and east west connectivity is considered to deliver greater benefits for the whole Borough.

- 7. There needs to be sound justification from BBC for bulldozing more of our local countryside. We have lost enough to new roads and houses. If there must be a train link then run it alongside the A421 and don't destroy any more of our countryside.**

This railway infrastructure project is the responsibility of EWRC and the government, and not BBC. Irrespective of the chosen route, there would have been a requirement to take additional land and to construct the new railway infrastructure. We are sensitive to the need to balance the requirements of the new railway line with the needs of local residents. We intend to work closely with EWRC in order to minimise the inconvenience during construction and operation and to minimise the environmental and visual impact of the scheme.

- 8. Supoporter of Route E - see word doc saved with emails - 11 pages. Addition comment sent in 2nd email - I would certainly be able to join either or both of the meetings.**

**My 'comments' were more in my support of Route E, the Council's choice of route E, to move forward and, to try to avoid any delay in the delivery of EWR (such as to re-run a past consutation and descision process). Also to say how I consider this might be achieved in the most sympathetic way and without impact to domestic property.**

**All of this is to off-set the undoubted opposition to any change.**

**If it assists the Council in their support of E and the benifits it will deliver, I can frame something in the manner of a 'question' or just give a supporting comment from both my local knowledge and my knowlege of rail both domestic and world-wide.**

Thank you for this comment – it is noted.

- 9. I am in favour of the EWR route linking Oxford and Cambridge but have serious reservations about which rote is take re. my village, Wilden.**

**I am asking for Alignments 8 and 9, the southern options, rather than Alignments 1,2 and 6, the northern ones that will devastate Wilden by**

**running straight through the middle of our village.**

**The southern options don't go anywhere near as close to other village centres such as Renhold, Clapham, Brickhill etc, so are nowhere near as bad for them.**

**Wilden is hit harder and closer than anyone else by the northern lines.**

**The very close northern route diesel freight and passenger trains will cause Wilden untold noise, vibration, pollution and disruption.**

**There will also be years of road closures, dust and lorries as they build the double railway line through here only 100 metres from the Village Hall and High Street, cutting across Shrubbery Lane, Chequers Hill and Colesden Road. When I decided to move to Wilden over 20 years ago I was attracted by the peaceful and rural setting of the village which I do not want ruined.**

BBC is not the decision-making authority in respect to which route is chosen for the Oxford to Cambridge route. We have responded to the EWR consultation document, and our route preference based on the current information supplied is alignment 1 (dark blue), followed by alignment 6 (light blue) if a Cambourne South station route is chosen.

We recognise, though, that the proposed Northern route options pass very close to the village of Wilden. If any of the northern alignments were chosen, we would propose that the alignment is altered to run somewhat further to the north of the current planned position. Such an alteration would reduce the disturbance and environmental impact to residents of Wilden.

At the next stage of the development process, EWRC will carry out a full Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with UK legislation, and this will be available as a public document. BBC will work with EWRC to ensure that steps are taken to minimise the impact on the countryside.

- 10. Will you please support Alignments 8 and 9, the southern routes, as against alignments 1, 2 and 6 of the northern routes, because the latter would devastate Wilden because they go right through the heart of the village. In fact far closer to any other village centre, for example, Brickhill, Clapham and Renhold. The northern routes would be unnecessarily destructive when alignments 8 and 9 would cause far less amenity and environmental damage.**

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**11. Why was route e supported when a flatter more direct route was available south of Bedford**

In the response to the 2019 EWR consultation, BBC supported the route coming through Bedford because of the additional benefits that would accrue to Bedford and the Borough versus routes that avoided the town. The decision in respect to route choice was made by EWR and the government. All five routes which were put forward by EWRC in 2019 would require new infrastructure to cross natural and existing built features.

**12. I still don't understand why a reconsultation on the chosen route can't go ahead. Please don't blame ewr, as the council fully backed route E, which it seems a lot of people do not want. So why is the council and mayor not listening?**

The 2019 EWR consultation document outlined the terms 'Route Corridor', 'Route Option' and 'Route Alignment'. Route Corridor represented an area up to 15 kilometres wide for the route between Bedford and Cambridge. The Route Option were the five routes (A to E) which were consulted at that time. The Route Alignment was defined as the exact route on which the line would run.

After the 2019 consultation the government and EWR selected Route E. The current (2021) consultation concerns the refinement of the route choice to the precise alignment of the proposed new railway. This consultation concerns the fine tuning of the process and does not represent a repeat of the 2019 consultation on Route Options. That decision has already been made. The current consultation does not invite views on the previous stages of the project, but instead focuses upon helping to inform decisions on the precise selection of the route.

We have focused our consultation response in feeding back to EWR our concerns and our requirements in respect to their approach going forward.

**13. How did route E become most desirable and more economically viable when it was the least viable? I've heard the council had a play in this and made the figures look better, is this true? And why?**

Although Route E appears to have been the most expensive route as outlined in the 2019 EWR consultation document (costs estimated by Network Rail, and at 2015 prices), it appears as though the increase in costs related to infrastructure in Cambridgeshire and not in the Bedford Borough area. The estimated Route E cost (2015 prices) was £3.4bn and the estimate for Route D – which followed the same general route from Bedford to the East Coast Main Line - was £2.6bn. Routes B and C, which avoided Bedford town centre were marginally cheaper at £2.6bn and £2.5bn respectively. Only Route A was substantially cheaper at £2.0bn. [EWR-Consultation-Document.pdf \(eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.amazonaws.com/EWR-Consultation-Document.pdf).

The same document also stated that 'the potential to support the wider economy and new homes that are needed to sustain growth across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc will also be an important consideration'. It is clear, then, that the government took more than pure cost into account in assessing route choice.

After the 2019 Consultation, EWR carried out further work on the costs of the works required for each Route and amended the costs to 2019 prices. We are not party to the budgeting or the costing assumptions. It is understood, though, that some aspect of the re-costing included the outcome of further feasibility work and reflected a more cautious approach to risk and contingency. The EWR 2020 Preferred Route Options Report estimated the route costs (at 2019 prices) as Route A: 3.6bn, Route B: 3.9bn, Route C: 4.3bn, Route D, 4.0bn, Route E: 3.7bn. On the basis of these figures, and on the basis of financial cost exclusive of any financial benefits, Route E was cheaper than Routes B, D and D, and only marginally more expensive than Route A.

EWRC took the decision to support Route E, and this is supported by the Government.

**14. My question concerns the choice of Route E over the southern routes. Qu. Did anyone from BCC walk or cycle the original route from Bedford out towards Sandy to check the viability of using it once again - as much of it still exists?**

**I have viewed the Railtrack land available from just south of Ford End Road bridge out to Cardington Road.**

**A new Bedford South station could be sited just south of Ford End Road bridge, a couple of hundred metres walk from Bedford Midland Road Station. Plenty of space is available to bring passenger trains in and the out of such a station. Freight trains could simply use the existing pathway running east-west and have no need to enter central Bedford. The passenger line could then return via the very original St. John's line, under the London Road bridge, through the gap between the Bus Depot and B&M's garden store and out to Cardington Road. Across the road the**

**original trackbed runs to Willington and beyond.**

**I realise Cardington Road would require a bridge section, as would the Bedford Bypass, but this route negates the necessity to carve up much new land, obviates the need to buy and demolish houses in Sydney Road and removes the need to re-build Bromham Road and Ford End Road bridges again. It avoids the building of a huge viaduct over the River Ouse and the A6 etc., does away with the cutting into Clapham Hillside and all that involves, is shorter, flatter and is probably a cheaper option.**

**Route E would still have to cross major and minor roads, the A1, the mainline between Sandy and Peterborough.**

**I strongly urge the Council to review the consultation and look again at a southern route. It makes sense!**

The original consultation in 2019 was to inform EWRC and the government in respect to route choice. There were five routes proposed: Routes A, B and C avoided Bedford and Routes D and E came through the town. It is worth noting that at no stage did EWRC propose reutilising the original route between Bedford and Sandy.

It has been the Council's objective for some years that the new East West Railway came through the town and connected with the existing Bedford Midland Station and with the Midland Main Line. Of the five route choices proposed, only Routes D and E satisfied this objective. The purpose in our response to the 2019 consultation was to achieve an outcome that satisfied our objective. The selection of Route E meant that EWRC were committed to access to Bedford Midland Station.

Although we do not know why EWRC did not include the old route as an option as part of the 2019 consultation, we assume that it had already been rejected. One of the critical aspects of the EWR project is that it does not interfere with the operation of the Midland Main Line and Bedford Midland Station. A limitation of accessing Bedford Midland Station whilst utilising the old route would be that trains would have to be turned at Bedford. It may be that the operational aspects associated with changing direction would introduce a performance and journey time penalty that makes this approach unattractive.

**15. The decision to take the northerly route is totally wrong for the following reasons:**

- **1. A direct line from Oxford via Bletchley to Cambridge goes to the south of Bedford, thereby drastically reducing the financial cost of the line.**
- **2. The parking at Bedford station even with the proposed North Bedfordshire council funded multi storey car park will not be large enough even for the midland Mainline.**

- **3. Now that all the department stores have closed there is no likely hood that people will want to dismount at Bedford Station.**
- **4. No houses will need demolishing if the route stays to the south of the town.**
- **5. It was always intended to put a railway station at Wixams and access to Bedford would be by bus extending the current park and ride route from the south of the town via Amphill road.**
- **6. If the northerly route goes ahead the bridges over the railway at Ford end road and Bromham road will not need to be enlarged saving more disruption to Bedfordians.**
- **7. Trains do not like going up hill-The southerly route is virtually flat.**
- **8. Disruption to the commuters into Bedford from the north of Bedford will be minimal.**
- **9. The environmental disruption will be significantly less with a southerly route.**
- **10. When one looks at the Bedford Mayors assessment of the financial benefits to Bedford these are negative when one includes the costs of his multi storey car park project. Please reconsider the current plan of a northerly route.**

According to the 2019 EWR consultation, the estimated cost for Route B and Route C, both of which were to the south of Bedford was £2.6bn and £2.5bn. Route D, which was through Bedford then along a northerly route towards Tempsford/St Neots was £2.6bn. Route E, which was similar to Route D until east of St Neots was £3.4bn. This analysis would suggest that the relative difference in costs between a route through Bedford versus one to the south was marginal. [EWR-Consultation-Document.pdf \(eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.amazonaws.com) EWR were at pains to stress, though, that the costs were included for comparison between routes and not in order to predict the actual budgeted cost for the works.

