

Bedford Borough Council (BBC) /East West Rail (EWR) – Minutes of Meeting



Date: Wednesday 3 rd December 2025	Time: 3.30pm – 4.30pm	Venue: Committee Room 1
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Invited parties		Attended
TW	Mayor Tom Wootton – Mayor of Bedford Borough BBC	Y
JW	Deputy Mayor Councillor Jim Weir	N
NG	Councillor Nicola Gribble – Councillor for Renhold and Ravensden, Portfolio Holder for Environment BBC	Y
AS	Councillor Andrea Spice – Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth Planning and Prosperity BBC	N
ARC	Antigua Riley Corion – Community Engagement Officer	Y
JBB	Joanne Branson Budd - Head of Capital Projects, Infrastructure and Sustainable Travel BBC	Y
GC	Gavin Chinniah - Head of Planning and Building Control BBC	Y
CC	Cara Cosson – Personal Assistant to Mayor Tom Wootton (Minutes) BBC	Y
[EWR]	[Redacted at request of East West Railway Company]	Y
[EWR]	[Redacted at request of East West Railway Company]	Y
[EWR]	[Redacted at request of East West Railway Company]	Y
[EWR]	[Redacted at request of East West Railway Company]	Y

*NB These minutes are not meant to be verbatim, but a summary of the discussion.

No	Item
1	Apologies Deputy Mayor Cllr Weir, Cllr Spice
2	Welcome and Introductions
3	<p>Agenda suggested by EWR ([EWR]) circulated by [EWR]</p> <p>Review of previous actions</p> <p>[EWR] Advised a note has been circulated to advise where we think we are</p> <p>CC Advised Mayor Tom has been in meetings so he may not have seen this as yet</p> <p>[EWR] Technical, note for Ashburnham Road should be with BBC by end of this week</p> <p>ACTION: EWR to provide note for Ashburnham Road</p> <p>[EWR] Summarised actions, included drop-in sessions at Ashburnham Road and activity since the start of the year</p> <p>JBB Advised hadn't seen the document yet, asked if the document included the stakeholder feedback previously requested to enable BBC to provide the requisite support to BBC residents and businesses?</p>

[EWR] No it doesn't, just a summary of the engagement that has taken place – would you like a summary of that?

JBB Yes please, had been asked for at last meeting to help understand where things are

ACTION: EWR to provide summary of feedback from engagement and key themes/concerns.

ARC Also asked for number of people contacted/reached, as she had attended both the drop-in sessions and they had not met with many residents/businesses. Would be great to understand the other engagement that you (EWR) are doing.

ACTION: EWR to provide details of engagement and list of addresses

[EWR] Noted only 2 people turned up to the Ashburnham Road drop-in session on Monday Meeting with GP surgery taking place next week.

NG Is this the first meeting with GP surgery?

[EWR] No, 10th September and 29th September and the one planned for next week.

JBB Confirmed she had met with the GP during a door knocking exercise, spoken with Dr Basra, think they felt very alone, didn't feel supported, or that much information was being shared with them, so be mindful when you meet them, they are looking for support, and to understand what happens next

[EWR] They get advised to appoint an agent, take expert advice which will be paid for

[EWR] We point them to advisors and pay for it, its important in this process that they have that advice

JBB Is the advice capped at a certain level, concerns raised by others?

[EWR] Reasonable level.

JBB GP surgery it's a case of buying suitable premises, refurbishment etc. This will not be a quick process.

[EWR] Will take that back and come back to you with a summary of the discussions and feedback during those meetings

ACTION: EWR to provide summary of discussions and feedback from meetings with GP

[EWR] Report details all community engagement and various meetings in the POETS area as well, we have been aiming to up our engagement and listening to feedback

NG What feedback have you had?

[EWR] Focusing on supporting through the processes, a couple property owners asking about acquisition supporting with that and supporting with technical and legal processes, reached a conclusion they are happy with/accepting

NG Back to GP surgery – we have spoken to Dr Basra, emphasise that area is a deprived area 4,500 patients, they are there because they can walk to it, there are no parking spaces, an out-of-town solution is not meeting their needs and its an awful lot of people.

TW Have you (EWR) met with CQC/ NHS high ups?

NG Or the ICB?

ARC Advised she had discussions with ICB about drs surgery, they are keen to connect with the right person in EWR once they understand how much it will cost to relocate the service - 4500 massive primary care provision needed for the bus station/town centre

[EWR] We will have meeting next Tuesday, note ARC has contact details, we are capturing feedback

ARC Have you been in contact with ICB as the team I have spoken with had not heard or been contacted by EWR, which is a concern that they haven't been contacted about the GP surgery

[EWR] Not listed here but will take back

GC To note a new drs surgery will not happen overnight, need active engagement with ICB/NHS Trust, takes time needs to be in place/relocated, I'm surprised that you have not had that engagement yet and if you are looking to submit the DCO application in early 2027 it does not give a lot of time

[EWR] We have been reaching out to try to have the meeting, will understand if there are any issues, and get the right contact and when we have had that meeting, we can progress and will pick up after meeting them next week

GC Comment re residents POETS consultation in person session a few weeks ago- lots raised about values of properties are you looking to re provide the sales values are you looking at that?

