

EAST WEST RAIL

NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION 2024

Responses from Haslingfield Parish council

**1a. Please tell us which of the following describes your interest in the project:  
(Please tick all that apply)**

Local Authority

**1b. If you have received a letter identifying you as having an interest in land, please add your letter reference number in the box below:**

Blank

**2. Please provide your contact details: (If you would prefer to remain anonymous, we would be grateful if you could provide the first part of your postcode, so we can understand where you live in relation to the project)**

Blank

**3. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, group or landowner, please provide further details below:**

Organisation/group/landowner name: Haslingfield Parish Council

Organisation/group/landowner address (First Line): Haslingfield Village Hall

Organisation/group/landowner address (Second Line): Haslingfield

Organisation/group/landowner address (Town/City): Cambridge

Organisation/group/landowner address (County):

Organisation/group/landowner address (Postcode): CB23

Your role in organisation, group or representing landowner: Councillor

**4. Please provide your age range: (Please tick one box)**

Blank

**5. – 16.** [These sections cover areas of the route not directly related to Haslingfield.]

Blank

**Comberton to Shelford**

**Newton to Harston connectivity**

**17a. & 17b.**

Blank

**Newton footbridge**

**18a. & 18b.**

Blank

***Hauxton Road level crossing closure***

**19a. & 19b.**

Blank

***Comberton to Shelford route section***

**20. Please use the box below to provide any comments you have about our proposals in the Comberton to Shelford route section. Please leave this box blank if you do not have any further comments. Your comments can include (but are not limited to) topics such as:**

- **Community benefits and impacts.**
- **Land and property requirements.**
- **Environment and sustainability (please refer to the *Environmental Update Report*).**
- **Construction and logistics.**
- **Traffic and transport (please refer to the *Transport Update Report*).**
- **Door to Door Connectivity and Active Travel.**

### **Introduction to Haslingfield Parish Council's (HPC's) responses**

We wish to make it clear that we continue to oppose the project in its entirety as there is no compelling business case for the railway. In light of this, EWRCo now seems to accept this and their arguments rest on poorly-specified 'wider economic benefits' or 'transformational' change. This is an unacceptable basis on which to spend about £8bn.

If the government insists that the project proceeds, we consider that the northern route into Cambridge is superior to the southern route. EWRCo accept that in their Feedback Report, Chapter 3, Approach to Cambridge, that their revised northern approach has fewer earthworks, less embodied carbon, less impact on the barbastelle bats, shorter overall length of viaducts and a lower impact on agricultural infrastructure than the southern route. They have also accepted that it is cheaper, impacts fewer villages and would take less time to construct.

The essence of EWRCo's justification for a southern approach into Cambridge is that the railway would serve Cambridge South as a first stop in Cambridge and that this would provide more economic growth. Reference is made more than once to the economic advantages of the southern approach over the northern approach, but no reference is made to any supporting economic analysis to justify this position. You claim that it is difficult for a northern approach to stop at Cambridge South because of the difficulty of providing turnback facilities. This is blatantly not the case. Turnback facilities for a northern route could be provided in a variety of locations south of Cambridge South station. The northern route allows direct connection to Cambridge North with close access to the Science Park. Furthermore, a southern approach condemns freight to pass through central Cambridge – freight would remain to the north

of Cambridge using a northern route, We find it disappointing that EWRCo have not provided any further information for the northern route, despite the number of responses to the Route Update Announcement (2023) opposing it.

Despite our continued opposition to the southern approach, we provide our comments below on the basis that EWRCo's preferred route into Cambridge prevails and gains consent.

We believe that scant attention has been paid in the proposals to the impacts of the project on both the environment and local residents. This is borne out in the nature of our responses. In spite of EWRCo's extremely optimistic figures for the economic benefits for the project, the design is characterised by prioritising ease of construction and cost over most other considerations.

Too little information has been provided in the consultation on the impacts of the construction works. This information is crucial to residents so that they fully understand the project and so they can make meaningful responses to this consultation. While we understand that detailed construction methodology would not normally be determined at this stage in a project, we are disappointed that EWRCo has not shared more information on potential impacts on road and rail transport, the local economy and the environment.

Our requests are shown underlined and numbered.