After the 2019 Consultation, EWRC carried out further work on the costs of the works required for each Route and amended the costs to 2019 prices. We are not party to the budgeting or the costing assumptions. It is understood, though, that some aspect of the re-costing included the outcome of further feasibility work and reflected a more cautious approach to risk and contingency. The EWR 2020 Preferred Route Options Report estimated the route costs (at 2019 prices) as Route A: 3.6bn, Route B: 3.9bn, Route C: 4.3bn, Route D, 4.0bn, Route E: 3.7bn. On the basis of these figures, and on the basis of financial cost exclusive of any financial benefits, Route E was cheaper than Routes B, D and D, and only marginally more expensive than Route A.

The precise number of car parking spaces at a new Bedford Midland Station is yet to be determined. Furthermore, Wixams station will provide an alternative for London bound customers and should relieve some pressure on car parking spaces at Bedford Midland Station. The new Bedford Midland Station will not be



designed in isolation and part of the new station will include improved means of interchange. The Council will work with EWRC to develop plans that make carbon free interchange more attractive to customers which we hope will reduce car reliance. We will, for example, seek to improve bus interchange, pedestrian access, and cycle storage to improve first and last mile accessibility.

The value of the improved connectivity is less about whether Bedford town centre has department stores, 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.

The earlier 2019 consultation mentioned a Bedford South station for those Routes which were to the south of Bedford. There was no certainty that Wixams station would be Bedford South. Indeed, there was some thought that Bedford South would have blighted the prospects of Wixams station. By having the interconnection between EWR and the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station it has been possible to ensure that Wixams station can be developed. In any case, it is highly unlikely that the same benefits would accrue to Bedford if there was a bus link from a southern station.

EWRC made the decision to develop a route which runs through Bedford Midland Station after considering the benefits and disbenefits of the 5 route corridors proposed in 2019. This decision is supported by the Government.

We agree that as the current consultation is presented there are some disbenefits to Bedford. Not least the prospect of the compulsorily purchase of houses. We believe that rail connectivity can be delivered using the existing four tracks rather than the proposed six track option. In our consultation response we state that EWRC can deliver the new railway without demolishing houses in the town. We also recognise that an infrastructure programme of this nature cannot be delivered without some disruption. Our aim is to work with EWR to ensure that there is an agreed programme of works which minimises the disruption to residents of the Borough.

**16. We will be making representations to the consultation being undertaken by East West Rail on behalf of our client Tarmac Trading Ltd. The focus of representations will be in regard to the implications of the proposed route alignments 8 and 9 on the working and delivery of the sand and gravel resources at Roxton and Blunham which are allocated in the adopted**

**Minerals and Waste Local Plan. These route alignments would potentially sterilise part of the allocated area for Roxton and impact on the identified mineral working access route for the combined Roxton and Blunham allocation areas. We do not propose to take up specific time at the consultation event. However, we would maintain that the Council should be questioning the impact that route choices have on mineral resource safeguarding, allocated mineral resources and the implications for sand and gravel provision over the Plan period. Specifically, we would like to know how the route choices will be assessed under the provisions of Mineral Strategic Policies 11 and 12 (extracts below) of the Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Strategic Sites and Policies (adopted 2014)?**

Thank you for your comments – noted.

At this stage we have seen insufficient information to be absolute but on the current information our preferred route choice is alignment 1 (dark blue), followed by alignment 6 (light blue) if a Cambourne South station route is chosen. As part of the ongoing process EWRC will carry out a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with UK legislation based upon the selected route, and we expect the Minerals and Waste authority to be a stakeholder throughout this process.

**17. I would also like to ask, following all of the surveys and investigations, how Route E suddenly became the best, cheapest, most environmental and beneficial Route for EWR and the Liberal Democrats? Do not blame the Government, they are financial backers of this EWR project, but EWR and Bedford Borough Council are the driving force behind this sudden and unexplained reversal, that kicked out sensible Routes and chose Route E. In summary, people in Brickhill feel cheated by the EWR sudden change of plan, and let down by our Parish and Borough Councillors, there is also a feeling that a lot of this was pushed along behind the cover of Covid 19 and people being more concerned with Living than their future quality of life in Brickhill. The last video meeting I watched pushed all EWR Route E concerns to the end of the meeting, then closed due to lack of time, effectively stopping critical opinions being heard. Democratically this is not fair and not even subtle.**

The decision on the route choice was made in January 2020 (which was before COVID 19 became established in Britain) and was based upon feedback received in consultations in 2019. The EWR Preferred Route Option Report of January 2020 states that Route E:

- Would deliver the best value for taxpayers, returning the most benefit for every £ spent
- Was the most popular option with people who responded to EWRC's 2019 consultation

- Would deliver the best opportunities for supporting and enhancing the environment.

The government decision was based upon a number of factors not purely the construction cost of delivery.

Up to January 2020, EWRC and the government were proposing five possible route options. Of the five options two were routed through Bedford Midland Station and BBC actively supported bringing EWR through the town.

There is no doubt that the restrictions as a result of COVID 19 has made this consultation more challenging and less personal than it could have been. EWR triggered the consultation in March 2021. We have done our utmost to bring matters to the attention of affected residents and to complete the Council's formal response to the consultation. We recognise that there has been a lot of interest in this consultation. The practical limitations of widespread online engagement and limited time to respond has limited our flexibility in how we have been able to respond.

It should be noted that the 2021 EWR consultation is not a repeat of 2019 consultation on route selection. That decision was made in January 2020 and Route Corridor E was chosen. This consultation concerns feedback on the route alignment within Route E. Anyone with an interest in the route alignment or comments on the wider project was invited by EWRC to comment. We hope that residents and those with an interest have felt able to do so.

**18. I have lived in Brickhill for 24 years. It is a fabulous area in Bedford. Some of the attractions of living here is the closeness to the countryside. Clapham Woods and the Renhold and Ravensden have the most amazing public footpaths which transport you to a calm and peaceful place. Also the wildlife which is in abundance also. The amount of properties that will be lost because of this route is also ridiculous. I do not think this will attract people to Bedford. There is nothing here. The town is dead. If anything people will leave the area due to the disruption and the road infrastructure cannot cope at the moment the town will become one big traffic jam. It would make far more sense to put the station to the south of the town and use the existing old track to Sandy. I feel Bedford will never be the same again and it is such a shame. So much more could be made of the town perhaps if the rents were lowered slightly more shops would be occupied? I don't think that's rocket science. I hope a complete rethink of Route E is looked into. The town cannot cope with the traffic it has at the moment. Bromham Bridge has already been worked on if they have to do it again what a waste of our hard earned money. The disruption all over again. It is totally ridiculous to my mind.**

After an extensive series of consultations in 2019, the government and EWRC selected Route E in January 2020. The purpose of the current round of consultation is to gain feedback so as to inform decision makers in respect to the

further refinement of the proposed route alignment. It is not the intention of EWRC, as far as we are aware, to reconsider the decision to select Route E.

The economic case for public transport investment is that better connectivity causes a spiral: whereby new businesses are attracted to the area; 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 over time there may be an economic drain from places that lack such connectivity.

BBC is committed to work with EWRC to reduce the impact of the scheme on residents and the environment. We believe that the route can be constructed without taking additional land through the town and compulsorily acquiring property. We will work with EWRC to ensure that their programme of works causes the least disruption to residents within the Borough.

**19. I have been told that the financial benefits of Route E are "self evident" and "overwhelming" by Lib Dem Councillors. Please can you provide the documentary evidence of these benefits and the evidence that these are additional benefits that Route E would provide over and above a Southern Route.**

EWRC has produced a number of reports including: East West Rail, Bedford to Cambridge Route Option Consultation Document, January 2019, [EWRC-Consultation-Document.pdf \(eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](http://eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/Consultation-Document.pdf); Connecting Communities: The Preferred Route Option between Bedford and Cambridge: Executive Summary, [Route-Option-Report.pdf \(eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](http://eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/Route-Option-Report.pdf); and East West Rail, Bedford to Cambridge Preferred Route Option Report, [Executive-Summary.pdf \(eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](http://eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/Executive-Summary.pdf). These documents explain the process which led EWRC and the government to select Route E as the preferred option. The Preferred Route Option Report includes details of the relative costs per route (at 2019 prices). Route E was only slightly more expensive than the cheapest option and cheaper than the other three options. According to the Preferred Route Executive Summary Route E:

- Would deliver the best value for taxpayers, returning the most benefit for every £ spent
- Was the most popular option with people who responded to EWR Co's 2019 consultation
- Would deliver the best opportunities for supporting and enhancing the environment.

**20. I don't recall any consultation by BBC on Route E prior to 2019. What evidence do you have that Bedford Borough Council have acted on the wishes of Bedford residents when lobbying so strongly for Route E?**

The promotion of, and consultation on EWR is the responsibility of the ERWC, and the decision to choose route E is supported by Government.

