

# East West Rail: new proposals bring Oxford-Cambridge rail service one step closer

May 26, 2023



Train services connecting Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge have moved a step closer as East West Railway Company (EWR Co) published its latest proposals for East West Rail (EWR).

The EWR update is **part of a wider government announcement** the Chancellor of the Exchequer made this morning about plans to bolster the UK's position as a global science superpower. This announcement recognises that delivering this new line is critical to improving connections between UK science powerhouses Oxford and Cambridge and will bring more investment to the region.

Construction of the railway between Bicester and Bletchley is already well underway and track-laying passed the halfway mark earlier this year before passenger services between Oxford and Milton Keynes begin in 2025. Plans for the rest of the route have been updated following feedback from the second non-statutory public consultation with local people, which has been analysed alongside environmental and technical studies. The updated proposals include:

- **A route alignment that best serves the Cambridge Biomedical Campus**, which is an unparalleled centre for life sciences of global importance and home to Addenbrooke's Hospital. This route – which takes a southern approach into Cambridge – is more likely to unlock the region's potential for transformational economic growth and create jobs, attract investment and support the UK economic recovery.
- **A new station near Tempsford**, connecting the new section of railway between Bedford and Cambridge with the East Coast Main Line that would encourage economic growth in the area.
- **Faster travel for job opportunities and more**, slashing travel times by up to 40 minutes for people living in Bedford who want to travel to Cambridge or Milton Keynes.
- **Trains every 20 minutes on Marston Vale Line**, which would mean a three-fold increase in services per hour between Bletchley and Bedford.
- **A new station for Bedford Hospital**, making life easier for NHS staff, patients and visitors.
- **A preferred route into Bedford station**, supporting local aspirations for more jobs, prosperity and growth.
- **Protecting the reliability of existing services using the busy Midland Main Line** by proposing two additional tracks alongside the existing Midland Main Line north of Bedford, which is formally designated as 'congested infrastructure'.
- **Reducing the number of homes being impacted in Bedford by a third**, through further work to challenge the design.
- **Keeping connections at London Road level crossing in Bicester** with new opportunities identified following community feedback.
- **Significant reductions to the need for and height of embankments and viaducts** following consultation feedback.
- **Setting out an updated strategic case for investing in EWR** which considers ways of delivering the benefits of EWR at a lower cost to the taxpayer

Beth West, CEO, EWR Co, said: "People deserve access to public transport wherever they live, and EWR is a once in a generation opportunity to open up new journeys, cut travel times, ease congestion on local roads and bring more jobs within reach of people living locally.

"Six of the world's top pharmaceutical companies have a presence in the Cambridge biomedical cluster, with six of them located in South Cambridgeshire. By connecting Cambridge – and particularly Cambridge South – with communities further west, EWR will unlock growth across the region and – given the global opportunity at the Biomedical Campus – for the whole of the UK too.

"We recognise that our updated proposals will have implications for the region as a whole but also for individual landowners, households and businesses. We've been determined to reduce this impact and, by

challenging the design, we've found ways to significantly reduce the number of properties affected in key areas. We're working closely with communities to continue designing the railway sensitively to reduce negative impacts on people's land – and alongside today's report we've published new guidance and support for landowners.

"Quick, reliable public transport linking Oxford and Cambridge continues to have widespread local support and our updated proposals have been shaped by the hundreds of conversations we've had with local people, businesses and other stakeholders and the thousands of responses we received to our most recent public consultation."

A series of public drop-in events are being arranged across the route to provide opportunities to meet the EWR Co team and find out more about the updated proposals.\*

Published alongside the Route Update Report are:

- **The Consultation Feedback Report** – which outlines the feedback received to the 2021 public consultation, the responses to the matters that were raised and how these have been taken into consideration
- **Economic and Technical Report** – which considers the strategic case for investing in EWR and ways of delivering the benefits of EWR at a lower cost to the taxpayer
- **Need to Sell Property Scheme** – we've launched the Need to Sell Property Scheme, which has been developed following consultation feedback to provide support to eligible property owners who have a compelling reason to sell their property but are unable to do so except at a substantially reduced value because of EWR.

Rail Minister, Huw Merriman said: "The delivery of East West Rail continues to move at pace and today's announcement demonstrates our commitment to improving travel and supporting economic growth between the historic, thriving cities of Oxford and Cambridge.

"This major railway line is expected to not only boost local economies but also, slash journey times and transform rail travel for passengers in and around the region for generations to come."

The new railway connecting Oxford with Milton Keynes and Cambridge will open up new journeys for local communities, including key interchanges with the West Coast Mainline, Midland Mainline and East Coast Mainline. It will also shorten east-west travel times and unlock new opportunities for businesses in the area, providing access to a wider pool of talent and the space to expand.

Dr Kristin-Anne Rutter, Executive Director, Cambridge Biomedical Campus Ltd, said: "Cambridge Biomedical Campus Ltd welcomes the Government's announcement of a route for the East-West rail link. We believe that connecting up two of the world's leading life science clusters, Cambridge and Oxford, has the potential to provide significant improvements to healthcare and be a key component in delivering the Government's science superpower ambitions. Along with the building of the new Cambridge South station, it will also greatly enhance the sustainability of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, by encouraging more staff and visitors to arrive by public transport."

Dr Andy Williams, Chair, Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster Board, said: “Connectivity between Oxford, Cambridge and the towns in between is vital to opening up the flow of talented people, innovation and investment needed to secure the UK’s position as a global science supercluster. This week’s Government announcement and the updated East West Rail route will boost business confidence in the region taking us one step further towards transforming the Arc into a global science destination fit to compete with other superclusters like Silicon Valley.”

Further feasibility and technical assessments are currently underway and will be presented for feedback along with the updated route proposals during the next phase of public consultation, which EWR Co expects to take place in the first half of 2024. Services between Milton Keynes and Oxford are expected to be running by 2025.

Responding to the news RIA Midlands & Eastern Chair, Sekoura Benissad, said: “We welcome the announcement which gives the UK railway suppliers greater clarity and certainty over the work pipeline, which is something RIA consistently advocates for.

“This is a key transformational project for the region, supporting jobs and better connectivity. It is now important to make sure this project continues to progress and we look forward to engaging with EWR to bring supply chain expertise across all the different areas needed for success.”

**\*Event dates, times and locations are as follows**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
<b>13 June 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>Bedford Heights</b> Manton Lane, Bedford, MK41 7NT
<b>20 June 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>Ravensden Village Hall</b> Church Hill, Ravensden, MK44 2RL
<b>22 June 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>Eversden Village Hall</b> 4 Chapel Road, Great Eversden, CB23 1HP
<b>26 June 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>Harston Village Hall</b> 20 High Street, Harston, CB22 7PX
<b>30 June 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>Summerlin Centre</b> 138 Station Road, Woburn Sands, MK17 8SG
<b>04 July 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>Lidlington Village Hall</b> High Street, Lidlington, MK43 0RN
<b>07 July 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>Tempsford Stuart Memorial Village Hall</b> Church Street, Tempsford, SG19 2AW
<b>11 July 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>Cambridge Belfry Hotel</b> Back Lane, Cambourne, CB23 6BW
<b>12 July 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>John Paul II Centre</b> The Causeway, Bicester, OX26 6AW
<b>20 July 2023</b>	2pm – 8pm	<b>Love’s Farm</b> 17 Kester Way, St Neots, PE19 6SL

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