



# **EWR Co.**

# **Programme**

# **Document**

Report for the Planning Inspectorate  
East West Rail – Bedford to Cambridge and Western  
Improvements  
TR040012

May 2025

EDMS Reference: 133735-EWR-Z0-XXX-CNT-EEN-00002

Classification: OFFICIAL

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# Document Control

## Document authorisation

	Name	Role	Signature	Date
Author				
Reviewers				
Approver				

## Version history

Change date	Version	Section	Change
11-12-2024	V01	All	First issue
30-05-2025	V02	All	Second issue

## Abbreviations

Term	Description
CoCP	Code of Construction Practice
CtoC	Cambridge to Cambourne [guided busway TWAO project]
DCO	Development Consent Order
DOLB	Draft order limits boundary
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMI	Electromagnetic interference
ES	Environmental Statement
EWR	East West Rail
EWR Co	East West Rail Company Limited
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
MRAO	Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory
NCS	Non-statutory consultation
NMU	Non-motorised users
PDR	Permitted development rights
PPA	Planning performance agreements
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SoCC	Statement of Community Consultation
TWAO	Transport and Works Act Order

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# 1. Introduction

1.1.1 This Programme Document has been prepared to support the proposed application by the East West Railway Company Limited (“the Applicant”) for development consent for the East West Rail (EWR) project.

1.1.2 The Programme Document sets out the timetable and activities to be undertaken during the pre-application stage. It has been prepared in accordance with:

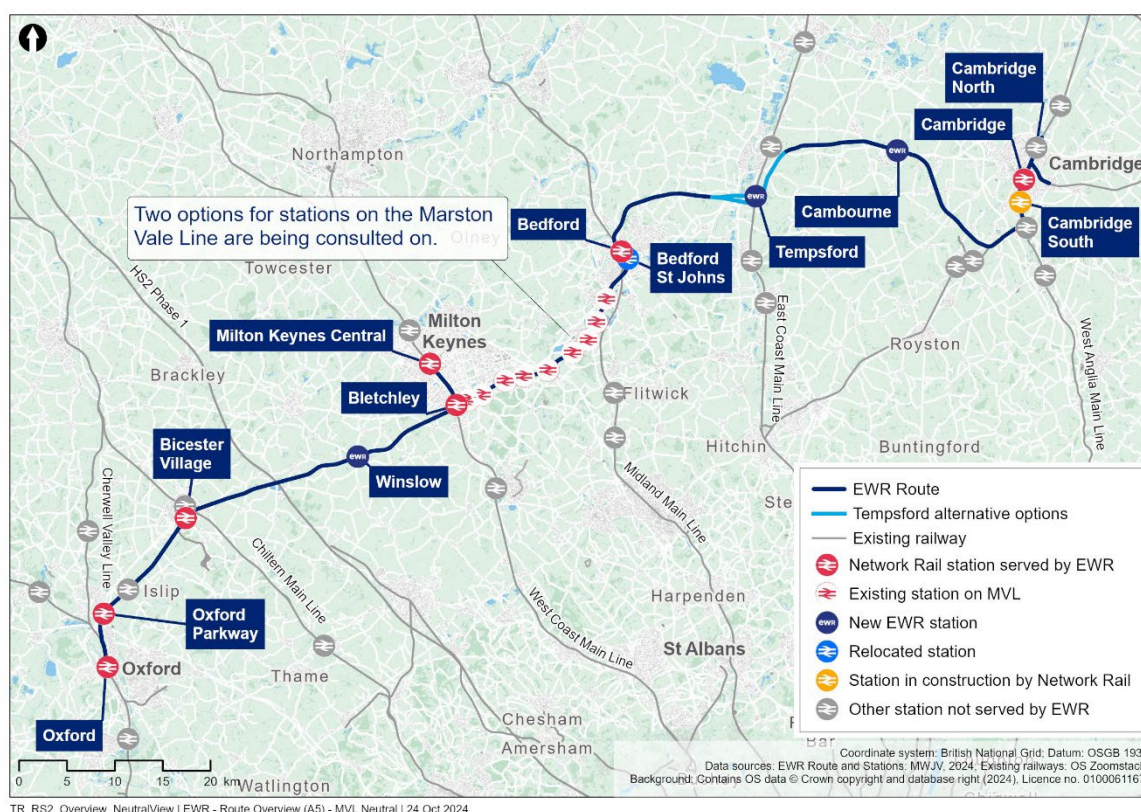
- a) National Infrastructure Planning Guidance: Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects; and
- b) Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus.