During the 2019 consultation by EWRC on the choice of route corridor, the Council publicised the EWRC the proposed routes for EWR. It was a matter of significant discussion in the local press and to some degree in the national newspapers. 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. These include;

- Featured articles on his website
- Three regular email updates, each of which promoted awareness of both the consultation and the Council's support for a route through Bedford Station
- Two 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. BBC also emailed everyone on its 'Consultations' email list on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019, to promote the consultation, including a link to it.

EWRC has published its Report of Consultation, which sets out the consultation process from 2019. This can be found [here](#).

The Council submitted a response to the Consultation, which you can see at Preferred-Route-Option-Announcement-Public-Feedback-Report-Appendix-1.pdf (eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com) (from page 65). All the political groups on Bedford Borough Council supported a route through Bedford, you can see this support at <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/east-west-rail-route-must-go-through-midland-road/>.

It is longstanding Council policy to support a route through Bedford Midland. We believe that the economic benefits and the higher levels of connectivity provided by a town centre station will bring greater levels of prosperity to the town than a route which bypassed Bedford.

**21. Where is the evidence that BBC's purports to have, that highlights the benefits of Route E through north Bedford villages? If it exists does it prove the benefits outweigh the negatives for ALL of Bedford residents**

**both during and post construction (cost, pollution, disruption and environmental destruction on a grand scale)?**

Any of the route corridors which were put forward in 2019 would lead to some level of disruption as there are natural and built features associated with all the route options which have to be overcome. No single route would be able to avoid all adverse impacts.

The Council supported route E on the basis that the economic benefits and the higher levels of connectivity provided by a town centre station will bring greater levels of prosperity to the town and Borough as a whole than a station which bypassed the town. All BBC's consultation responses can be found [on this page](#)

EWRC made its decision to choose a route through Bedford on a number of variables of which cost was just one factor. As it develops the plans for a route within route corridor E, EWRC will have to produce an Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with UK legislation. This will set out the impacts and potential mitigations for the route, and will be publicly available.

**22. EWR originally rejected Route E on affordability grounds (e.g. the huge cost of the proposed viaduct over the Roxton section of route E). Route E become affordable only after the BBC had agreed substantial funding towards this route. Why wasn't there a full public consultation about this?**

The EWR consultation document of January 2019 proposed 5 Routes (A to E). At that point, none of these routes had been rejected. In January 2020, after the first consultation round, the government selected Route E as the preferred route.

Over time EWRC has refined the costings and updated the base of costs. The earlier documentation refers to costs at 2015 prices, whereas more recent documentation refers to costs at 2019 prices. The EWR Preferred Route Option Report estimates the cost of Route E at £3.7bn which is cheaper than Routes B, C and D and £0.1bn more than Route A.

EWR is wholly funded by central government. The Council is not contributing any of its own funds to the delivery of the railway or redevelopment of the station. We have submitted a separate bid to the 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 service provision.

**23. Why was the Council's decision to support Route E not fully consulted on, or even conveyed to those people affected and why was it not openly debated by the Council until apparently months after the response had been submitted? Surely a matter of this magnitude, with all its implications, should have been conveyed to all those people affected and their views considered by the full Council before their submission was made.**

The promotion of, and consultation on EWR is the responsibility of the ERWC, and the decision to choose route E is supported by Government.

During the 2019 consultation by EWRC on the choice of route corridor, the Council publicised the EWRC the proposed routes for EWR. It was a matter of significant discussion in the local press and to some degree in the national newspapers. 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. These include;

- Featured articles on his website
- Three regular email updates, each of which promoted awareness of both the consultation and the Council's support for a route through Bedford Station
- Two 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. BBC also emailed everyone on its 'Consultations' email list on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019, to promote the consultation, including a link to it.

EWRC has published its Report of Consultation, which sets out the consultation process from 2019. This can be found [here](#).

The Council submitted a response to the Consultation, (one of around 7,000) which can be found [on this page](#). All the political groups on Bedford Borough Council supported a route through Bedford, you can see this support at <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/east-west-rail-route-must-go-through-midland-road/>.

It is longstanding Council policy to support a route through Bedford Midland. We believe that the economic benefits and the higher levels of connectivity provided by a town centre station will bring greater levels of prosperity to the town and Borough as a whole than a route which bypasses Bedford.

**24. First I wish you to note we are against route E. We do not feel that as a Council you properly informed the residents of Bedford as we don't all get emails from the Mayor or local papers. Not enough information has been provided, that is demonstrated by you being unable to answer residents questions on some of the fundamental issues.**

**That the Council and parish councils have had to have all these emergency meetings with yourselves and also the residents, highlights as to how**

**flawed the lack of consultation has been in the past. These meetings should have taken place a long time ago, to gain feedback of the Bedford residents. How it has been done shows a clear disregard to serving the residents of Bedford. That it has been flawed to 2019 consultation, information for 2021 is further flawed.**

**You now try to state decision made by EWR, however this has been done based on the recommendations from the Councils, a letter to which you signed.**

**Looking at previous documentation that has been highlighted on Social Media and the EWR web page, the Southern routes were a lot cheaper and less impact on the environment. We can not understand how now Route E becomes comparable in costs. This route is to a flood plain and steep gradients, which impacts on costs rather than a flatter southern route, along with being less environmentally friendly. There is no transparency in the costs.**

**I would like to fully understand your justification for Route E?**

**You list a figure of it bringing £6m a year to the town, how?**

**Running the train line through Bedford Midland, other than Manton Lane Ind Est, is away from the other industrial estates, especially with more industrial development in Kempston & Wixams, thus we can't see it being about bringing businesses to the town, as you then have the issue of travelling to places of work, through a congested town.**

**If this is about people then being able to travel out of the town to work in Cambridge or Oxford, Bedford will not be a closer town to travel from and people would look to live in closer towns, such as the St Neots and Milton Keynes area.**

The decision to choose route E was made by EWRC in 2020, and is supported by the Government. You can read about how EWRC came to that decision [here](#).

The decision on the selection of Route E was based upon a number of factors some of which are shown below:

- It would deliver the best value for taxpayers, returning the most benefit for every £ spent
- It was the most popular option with people who responded to EWRC's 2019 consultation
- It would deliver the best opportunities for supporting and enhancing the environment.



The EWR Preferred Route Options Report estimated route costs at 2019 prices as Route A: 3.6bn, Route B: 3.9bn, Route C: 4.3bn, Route D, 4.0bn, Route E: 3.7bn.

The economic case for public transport investment is that better connectivity causes a spiral: whereby new businesses are attracted to the area; 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 over time there may be an economic drain from places that lack such connectivity.

I am sorry that you feel that the consultation process is flawed. The situation is that it is EWRC which has consulted residents and stakeholders on their proposals. In this respect the position of BBC is that we responded to EWR's consultation. We were not in a position to engage with residents on the EWR consultation until such time as we received a copy of it – along with everyone else – when it was published in late March 2021. Time was then limited since the consultation was for only 8 weeks. Limitations in respect to COVID 19 made matters more challenging.

**25. Pre Consultant facts about cost of the routes for consideration in 2019 Consultation have been changed after the consultation which appear to have significantly influenced the decision. There has been no clear explanation to why the costs changed. Q: Why did Bedford Borough Council employ Kilborn Consulting to do further technical analysis to supplement BBCs initial findings that “Option E is not only desirable on an economic and connectivity case, but is also technically deliverable at significantly reduced cost from that put forward in EWR Company’s consultation.” ?**

We are aware that EWR amended the base cost prices from 2015 prices to 2019 prices and that as part of the ongoing project development, EWR undertook further feasibility and costing work. We are not party to the budgeting or the costing assumptions. What we do know, however, is that the EWR Preferred Route Options Report estimated the route costs (at 2019 prices) as Route A: 3.6bn, Route B: 3.9bn, Route C: 4.3bn, Route D, 4.0bn, Route E: 3.7bn. On the basis of these figures and on the basis of financial cost exclusive of any financial benefits Route E was cheaper than Routes B, D and D, and only marginally more expensive than Route A.

In response to the 2019 consultation, Kilborn Consulting made some suggestions to EWRC which could potentially lower the cost of route E. These can be found on this [page](#).

**26. A southern route option, using some of the Old Varsity Line, which was recommended by Kilborn Consulting, was not given to EWR Co as an option for consideration, by Bedford Borough Council. Report Reference: 1661-TR002, Revision: 0-3 DRAFT, Date: 12/02/2019, Compiled by: JS. Q: Why did BBC not submit this route as an option to EWR Co for the 2019 Consultation ?**

The purpose of BBC responding to the 2019 consultation was to make a case for a route which connected EWR to Bedford Midland Station. Route Options D and E provided such connectivity. As part of formulating our case we considered a number of approaches. One possibility was to propose the reinstatement of the Old Varsity Line. After due consideration we decided that we stood a better chance of achieving our aim, i.e. direct connectivity to Bedford Midland Station, by supporting one of the established route proposals rather than tabling another alternative.

**27. In light of all the new information that is emerging that has significantly changed the scoring of Route E against EWR Co's route selection criteria. Q: Would BBC consider another route option that encompasses the following points:?**

- o Avoids devastation of rural communities & heritage
- o Avoids disruption & demolition of 100+ properties in Bedford
- o Ensures EWR access to Bedford Midland as terminus & interchange
- o Supports planned houses & jobs growth
- o The best approach for low carbon, sustainable Bedford with least damage to the environment
- o Potentially the fastest, low cost, low risk, solution.

We are not aware of new information which has significantly changed the scoring of Route E against EWR's route selection criteria. EWRC and the government have selected Route E as the preferred choice and the purpose of this current round of consultation is to further refine the route alignments along Route E. The purpose of BBC's response to the current consultation is to minimise the impact upon residents and on the environment of the construction and operation of the railway.

We believe that the current proposals can be improved to avoid a number of the current concerns. For example, we believe that the railway can be constructed without requiring six tracks through the town centre. If we are correct, then there should be no requirement to acquire additional land in this area. We support a low carbon and sustainable environment for Bedford, and we have stated that the new railway line should be carbon neutral, preferably fully electrified.