[EWR] The case raised at the residents meeting has been addressed, don't want to speak re confidentiality perspective, but have been working with them and we believe we have got to a point where they are engaging and addressing concerns raised at meeting – (turned to [EWR]) don't know if I can say anymore in terms of details

NG Said they were accepting but didn't say they were happy?

[EWR] Can't speak on behalf but having regular conversations with them

GC It was quite a heated conversation at that meeting

[EWR] Meeting on 6th

GC Yes

[EWR] [EWR] and [Redacted] met with them the follow week, we don't want to use the word happy, need to be mindful of confidentiality, we accept we need to raise out game but think the couple in more comfortable place, we can't speak for them

TW When we met last time, I said the drs surgery would be a worry, 2.5yrs hard work, I think this will be the toughest thing you do

[EWR] Wanted to have next engagement with surgery then will pick up with the ICB, thank you Mayor Tom for this caution and we hear it. We have 4 years before we need it. We will have meeting next week and immediately link in with ICB.

[EWR] Carrying on with action list - summarised discussion with residents and businesses, hearing there is more information requested, there is a fortnightly meeting in with officers - is this the level of detail in those meetings or is there more feedback needed?

JBB It's about hearing the feedback you are getting on the ground so we can understand the concerns and put support mechanisms in place.

[EWR] Noted

GC From our perspective as an officer, needs to be a more structured process of engagement with officers/councillors, Jo and I are getting a lot of meetings with EWR e.g. construction traffic etc need to be structured dates in diary.

[EWR] I know [Redacted] is the point of contact for Bedford area specifically, we have changed the way our engagement team is set up for geographical focus. LA forum tomorrow, list not ready to share but work ongoing, and heard from numerous LA and will get to you hopefully before Christmas – work is ongoing.

GC Ask another question; do we yet have that alternative design proposal we were promised today?

JBB Which bit?

GC Alternative around Bridge alternative compound around Midland Station.

[EWR]/[EWR] Nearly there will get to you this week

ACTION: EWR to provide Alternative design proposal around Bridge alternative compound around Midland Station

JBB Can you clarify what stage in PACE you are at?

[EWR] Phase 1 but there are engineering stages within that and we are closing on 2.

[EWR] Summarised other mitigations/info sent to date, including how potential traffic issues might be mitigated.

JBB Big area of concern impacts of how it will be monitored and managed going forwards, it only takes one small thing to impact the whole network, so would like outcomes of modelling – understand it is ongoing.

[EWR] Need the help of the council, that's key to us and it needs to work well

JBB We have raised that at the Highways working group

[EWR] To make sure we have the feedback on design matters, has that been fed it or is there still more that we are waiting for?

JBB Ongoing process, we have been advised it's work in progress, we haven't seen anything/outcomes

[EWR] Monthly meeting note no information on formal design- do you need more information before formal feedback can be given?

JBB Which meeting?

[EWR] Monthly Highway working group

JBB Action by colleague Dave Bennet to feedback which I understand he has done

[EWR] Don't think we have received @ this morning

JBB Will check

ACTION:JBB to check Dave Bennet has provided feedback

[EWR] Slides shared in October were confidential at the time, now You Said We Did Report has been published, watermark has been removed and slides re-issued

EWR to provide a map of Ashburnham Road with red line on it – now working on maps to reflect recent changes – will be updated in January and available ahead of next engagement February – March time.

JBB Safeguarding notice served on 19th November – are there further amendments to that ?

[EWR] No, they are being reflected in the maps.

NG Long time to wait for the maps if it is re drawing red lines?

[EWR] That's across the whole project – will see if we can get that area out quicker

ACTION: EWR to provide map of Ashburnham Road with red line on

[EWR] Slides sent out, answer sent yesterday to NG questions

NG You said you have spoken to Clapham Parish Council about Carriage Drive, is the meeting in the book yet?

[EWR] Don't think have date – let me come back to you.

ACTION: EWR to confirm meeting date

TW When you go to Clapham, they will ask about a tunnel – will you be plain that there will be no tunnel so they are aware

[EWR] No tunnel

[EWR] Got it, we will get the date of the next meeting

TW Also, they have a blight on their road and they were blocked from coming into town, you will need to understand sensitivities of cutting them off, very sensitive cut off previously due to the roundabout. The bypass was built as there was a lot of traffic in Clapham, very sensitive about traffic, new school built right next to where you will be building this railway. When you go to Clapham there will be lots of questions.