### **Permanent design & operations**

P1. The tunnel beneath Chapel Hill should be lengthened

P2. The western tunnel portal should be moved at least 500m away from properties

P3. The eastern tunnel portal should be relocated to minimise impacts on the landscape, our cultural heritage and the environment

A longer tunnel would reduce the land-take required for the tunnel. For the contractor, it would reduce excavation and subsequent earthmoving activities for the proposed deep cuttings. Further contractor benefits would follow in terms of reduced area of construction compounds for stockpiles, fewer muck lorries on the roads and less dust and noise management burdens.

More importantly, however, it would cut requirement for large areas of high-grade farmland needed for the project. CPRE, the countryside charity, has carried out research showing that farmland has been lost to development in England since 2010 that would be sufficient to feed two million people five portions of vegetables a day. The increased risk of severe flooding will only exacerbate this trend – we should do all we can to protect this valuable commodity.

A longer tunnel would reduce the length of the gaping wound on the landscape. The depth of cuttings at the portals in the preferred tunnel length option is 27m, greater than the height of an 8-storey building, and they extend for hundreds of metres in either direction from the portals. The view from Chapel Hill and Money Hill has been described in a 2002 review of the Cambridge Green Belt as one of the (three) defining views of Cambridge. "There are distant views of Cambridge from the ridge, with the most famous from Chapel Hill (a view referred to in Rupert Brooke's poem "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester")... The historic landmarks of Cambridge are visible on the skyline, and the city can be seen set in a green landscape, with river valleys, chalk hills and clay ridges all contributing to the impression of the city." It is cultural vandalism to desecrate such a beauty spot.

There are a number of Bronze Age burial barrows adjacent to the eastern portal which would be wiped out by EWRCo's preferred tunnel length option, even though you say that you would try to keep them. This just adds to the sense that EWRCo has scant regard for the local heritage.

Wildlife, including the rare barbastelle bats from the Wimpole and Eversden Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), would be severely impeded in their foraging activities by both the construction works and during operation. As there are only approximately 20 adult females in this SAC, the EWR-related mortality or even breeding failure of just one or two females annually could well threaten its long-term population stability, conflicting fundamentally with the SAC's conservation objectives. Bats are an essential part of the ecosystem. One bat weighing just a few grams can eat up to 3,000 insects a night: insects that would otherwise be eating crops. A longer tunnel would reduce the chances of direct collisions between the bats and high-speed trains.

Extending the length of the tunnel would allow the portals to be relocated. The western portal is just approximately 200m from residents' property boundaries. This is unacceptable from both a noise viewpoint and because of air pollution from freight trains. As trains enter and exit from the tunnel, there is a sudden change in noise levels. This is exacerbated by the sloping sides of the cuttings which would bounce the sound upwards and towards the properties. Diesel fumes from freight locomotives would escape at the portals where it could be moved by the wind towards houses. A longer tunnel would allow fumes to dissipate much further away from human habitation.

We note that EWRCo's main reason for preferring the intermediate length tunnel is because a longer tunnel could extend the overall construction programme. We also note that the tunnelling method envisaged by EWRCo would use mining techniques (i.e. digging out the spoil using excavator machines). We encourage EWRCo to consider the use of a tunnel boring machine (TBM). While we accept the relatively high purchase cost and set-up time, using a TBM could be quicker than mined methods, especially for longer tunnels. According to a study by Grose and Hellier for the Infrastructure Projects

Authority, part of HM Treasury, the average weekly production rate for a typical tunnel of this diameter is approximately 70m, allowing a 4km twin bore tunnel to be excavated in a little over 2 years using one TBM.

Furthermore, use of TBMs would allow an extended length of tunnel towards the Eversdens past Harlton and even a dive-under solution for the grade-separated junction at Harlton to be considered. The TBM could also potentially be used to construct a bored tunnel beneath the A428 in lieu of the extremely intrusive cut-and-cover construction method. Not only would this clearly demonstrate that the project *does* respect the residents' wishes in the area where they work, it would also put into practice EWRCo's commitment to the environment in accordance with their assertions in the consultation documents. A long tunnel would effectively mitigate the impact of the project on the barbastelle bats and avoid expensive viaducts over the Bourn Brook, A603, A10 and River Rhee, the Harlton grade-separated junction and the bridge over Harlton Road. Road diversions would be reduced along with the number of construction compounds and the overall project management workload. It would also significantly reduce the area of farmland taken and ease compliance with Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory's (MRAO's) stringent vibration and electromagnetic disturbance criteria.