1.1.3 This is a live document which will be updated by the Applicant as necessary until the submission of the application for development consent. This document will be published on the Applicant’s website at [East West Rail | Home](#).

## 2. The Project

2.1.1 The Applicant is proposing to submit an application to the Secretary of State for Transport for a development consent order (DCO) for a new railway link which would connect communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge (Figure 2-1).

Figure 2-1 The proposed project as presented at non-statutory consultation, autumn 2024



2.1.2 The proposed new railway link is referred to as ‘the Project’ and includes the following:

- Construction of a new railway between Bedford and Cambridge, including the construction of new stations at Tempsford and Cambourne.
- Improvements to the existing railway between Oxford and Bedford and the approach into Cambridge.
- Works to upgrade existing stations along the route to ensure they can accommodate increased passenger numbers, including:
  - remodelling Bedford station
  - the potential consolidation or upgrade of stations on the Marston Vale Line

- iii. relocating Bedford St Johns station
- iv. works at Cambridge station.
- d) Building new infrastructure and upgrading existing structures, including viaducts, tunnels, bridges, cuttings and embankments.
- e) Improvements to or closure of level crossings and the provision of suitable replacement crossings.
- f) Works to enable the full or discontinuous electrification of the railway including the installation of overhead lines, substations and grid connections.
- g) Works to manage interfaces between the railway and existing highways, Public Rights of Way, watercourses and utilities apparatus.
- h) Work to reduce the environmental impacts of proposals, as well as to enhance and improve the environment in line with the Applicant's commitment to biodiversity net gain.

2.1.3 The Project forms part of the wider East West Rail scheme which is being promoted and brought into use in three different connection stages:

- a) Connection Stage 1 enables services to run between Oxford and Milton Keynes. The first part of this stage, the link between Oxford and Bicester, is already in place. The work to extend services further north and east to Bletchley and Milton Keynes was given planning consent in 2020 by an order made by the Secretary of State under the Transport and Works Act 1992. Construction is well under way and passenger services will start running from 2025.
- b) Connection Stage 2 work is ongoing to bring forward services between Oxford and Bedford by the end of the decade. Planning consent for these works was also granted by the Transport and Works Act order in 2020.
- c) Connection Stage 3 would complete East West Rail and enable passenger services to operate between Oxford and Cambridge via Bletchley and Bedford. To complete this work, the Applicant will need to apply for a DCO, which would grant consent to build the new railway between Bedford and Cambridge, as well as the other upgrades between Oxford and Bedford to deliver the full proposed EWR service.

## 3. Pre-Application Timetable

3.1.1 The main milestones and anticipated dates during the pre-application stage are set out below in Table 3-1. It is to be noted that milestones are subject to periodic review and may change as we are currently reviewing the implications of the Universal development on EWR. Those highlighted in blue are completed milestones.

3.1.2 It is to be noted that the Universal Studios development is likely to have impacts for East West Rail. We are working closely with Universal and the Government to better understand this and any impacts will be reflected in future updates of this document. Therefore, our plans for statutory consultation shown in the table below commencing in January 2026 is under review. We are also reviewing our consultation and engagement approach, in light of the draft Planning and Infrastructure Bill, to explore any potential opportunities for our programme. We do not anticipate this causing delays to the overall project as we remain committed to submitting and concluding our Development Consent Order (DCO) within this Parliamentary term.

