

# Comberton to Haslingfield Enhanced LRG - Meeting note

## Meeting #1

Date: 03/06/2025

Time: 6:30pm

Type of meeting: In person

## Key discussion points and outcomes

### 1. Introduction, overview, and housekeeping

- 1.1 Sarah Jacobs (SJ) welcomed attendees to the meeting and ran through the housekeeping and agenda. SJ explained that the notes from the meeting would be made available on the community hub.
- 1.2 SJ highlighted that although only the parishes in the Enhanced LRGs are statutory consultees, with regards to these meetings EWR Co have taken the view to also regard ward councillors as statutory consultees as this will allow EWR Co to have more meaningful discussions and provide more information.
- 1.3 SJ added that it will be up to the group's discretion whether to share the information discussed during the meeting, although it should be noted that some information will be confidential
- 1.4 All attendees, including EWR Co staff, introduced themselves and their respective parishes, wards or job title.

### 2. Review of actions from the last meeting

- 2.1 Sarah Jacobs (SJ) confirmed that all six actions from the previous meeting have been completed or are in progress. Key updates included sharing a recent factsheet on the southern approach to Cambridge, information regarding to Section 106 payments, tree plantation and maintenance, biodiversity impact mitigations, construction duration information, and environmental survey timelines.
- 2.2 Norman Evanson (NE) responded to the section 106 action and asked if there were any other sections that were relevant for this action that had not yet been explored. SJ said EWR Co would go away and confirm whether or not there were.

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- 2.3 Sharon Erzinciloglu (SE) asked who would be responsible for the upkeep of trees after the development is concluded. Haitham Ayoubi (HA) responded that usually they would be taken over by Network Rail after construction. Laurence Damary-Homan (LDH) responded that on some infrastructure projects trees are a small but important thing that often get left to decline. SJ added that EWR Co would get the environmental team to comment on this.

### **3. Project updates**

#### Universal theme park

- 3.1 SJ discussed the newly announced Universal theme park set to be built
- 3.2 SJ explained that EWR Co are engaging with Universal to determine the potential implications of the park the wider network, including service levels on the Marston Vale Line (MVL) and individual stations. SJ noted EWR Co had not received any further information from the Department for Transport (DfT) since the announcement and are operating as 'business as usual'. Even though it has not yet been confirmed what the park may mean for the railway, EWR Co are committed to maintaining close contact with all relevant parties such as Universal, Network Rail and the Department for Transport (DfT) to ensure accessibility and connectivity are core elements of the planning process.
- 3.3 SE brought up that at a previous meeting EWR Co had suggested they might move the Stewartby station. SJ and SC responded that it was under consideration but not yet decided.
- 3.4 Isabel Robinson (IR) asked when the park was supposed to open. SC responded that it would open in 2031.
- 3.5 SJ confirmed that once EWR Co receive more information, groups would be notified in the following meeting.

#### Chiltern Railways

- 3.6 SJ explained that Chiltern Railways has been announced as the operator for the first stage of EWR and is expecting to run services later this year.

#### Ground Investigation (GI) Works


- 3.7 SJ shared that the Phase 1 ground investigation (GI) works for EWR Co started in February this year and that EWR Co have been or would be in contact with the parishes to notify them of such works.

- 3.8 The GI works were estimated to take four to five months, but it is likely that EWR Co will need more time to complete them. EWR Co still needs to complete site visits and look for ways to reduce costs and risks associated with the GI works, as well as acquire permission through licences to access land. SJ said as soon as they were aware when they would reach this area they would let attendees know.
- 3.9 Liz Hales (LH) asked if EWR Co were doing investigations on the chalk streams in the area. SJ responded they were and then went into detail regarding multiple surveys EWR are working on which include but are not limited to; Biodiversity, Arboriculture, Agriculture, Noise and Vibration, Water Resources, Air Quality, Traffic, Wider Framework Directive, Culture, Community, and Landscape.
- 3.10 SE asked where any found fossils would go. SC responded they would be kept for a finite time and then possibly given to museums or other relevant parties.
- 3.11 IR asked if parishes would be told when the surveys are occurring. SJ responded that parishes would only be notified for the intrusive ones.
- 3.12 IR asked when and where parishes would be able to access the survey information. HA and JS responded it would either be available on the Natural England databases or other relevant institutions as part of the DCO requirement. SJ said they can send a link out with the notes with a table which denotes which database will be uploaded for which data.
- 3.13 LH asked if there would be a survey for Chapel Hill which is an archaeological site. SC responded yes but it is currently delayed due to agricultural work in the area.
- 3.14 IR questioned why certain locations had been chosen for the noise and air quality surveys which were done next to the A603. SC said EWR Co would ask the environmental team and provide an answer. LH followed up by saying comments had been made on the Environmental Impact Assessment about the locations of surveys, especially with regard to air quality and taking account of the prevailing direction of wind which would have an impact on where particulate matter spreads.

