

Bedford Enhanced LRG

-Meeting note

Meeting #2

Date: 15/10/2025

Time: 6:00pm

Type of meeting: Online on MS Teams

Key discussion points and outcomes

1. Introduction, overview, and housekeeping

- 1.1 Sarah Jacobs (SJ) welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced herself and the EWR Co attendees on the call, then ran through the agenda and housekeeping.

2. Project updates

- 2.1 SJ shared project and engagement updates since the last round of LRG meetings.
- 2.2 SJ shared the planned engagement activities, from November 2025 to January 2026 (*See slide deck for the full list of all actions*).
- 2.3 SJ gave an update on the landowner engagement that EWR Co have been doing – EWR Co are writing to people across the route whose land or property could be affected by the proposals.
- 2.4 Colleen Atkins (CA) asked whether landowners outside of the red line boundary will be contacted by the project team.
- 2.5 SJ answered that landowners outside the red boundary line will not be directly contacted by the project team. However, SJ explained that there is information on the website available for them to review and offered to share the links to said documents. SJ went on to explain the process of contacting landowners during ground surveys and GI surveys.
- 2.6 Ben Foley (BF) enquired specifically regarding affected tenants, rather than owners.
- 2.7 SJ explained that the land registry and land engagement piece is ongoing. SJ clarified that the project team are working to identify tenants in the area.

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3. Planning and Infrastructure Bill (PIB)

- 3.1 SJ provided an update on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (PIB), noting that it presents an opportunity to modernise and enhance engagement outside of formal consultation periods. When EWR Co have more information, they will come back to the ELRGs on this matter.
- 3.2 CA reported questions on behalf of Protect Poets, who enquired on whether and how the PIB will impact the Statutory Consultation planned for 2026, and how residents could submit their questions to the project team.
- 3.3 SJ asked Cllr Atkins to send the questions by email and took away as an action to answer these.

4. Environmental Update

- 4.1 Leah Bargetta (LB) gave an environment update, which included an environmental assessment update, the approach to environmental design and mitigation, the survey update, the BNG update, and the flood risk update. It was also noted that the initial environmental information was shared in the non-statutory consultation 2024 Environmental Update Report. Since then, EWR Co have been reviewing feedback, engaging with stakeholders and undertaking surveys to inform design development.
- 4.2 Katie Dixon (KD) gave specific environmental updates to the Bedford project area.
- 4.3 CA enquired whether there are progressing groundworks in the specific Poets area.
- 4.4 LB, in response to the question, outlined the two phases under which groundworks take place, and was happy to take away the question to provide a more specific answer.
Post meeting note: Phase 1 focused on core route sections, and some areas along MVL. Phase 2 will cover the route wide section.
- 4.5 Zara Layne (ZL) asked what lessons learned has the project team gathered from previous projects, which will be used to deliver an environmentally friendly outcome.
- 4.6 LB outlined the project's forward-looking attitude in terms of sustainability, citing IEMA, ICEP and B&G as contributing examples.
- 4.7 KD added that it is a process very much reliant on environmental and sustainability advice from professionals.
- 4.8 LB mentioned the online forums for early engagement with stakeholders.

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- 4.9 KD added that the team is taking examples from HS2 and ensuring that it is compliant with various environmental requirements, before applying for DCO.
- 4.10 Joanne Branson-Budd (JBB) asked whether there is any documentation at present which summarises the You Said We Did piece/ feedback from the non-statutory consultation
- 4.11 SJ answered that the You Said We Did document is imminent.
- 4.12 CA asked for clarification regarding the presence of TPOs on trees.
- 4.13 KD clarified that the design is still under development, and that the project team is focusing on avoidance rather than mitigation of such factors.

5. Route Section Update

- 5.1 Mohamad Alserdare (MA) explained the specific design decisions related to the Bedford route section, also focusing on station concept and project aspirations for increased connectivity.
- 5.2 Ben Foley (BF) observed that there is a change in rationale, coming from the project team, related to the planned demolitions for the Multi Storey Parking.
- 5.3 ZL pointed out that any significant patch of land which could be used for development should be made known to the Council.
- 5.4 MA clarified that the reasoning behind EWR acquiring properties was not related to consultation feedback.
- 5.5 ZL asked if the slides had been presented to the mayor.
- 5.6 SJ clarified that the slides were presented to the mayor four weeks prior, and a copy of those slides were sent to the mayor's office after the meeting.
- 5.7 BF enquired whether any buildings present within the Ashburnham triangle could be preserved, unsure whether the planned demolitions are necessary. BF requested the team to reconsider demolition plans for this area, specifically referring to local resident homes and the Polish Centre.
- 5.8 MA explained that present buildings erasure planned for the Ashburnham triangle was a gradual decision. MA clarified that those with interest in the site are being involved in decision making, and that the team is presently also considering the merit of maintaining some of the buildings. Related to the Polish Club, MA explained that demolitions would not impact the building as a whole; related to private properties, MA explained that it is unlikely that the project will request to acquire less properties than expressed at the present time.