Table 3-1: East West Rail main milestones and dates

Actual / Anticipated Date	Milestone
January – March 2019	2019 consultation  Non-statutory consultation on five route options for the section of railway between Bedford and Cambridge
January 2020	2020 – preferred route option announcement  Route option ‘E’ identified as preferred route
March – June 2021	2021 consultation  Non-statutory consultation on wider project including nine potential alignment options for the railway between Bedford and Cambridge
May 2023	Route update announcement  Alignment 1 confirmed as preferred alignment for new railway for most of the route between Bedford and Cambridge with an emerging preference for a local variation to provide a new station at Tempsford
	<b>Six months October 2024 – March 2025</b>
6 November 2024	PINS Meeting No. 1 Agenda - update on the project - consultation strategy
14 November 2024 to 24 January 2025	Non-Statutory Consultation following the route update announcement and refined design proposals.



Actual / Anticipated Date	Milestone
2 January 2025	Request for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion
12 February 2025	Scoping Opinion provided
7 March 2025	PINS Meeting No. 2 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scoping Opinion</li> <li>- Programme Document and future meetings</li> </ul>
	<b><i>Six months April 2025 – September 2025</i></b>
TBC June 2025	PINS Meeting No. 3 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues Tracker</li> <li>- Feedback from non-statutory consultation and implications for design</li> </ul>
Q3 2025	Design development following non-statutory consultation and ongoing statutory stakeholder engagement.
TBC September 2025	PINS Meeting No. 4 Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues Tracker</li> <li>- Lands Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Order limits, land take, demolitions</li> <li>o Approach to landowners/occupiers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
TBC	Discussions on one or more of the supplementary pre-application components listed in the enhanced tier offer in order to optimise our application.
	<b><i>Six months October 2025 – March 2026</i></b>
November 2025	PINS Meeting No. X Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues Tracker</li> <li>- PEI Report</li> <li>- Our approach to Statutory Consultation and SoCC</li> </ul>
January 2026	PINS Meeting No. X Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues Tracker</li> <li>- Deep dive on the DCO Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o NSIP</li> <li>o Associated Development</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Other works brought forward under permitted development rights (PDR) and other consenting mechanisms</p>
Q1 2026	Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) published
Q1 2026	Statutory Consultation (under review)
TBC	Drafting of plans and reports for the DCO application
November 2025	PINS Meeting No. X Agenda - TBC
January 2026	Discussions on one or more of the supplementary pre-application components listed in the enhanced tier offer in order to optimise our application.
	<b><i>Six months April 2026 – September 2026</i></b>
April / May 2026	Ongoing drafting of plans and reports for the DCO application

Actual / Anticipated Date	Milestone
June / July 2026	PINS Meeting No. X Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues Tracker</li> <li>- Feedback from statutory consultation</li> <li>- Implications for design, assessment and mitigation</li> </ul> Link to Milestone on Adequacy of Consultation?
TBC	PINS meeting No. X – Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues Tracker</li> <li>- DCO application documents structure</li> <li>- Key documents to be submitted to PINS for review (in August/September)</li> </ul>
August – September 2026	Discussions on one or more of the supplementary pre-application components listed in the enhanced tier offer in order to optimise our application.
Q3 2026	Draft application documents to the Planning Inspectorate for early review
August/September 2026	Milestone on Adequacy of Consultation
April / May 2026	PINS Meeting No. X Agenda TBC
	<b><i>Six months October 2026 – March 2027</i></b>
October 2026	PINS Meeting No. X Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues Tracker</li> <li>- Feedback on PINS review of key DCO Application documents</li> <li>- Feedback on Milestone of Adequacy of Consultation</li> </ul>
Q4 2026	Finalising DCO application documents
Q4 2026	Discussions on one or more of the supplementary pre-application components listed in the enhanced tier offer in order to optimise our application.
December 2026	PINS Meeting No. X Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential Main Issues for Examination (PMIE)</li> <li>- Issues regarding process to submit the DCO application</li> </ul>
January 2027	Application Submission

## 4. Main Issues for Resolution

4.1.1 Table 4-1 sets out the Applicant's current view of the potential main issues for resolution in the application and the activities it will undertake to address those issues.