We want to work with EWRC to refine the route alignment where it is possible to do so to reduce the impact on the local environment and on residents. We have tabled some alternatives to the location of some viaducts to reduce the impact of the railway and to reduce disruption. We have also suggested that the cutting at Clapham is replaced with a tunnel. Ultimately, though, we want Bedford to benefit by the economic and social opportunities afforded by this new railway. The greatest benefits will accrue with a railway interchange at Bedford Midland Station.

## **28. Removal of Support for Route E.**

**I would like the council to remove their support for Route E. I believe that the initial consultation was flawed. I live very very near the route in Clapham and did not receive any consultation documents or postcards regarding this and only heard about it after route E was chosen and so could not have my say. I do not believe that the council decision to back route E is representative of the views of the people of Bedford. I have not met a single person in Bedford that supports Route E. Everybody had been led to believe that Wixams would be where this line came in and out of and as such represents a much better route option.**

**Route E will only further congest our town centre that cannot cope with traffic at rush hour already. It will most definitely make any commute from Clapham across to the other side of town worse (when I commuted it was already 40 mins to go 4 miles) as so much extra East West commuting traffic heads to the main station.**

**The route cuts through a very narrow corridor of green land that is used extensively by not only residents of Clapham and Brickhill areas but people from all over Bedford. Green spaces within our town borders are so important for the well being of the residents and to provide places for recreation and walking. The areas are home to all sorts of wildlife and birds, (bats, owls, woodpeckers to name just a few).**

**The viaduct the is being proposed to cross the river, the floodplain, the A6 and the road in Clapham will totally spoil the rural sense of the village and the cost in time, money and environmental effect of such a project surely out weight the benefits - when a route via the south would not require such engineering feats.**

**I totally reject the council suggestion that the route needs to come into the town centre and if it does that it will bring people into Bedford. Let's be real.....people on route to Oxford and Cambridge are not going to stop off in Bedford. In fact I think the opposite will take place and it will totally backfire on your plans - more people will chose to leave Bedford to go to Oxford and Cambridge for their evening recreation. I think putting it in Wixams will make commuters very happy - easy access .no traffic issues**

**and easy parking and it will benefit Bedford far more.**

**The possibility of freight has not been ruled out and the pollution effects of bringing this into the town and close to the northern villages is not acceptable.**

**Finally the destruction of a large number of houses is also unacceptable.**

I am sorry that you feel that the initial consultation process was flawed. EWR state that the advertised in local media and sent out over 120,000 post cards. You can read more about the 2019 consultation process [here](#).

The economic case for public transport investment is that better connectivity causes a spiral: whereby new businesses are attracted to the area; 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 over time there may be an economic drain from places that lack such connectivity. We believe that it is important to the future prosperity of Bedford that EWR connects with Bedford Midland Station.

BBC is committed, though, to work with EWR to reduce the impact of the scheme on residents and the environment. We believe that the route can be constructed without taking additional land through the town and compulsorily acquiring property. We want to work with EWR to refine the route alignment where it is possible to do so to reduce the impact on the local environment and on residents. We have tabled some alternatives to the location of some viaducts, notably at Clapham, to reduce the impact of the railway and to reduce disruption. We have also suggested that the cutting proposed at Clapham is replaced with a tunnel. We will work with EWR to ensure that their programme of works causes the least disruption to residents within the Borough.

**29. The Kilborn report issued in February 2019 states: “Bedford Midland Options....come at the cost of increased construction costs, increased disruption, longer journey times and increased operational costs, as well as increased congestion and other highway costs.”**

**“In short neither Route D or E [the northern routes] have much to recommend them to EWR... However there is an alternate approach that should be explored with EWR....”**

**It goes on to recommend an alternate option which they surveyed and identifies that there were “no insurmountable physical obstructions...” It follows the old Varsity line. They identified some specific features that would require design solutions “none of which seems to be**

insurmountable”

It goes on to say: “The route is almost straight from Bedford to Sandy and on to Cambridge, minimising distance, route costs, and journey time while maximising value of time benefits.”

**1a. What did BBC do about suggesting this alternative to EWR?**

**1b. What feasibility study was done?**

**1c. Why didn't BBC pay Kilborn to “Value optimise” this route or the Southern Routes as well as Routes D&E?**

**1d. Why weren't these reports made public before an FOI request?**

**1e. How much money has BBC spent with Kilborn and other consultants for the purposes of responding to EWR consultation since 2018? Who were the other consultants?**

The Council's view has always been that a route through Bedford Midland Station would bring greater benefits than a route which bypassed the town. A route serving Bedford at the former St John's Station was not proposed by EWRC, but Kilborn Consulting considered this option to assess whether or not it would bring any benefits in the absence of a town centre option. Ultimately, the Council opted to support a route which used Bedford Midland Station, and so did not need to promote the work on an alternative route.

As the Council supported route E, there was no merit in carrying out further economic analysis on the southern routes. The reports were not made public because they formed part of the Council's background work in preparing the final response.

Aside from Kilborn Consulting, the Council is working with SLC Rail. The work being undertaken to respond to the consultation has not yet been invoiced.

**30. EWR continue to evade questions about cost transparency and persist in the fallacy that they are “constantly back-checking” their calculations.**

**- EWR have not provided the information that shows how the relative route option calculations changed from 2019 to 2020. Route E went from being the most expensive to the second cheapest with the other 4 routes being inflated by 50%-80% with no plausible explanation. \*Note Route D also inflated and this would have benefitted from the BBC value engineering – so the reason cannot be solely that.**

**- EWR have not provided all the cost information for the 2021 consultation – the cost information for the Bedford section is not included. Therefore it is impossible to verify their cost calculations on a like for like basis.**

We are aware that EWR amended the base cost prices from 2015 prices to 2019 prices and that as part of the ongoing project development, EWR undertook further feasibility and costing work. We are not party to the budgeting or the

costing assumptions. What we do know, however, is that the EWR Preferred Route Options Report estimated the route costs (at 2019 prices) as Route A: 3.6bn, Route B: 3.9bn, Route C: 4.3bn, Route D, 4.0bn, Route E: 3.7bn. On the basis of these figures and on the basis of financial cost exclusive of any financial benefits Route E was cheaper than Routes B, D and D, and only marginally more expensive than Route A.

We agree that it would have been more helpful if EWR had provided more detail on the relative costs of the alignments. The Council will continue to ask EWRC to share the rationale and details behind its estimated route costs. We are not privy to the cost breakdown of EWR, nor how it has been budgeted for the scheme. Whilst costs often increase, they may well be within the budgeted amount.

Going forward, our primary focus is on ensuring that we have the appropriate level of detail required to engage with EWRC with a view to improving delivery of the project. We are keen to ensure that EWRC engage with local residents and that actions are implemented to minimise the disruption during construction and in subsequent operation.

**31. Costs are evidently already increasing for the chosen route E – When will BBC pressure EWR to be completely transparent about costs so ALL your residents can be reassured that costs are being back-checked?**

The Council will continue to ask EWRC to share the rationale and details behind its estimated route costs.

We are not privy to the cost breakdown of EWR, nor how it has budgeted for the scheme. Whilst costs often increase, they may well be within the budgeted amount. Our primary focus is on ensuring that we have the level of detail in respect to the proposed scheme to engage with EWRC with a view to gaining its commitment to improving in respect to delivery. We are keen to ensure that EWRC engage with local residents and that actions are implemented to minimise the disruption during construction and in subsequent operation.

**32. Just because EWR has reached the conclusion the Mayor wanted, does not mean that the process that EWR went through should not be challenged by BBC. Why Are the Lib Dem members of BBC propagating the EWR marketing spiel, rather than representing the very reasonable concerns of the residents?**

The Council has a long-standing policy to support a route through Bedford Midland Station, including in the Local Plan which had six separate consultations. The Local Plan included the statement on EWR that “The central section between Bedford to Cambridge is more difficult as the original Varsity railway line has now

been built over and a new corridor needs to be determined. The Council's preferred option is for East-West Rail to be routed through Bedford Midland Station"

**33. Why is the BBC not supporting the Northern parishes in demanding from EWR transparency on the 2019 consultation and the addresses that were not informed? EWR now state that there are 268,000 addresses within 2km of Route E – but they only sent out 120,000 postcards in 2019? Why are BBC not supporting the legitimate concerns of residents over the flawed process?**

The decision to adopt Route E on the East West Railway was not made by Bedford Borough Council, it was made by the East West Railway Company in January 2020, prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, following a consultation.

The consultation for the section between Bedford and Cambridge took place in 2019. Almost 7,000 people gave feedback following 6 weeks of consultation on the five route options. You can read more about the consultation, including reviewing the public feedback at <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/the-project/bedford-to-cambridge>. All MPs, Councillors and Parish Councils on any of the proposed routes were written to by the East West Rail Company. Bedford Borough Council also promoted the consultation – you can see this at <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/strategies-and-projects/east-west-rail-connection/>, and also promoted the consultation on social media and through emails.

The Council submitted a response to the Consultation, and all the political groups on Bedford Borough Council supported a route through Bedford, you can see this support at <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/east-west-rail-route-must-go-through-midland-road/>.

**34. Reasons given for rejecting the old varsity line include:**

- It has properties built on it - So does Route E
- It runs along side a country park - So does Route E
- It runs near scheduled monuments - So does Route E

**It is shorter, flatter, straighter, more environmentally friendly and the vast, vast majority of the economic benefits to Bedford available.**

**5a. Why was no feasibility study or effort to challenge EWR to use this established transport corridors of the OVL and the A421 transport development corridor made?**

EWRC presented the five route corridor options for consultation in 2019, and the Old Varsity Line was not one of the options put forward.