Lastly, the diversion of the HV power lines on Chapel Hill could be avoided by providing a longer tunnel and by moving the western portal further west. This would not only reduce the scope of the project but obviate the need to close Chapel Hill during some of the work. In addition, it would eliminate the need for the intrusive utilities compound at close to houses on Knapp Rise during the construction phase.

#### P4. Endorse Harlton Parish Council's request for the EWR line to pass beneath the A603 road

#### P5. Endorse Harlton Parish Council's request to lower the EWR line in the area to the north of Harlton

A track lowered to grade in the area between the A603 and Harlton Road would bring several benefits. There would be a significantly reduced noise environment in Harlton compared with trains passing close to the village on an embankment. If the track stays at grade, the A603 could be realigned onto new embankments. These embankments would be shorter and lower than those shown in EWRCo's current design and so would reduce the negative impact on the landscape. Furthermore, they would not be close to residents' properties and involve less earthmoving. An at-grade railway would also be expected to have a lower impact on MRAO's activities.

These benefits would be magnified if the track ran below grade in a trench. The challenge of dealing with Long Brook for this alternative with a shallow trench may be able to be overcome by diverting Long Brook into the drainage system to the west of the

A603. If this is not practical, a simple siphon can be constructed beneath the track to allow Long Brook to pass beneath the EWR trench.

P6. The EWR line should pass beneath the existing Harlton Road

P7. If the EWR line cannot pass beneath Harlton Road, the height of the new bridge should be minimised

P8. A dedicated and separated footpath and cycle route should be provided on the Harlton Road bridge if sight lines remain inadequate for oncoming and following vehicles to see cyclists and pedestrians from the existing road

A lower track level around Harlton would make it possible to lower the height of the proposed bridge over Harlton Road. The benefits arising from these requests are mainly safety related. Pedestrians and cyclists passing over the existing hump-backed bridge on the Barton Road are at significant risk when oncoming and following traffic cannot see them in sufficient time to take avoiding action. There is negligible space into which the pedestrians and cyclists can seek refuge. We request that EWRCo ensure that there are protected zones on the proposed Harlton Road bridge if it is eventually required after taking our other requests into account.

P9. Consider omitting the maintenance access road from Chapel Hill and extend the one from near Penn Farm over the top of the tunnel portal

The extent of farmland taken could be reduced by accessing both sides of the track by one road from near Penn Farm. By extending this track across the top of the portal would allow the proposed road from Chapel Hill (which passes through a large open field) to be eliminated.

P10. Achieve a biodiversity net gain (BNG) of 20%

We urge EWRCo to adopt a more ambitious target for net gain in biodiversity than the mandatory 10%. The project provides a golden opportunity for providing such gain and would help enhance EWRCo's environmental credibility. This target is the same as that which will be proposed by South Cambs District Council and comments you have received on the 2021 non-statutory consultation from the Wildlife Trust.

P11. Confirm responsibility for maintenance of balancing ponds

HPC understands from the online parish councils' feedback session with EWRCo on 16 January 2025 that the balancing ponds shown on the drawings would be maintained either by Cambridgeshire County Council (the organisation responsible for road maintenance in our parish) or by the EWR operator depending on the ponds' locations. As this contradicts a statement made by EWRCo at the Comberton drop-in session, we would appreciate written confirmation on what the arrangements are for their



maintenance. We would have serious reservations from viewpoints of safety, sanitation and effectiveness if they were inadequately maintained.

P12. Locate telecommunications masts in areas not detrimental to the landscape

We note that you intend to install GSM-R telecommunication masts at approximately 2.5km intervals along the line between Bletchley and Cambridge (Technical Report 14.7.3). Please confirm that there would not be any telecoms masts in the Chapel Hill/Money Hill area or other visually sensitive areas of the route.

**Construction stage**

We trust that EWRCo are aware of that Haslingfield is home to many young and old people. This underlines the need for EWRCo to be extremely sensitive about the impacts of their proposed construction work, especially as it is likely to last for many years.