#### **4. Non-statutory consultation (NSC) next steps**

- 4.1 SJ provided an update on the non-statutory consultation (NSC), reiterating its role as a high-level document intended to give an overview of the project.
- 4.2 LH responded that they were appalled with the NSC as it incorrectly summarised that the community was pleased with the development which is the opposite of what the current community sentiment is. Simon Moffatt (SM) agreed.

- 4.3 LH added that Haslingfield Parish Council has chaired two separate meetings between representatives of the parish councils the Head of Planning at SCDC and MP for the area to express their concerns with these plans. These meetings are now scheduled on a 6 monthly basis.
- 4.4 SJ thanked attendees for their feedback. Natalie Wheble (NW) responded that the NSC was meant to be high level, and the update document attempted to convey this. SE responded that the information in the document was not the issue, rather it was the tone the NSC update document used, which implied a more positive community response than the reality. They did not feel that they were being adequately listened to.
- 4.5 SM added that he thought the route should have taken a northern approach and felt that the decision was being influenced by national Government. SJ reiterated that the route alignment decision was made two years ago, and it was not productive to dwell on the decision since it had been made.
- 4.6 IR suggested that the point of the route was to build more houses in the area. LDH countered that this is the reality of the area, as central government wants to see this area develop. LDH argued a better use of time would be to explore how can they minimise disruption and maximise benefits. They would welcome solutions to go to DfT, but the government won't listen to Local Authorities. LDH added that the local view is almost disregarded at a central level, but they can try and make this as palatable as possible.
- 4.7 HA added that the station is at Cambourne, regardless of northern or southern route. A lot of the design is constrained by habitat, rather than railway systems. EWR Co must avoid woodland, watercourses, flood risks, bats. A lot of energy and effort is being spent to address this.
- 4.8 IR mentioned that once the railway is built, arable land would be lost, thus opening it to housing developers. AM responded that this is still being discussed in the EWR Co team.
- 4.9 AM added that active travel was popular in the area and would like to see this presented. HA said a lot of work was being done on active travel leading to consultation.
- 4.10 LH said they felt that the EIA did not adequately portray the impact on communities and villages who need to access key facilities across parish boundaries. SJ responded that severance and the connection between locations was something EWR Co were investigating in detail.
- 4.11 SE asked if there would be adequate parking at the Cambourne station. NE added that the biggest mitigation that EWR Co have not considered is a lack of stations between Cambourne and Cambridge.
- 4.12 AM asked if there could also be a push for light rail. SC said EWR Co looked at this three years ago as an option, but it was discarded in favour of heavy rail. NW added the two are not mutually exclusive.

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- 4.13 SE asked that a cycle path could be included in the plans. SC replied that the active travel team was looking at having a cycle path alongside the route. Development Consent Order (DCO) Process
- 4.14 SJ shared the Development Consent Order (DCO) process timeline. The key principles of the DCO process were outlined, including that it is an inclusive process and EWR Co wants communities to have a say at every stage.
- 4.15 SM asked how long the consultation would take. SJ responded 10 to 12 weeks. SC added that it would likely be approved by central government around 2028.
- 4.16 NE asked when the rules of engagement in terms of road closures and timings, and section 106 would take place on the DCO timeline. SJ confirmed it wouldn't be until after they'd submitted the DCO.
- 4.17 SM asked if there was any consideration for an ombudsman setup to protect the villages once the project is underway? Feedback was that it had been difficult to raise complaints about issues in the past. NW responded they would set out a code of construction and direct communication would be maintained between EWR Co, Contractors, and the communities.
- 4.18 SM replied that this had not been the case for CS1 where issues had arisen. SJ replied that in response to issues with the CS1 project an alliance had been formed between EWR Co and Network Rail which had resolved those issues and lessons learned from that would be applied in this instance.
- 4.19 NE asked who the DCO would eventually be submitted to. HA responded that it will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.
- 4.20 SE cited a recent issue between contractors and a local farmer. Contractors had raised a complaint against the farmer which was discovered to be false when the farmer was able to produce video evidence to dispute it, in response to emails sent to him via the EWR Co Lands Team. SE raised that this is concerning as the dispute could have gone differently had the farmer not had evidence to dispute the claim. SJ said that EWR Co would take this feedback away and discuss in more detail how conflicts like this are resolved.
- 4.21 NW confirmed to NE that South Cambridgeshire would be the planning authority until the DCO is submitted, with regard to Section 106.