[EWR] Actions list concluded – anything else?

ARC Has been asking for a full list of affected properties, addresses, so we can put support in place for resident. Have for Ashburnham Road – but we don't for the rest of the Bedford patch need the rest please, would be really helpful.

TW Including businesses in Queens Park

ARC All affected properties subject to compulsory purchase so we can understand tenure types.

ACTION: EWR to provide list of affected properties addresses for Bedford including Queens Park.

Engagement

[EWR] Spoken about engagement activities – finalising dates for next engagement in You Said We Did Report, hope to get dates in February

JBB February seems a long time off and if you are proposing to go out to non-stat consultation in Spring?

[EWR] Late Spring early Summer

JBB It doesn't leave long, why February for further consultation with residents

[EWR] We can challenge and see if we can bring that forward, it is a balance on whether we have enough information and are ready but I will take that back and see if there is movement

[EWR] We have a design drop on 19th December so that freezes design on all feedback to date, that why January to produce plans

[EWR] To clarify, the engagement activities we are planning at the start of next year, when we consult the feedback we receive in that engagement will not be represented in consultation materials. The intention is we go and engage with communities so they have the time to understand the proposals ahead of consultation. We don't want to lead you into thinking the engagement we have in February will result in changes for the consultation in late Spring early Summer, it's just that we will have detailed conversations with the people really impacted.

JBB When you talk about design freeze, just wanted to check that further changes will not be considered, is it a design pause?

[EWR] End of December design drop is what we will take forward to prepare our consultation materials for the Spring Summer.

[EWR] Any other questions on engagement?

ARC Helpful to understand what you planning to do by community drop ins. What can we expect and how can we make sure it is appropriate for our community?

Big point for me, trying to understand how can work with [Redacted], the ones on Ashburnham Road have been for those residents, but are these community drop ins we can invite people to- will they be more open?

[EWR] 2 parts – 1 engagement activity: design updates, opportunity for people to ask questions and speak to technical experts, for who community not a restricted access event and will be in locations of areas impacted.

Next couple of weeks will be 2 community pop ups along the line of the route, these are for general awareness, public locations, shopping centres, supermarkets having a couple of people with a few leaflets and information.

I will connect you in with [Redacted] who is tuning those.

We are not planning to do invites/publicity on those, just in locations along the route and is different to targeted engagement.

[EWR] Neither of those approaches are designed solely for residents in red line boundary, open to the public, information sharing one trying to engage with communities. We would love to have your input.

ARC Just about being aware in timely manner when it comes to engagement so we can ensure we are doing our bit for our residents and keeping them informed.

GC Question regarding design drop – following technical note when submitted and when we assess/submit, would you take account of that change?

[EWR] We share the technical note and if the Borough has views we will listen, don't know if that will result in us changing the design – but we will listen and take feedback, can't say it will affect design.

GC It's quite important of the council to know.

[EWR] We've had something like 10,000 bits of feedback on the design, so we will listen

GC We have been asking for that technical note for months now

[EWR] I understand but do you get my point, we want feedback, but it doesn't mean will affect the final design

JBB In terms of development and selection in terms on the design of Ashburnham need substance to understand that other options have been considered and discounted that the only option is to demolish those additional properties. We have talked about it but we have seen no substance to it, there's still key information we are waiting to see

[EWR] We will send technical note out

NG When?

[EWR]/[EWR] By the end of week

ACTION: EWR to provide technical note

Project update

[EWR] invited [EWR] to update

[EWR] Covered mostly, big milestone was to get to point in November when we published our response to the consultation, there was a comms update week before last, which has been done. Now landed, next stage for EWR is gearing up for next phase of engagement and consultation next year. The Planning and Infrastructure Bill is expected to get Royal Assent before Christmas but it's not there yet, this is the next main focus on how we will do consultation in 2026.

Items from BBC

TW Lot of officer time taken up, incurred big bills, what is the procedure of getting some money back, how does it work do we send bills?

[EWR] PPA is in place

[EWR] In place now

TW That's about planning, but there are other bills on customer engagement, residents. What can we bill for? Its not just one or two officers, there are large meetings and lots of officer time taken up on this.

[EWR] This is outside of this and I am not expert, doesn't sound unreasonable

[EWR] We can clarify but its effectively all related to planning and DCO

TW Bruised as we had Cleat Hill and government has said no

[EWR] We need to link in

[EWR] Inclined to be generous, but need to check and be mindful of guidelines

TW Is it paid monthly or how?

NG Need it to be paid monthly

TW These are questions our finance team will ask.

JBB PPA signed end July, lot of time spent external advice bought in since last non-stat and invoice to be sent in with timesheets. Circulated process internally for officers to document what they are spending time on. Then we will invoice for July, August September October and possibly November, then invoice monthly.