C1. All construction compounds to be a minimum of 150m from boundaries of residents' properties

Some of the compounds shown on drawing 133735-MWJ-Z0-XXX-DRG-CSE-700002 rev P02 are adjacent to residential property. These include the compounds near Wells Close, Knapp Rise and The Knapp.

We understand that the compound near Wells Close is planned to be used for stockpiling earth removed during the works. It could result in large mounds of earth and noisy and air polluting earthmoving plant within a few metres of residents' sitting rooms. We trust EWRCo can see that this would be unacceptable.

HPC understand from an online parish councils' feedback session with EWRCo on 16 January 2025 that the utilities compound adjacent to Chapel Hill and hard up against the boundaries of properties on Knapp Rise is for the temporary use of the contractor diverting the high voltage power lines on Chapel Hill. Please confirm whether this is correct. In either case, please relocate the compound so that it more than 150m from the boundaries of all residential property.

C2. Fund an independent ombudsman to liaise between residents and EWRCo on construction matters

The role of the independent construction ombudsman would be to mediate on matters of dispute between the residents and EWRCo during the construction phase of the project. Of particular concern would be the timing and sequence of road closures, construction traffic using unauthorised routes, the state of roads during the construction phase and air, noise and visual pollution caused by the contractor's activities. The ombudsman would have the power to fine the contractor for serious infringements. We realise that EWRCo would resist such a request as it would inhibit

their freedom during the construction phase. However, we give notice that we will be seeking for this role to become a condition of planning consent.

We have received many reports from residents in Buckinghamshire of poor behaviour by the contractor for EWR and are naturally sceptical of the assurances provided in consultation documentation. Such poor behaviour included roads being closed at extremely short notice, roads being left in a poor state during the construction and rubbish being strewn in residents' properties. The issue was so serious that the local MP for Buckinghamshire raised the matter at an adjournment debate in Parliament – the local unitary authority had little power to influence the contractor's conduct.

### C3. Prevent all construction traffic passing through Haslingfield

Haslingfield is a historic village with over 50 listed properties, many of which have shallow, traditional foundations. Many roads are narrow with tight bends and we have a school and pre-school in the centre of the village, often with cars parked nearby. Large volumes of heavy vehicles passing through Haslingfield would increase the risk of accidents, damage to properties and noise and air pollution. For these reasons, we request that all construction traffic is banned from passing through the village.

To avoid such displaced traffic from negatively impacting adjacent villages, the contractor should increase the use of haul roads both to the A603 and to the A10. It is appreciated that the viaduct works over the River Rhee would be needed before large earthmoving activities could commence at the eastern portal of the tunnel beneath Chapel Hill.

### C4. Minimise the extent of road closures

While we understand that road closures are inevitable part of such a large project, the impact of such closures in Haslingfield could be devastating with increased traffic and associated noise and air pollution. In the following table, we draw your attention to the impact of closure of the four routes into the village. It can be seen that the journey distance between adjacent villages and Haslingfield would more than double in most cases and triple between Haslingfield and Harlton. Emergency vehicle travel times could be severely impacted. It would be totally inappropriate for two of the roads to be closed simultaneously. EWRCo need to ensure that they maximise the use of haul roads mentioned above. We require regular consultations between residents and EWRCo to ensure the maintenance of critical inter-village connectivity in relation to accessing school, medical facilities, work and the nearest train station.

<b>Destination</b>	<b>Existing distance to H'fld and distance if road closed (km)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Harlton	2.1 -> 7.3	Harlton and H'fld extremely close culturally. Harlton relies on access to shop.

Harston	3.2 -> 7.2	Access to Addenbrooke's hospital and Harston surgery (many elderly people in H'fld)
Barrington	2.9 -> 7.7	Many Barrington children use H'fld schools. Access route to Shepreth train station.
Barton	4.0 -> 6.9	High traffic volume commuter route

#### C5. Minimise land-take during construction

Previously high-grade farmland used during the construction process will be largely sterilised over a wide swathe along the route. Hedgerows, trees and other plant life will take decades to recover. The rare and legally protected barbastelle bats from Wimpole & Eversden Woods that use the fields around Haslingfield during foraging could be wiped out by the project. EWRCO have proposed mitigation measures but these are largely unproven. Other wildlife will be severely affected by the track as it is blocked from normal foraging routes. It goes without saying that the landscape will be permanently scarred by the works.