*Table 4-1: Main areas of potential issue and resolution*

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
<b>General aspects</b>		
Design development and option selection	Removal of optionality / identification of single preferred option	<p>The non-statutory consultation sought feedback on areas of the route where the Applicant was still considering alternative options. The Applicant is having regard to the feedback received in the ongoing design development.</p> <p>The Applicant will continue to refine and optimise the design proposals, with a focus on sustainability and mitigation of potential environmental effects, cost reduction, constructability and reducing impacts on traffic and transport.</p> <p>The outcome of ongoing design development and decisions on the options presented at non-statutory consultation will be reported at the statutory consultation.</p>
Independent Design Review	Commissioning design review	EWR has commissioned the Design Council to undertake independent design review. The review takes the form of a series of reviews and workshops up to and including statutory consultation. The first meeting was held in March 2025. It took the form of a briefing with the aim of proving the Chair and the Panel with an overview of the project and to inform the subject of the further planned reviews.

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
		The next review is planned for the end of May 2025.
Environmental Impacts	Potential environmental impacts arising as a result of the construction and operation of the Project.	<p>Design development will take place in parallel with a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and supporting surveys, modelling and technical assessments.</p> <p>Information from the EIA process will be used to inform the development of appropriate mitigation measures as part of the ongoing design development process. It will also support more detailed analysis of biodiversity measures needed to deliver biodiversity net gain.</p> <p>A Preliminary Environmental Information Report will be provided as part of the statutory consultation and an Environmental Statement will be submitted as part of the DCO application which will contain full details about the likely significant effects of the Project and the proposed mitigation measures.</p>
Land acquisition	The Applicant would need to acquire land and property to build and operate the railway.	<p>Where possible, the Applicant would use existing railway land rather than acquiring new land in connection with the Project. However, in some places it will be necessary to acquire other property which includes residential properties, businesses and agricultural land.</p> <p>As the proposals have been developed, the Applicant has sought to reduce the impact on land and property owners and on sensitive environmental features</p>

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
		<p>and historic landscapes and will continue to do so.</p> <p>The Applicant will seek to enter into voluntary agreements with regard to any land acquisition that is required wherever possible.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Transport has safeguarded land which would potentially be required to build and operate the Project. This means that people who own and occupy a property in the safeguarded area from November 2024 may be eligible to serve a statutory blight notice, asking the Applicant to purchase the property before it is needed to build the new railway.</p> <p>The Applicant also published a discretionary Need to Sell Property Scheme at the route update announcement in May 2023. This provides support for those property owners who have a compelling need to sell their property but are unable to do so, other than at a substantially reduced value, because of the Project proposals. This scheme is also available to landowners who are not eligible to serve a blight notice, for example because their property is not within the safeguarded area.</p>
Construction Impacts	The construction phase of the Project would have an impact on local communities, businesses and the environment.	As part of the design development, the Applicant is assessing the potential construction impacts and how they could be mitigated.

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
		<p>The Applicant is committed to regular engagement with communities and businesses that would potentially be affected by the construction of the Project as the design and approach to construction are developed.</p> <p>The Applicant will submit a draft Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) as part of the DCO application. The CoCP will set out a range of mitigation measures and principles which contractors would be required to follow when building the Project, including engaging with stakeholders and the community. The Project would be delivered by contractors and supply chain partners with experience in successfully delivering major infrastructure projects and managing the related impacts.</p>
Public rights of way, highways and private means of access	Whilst the Applicant would seek to maintain existing public rights of way, highways and private accesses wherever possible, in some instances it may not be feasible or safe to do so.	<p>In circumstances where it is not possible to keep a public right of way, highway or private access open in their current location, the Applicant would seek to provide suitable alternatives which would reduce the impact on communities and take account of the needs of all users, accessibility and equality considerations.</p> <p>During construction, the Applicant would seek to maintain connections that are temporarily affected by the works. This may include the creation of temporary diversions.</p>
Level crossings	In some cases, the increased speed and frequency of the new train	In any case where a level crossing would need to be closed the Applicant would seek to provide