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5.9 MA clarified that the project will no longer be affecting the surface car park to the north of the station at Bromham Road.

5.10 CA enquired whether there will be an up-fast platform at the station, and whether said platform will remove the need for double tracks.

5.11 MA explained that there is a plan for an up-fast platform, which will provide wider platforms, safer amenities and a faster service. However, MA explained that this does not remove the need for double tracks, and that demolitions in the Poets Area are still required.

5.12 Eric Cooper (EC) asked whether the team is planning on doing design work on Bromham Road.

5.13 MA answered that design works on Bromham Road are being considered for the next stages.

5.14 BF raised the issue of having accessible parking spaces close to entrances and exits.

6. Accessibility Panel

6.1 Georgina Taylor (GT) explained that EWR Co have been doing a lot of work to embed inclusion and accessibility into proposals and design.

6.2 BF raised the matter of increased access to bus routes, saying it is crucial for those who require accessible arrangements.

6.3 GT confirmed that the project considers not only station entrances, but also how people travel to the station, clarifying that the matter raised is of interest to the project team.

7. Discussion, Questions & Answers (Q&A)

7.1 EC enquired regarding flood relief at the Clapham end of the viaduct section in particular, but also requested an update on St John's station and the rest of the Clapham route to be included. EC expressed disappointment at the fact that the project team decided to split the Clapham section into multiple parts, instead of keeping it as one.

7.2 LB also mentioned that she had provided an update on flooding earlier on in the presentation.

7.3 SJ took this enquiry into account and agreed to arrange a separate meeting with EC in order to provide a further update on the Clapham viaduct, the Sainsbury's area, St John's Station, the area south of Bedford station and Harpur.

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- 7.4 CA asked in the meeting chat whether residents and ward councillors will be made aware of the findings and impacts of the structural surveys (particularly in Chesterton Mews and Milne Row).

Post Meeting Note: Was not discussed during survey license agreement; no survey copies have been previously requested.

- 7.5 SJ assured that the team will aim to answer all questioned posted in the meeting chat in the meeting minutes document.

8. Closing remarks

- 8.1 SJ thanked the attendees for their contributions during the session and advised that further information is available on the [EWR website](#).
- 8.2 SJ advised that if any attendees have any further questions, these can be sent to localrepresentativesgroups@eastwestrail.co.uk.

Summary of Actions

ACTION 1: Sarah Jacobs to answer by email Colleen Atkins' questions on behalf of Protect Poets (3.2)

ACTION 2: Leah Bargota to provide a more specific answer for Collen Atkins' question on the planned scheduling for the Poets area, from the GI team.

ACTION 3: The project team to decide whether it is possible to reconsider the demolitions planned for the Polish Centre and local residencies, as per Ben Foley's request.

ACTION 4: For the next round of meetings, Sarah Jacobs to present an update on the viaduct section, the Sainsbury's area, St John's Station, and the area south of Bedford station and Harpur.

ACTION 5: Sarah Jacobs to set up a call with Eric Cooper to present an update on the viaduct section, the Sainsbury's area, St John's Station, and the area south of Bedford station and Harpur.

ACTION 6: Sarah Jacobs to answer Colleen Atkins' chat question (7.4) in the meeting minutes.

Attendees

EWR Co attendees

- Sarah Jacobs (SJ) - Senior Stakeholder Manager

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- Leah Bargota (LB) - Environmental Area Manager
- Katie Dixon (KD) – Principal Environmental and Sustainability Consultant
- Mohamad Alserdare (MA) – Development Program Manager (Bedford)
- Georgina Taylor (GT) – Accessibility Manager
- Lavinia Popa (LP) – LRG Support
- Veronika Mora (VM) - Bedford Project Manager Delivery
- Jason Rodwell (JR) - Senior Development Manager West

Local authority councillors

- Zara Layne (ZL) – Harpur, Bedford Borough Council
- Ben Foley (BF) – Greyfriars, Bedford Borough Council
- Abu Sultan (AS) – Cauldwell, Bedford Borough Council
- Colleen Atkins (CA) – Harpur, Bedford Borough Council
- Mohammed Nawaz (MN) - Kempston Central and East ward Kempston, Bedford Borough Council
- Fouzia Atiq (FA) - Cauldwell, Bedford Borough Council

Parish Councillors

- Eric Cooper (EC) - Clapham Parish Council
- Sian Woodfine (SW) - Bromham Parish Council
- Nicola Gribble (NG) - Ravensden Parish Council
- Peter Lamswood (PL) - Brickhill Parish Council

Other

- Susan Edwards (SE) - Political Assistant to Bedford Borough Labour Group
- Joanne Branson Budd (JBB) - Bedford Council Officer

Apologies

- Mohammad Masud (MM) - Queen's Park, Bedford Borough Council
- George Gurney (GG) - Oxfordshire County Council

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