

## **Category 4: Demolition of houses in Poets etc.**

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 Rail Company**
- **NR – Network Rail**

- 1. How is East West Rail going to help people who are now unable to sell their properties because of these plans? I do NOT mean the Need to Sell Scheme which I am very familiar with, as that is not going to be available for at least a year. I mean homeowners who need to sell their properties in the next 1-6 months. As soon as the plans were made public at the end of March, my property became unsellable, and I am now likely to be in limbo for a very long time, unable to sell my house, until the Need to Sell Scheme is eventually made available, possibly some time next year. In my case, if a potential buyer was to google “East West Rail” and “Palgrave Road” (which any savvy buyer would do), the first search result that comes up is the Technical Report which states that demolition of some properties on Palgrave Road may be required. This will instantly deter any prospective buyer.**

We recognise the urgency in providing a workable resolution to this issue. Our first aim is to challenge the requirement of EWRC to take additional land. We believe that the railway can be constructed with much less land being taken. If we are successful in making this case to EWRC the result will be that fewer houses require demolition and fewer are blighted.

In our consultation response we are stressing the requirement for EWRC to take urgent action now. We believe that the ‘Need to Sell Scheme’ needs to be modified and that EWRC offer to purchase properties where there is certainty that they will need to be acquired, and in addition, that the purchase price should be at least 10% higher than the market value.

- 2. Which houses are going to be demolished to make way for this in Bedford?**

It is not certain which houses are to be demolished. The information provided by EWRC identifies houses which are likely to be required as part of their current plan. We believe that the railway can be constructed using much less land. We are questioning their technical analysis in relation to the amount of land they require, and pressing them to reassess. If we are successful we hope that the result will be many fewer houses may be required.

- 3. Could you please advise whether the proposed new track alignment in Cauldwell means that some nearby properties could be at risk of being**

**demolished? These include the Arts & Crafts Centre, Cauldwell Community Centre and residential properties on Althorpe Street and Ossory Way.**

The EWRC has not suggested that either centre or any of the properties in Althorpe Street and Ossory Way are at risk of demolition.

- 4. I am submitting a question for the meeting regarding the rail extension and it is at the end of this letter but first may I add my voice to the many people who are seriously concerned at the plight of those who are at risk of losing their homes to this venture? Surely nothing is more precious than a home? And I fear that, historically, compulsorily purchased homes leave erstwhile occupants much worse off. PLEASE do not cocoon yourselves with the thought that the greater good is served by the sacrifice of a few. Unless you can reassure us that FULL AND FAIR RECOMPENSE will be made to those people who will be made HOMELESS, you must not continue with these developments. We live in times when politicians are trusted less and less and seen as self-serving and greedy. I beg that you use powers wisely and benevolently. Thank you for reading this. HERE IS MY QUESTION FOR THE MEETING “Can you assure us that any home occupiers, whether owners or tenants, made homeless by these plans, will be FULLY AND FAIRLY recompensed and that budgets for all proposed works which include compulsory purchase and home demolition reflect these costs?”**

We do not underestimate the impact on the residents whose properties are currently blighted by the threat of compulsory purchase. We know that people will be angry, upset and worried. We will do our utmost to ease the worries by pressing EWRC for better compensation and by trying to reduce the number of properties that may be subject to acquisition.

There are rules governing the compulsory purchase of property which ensures that the purchase price is the market value for the premises (ignoring the fact of any blight). The aim is that the owner receives a fair price. We are pressing for an increased compensation payment to those owners whose houses are compulsorily acquired.

We are also questioning EWRC as to whether they need to take as much land. We believe that the railway can be constructed using less land. If we can persuade them of this situation and get them to rethink their land requirement, we are hopeful that less land will be taken and so there will be fewer homes and residents affected.

