

East West Rail reveals updated designs, accelerated construction plan, and up to five trains an hour in latest consultation

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East West Railway Company (EWR Co) has launched its latest consultation which includes updated proposals for the new railway. Key design updates include an accelerated construction programme to deliver the benefits of the railway to communities earlier and the delivery of up to five trains an hour.

The latest details are part of East West Rail's last route-wide consultation on the project, which will connect Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge before a Development Consent Order (DCO) application to build the railway is submitted in 2027.

These proposals now take into account the plans for the Universal Resort near Bedford and reflect the expected increase in passenger demand along the line and include provision for a station at Stewartby to serve the theme park.

As a result, EWR is now proposed to be built in new delivery phases* - replacing the previous connection stages - with new stations and sections of the railway opening as soon as they are ready, rather than waiting for the whole route to be completed.

This approach aims to bring forward better benefits to communities and passengers and accelerate the delivery of EWR in certain sections, allowing new communities to grow around the infrastructure in place, unlocking housing opportunities and drawing in more investment and businesses. It will also better align with getting high-capacity frequent services to the new Universal Resort earlier than previously anticipated.

A core EWR service of four trains per hour across the whole route is now proposed, with an additional fifth train running at peak times or potentially all day, if required. This fifth train could be used to enable service extensions to and from locations on the wider rail network beyond the EWR route. Five-carriage trains, rather than four carriages, are also proposed due to increased demand.

Latest proposals:

- **Tempsford** – plans to connect the proposed new town of Tempsford to the rail network will be brought forward five years earlier than originally planned. Construction of a new station at Tempsford would start by 2030, giving Tempsford access to north-south services on the East Coast Main Line. EWR platforms would follow in the mid to late 2030s. We would support increased train capacity from the west to Milton Keynes, where Universal plan to run a coach shuttle service to the new resort when it opens. Once everything is up and running, Tempsford will offer direct east-west links to Oxford, Bedford and Cambridge, as well as services to Peterborough and London. Extending the station to include a southern entrance is now proposed to provide improved access on both sides of the A421 and support a phased opening. There would be north-south connectivity via a new underpass beneath the new A421, providing active travel and bus routes to and from the station.
- **Marston Vale Line** – improvements on the Marston Vale Line will also be accelerated. This includes upgrades to the track, electrification and a new station at Stewartby to serve the Universal theme park – along with three new fully accessible stations at Woburn Sands, Ridgmont and Lidlington. These upgrades will allow four trains an hour to run between Oxford and Stewartby by the early 2030s. Universal will start with shuttle buses from Milton Keynes, but by fast tracking this part of the project, EWR trains can serve the park with 4 trains an hour within its first few years of operation.
- **Bedford** – the delivery of a brand-new station in Bedford, including a new western entrance, is being brought forward. This will regenerate a key gateway to the town and create full connectivity in every direction. Once it's complete, those four trains an hour between Oxford and Stewartby will be extended to Bedford by the mid-2030s.

- **Cambridge** – improvements in Cambridge are also being accelerated. This includes a new entrance at Cambridge station and a new station at Cambridge East, which will be ready for other services — like Greater Anglia trains to Ipswich — before East West Rail fully launches. When everything is complete, Cambridge will be better connected than ever, with stations to the north, south, east, west (at Cambourne) and in the city centre.

- **Full-service timeline** – the full end-to-end service with up to five trains an hour running all the way from Oxford to Cambridge will be operational by the mid to late 2030s.

- **Electrification** – hybrid electric/battery-equipped trains are planned to operate along the railway to enhance decarbonisation, support UK net zero goals, and reduce emissions.

- **Modern stations** – train stations will support multi-modal travel with integrated bus and active travel connections, mobility hubs, and improved station access for walking, wheeling, cycling, taxis, and parking.

- **Environment** – to achieve sustainability goals, the designs seek to realise opportunities to enhance and strengthen green infrastructure networks, to benefit local people and nature along the line of the route. Environmental assessment and mitigation proposals include habitat creation, flood mitigation, noise barrier location development, drainage pond and floodplain compensation locations, species connectivity (green bridges, corridors) and landscape integration and reduced cutting/embankment heights.

David Hughes, CEO, East West Railway Company, said: “These updated proposals mark a major step forward for East West Rail to help ensure communities see the benefits of the project sooner as we finalise the design. Faster delivery, more frequent services and new stations will help unlock housing, support new jobs and attract investment, while giving residents and businesses better connections between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge.

“By bringing forward key elements of the railway and planning for increased demand, we are helping to ensure the infrastructure is in place to support future growth and opportunities for our communities. I encourage residents, businesses and stakeholders to take part in the consultation and share their views on our latest plans.”

Rail Minister, Lord Peter Hendy, said: “East West Rail will unlock the potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, providing greater connectivity across the region and delivering on our Plan for Change mission to drive economic growth, jobs and homes. This consultation reflects continuing progress on the final design for this critical railway and another step forward to delivering the benefits of this project to a

multitude of individuals, local communities and businesses.”

Gidon Freeman, Vice-President, External Affairs, Universal Destinations and Experiences, said: “One of the reasons we selected our site for a new entertainment resort complex featuring a world class theme park is its central location and excellent transport links. East West Rail can further improve that connectivity – its proposed station by Universal would enhance guest and team member arrival with a new link to our resort from across the Ox-Cam Corridor.”

Dr Andy Williams, Chair, Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster Board, said: “East West Rail will greatly improve connectivity between Oxford, Cambridge and the towns in between, stimulating the flow of talented people, innovation and investment needed to secure the UK’s position as a global science supercluster. It will boost business confidence in the region, providing opportunities to expand to other locations along the route, such as Bedford and Milton Keynes, and connecting a region of 3.5 million people ready to compete with other global superclusters like Silicon Valley.”

Feedback from the consultation will be taken into account as designs for the railway are finalised ready for the submission of a Development Consent Order in 2027.

The consultation will run for eight weeks from April 14 to June 9, 2026. A series of public drop-in events are being held across the route to provide opportunities to meet the EWR Co team and find out more about the updated proposals*.

For more information about the consultation and how to get involved, please visit the [consultation page](#), contact EWR Co’s helpdesk at contact@eastwestrail.co.uk or call 0330 134 0067.

Feedback must be received by 23:59 on 9 June 2026.