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
	<p>services would mean it would be unsafe to retain some level crossings. Where this is the case the level crossing would need to be closed.</p>	<p>an appropriate diversion or alternative crossing.</p> <p>The Applicant will continue to engage with stakeholders and will take account of feedback to consultation and ongoing engagement to inform the final proposals with regards to level crossings. The final proposals will need to be endorsed by the Level Crossing Review Panel at Network Rail, which considers every level crossing on the national rail network.</p>
<b>Future / existing developments</b>		
Universal theme park	Implications of a major development near Bedford.	Proposed Universal theme park and resort near Bedford. The implications of the theme park for the DCO Project, including capacity and impacts on local transport networks are being considered in the design development for EWR.
Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory (MRAO)	Potential Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) and construction / operational noise and vibration impacts that might interfere with the operation of the observatory.	Ongoing engagement between EWR Co and Cambridge University (the operators of MRAO) since 2022 on the potential mitigation to reduce these impacts. The results of the Environmental Impact Assessment will determine whether the mitigated design is sufficient or further mitigation should be explored. EWR Co will continue to engage with Cambridge University.
Interface between EWR and Bourn Airfield mixed use development.	Potential impacts on the land identified for the Bourn Airfield mixed use development. Issues include the interface between the proposed cut and cover tunnel under the A428, the proposed route of the Cambridge to	Ongoing discussions on design options between EWR Co and the developers Countryside Partnerships/Vistry Group. EWR Co is also engaging with the GCP regarding the application for the CtoC Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO). A public inquiry

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
	Cambourne (CtoC) project, and the planned mixed-use development on the site of the former Bourn Airfield.	into that application is programmed for September 2025.
<b>Environment</b>		
Availability of survey data due to limited site access.	This issue relates to all environmental topics, in particular for archaeology, ecology, and water surveys. Since 2021, EWR Co has been seeking access to land to enable intrusive and non-intrusive surveys within and adjacent to the Draft Order Limits Boundary (DOLB)	EWR Co is engaging with landowners where access is required. With some, negotiations are on-going and Section 172 notices are being considered, where appropriate. If land access cannot be secured it may be necessary for specific elements of the environmental assessments to be based on precautionary assumptions. This could result in the Environmental Statement (ES) overestimating some environmental effects for key topics, including historic environment, biodiversity and water resources. Following receipt of the EIA scoping opinion from PINS in February 2025, work is commencing on the EIA, and interim updates will be provided in due course.
Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) and the interface between EWR and internationally designated sites.	The project is assessing potential impacts on Barbastelle bats associated with the Eversden and Wimpole Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to for example changes in land use during construction or operation, loss of ecological connectivity, increases in vehicle movements using public highways during construction and operation, and collision	EWR Co is currently undertaking detailed engagement with Natural England in relation to the scope of the HRA and potential mitigation using the mitigation hierarchy. An evidence plan approach is being followed.



Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
	with moving trains during operation.	
Permanent acquisition of open space and mitigation.	The DCO Project will require the acquisition and use of land that comprises open space e.g. areas of informal recreation land close to the railway, playground / sports facilities. The relevant legal and policy tests will need to be satisfied in relation to the acquisition and use of such land.	Open space required permanently for EWR has been identified. Mitigation options are being developed in accordance with the relevant legal and policy protections that apply to open space land. Scoping and environmental assessments, in relation to open space, have been agreed with PINS in the Scoping Opinion. It is expected that EWR Co. will shortly be embarking on discussions directly with landowners where required and mitigation proposals will be presented at Statutory Consultation.
Scope of the traffic and transport modelling study.	The modelling approach has been agreed in principle as part of the transport assessment scoping process. The details of the transport modelling scenarios continue to be developed including through ongoing engagement with the highway authorities.	Discussions between EWR Co and the highway authorities are ongoing.
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>		
Closure of London Road level crossing, Bicester and replacement NMU / vehicular access redirecting onto the local highway network.	Proposed closure of London Road Bicester level crossing with provision of either a non-motorised bridge or underpass. Feedback from Non Statutory Consultation and stakeholder engagement raises concern about the impacts of the closure of the level crossing,	Discussions are ongoing between EWR Co and Cherwell District Council taking into account feedback from Non Statutory Consultation, alongside reviewing the design to consider whether it would be possible to address these concerns. The Transport Assessment will recommend any mitigation measures for this section of the local highway network, should any be required.

