

East West Rail Co

By email to:

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Response to East West Rail: Route Wide Consultation

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

Introduction

In response to previous consultation, our position has been that EWR should enter Cambridge from the north to better serve the northern growth areas and reduce the impact on the countryside. We have raised concerns regarding Biodiversity Net Gain targets and site specific impacts on County Wildlife Sites at Coldham's Common, Long Road and Barnwell Common. We have supported an eastern access to Cambridge Station and any changes to the Grade II listed building must respect its architectural importance. We have advocated for a longer tunnel at Chapel Hill and expressed concern about the impact on villages such as Harston and Newton.

In relation to the current consultation, we wish to make the following additional comments.

Barnwell Common

Cambridge Past, Present & Future owns the Grade I Listed Leper Chapel of St Mary Magdalene and the Barnwell Meadows County Wildlife Site to the north of Newmarket Road and east of the railway line. Regrettably, we are unable to ascertain from the current consultation plans what specific impacts, if any, EWR will have on the land within our ownership.

Following email correspondence in December 2025, it was noted that we did not receive your land plan letter dated 14th November detailing the anticipated interaction between EWR proposals and our property. As we have not yet been able to review these details or hold a clarifying discussion, we kindly request that your team contacts us via the details above to arrange a meeting. This will enable us to fully understand the implications for these heritage and ecological assets and offer informed feedback.

Coldham's Common

Coldham's Common is an important expanse of open land in east Cambridge. It is part of the open space stretching from the River Cam, through Ditton Meadows and Stourbridge Common to Coldham's Common, valued for nature and for recreation. The railway line which bisects the Common is an exceptionally valuable wildlife corridor. The vegetation bordering the railway functions as a crucial wildlife corridor, connecting the river and these Commons to the surrounding countryside to the east.

- **Vegetation and Habitat Loss:** We note that the plans show "woodland planting" being proposed along extensive sections of the track where mature, ecologically valuable shrubs and trees already exist. We are concerned that the current vegetation may be removed, perhaps unnecessarily. We would object to its removal because it would take many decades to recover to the extent that it could sustain anything like the level of biodiversity and habitat value that is evident at the moment. We trust that the level of biodiversity will be revealed in any habitat surveys undertaken. It is already known that there are declining bird species, such as Song Thrush being sustained in the trackside vegetation as well as an abundance of other wildlife. It should also be noted that the vegetation alongside the track was extensively cut back approximately 18 months ago, revealing the substantial corridor width for the re-doubling of the line. Any further removal of vegetation would therefore be both unnecessary and highly detrimental.

We have similar concerns about the impact of the proposal on vegetation as the line continues from Coldham's Common, before crossing over Barnwell Road, through the woodland south of Nuttings Road, and alongside Burnside Lakes.

- **Visual Screening and Electrification:** the vegetation provides an important visual screen, helping to soften the impact from the Common of the urban character of the railway. We note however that the plans include new electrification of this section of the line which involves the erection of gantries supporting the wires. This would result in the railway line becoming much more intrusive in the landscape and negatively affecting the amenity value of the Coldham's Common.
- **Mitigation Requests:** We therefore request that the section of the line through Coldham's Common does not have overhead line electrification, as is proposed for other sections of the line. In addition, East West Rail could undertake off-site tree and shrub planting on the Common, particularly on the south side of the track, to soften the effect of the gantries and wires. Most of the off-site planting could be undertaken early to enable more beneficial mitigation.
- **Pedestrian and Cycle Infrastructure:** The consultation presents a major opportunity to improve the active travel network across the Common. The existing pedestrian underpass on the west side of the common is narrow with low clearance, yet it sits on a highly trafficked cycle and footway forming part of the Chisholm Trail. The temporary closure of the line required for construction works should be leveraged as an opportunity to rebuild this underpass to modern design standards, ensuring a minimum width of 5 meters to safely accommodate pedestrian and cycle flows.

East Station

We do not consider that the proposed location for the East Station is the best location, based on the following planning constraints:

- **Environmental Risks:** The proposed site is a former landfill site characterised by significant ground contamination and land fill gas risks, posing complex remediation challenges.
- **Residential Amenity:** The alignment runs in close proximity to numerous residential properties in Cherry Hinton. Following double-tracking, some dwellings will sit within 5 meters of the operational line, presenting severe noise and vibration concerns.
- **Location:** The location sits too close to Cambridge Station. Future residents of the planned Cambridge East neighbourhood (Marshall's Airport site) will be located just 2 to 3.5 miles from Cambridge Station—a manageable 12-to-20-minute bicycle ride. If it is assumed that for most trains from

Cambridge East passengers will have to change at Cambridge Station, therefore catching a train from Cambridge East Station is not going to be attractive option when it is as quick and easy to cycle directly to Cambridge Station.

- **Alternative location:** EWR Co. should evaluate whether a Cambridge East Station would be more effectively located to directly serve major regional employment hubs, such as Arm in Cherry Hinton and Capital Park in Fulbourn.

Train Care Centre location

We hold significant objections to the proposed location of the Train Care Centre north of Fulbourn, owing to its severe landscape, heritage, and community impacts.

- **Landscape and Visual Impact:** The local landscape character is predominantly flat. Introducing large-scale industrial buildings up to 9 meters in height on an elevated farmland site would cause uncharacteristic landform changes, substantial light pollution, and the inappropriate creeping urbanisation of Fulbourn's northern edge.
- **Green Belt Policy:** The development would intrude into the Green Belt, conflicting with local and national policies aimed at preserving openness and green infrastructure. Depots and car parks can be classified as inappropriate development and very special circumstances must be demonstrated.
- **Heritage Assets:** The site threatens sensitive heritage assets, including scheduled monuments and prehistoric sites, through visual intrusion and potential archaeological disturbance, with no current field surveys to confirm impacts.
- **Water Assets:** we are concerned about risks to the underlying aquifer and wider hydrological network from greywater disposal.
- **Community and Noise Impacts:** The facility will negatively impact a substantial number of residential properties, including new housing developments. Increased train movements—particularly overnight—will generate unacceptable noise, light intrusion, and vibration, undermining local tranquillity and dark skies. The surrounding rural road network is also entirely unsuitable for the projected volume of heavy vehicle traffic during both construction and operation.
- **Site Selection:** there are serious concerns locally about the rigour of the analysis that led to the site selection and the dismissal of almost all the numerous other site options reviewed. We would urge EWR to find a location for the Train Care Centre, closer to appropriate urban infrastructure, that would not have the environmental and quality of life impacts on a local rural community.
- **Network Capacity:** We note that twin-tracking terminates at the Cherry Hinton turn-back facility, with only a single track continuing to the Train Care Centre. Utilising this single-track line to access the depot will consume valuable line capacity, effectively blocking future opportunities to enhance local passenger services to Newmarket and beyond.

Conclusion on East Station and Train Care Centre: These cumulative impacts lead us to conclude that EWR Co. must rethink its strategy for stabling and turning trains. Large-scale capital investment on the Newmarket line should be deferred until a coherent, long-term strategy for that corridor is established in full collaboration with the local community.

Biodiversity Net Gain

We encourage EWR Co. to commit to 20% BNG, to ensure that it is aligned with the Greater Cambridge draft Local Plan and to align with Cambridgeshire's aspiration to double the amount of nature rich habitats by 2040, as set out in the [Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough](#). This is needed to support the ambition for economic growth, to ensure that the rapid development of greater Cambridge is genuinely sustainable and benefits existing and new communities.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely
Sarah Nicholas
Principal Planning Officer