The Council has a long-standing policy to support a route through Bedford Midland Station, including in the Local Plan which has its own consultation process. The Local Plan includes the statement on EWR that "The central section between Bedford to Cambridge is more difficult as the original Varsity railway line has now been built over and a new corridor needs to be determined. The

Council's preferred option is for East-West Rail to be routed through Bedford Midland Station"

**35. Why did Bedford Borough Council ignore recommendations from the Kilburn report, Cranfield University and CPRE to name just a few organizations for a straighter, more cost effective build (without distorting real costs) and environmentally friendly southern route unlike their biased 2019 consultation preference for a northern route?**

The Council's view has always been that a route through Bedford Midland Station would bring greater benefits than a route which bypassed the town. A route entering Bedford at St John's Station was not proposed by EWRC, but Kilborn Consulting considered this option to assess whether or not it would bring any benefits in the absence of a town centre option. Ultimately, the Council opted to support a route which used Bedford Midland Station, and so did not need to promote the work on an alternative route.

Ultimately, our decision was based upon the proposals tabled by EWR. Only Routes D and E opened up direct access to Bedford Midland Station. The Council objective for many years has been that EWR comes through Bedford. Therefore we were going to support these routes rather than a route which effectively by-passed the town centre.

**36. Has the level of public response against Route E surprised you?**

This is a rare project with the potential for a significant impact both positively and less positively, on Bedford and the whole Borough. It is not surprising that so many people should share their opinions and we continue to encourage people to do so.

**37. When the EWR Technical Report states that "a new station south of Bedford would generate slightly greater increases in jobs and productivity than routes serving Bedford Midland due to faster journey times", what other considerations made you choose to lobby for passenger and freight services through Bedford?**

The 2019 EWR Consultation document was clear that Route E attracted the highest transport user benefits, and the second highest economic growth benefits of the five routes under consideration. The highest economic growth benefit was for Route D, which also passed through Bedford and on the same route north and then east of the town.

BBC has not been able to find the statement to which you refer regarding a new station south of Bedford generating an increase in jobs and productivity. It may be correct that a faster journey time might have greater overall economic benefit across the scheme as a whole. However, the 2019 Consultation document seems to suggest otherwise.



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

The EWR 2019 Consultation Document makes specific reference to the possible impact of Routes A, C and D on the RSPB at Sandy and Whimpole Hall.

**39. I still have no clear picture as to how Route E began as the most expensive route in 2019 consultation and is now just about the cheapest and preferred. Just provide a clear breakdown as to costs in 2019 v 2021 and how they changed for all routes. Why wouldn't one wish to share? I do think this is why many local residents and I (from the Clapham area), didn't think it would be chosen and thus spent little time on the plans and added little objection in 2019.**

The EWR consultation of 2019 referred to costs at 2015 prices, whereas the Preferred Route Option report of January 2020 had rebased costs at 2019 prices. Furthermore, EWRC updated their costings based upon additional information acquired in the interim. Further work was undertaken in respect to the scope of works which drove the relative costs as well as updates in respect to the EWR 'transport model', Department for Transport 'appraisal guidance', impact of new potential new housing.

The Preferred Route Option report clarifies that the original costs were those provided by Network Rail, and that between the 2019 consultation document being produced and the Preferred Route Option report being published EWRC re-examined the cost assumptions and took a more conservative approach to some of the costs.

The January 2020 cost estimates were those used by EWRC and the government to make a decision as to which route to support. Route E was the second lowest capital cost (2019 prices) and only £0.1bn more than the lowest cost (range £3.9bn to £4.3bn) and indicated the highest net profit in terms of railway operations.

As far as we are aware, there has been no change in the estimated costings since January 2020.

**40. Background BBC has given vigorous support to Option E to in order attract jobs and investment into Bedford and to create a nationally recognised transport hub centred on Bedford Midland Station. The financial benefit to Bedford has been shown to be modest with GVA uplift of less than 1.5% and recent studies have demonstrated alternative route options to serve Bedford Town Centre are viable without devastating urban and rural countryside within the Borough.**

**The key new characteristic is a junction which allows access by EWR to Bedford Midland Station and the option of services calling at a new Bedford**

**South station servicing residential and business developments in the region of the A412 'southern bypass'. The design would avoid demolition of 100+ houses and the devastation of rural communities in north Bedfordshire. Initial analysis shows these alternative route options to be viable, and potentially offer the fastest, lowest cost, low risk solutions meeting the complete range of stakeholder interests.**

**A summary of the option is attached as a single-page pdf file.**

**Question. Having established key objectives for EWR serving Bedford, will the Borough Council consider alternatives to Option E that meet all of these conditions and potentially offer advantages without the significant problems and public concern that is emerging with Option E? Specifically, will BBC support investigation of these new options by EWRC as is proposed in the attached summary paper?**

We do not appear to have a copy of your single page pdf. If you wish to resend, please send to [rail@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:rail@bedford.gov.uk).

The decision to select route E as the chosen route corridor was made by EWRC and was supported by Government. The Council is a consultee within the process, and is not able to reopen the debate about the route options.

Going forward, our primary focus is on ensuring that we have the appropriate level of detail required to engage with EWRC with a view to improving delivery of the project. We are keen to ensure that EWRC engage with local residents and that actions are implemented to minimise the disruption during construction and in subsequent operation.

**41. Why does EWR have to go through Bedford, why can it not come into Bedford and then return via St Johns on the Varsity line? Also, how did costs increase 'overnight'? Surely it would make sense to include Wixams stations with the EWR station south of Bedford**

It has been Council policy for a number of years to support an EWR route which comes through Bedford town centre and serves Bedford Midland Station. We believe that this is the best long-term solution for the town and the Borough. The Council are not the proposers of the scheme, and at the route selection consultation we sought to support those routes selected by EWRC that we felt best served the town. EWRC did not propose a route via the old Varsity Line which is probably because they believed it to be unviable.

The EWR consultation of 2019 referred to costs at 2015 prices, whereas the Preferred Route Option report of January 2020 had rebased costs at 2019 prices. Furthermore, EWRC updated their costings based upon additional information acquired in the interim. Further work was undertaken in respect to the scope of works which drove the relative costs as well as updates in respect to the EWR

'transport model', Department for Transport 'appraisal guidance', impact of new potential new housing.

As far as we are aware, there has been no change in the estimated costings since January 2020.

Wixams will be a station serving the Midland Main Line and giving connectivity between Bedford and London. Bedford Midland Station has been selected as the interchange between EWR and the Midland Main Line.

**42. May I ask Mayor Dave where he has his home? I ask, in the context of the route choices.**

**EWR chose Route E. Why did they not use the original Varsity Line route? We accept that no route is without impact, however, according to the BBC's original consultant report, this was a viable option. Please do not insult our intelligence by claiming that the decision was EWR's as we know that it was made following significant input from Mayor Dave and others via both the Borough Council and the EWR Consortium.**

**Given the depth of feeling and tsunami of negative reactions and distress from so many of the people you supposedly represent now that the situation can no longer be hidden, we ask you to urgently press EWR (directly and via the consortium) to hold a fair, transparent rerun of the consultation. This time, make sure it runs the correct, lawful length of a consultation; make sure it is fully communicated to EVERYONE potentially impacted; make sure all information is made available in a clear format and not in confusing and incomplete maps, diagrams so people can see just how it impacts where they live or travel when asked to express an opinion; make sure the costings are fully and independently assessed and made public.**

The Mayor's contact details are available on the Bedford Borough Council website [here](#).

In 2019 BBC made strong representations in support of EWR taking a route through Bedford. At that time there were only 5 routes for consultation, two of which, Routes D and E, came through Bedford. At no stage did EWRC offer the old Varsity route for consideration. Our primary objective was for the line to come through the town providing connectivity at Bedford Midland Station. The fact that the old Varsity Line may have been considered viable, is immaterial as EWRC did not consider it as part of the consultation. Although BBC lobbied hard for a route through Bedford, we had no involvement in the decision making. The decision was made by EWR and central government.

We understand that some of the consequences of the 2021 EWR consultation on route alignment for some people is fear and uncertainty about the impact in

respect to homes, disruption and on the environment. We are determined to work with EWRC and with residents to minimise the negative impacts of the scheme (and to maximise the positive benefits). We believe, for example, that it is possible to commission EWR without building an additional two-tracks to the north of the town. Such an approach would mean that fewer houses would need to be acquired. We also believe that with careful collaboration it may be possible to improve the environmental impact by re-aligning viaducts and shifting the precise location of the line to reduce impact on residents.

We agree that some of the maps in the 2021 consultation document are poor and with insufficient detail. We believe that the reason for the lack of detail is that much of the precise and detailed design of this line of route has yet to be undertaken. We recognise that such a situation presents us with some opportunity, because before the cost of expensive and detailed infrastructure design is undertaken we can engage with EWRC on matters such as alignment, and visual and environmental impact in order to produce a much more acceptable design to local residents. A design which allays many of the fears which have been created by the lack of detail in the current consultation.

As far as we are aware, the 2021 EWR Consultation has been widely publicised and a comprehensive range of documentation has been made available on the EWRC website and their Virtual Consultation Rooms. There is no reason for a re-run of the consultation.

**43. Why did the Borough Council give its support to Route E in March 2019 when no detailed Environmental Impact Assessment of the choice of Route E, and how Route E compares to Route B or other routes, had been undertaken or reported regarding environmental impacts of the routes in Bedford Borough?**

BBC acknowledges and agrees that the potential impact of EWR on the environment is of considerable importance. The duty to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) rests with EWRC as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) process which is the planning approval process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (see link [advice note 15 version 1.pdf \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](#) ). The next stage for EWR will be to undertake the requirements for the preparation of a DCO. We expect this to include a detailed EIA and we would expect to comment on the findings which will be publicly available.