- 5. Why do the homes adjacent to Shakespeare Road and on Ashburnham Road need to be demolished for 2 new rails? There are already 4 rails North of Bedford Station. Why can't these be used to the junction where the line would switch East TOWARDS Cambridge?**

EWRC believes that two additional lines are required to run a separated service from trains on the Midland Main Line. However, the Council believes that it is possible to integrate both services on the existing four-track railway and has made this case to EWRC and has provided evidence to this effect.

In addition, even if six tracks were required, we believe the tracks could fit into less space than that shown by EWRC on their plans, and as a result, fewer properties would need to be acquired.

We realise how important this issues is to local residents and in particular those directly affected, and we are raising this issue with EWR as matter of urgency.

**6. Unnecessary impact on home owners - noise, loss of homes. We understand nearly a hundred homes will be lost and a number of people have already been put on notice. This is terrible for them but it is made worse knowing the preferred route makes no sense.**

We are hopeful that we can persuade EWRC that they need less land and as a result fewer houses will need to be acquired. The preferred route is about creating long term opportunity. It is likely to make more sense retrospectively once the benefits are all delivered than now when those benefits cannot be seen or used.

The business case for EWR is built upon long term demand across a wide swathe between Oxford and Cambridge. The government believe that future prosperity will be linked to connectivity to and from these locations. This connectivity will stimulate high tech innovative companies which are expected to locate in locations with good rail connectivity. Connecting Bedford directly to this system is important to the future prosperity of the town and Borough.

**7. The council has hired consultants and briefed them to find ways of reducing the chances of some demolitions. Can the council please brief its consultants to find ways to avoid ALL demolitions of homes in the Borough? Can the council please also brief the consultants to find ways of maximising the chances of there being a fast-line platform at Bedford's main station which would both help reduce the chance of demolitions and improve the chances of trains from Leicester to London calling at Bedford?**

We believe that the railway can be constructed with much less land being taken. If we are successful in persuading this case to EWRC the result will be that fewer houses require demolition and fewer are blighted. In terms of the redevelopment of Bedford station we agree that the construction of a fast-line platform is essential for the reasons that you mention.

**8. If EWR are adamant for a 6 track around Bedford station, will you reconsider an alternative route, to avoid less impact on peoples homes?**

**There are documents dating back to 2018 from network rail stating the impact on homes for 6 tracks that you must have been aware of.**

We believe that it is possible to integrate both Midland Main Line and EWR services on the existing four-track railway. We also believe that EWRC could fit two additional tracks into less space. So even if EWRC insist on six tracks we are hopeful that we can persuade them that they need less land and as a result fewer houses will need to be acquired. We realise how important it is to local residents and in particular those directly affected, and we are raising this issue with EWR as matter of urgency.

Although the Council was aware that Network Rail (NR) was looking into the possibility of 6 tracking north from Bedford, the Council was not officially consulted on this until the recent consultation.

Now that the NR work is available, we are pleased to note that they also found six tracks to be unnecessary.

- 9. Q: Will BBC stop supporting Route E now that EWR Co have confirmed the requirement for the devastation of 100+ properties, including demolition and removal of gardens because of the expansion of Midland Road station and the new requirement for 6 tracks when existing Midland Road station ?**

Our focus is on alleviating the issues in respect to the potential impact on local residents whose houses might be compulsorily purchased. Our view is that the railway enhancement can be delivered with a much smaller requirement to acquire land and property. We are pursuing this with EWR as a matter of some priority. The Council supports route E because it believes this presents the greatest opportunity for growth and prosperity to the Borough as a whole.

- 10. Will Bedford Borough Council commit to avoiding the (apparently considerable) destruction of housing in the Poet's Area of Bedford?**

BBC will do its utmost to ensure that EWR fully consider alternative proposals to mitigate the impact of the rail enhancement proposals in the area. We believe the infrastructure enhancements can be delivered with less land than EWRC is proposing. If we can persuade EWRC of our case we are hopeful that the number of houses affected is greatly reduced.