Potential issue for consideration	Summary of issue	Activities to address issue
	particularly in terms of severance and the impacts of traffic redirecting onto the local highway network.	
Loss of residential property in the Poets area, Bedford.	Bedford Borough Council has objected to the DCO Project's design to construct six tracks north of Bedford Midland Station in order to meet rail timetabling requirements. The land-take needed would require the demolition of a number of buildings including residential properties in the Poets area north of the station.	EWR Co is currently engaging with the Council and land and property owners.
Bedford Hospital car parks	Bedford Hospital has objected to EWR Co's proposal to use land comprising one of their existing car parks.	Discussions between EWR Co and Bedford Hospital are ongoing about how this hospital car park would be replaced. An area has been identified south of Ampthill Road for a replacement car park.
Effect of temporary closure of Long Road Overbridge on Addenbrooke's Hospital	Addenbrooke's Hospital has objected to the temporary closure of Long Road Overbridge, Cambridge. This bridge is the main access to the bio-medical campus that contains Addenbrooke's Hospital and other medical providers.	Engagement is ongoing between EWR Co and Addenbrooke's Hospital regarding the temporary closure of the existing Long Road Overbridge. EWR Co is considering alternatives to minimise the impact and duration of the closure.

## 5. Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

5.1.1 The Applicant has adopted a strategic and proactive approach to stakeholder engagement for this DCO. This involves seeking to build strong working relationships with stakeholders to gather valuable insights and feedback, which can be considered as part of design development. Delivering meaningful engagement ensures that all voices are heard and considered with the aim of developing a more informed project.

5.1.2 The Applicant has outlined the proposed programme for the Project in discussions with the local authorities and other statutory consultees, including Network Rail and statutory undertakers. Based on its discussions with those bodies, the Applicant understands that they are content with the current proposed programme.

5.1.3 Throughout the development of the Project the Applicant has engaged with local communities, representatives and statutory stakeholders.

5.1.4 The Applicant will continue to engage throughout the project with key stakeholders, such as Network Rail, National Highways, the Environment Agency and relevant local authorities. The Applicant has also created Local Representative Groups, which are made up of elected members and Parish Councils, and regularly engages with these groups about the project.

5.1.5 As set out in Table 3-1, the Applicant has previously carried out two rounds of non-statutory consultation. A third non-statutory consultation commenced on 14 November 2024 and closed on 24 January 2025.

5.1.6 The statutory consultation, which is currently planned for Q1 2026, will be carried out in accordance with the legal requirements and provisions within the Planning Act 2008, including the preparation and publication of a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). However, we will also review the draft Planning and Infrastructure Bill for any potential opportunities to amend our approach, if this delivers time and cost savings without compromising high quality engagement and consultation.

## 6. Financial Support Agreements

6.1.1 The Applicant is currently discussing the terms of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs), several of which have been completed, with the local authorities listed below. The purpose of the PPAs is to provide a framework for constructive engagement between the Applicant and the local authorities and for the Applicant to provide financial support to the local authorities to help facilitate this.

- a) Bedford Borough Council.
- b) Buckinghamshire Council.
- c) Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (working in partnership as the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service).
- d) Cambridgeshire County Council.
- e) Central Bedfordshire Council.
- f) Cherwell District Council.
- g) Huntingdonshire District Council.
- h) Milton Keynes Council.
- i) Oxford City Council.
- j) Oxfordshire County Council.

6.1.2 The Applicant has also entered into Service Level Agreements (SLAs) or similar with the bodies listed below. Like the PPAs, the purpose of these agreements is to provide a framework for constructive engagement between the Applicant and the relevant bodies in relation to the project and for the costs of such engagement to be paid by the Applicant in order to help facilitate this engagement.

- a) Environment Agency
- b) Natural England
- c) Forestry Commission
- d) Historic England
- e) National Highways
- f) Network Rail

## **7. Main Risks to the Pre-Application Stage**

7.1.1 As the Project is in the early part of the pre-application stage, the Applicant recognises that there is a risk of changes to the programme and submission, for example to respond to any matters identified during consultation.

7.1.2 The Applicant will continue to track any risks to achievement of the pre-application stage and manage them by keeping the programme under review.

7.1.3 The Applicant will inform the Planning Inspectorate of any extensions to the anticipated dates set out in section 3.