**44. It is clear and obvious to anyone familiar with the locations impacted by EWR in Bedford, that Route E runs across an area of open countryside and rural villages, whereas Route B is located within an existing transport corridor (the A421) which is already developed for commercial activity. There can surely be no doubt at all that the environmental harms that would**

**result from Route E very substantially outweigh any negative environmental impacts associated with Route B.**

It is longstanding Council policy to support a route through Bedford Midland. We believe that the economic benefits and the higher levels of connectivity provided by a town centre station will bring greater levels of prosperity to the town and Borough as a whole than a route which bypasses Bedford.

BBC acknowledge and agree that the potential impact of EWR on the environment is of considerable importance. The duty to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) rests with EWR as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) process which is the planning approval process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (see link [advice note 15 version 1.pdf \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](#) ). The DCO does not currently exist, and the next stage for EWR will be to undertake the requirements for the preparation of a DCO. We expect this to include a detailed EIA and we would expect to comment on the findings.

**45. EWR state in their consultation document that their preference is to use existing transport corridors rather than creating new ones. Can I ask that the Council would support this and reconsider the option of the south of the river line hence reducing the need to destroy the beautiful properties in the Poets area, remove the need to carve up extensive areas of pristine farmland, and give to Wixams the train line and station many home owners had expected when they chose to live there?**

The aim of the Council has been that EWR should connect with the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station. The preferred route for government and EWRC is Route E which comes through the town and then takes a route from the north and then east of the town. We recognise the concerns that residents have in respect to the recent Consultation Document. We are determined to work with EWRC and with residents to minimise the negative impacts of the scheme (and to maximise the positive benefits). We believe, for example, that it is possible to commission EWR without building an additional two-tracks to the north of the town. Such an approach would mean that fewer houses would need to be acquired. We also believe that with careful collaboration it may be possible to improve the environmental impact by re-aligning viaducts and shifting the precise location of the line to reduce impact on residents.

Wixams will have its own railway station. The station will be on the Midland Main Line and will enable direct connectivity to London and Bedford. The development of Wixams is prompted by BBC but is not part of the EWR scheme.

**46. Perhaps the Council could explain how a potential route following a previous course with minimum change in elevation is cheaper than a potential route that is longer and has considerably greater changes in elevation requiring significant engineering, the knocking down of homes, crossing flood plans, crossing the pathway of the gas pipeline which**

**services London, that will involve considerable cuttings and bridges, road closures cutting off rural areas etc etc etc?**

We are not party to how EWRC has carried out its cost appraisals. The only information that we have in respect to costs are contained in the 2019 EWR Consultation Document, the 2020 EWR Preferred Route Option Report and the 2021 EWR Consultation Document. According to the Preferred Route Option Report, Route E was cheaper than Route B, C and D. The costs will be further refined depending upon which of the Route Alignments within Route E is selected.

Going forward, our primary focus is on ensuring that we have the appropriate level of detail required to engage with EWRC with a view to improving delivery of the project. We are keen to ensure that EWRC engage with local residents and that actions are implemented to minimise the disruption during construction and in subsequent operation.

**47. Why were residents not directly consulted for their views by the Borough Council before BBC made their decision to support the Northern Route which at the time of the (flawed) 2019 consultation was considered more expensive and more technically challenging.**

In 2019, there was a six-week window from EWRC publishing their consultation document to the final date for the submission of comments. We concentrated our efforts on: publicising the consultation; preparing our own submission; and gaining consensus as a Council. There was little time to do much more. Even with the current 10-week consultation period it has been difficult to prepare and schedule public meetings, hear views and integrate those views into our thinking and formal feedback to EWRC.

Whilst the estimated cost for Route E in 2019 was the most expensive, Route D, which followed the same corridor through the Borough was no more expensive than Route B, and only marginally more expensive than Route C. It seems, then, that the greater expense of Route E versus Route D was, at that stage, to the east of the Borough area. Subsequently to the 2019 consultation period costs were estimated at 2019 prices as Route A: 3.6bn, Route B: 3.9bn, Route C: 4.3bn, Route D, 4.0bn, Route E: 3.7bn.

Any of the route corridor options put forward by EWRC in 2019 would have presented technical challenges. EWRC concluded that any challenges associated with route E could be managed satisfactorily.

**48. I do not agree with Route E. The best Route for Bedford is A, B or C. Economically and Environmentally these are clearly the best routes. A New Bedford South Station is the best solution for Bedford.**

We respect your opinion. We continue to believe, however, that the best outcome for Bedford is that EWR connects with the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station. The EWR economic case favours Route E. We recognise that there will be an environmental impact of the works, but that would be true for any of the routes. We will work with local residents and with EWRC to minimise the impact during construction and in subsequent operation.

**49. Why given the cheaper, shorter, flatter, quicker route alongside the A421 have BCC chosen a route which destroys the north Bedfordshire countryside with deep cuttings, unsightly viaducts and destroying wildlife and homes? What is the obsession with coming through Bedford station and destroying people's homes and communities? How will that save Bedford town centre by people getting off to get a coffee to change trains? What evidence is there for this?**

The reason that we want EWR to connect with the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station is because of the transformational impact of regeneration that is stimulated by such a transport infrastructure enhancement. The station redevelopment itself is likely to stimulate growth and further urban regeneration. There may be brownfield land around the railway which in conjunction with the station and EWR developments becomes viable to be repurposed.

The economic case for public transport investment is that better connectivity causes a spiral: whereby new businesses are attracted to the area; 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, the whole Borough will benefit. Without the new connectivity somewhere else will benefit. Arguably, if the benefits are elsewhere, then over time there may be an economic drain from places that lack such connectivity. We believe that it is important to the future prosperity of Bedford that EWR connects with Bedford Midland Station.

The current EWR costings suggest that alternatives to Route E are, with the exception of Route A, more expensive.

We remain convinced of the benefits of EWR coming through the town. The challenge is to minimise the impact of them doing so. We believe that the Route can be built without taking additional land along the existing line to the north of the station. We will engage with EWRC to develop alternatives which reduce and preferably eliminate the requirement to compulsorily acquire properties in this area. We also understand the sensitivities of developing the route around the north of Bedford and towards the east. We will work with EWRC and residents to

develop plans to mitigate the impact of the construction work and the operation of the railway.

**50. Please can I have a meeting in person here, as soon as possible with a representative(s) to discuss why Route E has been chosen when it seems it was originally the most expensive, most geographically challenging and longer than the southern route. I have heard it will be a diesel freight train to cope with Route E's landscape which considering diesel is being phased out by the government I don't believe that can be true - please advise? Please can I ask not to receive a standard email I really am appealing for a visit. I am absolutely floored with shock that this could happen without any communication in such an idyllic location with wildlife in huge abundance. It will be a tragedy and a real loss of enjoyment for future generations.**

Whilst the estimated cost for Route E in 2019 was the most expensive, Route D, which followed the same corridor through the Borough was no more expensive than Route B, and only marginally more expensive than Route C. It seems, then, that the greater expense of Route E versus Route D was, at that stage, to the east of the Borough area. Further work was undertaken by EWR during 2019 which resulted in a reassessment of costs which resulted in Route E being the second strongest economic option against Route A.

The decision regarding diesel traction has nothing to do with the route choice. It is a policy decision which, has been made by EWRC and the Government. We are strongly of the opinion that the route should be carbon-neutral, preferably fully electrified, and we will continue to make this case to EWRC.

BBC acknowledge and agree that the potential impact of EWR on the environment is of considerable importance. The duty to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) rests with EWR as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) process which is the planning approval process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (see link [advice note 15 version 1.pdf \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](#) ). The next stage for EWR will be to undertake the requirements for the preparation of a DCO. We expect this to include a detailed EIA and we would expect to comment on the findings.

We are determined to work with EWRC and local residents to minimise the impact of the construction and operation of the railway.

**51. Can BBC advise whether it's preference for a northern alignment will lead to further development in the vicinity of Ravensden, including the encroachment of new housing estates and infrastructure associated with East West Rail (EWR). Does BBC have any aspirations for a northern parkway station to service the EWR route and to relieve congestion due to additional commuters travelling into Bedford Midland station?**



The potential for developing land at Twinwoods in conjunction with a station on East West Rail was put forward in the Council's "Issues and Options" consultation on the next Local Plan in the summer of 2020.

The proposals since published by EWRC do not include a station at that location and therefore the draft Local Plan that is being consulted on in the summer of 2021 does not include development in this area as part of its emerging preferred strategy options.

**52. Why does the Council support a proposed route that would require substantial levels of earthworks, and infrastructure construction, in order to overcome the significant changes in gradient and the hilliness of the terrain, in contrast to the route south of the river that would follow this historic rail route that is largely flat and would require significantly less construction cost, time, and disruption?**

The aim of the Council has been for EWR to connect with the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station. We believe that such connectivity will have the greatest positive long-term impact on the Borough and of the town. We recognise that the proposed route alignments will have an impact on residents and on the environment and we are determined to work with EWR and residents to minimise that impact. Judging by the relative costs of the different routes included within the EWR Preferred Route Options Report of January 2020, we believe that all of the routes would require considerable construction works.

We are determined to work with EWRC and with residents to minimise the negative impacts of the scheme (and to maximise the positive benefits). We believe, for example, that it is possible to commission EWR without building an additional two-tracks to the north of the town. Such an approach would mean that fewer houses would need to be acquired. We also believe that with careful collaboration it may be possible to improve the environmental impact by re-aligning viaducts and shifting the precise location of the line to reduce impact on residents.

**53. Why is the Council supporting the construction of a railway designed to run diesel locomotives given the UK government's legally binding target of cutting emission by 78 % by 2035 which is not long after this new route is due to start operation? Is it not more cost effective and climate conscious to future proof the railway by constructing at least an electrified route if not designing a route for hydrogen-fuel cell locomotives?**

We believe that the new East West Railway should be carbon-neutral. Our preference is that the whole line is electrified. We made this point in our response to the 2021 Consultation Document.