- 11. Why was Bedford Borough Council not aware that routing the EWR line through Bedford would result in the demolition of in at least 60 homes in the Poet's area? Were they not informed during the 2019 consultation that an extra two tracks would be required and that again Bromham Road Bridge would need to be widened? If they were not aware and this has only just come to light then this proves that the original consultation was deeply flawed.**

The 2019 consultation, which concerned five different routes, was not at the level of detail to specify the precise impact at any location. It is only through the 2021 consultation process that we have become aware of the proposed impact in the Poet's area. We are surprised at the number of houses that may be involved. However, we believe that EWRC could deliver their enhancements using significantly less land. If less land is taken, then we hope that fewer homes will be affected. We are pursuing this approach with EWRC as a matter of some priority. The 2019 EWRC consultation concerned strategic decisions on route selection. The 2021 EWRC consultation includes much more detail because it is focused upon one route.

**12. I am a resident of the Poets Area of Bedford, One who's home may be subject to CPO under the preferred track alignment North of the station. What research have Bedford Borough Council undertaken, or will be undertaking to establish to impact of air pollution, noise AND congestion the proposed redevelopment of the Midland Mainline station and additional track will have on the area, both during construction and after completion? When will the findings be made public?**

BBC has commissioned work to demonstrate to EWRC that an EWR service can operate on 4 tracks north of Bedford Midland Station through the Poets Area of Bedford, and we will continue to make this case.

However, the scheme promoter, in this case EWRC, is obligated under UK law to examine and make public the environmental impacts of the scheme through an Environmental Impact Assessment. This detailed work will help EWRC to make their choice of route within corridor E before the next, statutory, stage of the consultation process.

**13. 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.

**14. I'd like to draw your attention to the major disruption to the life of Bedford and surrounding area residents if the East West Rail (EWR) goes ahead in its current form. In addition to the well published demolition of many homes, the project will impact Bedford in many other ways. In particular Great Ouse Way, Bromham Road, Ford End Road, Paula Radcliffe Way,**

**Clapham Road and several others road which will need to be closed for extended periods of time. The recent Bromham Road Rail Bridge rebuilding took nearly 2 years. It is unlikely that re-widening of the bridge will take any less time as all of the services will still need to be re-routed. In the case of the Great Ouse Way this will need to be closed whilst major earth works take place to raise the height of the roadway. Whilst the exact timing & duration of disruption are unknown, it's unlikely to be less than 12 months. The consultation document also implies that the Clapham Road Roundabout will also need to be raised/modified. As for the Ford End Bridge it is likely that it will need to be demolished & re-built. Again yet more disruption to Bedford.**

As part of the BBC consultation response, we have made clear our requirement that Great Ouse Way is kept open at all times with the provision of a temporary bridge. We have also suggested an alternative route alignment to the south of the River Great Ouse which we hope will be a viable and cheaper alternative to the existing EWRC proposal. If this route proposition is developed it could mean that an existing span of a bridge supporting Paula Radcliffe Way could be utilised for the railway line. If so, this would significantly reduce vehicular disruption in the area. We have alerted EWRC to our desire to develop and agree a Construction Management Plan for the proposed works to deal with numerous aspects associated with the works including management of road closures.

**15. Another impact of EWR is the loss of 12 car Jowett Sidings at Bedford Station. The direct impact of this will Bedford will lose its 12 car trains to London on Thameslink. East West have provides no alternative solution to the loss Jowett Sidings. If East West goes ahead Thameslink will have no option but start the 12 car trains south of Bedford, and Bedford will lose its regular frequent service to London. The north south service is much more important to Bedford Residents than a slightly quicker journey to the outskirts of Cambridge.**

In the EWR Consultation Technical Report, the possible requirement to relocate (not lose) the Jowett Sidings is discussed. It mentions that EWRC will work to determine a solution which works for Network Rail and the Train Operating Company. The report mentions that a number of potential possibilities have been identified. There seems to be no reason to think, then, that a satisfactory outcome will not be found to stable 12-car trains at a location that enables service to Bedford.