#### C6. Fund independent noise surveys

Haslingfield is a quiet village and most residents do not wish this to change. We request that EWRCO fund independent noise surveys at appropriate times before the project commences to ensure that a noise baseline is available against which to compare noise levels during both the construction and operation phases so that action can be taken to install mitigation as appropriate.

#### C7. Fund independent dilapidation surveys of at-risk properties

Vibrations from trains could impact some properties. We request that EWRCO fund independent dilapidation surveys of particularly sensitive properties. This would protect both EWRCO and the residents to independently show whether the works caused any structural deterioration. This would be especially important if it were not possible to prevent construction traffic from passing through the village.

#### C8. Fund independent road condition surveys

We know that Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) are responsible for the maintenance of the road network. We urge EWRCO to agree road conditions with CCC before the project starts so that EWRCO can reinstate the road to an agreed standard on completion of the works. We understand that this did not happen in Buckinghamshire.

#### C9. Repair major road defects caused by the project on an ongoing basis rather than waiting until just before the end of the project.

Major road defects would deteriorate at a faster rate than if they were repaired as they were formed. This means that it is the contractor's interest to repair them on an ongoing basis.

## C10. Take extreme care in preserving topsoil removed during construction and in its reinstatement

Topsoil removed during construction work needs to be stored and reinstated very carefully so that it does not degrade to an extent that fields become uneconomic to use. In particular, it could easily be mixed with sub-soil, rendering it infertile for decades.

### **Community benefits**

Our own consultation with residents has highlighted the qualities they value and that has made Haslingfield the village it is. They include quietness, low pollution and tremendous views. The railway would bring years of disruption during construction and in the longer term, possibly increasing noise and air pollution and loss of the current outstanding views. It would bring no benefits to our village, or to neighbouring villages.

To compensate for this reduction in the quality of life that the village currently offers to residents, we request that EWRCo sets up a fund to benefit the whole village.

Discussions with the residents are at an early stage but some preliminary ideas that have been floated and include:

- Cycleways and footpaths should be provided to neighbouring villages
- improvements to the school buildings and surfacing of the play area and financial support to create a permanent building in the village for the pre-school
- improvements to River Rhee including (a) scoping of gravel placement for river bed raising (b) work to trees and creation of a brushwood ledge to enhance flow diversity (c) scoping of floodplain connection opportunities (d) pollarding of veteran willows (e) scoping of backwater creation and wetland projects, such as Clock Holt
- Porkers Lane Pumping Station - the construction works and the permanent railway will have an impact on local surface water management. After periods of high rainfall, Porkers Lane pumping station regularly overflows. Investment is needed into an improved surface water management system including co-investment with Anglia Water on the Porkers Lane Pumping Station.
- Haslingfield Water Recycling Centre - the railway is intended to support additional development in the Cambridgeshire area. Haslingfield WRC is already under stress and reports regular untreated discharge into the River Rhee. Collaborative investment is needed with Anglian Water to improve water recycling in the area.
- solar farm on any permanently degraded farmland away from residential property – the energy from this would be sold to the National Grid which could provide a long-term income stream to be allocated to projects as required

- Extend the village hall to create space for a community café/pub serving the village and the large number of cyclists and walkers who pass through the village. In the last few years, we have lost both our pub (now an Indian restaurant) and our deli/café, which has become a private house. All we have now, in our village of over 1500 people, is a very small café, seating just 12 people.

### **Cambridge route section**

**21.**

Blank (note that these works could affect Haslingfield residents but it is left to individual residents to respond).

### **Route-wide matters**

**22. Please use the box below to provide any comments you have in relation to these route-wide matters. Please leave this box blank if you do not have any further comments.**

Our comments on route-wide matters are provided in the introduction to section 20 of this response.

### **About our consultation**

**23. Please tell us how you found out about this consultation: (Please tick all that apply)**

EWR website

**24. Please tell us how helpful you found our consultation material: (Please tick one box)**

Helpful

**25. Please use the box below to provide any comments you have on this consultation process or the information presented in our consultation material. Please leave this box blank if you do not have any further comments.**

Changes during consultation of some details on the interactive map (e.g. regarding use of construction compounds)

List of all consultation documentation provided should have been provided in a tabular format - some maps were particularly difficult to locate

Too little information on impacts during construction

Too little information on construction programme.