My understanding PPA is not capped and conversations will be a dedicated additional post, and I have had conformation in meetings that you are happy to fund – have sent off internally for evaluation waiting for that to come back. Once we know cost, it will be for a minimum 2year term told we can invoice that under the PPA and it's whether we can we have the 2year funding up front.

[EWR] Don't know

[EWR] If that is happening, my instinctive reaction is fine- send us the bill and we will write the cheque. I just need to check regulations.

JBB Financial predicament of the council is that we will need to do it that way

[EWR] Fine, ww want to be as helpful as possible

[EWR] Will generate invoice, catch up and then issue monthly

[EWR] Will flag with the team

[EWR] Can you give us a cost estimate month by month?

JBB Difficult to forecast, playing catch up with a number of meetings

[EWR] Will work with you, picking up on TW point we don't want a surprise

JBB Can attempt to forecast but front loaded at the moment

[EWR] Understand reactive - shout to me if problematic/ if we are not paying the bills

ARC left the meeting 16:16 – apologies to attend another meeting

TW Could we have an update about the hospital?

How are you going to build on that site and how is it going to work – getting a bit of a joke how do you run a hospital with no car park, while you build a big car park

It's our only hospital, anything else is miles away, it's a problem, you have had constant meetings with them. It's not going away is the onus on them or you to help them out?

[EWR] Bringing in [EWR] on this – I haven't met with CEO of the Trust for a while, but my understanding is we now have an agreed solution for the Elective centre which replaces all in full plus the existing car parking all within the footprint. What I am not sighted on is the construction phase

NG Where is everything going to go while it is being built?

[EWR] Think [EWR] said plan is multi storey will go in corner, footprint can be different sizes.

GC Has that been finalised yet as NHS said need 800, then 750, then 1000 then 1200 spaces

[EWR] CEO said they are happy as we are replacing with more than existing

GC Ok but in planning we have not been told, we don't know how many spaces, we might know where it is going to go but does it all work in terms of modelling and impact?

[EWR] We can take you through the position agreed with hospital – they are not sure on phasing of Elective centre as it is not funded yet.

[EWR] Planning to build Elective centre first, then us (EWR), then the 2nd building gets done in phase 2, that's the plan,

[EWR] Can we get update for next meeting and jointly with hospital.

TW Switch of leadership at hospital.

[EWR] Since about end September we have been heavily focussed on hospital on what does the end solution look like that accommodates their aspirations on the Elective centre and replacement car park. Reached a solution where everyone was happy with that and we are happy to take you through in some detail with traffic modelling to date.

Next challenge is the construction sequencing on how to maintain a parking provision while all of this is going on and I don't know where we have got to - we need to take that action away

ACTION: EWR to go through hospital/car park provision and construction phasing with BBC

[EWR] Looking at temporary car park on Network Rail land

TW Lot of land, waste ground which could be tarmacked

[EWR] We will not leave without a car park whilst constructing

	<p>[EWR] That is the commitment, it is our problem we have to fix it. Think there is space/options, we need to look at more detail but we know we can't take the car park away and our commitment is to maintain parking</p> <p>GC Problem is the amount of traffic in Britannia Rd and impact into hospital /station etc – have you done the modelling for that?</p> <p>[EWR] End state solution, [Redacted] and team worked through.</p> <p>NG Can we have sight of that?</p> <p>[EWR] Will take you through it</p> <p>[EWR] We have got to the point we have fixed, next step commercial stuff, phasing, we have three design workshops coming up one before Christmas, to finalise area. We had to wait to see planning application which they shared with us</p> <p>GC Now submitted</p> <p>[EWR] Seen it and there is a bit more detailed work to be done and to tie together.</p> <p>[EWR] Just on the commercial discussions with the hospital to be absolutely clear, we are clear we need to pay for the car park, there are complexities who owns it currently, who gets the rent, where will parking fees flow, we will build and pay, think it is mostly public sector.</p> <p>[EWR] Went to appoint an agent, but conflict of interest as those agents were bidding for work with EWR and advice was needed.</p> <p>TW Sooner or later we need to tell us and the public how the hospital will operate– will be guided by you.</p> <p>[EWR] We will take that as an action to focus at our next meeting around planning for the car park /hospital</p> <p>ACTION: EWR to provide update at next meeting</p> <p>JBB Regarding highway feedback- in meeting questions about design proposals, not at a sufficient level or detail to review. The only outstanding query is about futureproofing Prebend Relief Road, we shouldn't prohibit that being an option and factor in design – agreed by GC</p> <p>[EWR] Will look at actions</p> <p><i>TW left the meeting at 16.27 apologies to attend another meeting</i></p> <p>Meeting concluded</p>
4	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>ACTION: CC to arrange next meeting for the end January 2026 not Mondays or Fridays</p> <p>ACTION: EWR to circulate Agenda in advance with outcome of issues</p>