EWRC (backed by the Government) considers that the business case for developing rail services between Oxford and Cambridge and beyond is strong enough to warrant major investment. The Council believes that Bedford's position at the centre of north / south and east / west rail services will bring significant economic benefits to the borough.

**16. The economic effect of all these road closures and disruption to rail services should not be underestimated, especially in the post covid world where Bedford and its shops are already challenged.**

We understand the difficulties and disruption of road closures and alteration of train timetables due to engineering works. BBC will work with EWRC and local residents to ensure that disruption such as road closure is kept to an absolute minimum.

**17. Please confirm the anticipated cost of repossessing property in Bedford Town as a result of the current intended route and please state if and how much of local funds will be required to finance this.**

BBC is not responsible for any compulsory purchase in relation to this scheme. The responsibility sits with EWRC who will also manage the costs and the budget.

**18. So far I have been unable to discover why Bedford needs a second station, particularly in this location – What / who would it serve. I understand the current St Johns Station vaguely supports the hospital, but the replacement would appear to be further away from the hospital and have no other strong “market”. Do we really need another Station, within the Town?**

Bedford St John’s Station provides an important facility for people travelling to Kimberley 6<sup>th</sup> Form College, Ridgmont, Bletchley and other stations along the route, as well as connections to the West Coast Mainline. There are two proposals for a relocated Bedford St John’s station. BBC supports Alignment 1 which relocates the station closer to the hospital. This new station will make it easier for visitors to access the hospital. The relocation of the line and the removal of the current station will open up development opportunities on current railway land and the vicinity.

**19. The construction of a replacement St Johns station, would have a significant impact on local housing, requiring much compulsorily purchase and demolition of property to provide suitable station infrastructure / roads / parking. Housing in the town is currently at a premium with properties being snapped up as they come onto the market. Has this been factored in?**

We understand that the proposals to replace the station at St Johns will make it easier for people to access the hospital by train. The relocation of the line and current station will open up development opportunities on current railway land and the vicinity, and this will be used to provide the necessary infrastructure the

station will need, such as access points and parking. We are not aware that there will be any demolition of properties required for the relocation of St John's Station.

**20. Bedford as a town has in recent years, grown experientially with new housing estates being developed in all corners, one such development is that of Wixams on the south side of the town, Stradling the A6. Purchasers of properties to this development in this area were attracted to the area (village / town) by the promise of a new railway station serving the Bedford / London line. I am not sure where this is on the towns plans going forward as all appears to have gone quite on the issue. I believe the developers of the area were asked to provide a budget to provide a station as part of the development plans.**

The Wixams project is unaffected by the EWR plans and is being actively promoted by BBC. The programme is progressing with a view to the station opening in 2024.

**21. Wixams not only sits on the A6, but is close to a number of stations on the existing Bletchley / Bedford line, between Stewartby and Kempston Hardwick. Surely the development of a new station serving these communities and linking to the London / Nottingham railway service would be of great attraction, whilst at the same time easing congestion within Bedford and on its mainline station as commuters living on the South of the town would be able access such a station for their trips whether it be to London / Nottingham / Oxford or Cambridge, Rather than having enter Bedford. The added attraction for such a location is that it is a relatively a clean canvas enabling superior infrastructure, parking / access etc. therefore would require less in the terms of disruption to local residents and the unfortunate compulsorily acquisitions / cost. If a budget still exists and can be utilised for such a project even better!**

EWRC made the decision to adopt Corridor E on the basis of construction costs, operational benefits and other essential variables.

The Wixams Station project is separate to EWR. Plans are progressing and on course for a station opening in 2024. We agree that to some degree Wixams station will relieve pressure on Bedford Midland Station. These improvements, while separate projects, will not preclude the potential for future connectivity within the area around Stewartby, Kempston Hardwick and Wixams.