**54. Can the Council clarify the purpose of this rail route, and how it will be operated? There has been recent information that has indicated that it will be used for 24/7 freight services, and yet the latest EWR Co. financial statements state the purpose of the railway is for passenger services to connect Oxford and Cambridge, and makes no reference to the use of the route primarily for freight.**

It is our understanding that the primary business case for this new railway link will be for passenger services between Oxford and Cambridge and locations along the line of route. Any railway has the capacity, though, for freight train operation. Freight trains are a greener alternative to HGV road traffic. It is understood that the proposed railway timetable schedule will include some 'pathways' for freight trains. The existence of the pathways does not imply that such trains will run, but they could run if there was an economic demand for them.

**55. It is frustratingly unclear in the EWR consultation document what is proposed beyond the urban area of Bedford. For example a great deal of detail is suggested for the Poets area, but then only a vague description of how the railway would negotiate the terrain once it would diverge beyond the existing railway line.**

We agree that the detail is sparse, but we have taken the opportunity to provide EWRC with our thoughts concerning how the impact of the railway might be minimised. More detail is required as to the precise alignment of the route, and the impact of infrastructure on the geography. We have made this point in our consultation response to EWRC. We would expect further consultation on the detail in due course.

**56. Finally, I would appreciate an explanation of why route E was preferred by Bedford Borough Council in 2019 as this seems the most environmentally damaging of the options and simply a massive detour for the east west railway. I gather the decision was made on the basis that this route E was considered to be more economically beneficial for the town as it would serve the central station. However, do you have clear evidence to substantiate this theory?**

According to EWR documentation, Route E generates the best economic return in respect to railway operations and is the second cheapest option to construct. The decision made by EWR and the government to select Route E would have taken these factors into account. We did not select Route E. We made representations as a result of the 2019 Route Consultation on the benefits of EWR connecting with the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station. We believe that such connectivity will have the greatest positive long-term impact on the Borough and of the town.

The reason that we want EWR to connect with the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station is because of the transformational impact of regeneration that is

stimulated by such a transport infrastructure enhancement. The station redevelopment itself is likely to stimulate growth and further urban regeneration. There may be brownfield land around the railway which in conjunction with the station and EWR developments, become viable to be repurposed.

The economic case for public transport investment is that better connectivity causes a spiral: whereby new businesses are attracted to the area; 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 over time there may be an economic drain from places that lack such connectivity. We believe that it is important to the future prosperity of Bedford that EWR connects with Bedford Midland Station.

We remain convinced of the benefits of EWR coming through the town. The challenge is to minimise the impact of them doing so. We believe that the Route can be built without taking additional land along the existing line to the north of the station. We will engage with EWR to develop alternatives which reduce and preferably eliminate the requirement to compulsorily acquire properties in this area. We also understand the sensitivities of developing the route around the north of Bedford and towards the east. We will work with EWR and residents to develop plans to mitigate the impact of the construction work and the operation of the railway.

**57. As one of the technically most challenging routes, and with the most gradient changes, Route E is going to be the least environmentally friendly to build (due to greater construction impact) and operate (due to increased track length vs other options, and associated consumption of diesel on gradient change). How will BBC mitigate these impacts for residents?**

Whilst the lengths of routes might differ and the precise combination of cuttings, embankments, viaducts and tunnel vary by route, all will have an environmental impact. Overall, Route E may be no more impactful than other routes. The approach to mitigation, therefore, is broadly similar whatever route is eventually chosen.

BBC believes that this route should be electrified, or if that is not possible some traction used which is carbon-neutral. We are particularly concerned that EWRC work with BBC and local communities to develop a Construction Management Plan which sets out in detail how EWRC and their contractors will operate. We are seeking more information on EWRC's proposals in respect of the proposed infrastructure so that we can understand what can be done to further mitigate the impact on the environment and communities.

**58. 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?**

We are not aware of any roads being stopped up and we will press for all current roads and accesses to remain open.

**59. 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 St John's / Stewartby / Kempston 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.

**60. 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.**

The approach being followed by EWR is one of gradual refinement from a wider general scope with a range of possible options to a specific and focused preferred route and alignment. As the process continues and becomes more refined so the level of detail increases. There would be no point, for example, undertaking detailed bridge design work for four options that were ultimately to be rejected. For that reason, the initial work was based upon some top-level assumptions. As things stand there are still five route alignment options within Route E. Earlier in the process the cost of work would have been estimated and would have included a fairly hefty contingency to cater for uncertainty.

In respect to the Council's response to the 2019 Consultation process, our requirement was to support the route options which travelled through Bedford town centre (Routes D and E). At that stage of the consultation there was not a requirement for project details to be fully developed. It would have been impossible to do so given that the preferred route could still have a range of different alignments. The 2021 Consultation provides significantly more detail in respect to Route E and as a result we have responded to the Consultation with some detailed comments and requirements. Our main thrust is that we recognise that there is considerable more work required by EWR once they have selected the route alignment and we want to work closely with them and local residents to ensure that the precise route alignment, design and construction minimises disruption and environmental and visual impact.

**61. Why was Bedford Borough Council happy with choosing a route that would require viaducts, deep cuttings and embankments in prime countryside which would not only destroy the northern landscape but would impose much higher safety risks, rather than having a leveller route that the A421 corridor would provide? It would also require greater engineering feats.**

The reason that we want EWR to connect with the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station is because of the transformational impact of regeneration that is stimulated by such a transport infrastructure enhancement. The station redevelopment itself is likely to be a catalyst to growth and further urban regeneration. There may be brownfield land around the railway which in conjunction with the station and EWR developments become viable to be repurposed. We remain convinced of the wider benefits of EWR coming through the town.

The actual route was chosen by EWRC and supported by the Government. The January 2020 EWR cost estimates for all other routes with the exception of Route A exceed Route E. This relative cost comparison would suggest that irrespective of the route chosen significant engineering works would be required. Although Route E does require cuttings, viaducts and embankments, overall, it feels as though the scale of engineering works would be on par with the other routes. All railway infrastructure is constructed within strict safety regulations.

We understand that these works will have an impact on local communities and the environment. We are determined to work with EWRC and local residents to minimise the disruption during construction and operation.

**62. 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.

**63. 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, for some time, believed that significant long-term benefits would accrue to Bedford and the Borough by EWR connectivity with the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station. In 2019, when EWRC consulted on 5 possible routes, BBC took the opportunity to make a strong case for selection of one of the

options which came through the town. The decision on the route was made by EWRC and the government. BBC were not involved in that decision.

**64. The main question I have is "Why did this EWR Plan all change?". It would also be prudent to ask "Do any supporting Councillors, the Mayor and any other involved parties within the EWR consultation and planning process have any financial and / or other related ties to EWR that may be causing a Conflict Of Interest?". I think this would be a great question to ask, as there seems to be a complete refusal to listen to us residents of Brickhill, yet a solid backing for Ravensden staying un-touched by 'progress'.**

The shareholder in the East West Railway Company is the government. There are no other shareholders. The main question is for the EWR Co. 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.

In the 2019 EWR Consultation document, there was no preference on the route choice. For each route a number of opportunities, challenges, other considerations and costs were identified. This document also explained that costs were indicative and would be refined as work continued. By the publication of the EWR Preferred Route Options Report in January 2020 further work had been undertaken in respect to: the scope of works which drove the relative costs; updates in respect to the EWR 'transport model'; the Department for Transport 'appraisal guidance'; and the impact of new potential new housing developments.

EWRC took a more conservative approach to some of the original costs provided by Network Rail. The impact of these cost updates were to make Route E the second lowest capital cost (2019 prices) and only £0.1bn more than the lowest cost (range £3.9bn to £4.3bn) and indicated the highest net profit in terms of railway operations. As far as we are aware, there has been no change in the estimated costings since January 2020.

The Council took the opportunity, as part of the 2019 Consultation process to campaign for a route that enabled EWR to connect with the Midland Main Line at Bedford.

**65. The question I have for the public meetings please, and which I would also like questions 1 and 2 treating as an FOI request please: 1. Please detail and release ANY information received by Bedford Borough Council that at ANY time before August 2019 indicated that EWRCo or Network Rail had at ANY time proposed that a through-Bedford route for EWR could potentially require 6 tracks as it passed through the urban area of Bedford?**

**Please detail and release ALL the information that Bedford Borough Council received from EWR on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019 in relation to the planned EWR route through Bedford.**

Please use the appropriate FOI procedures [on this page](#)

**66. I refer to your Consultation Technical Report and the selection of Preferred Route Option E for the proposed route of East West Rail around the north side of Bedford. Option E will involve extensive cuttings in the vicinity of Cleat Hill. The cuttings will be in close proximity to proposed housing off the B660 and near Cleathill Farm and likely to have a detrimental effect. The proposed works will also involve the demolition of houses in Poets Corner which is a mature housing area. The route will also involve a major viaduct over the River Ouse and the A6 Paula Radcliffe Way and involve work to the recently improved Bromham Road Bridge. The two extra tracks will inevitably impinge on the station car park which is in great demand by commuters. It does seem to me that there is a strong case for a reconsideration of the route at Bedford and that a scheme involving trains entering and reversing from Bedford Station would be better and involve less works and disruption. I have spoken to some residents living in the vicinity and they concur with my views. I appreciate that it is late in the day but think that it would be worth consideration. Is this something that could be considered at this stage or has it already been considered?**

We understand that some of the consequences of the 2021 EWR consultation on route alignment for some people is fear and uncertainty about the impact in respect to homes, disruption and on the environment. We are determined to work with EWRC and with residents to minimise the negative impacts of the scheme (and to maximise the positive benefits).

We believe that the new railway can negotiate Bedford without requiring the construction of any additional tracks. We have made this case within our response to the EWRC consultation document. If the railway can be delivered without the need for additional tracks then there should be no requirement to compulsorily purchase additional land in this area. We also believe that improvements are possible in the design around Clapham to reduce the scale of the viaduct and to limit the impact on Paula Radcliffe Way. We aim to engage with EWRC on these and other matters with a view to minimising the impact of the railway on local residents and on the environment.

**67. Excerpt from Clapham Parish Council minutes 19th March 2019**  
**[https://clapham-pc.gov.uk/.../Minu.../2019\\_03\\_19\\_minutes.pdf](https://clapham-pc.gov.uk/.../Minu.../2019_03_19_minutes.pdf) '7.**  
**REPORTS:- a) East West Rail briefing 05.03.19. Chair had attended and tabled booklets detailing the 5 route options from Bedford to Cambridge. Two of the options would pass between Clapham & Bedford via Bedford Midland, three would go to the south of Bedford via Wixams or a new station. CPRE favoured route (b) to the south and Bedford BC preferred a northern route. If one of the northern options were chosen a large viaduct would be needed to carry the line past Clapham and Chair had expressed**

**concerns about the impact on the community especially as green space was already being lost to housing. Parking and congestion would be more easily resolved at a new southern station but Cllr. Walker noted that improvements to Bedford Midland, including a multi storey car park and extended platforms, would be funded by Bedford BC thus reducing the cost of the northern routes. ‘**

**Please firstly confirm that this is true and then answer the following.**

The Council is not contributing any of its own funds to the redevelopment of the station. We 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 for the scheme and is not at the expense of normal Council expenditure.

- 68. Does an analysis exist of BBC’s choice to head north out of Bedford? Where do you draw the line? If you need 25 viaducts to head north to keep the station would that still be the preferred choice?**

East West Rail Company selected Route Corridor E as their preferred route in January 2020, supported by the Government. EWRC has explained their choice of corridor selection in this [document](#). The cost and engineering challenges of selecting route E have been considered by EWRC in coming to this decision.

- 69. We are writing to express our concern over the proposed East West Rail link passing through the Bedford area. Here are some points for consideration:**

**1) The Covid 19 pandemic has caused a sea change in work travel (significantly more employees working from home), and retail practises (ie a huge transfer to online shopping). A new survey needs to be conducted into people's future travel habits/requirements to establish if this railway is really necessary, and not a future costly white elephant.**

**2) Environmental impact. The preferred option E looping north around Bedford will significantly affect the wonderful countryside in the Clapham, Renhold, Wilden area.**

**Electrification requires unsightly overhead supports which will be very visible, as is already apparent with the new electrification recently installed on north /south lines. Also the proposed viaduct near Clapham (if this is favoured) would be a huge eyesore and a very costly engineering challenge. The alternative of putting a tunnel through to Clapham Green also presents problems as there is frequent flooding in this area.**

**3) Has hydrogen power been considered (although less efficient currently than overhead electric), as technology in the coming decade may provide a better solution ?**

**4) Any rail route should follow existing travel corridors, ie the A421 around**



**the south of Bedford, and avoid devastating virgin land at all costs. This east west route would also avoid freight trains travelling through Bedford town. A T junction could be set up to just route passenger trains north into Midland Road station.**

**We hope these points are taken into consideration.**

Thank you for your points which are addressed in turn,

1. The impact of Covid is being considered across all sectors, not just transport. 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.
2. We recognise the very special nature of the landscape around Clapham, Renhold and Wilden and have proposed to EWRC that every effort should be made to consider tunnelling on the approach to Clapham. We will continue to press strongly for that outcome. We also recognise that construction will bring with it the risk of disruption. We are wholly committed to ensuring that EWRC understand the issues at stake and that together we develop a plan to minimise the impact of construction.

We also want to work closely with local communities and EWRC to minimise the environmental impact by design. Whilst it is true that the railway will have some impact, we are hopeful that by exploring the options carefully and utilising new techniques, where appropriate, EWRC will be able to deliver a railway through the area which in due course is seen to be a part of the rural environment in the way of many existing railway lines across the country.

The construction of a new railway line should not, of itself increase the risk of flooding. Unlike a tarmac road, a railway line is constructed on permeable material and therefore rainfall is likely to be absorbed rather than contribute to runoff. EWRC is likely to pay special attention to ensuring that construction works do not disturb existing watercourses, and will install flood mitigation in accordance with UK legislation where necessary.

3. BBC is pressing for electrification for the whole of the East West Rail line. The Government has confirmed that it is currently considering the case for either full or partial electrification. Partial electrification would involve operation of battery or hydrogen trains that would also take power from the electrified wires.
4. EWRC selected route E on a number of criteria and the background to the decision can be found [here](#). Any of the proposed routes would need new structures and earthworks to cross the existing built and natural environment.

Rail freight traffic already runs through Bedford town centre – up to two trains per hour in each direction on the Midland Main Line. Some of this travels through at high speed.

Paragraph 3.10.1 of the Consultation Technical Report from the East West Rail Company states that "EWR is being designed to maintain current capacity for freight trains on the existing railway and the design is considering the potential for future growth in demand for rail freight both as a result of, and independent of, EWR." The current capacity is stated as nine trains per day accessing the line from the Cambridge direction, and five on the Marston Vale Line.

There can be no guarantees of freight usage in the future as the railway network as a whole will evolve as time progresses. All we can say at the present is that there are no proposals for additional freight paths to be created at this time.

**70. The approval of the Bedford River Valley Park in 2013 appears to have been a deliberate plan by Bedford Borough Council to block the use of a southern route option, either along the old “Varsity Line” or the A421 transport route corridor by the East West Rail Consortium prior to the 2016 Route Corridor consultation work which started in 2014. That directly influenced the ridiculous route option in the 2019 Route Option Consultation, including to running north parallel to the A1 through Great Barford on Route B. The A421 already crosses through the Bedford River Valley Park and the Great Ouse flood plain on a viaduct over a “brown field” former gravel pit.**

**As a Bedford Borough Council representative on the East West Rail Consortium when did Councillor Michael Headley first become aware of the potential route and when was it ever discussed at a Full Council Meeting prior to 2019?**

East West Rail Company selected Route Corridor E as their preferred route in January 2020, supported by the Government. EWRC has explained their choice of corridor selection in this [document](#). The cost and engineering challenges of selecting route E have been considered by EWRC in coming to this decision.

The Council remains committed to development at Bedford River Valley Park which is included as a saved policy in the Local Plan 2030.

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

**71. Please can you help the people of Wilden?**

**The choice of the Northern route ( Alignments 1,2 and 6) will affect farms, residents, those driving through the village and walkers. It will mean the closure of two roads which come into the village ( Shrubbery Lane and Chequers Hill). It will be very close to the village hall ( 100 metres). It will mean the destruction of houses e g Rose Cottage and badly affect farms and footpaths. Has the cost of all this really been taken into account? The disruption, noise and mud generated in the construction will be immense and when it is built there will be diesel freight and passenger trains 24/7 affecting residents.**

**Please promote the Southern Route (Alignments 8 and 9) which will avoid the above and have very little effect on any village. This southern route will run north of Renhold and will affect a wood and not much else.**

**The people of North Bedfordshire are very upset by these plans because it will mean the destruction of a lovely part of the countryside around Bedford. A better route altogether would have been to have the railway along side the A421.**

**Please support the people of Wilden in their fight for the southern route which will reduce the destruction of the village and village life.**

BBC is not the decision-making authority in respect to which route is chosen for the Oxford to Cambridge route. We have responded to the EWR consultation document, and our route preference based on the current information supplied is alignment 1 (dark blue), followed by alignment 6 (light blue) if a Cambourne South station route is chosen.

We recognise, though, that the proposed Northern route options pass very close to the village of Wilden. If any of the northern alignments were chosen, we would propose that the alignment is altered to run somewhat further to the north of the current planned position. Such an alteration would reduce the disturbance and environmental impact to residents of Wilden.

At the next stage of the development process, EWRC will carry out a full Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with UK legislation, and this will be available as a public document. BBC will work with EWRC to ensure that steps are taken to minimise the impact on the countryside.

**72. Here is part of the Kilborn report that Cllr Headley keeps saying was not made by them recommending a southern route, why?**

**Kilborn report**

**East West Rail Consultation Support**

**Document No.1661-TR002 Revision: 0-3 DRAFT February 2019**

**The Bedford South options are generally more direct, and would be likely to create a new interchange station to the south of Bedford. This may stimulate more local development of land in this area, but it will not directly benefit Bedford town centre and hence does not achieve BBC's core aim for the EWR scheme. Of these schemes, it seems most likely that EWR will prefer Route A because of its direct approach to Sandy. Of the 'Bedford**

**South' schemes this is the one that BBC is most likely to be able to support, but would want to ensure that the Bedford South station is connected to the Wixams and that tickets for Bedford South/Wixams include free connectivity to Bedford Midland. The Bedford Midland options achieve the BBC's core aim and might improve demand for the EWR scheme overall, but come at the price of increased construction costs, increased disruption during construction, longer journey times and increased operational costs, as well as increased congestion and other highway costs.**

At the time this report was written, the Council was still considering the impacts of all routes. Further work during the 2019 consultation period helped to clarify the Council's longstanding policy position that a town centre route was preferable, and the Council responded accordingly. You can see the Council's response [here](#).

The reason that we want EWR to connect with the Midland Main Line at Bedford Midland Station is because of the transformational impact of regeneration that is stimulated by such a transport infrastructure enhancement. The station redevelopment itself is likely to stimulate growth and further urban regeneration. There may be brownfield land around the railway which in conjunction with the station and EWR developments, become viable to be repurposed.