#### Revised Local Representative Groups (LRGs)

- 4.22 SJ discussed the revised group structure for the LRGs and explained that all parishes and wards within the red line boundary have been placed into the 'Enhanced' LRGs, whereas those outside this boundary are part of the 'Community LRGs'.

- 4.23 AM mentioned they were from Barton but felt it was important they were here due to concerns of construction traffic travelling through their village. SJ asked why Barton isn't included in the red line boundary and SC responded they thought it might be as EWR Co weren't taking land there, but acknowledged it was a good point to raise.
- 4.24 SM asked if Toft were part of the group. SJ responded that Toft representatives were invited to this group but attended a meeting on the previous night. NE added that they have a legitimate interest in both groups as they were on the boundary.

### Maps

- 4.25 LH asked where amended maps could be found of the route. SJ said they would be available at consultation.

## **5.Terms of Reference**

- 5.1 SJ mentioned that the Terms of Reference (ToR) would be shared and if there was anything that the councillors wanted to change they should provide feedback.

## **6.Design changes, Questions & Answers (Q&A)**

- 6.1 SC recapped the works which had taken place in the area such as the twin track railway, works on the tunnel at Chapel Hill, a series of bridges and crossings so that roads and footpaths can be maintained across the railway, two new viaducts over bourn brook to the south of Comberton and the River Rhee to the West of Harston, and balancing ponds and divert utilities including overhead electricity transmission lines.
- 6.2 SC mentioned EWR Co have been looking at gradients over the course of the core section. They mentioned now most of the gradients are now 1 in 80 with some being 1 in 100 as some were thought to be too steep in initial designs.
- 6.3 SC ran through the QA slides. Tunnelling is being looked at across the route. Construction compounds and stockpile locations are being reviewed due to proximity to housing. IR was concerned compounds might have been moved to another populated area. HA reassured that they wouldn't be moved near to other properties.
- 6.4 SE asked how extreme the changes were to the raised embankment. HA responded they didn't know exactly but likely would change by being a few metres lower.
- 6.5 AM wanted to make sure that footpath access from Eversden to Comberton was maintained since it was used often by children to transit to nearby colleges and schools.

- 6.6 NE mentioned that the embankment at the Kings Cross line to Shelford often floods when it rains and wanted to make sure this wouldn't happen with the ones on this part of the route. SC mentioned EWR Co need to do some surveys in this area to ensure that doesn't happen.
- 6.7 SE asked if EWR Co had reconsidered the height of the viaducts given recent examples of them not contributing to biodiversity related to bats. A specific example in Norfolk was cited as not working well. SJ added that EWR Co's environment team were looking into examples, SE asked if the bats don't use the viaduct, then could its height be lowered? HA said that it was possible. SC mentioned that EWR Co would ask their environment team about it. HA added that all relevant work is being reviewed by Natural England.
- 6.8 SC went through some of the design changes that have been considered after feedback from the non-statutory consultation.
- 6.9 Firstly, the alignment has changed slightly to allow access to the house near Comberton to toft. Access to the questioned area has been maintained. Further consultation with the property owner about drainage will happen to consider moving a drainage tank.
- 6.10 In the same area access to the fields south of Comberton there is a footbridge just south of Comberton and toft which will be upgraded to improve agricultural access. Access tracks to farms will be assisted by that bridge.
- 6.11 All info was shared with Cambridge local authorities this week.
- 6.12 Construction compounds near Comberton village college have been moved based off feedback that they were too close to the college. SE asked where they were going to? SC didn't know but they would go and check and share with the group.
- 6.13 Engagement with Bourn Brook Farm on drainage is ongoing.
- 6.14 AM asked what the noise issue was now like? SC said noise and vibration impact assessments are currently being done. AM asked if EWR were aware about the Parish Online Vibration and Noise recording. SC suggested the environment team would be.
- 6.15 Historic England were concerned about the proposed route interfering with an archaeological site near Harlton. Near Washpit Lane. Chapel Hill. Drainage diversion went through it, so it has been changed to not go through it.
- 6.16 Harlton construction and logistics compound is still open and part of a route study. Feedback was to move it. There are issues with the gradient in that area. General guidance of 10% slope and EWR Co believes its higher than that in alternative locations but it's still being looked at. IR questioned where it was steep? SC said they would go away and check.
- 6.17 Feedback on Chapel Hill tunnel extension suggested the tunnel could be extended, but not to the degree proposed by David Revell. LH asked if the entrance and exit of the tunnel would be consulted on due to proximity to its dwellings. SC mentioned it would be, as well as noise assessments.

- 6.18 AM asked what numbers EWR Co were working to on noise and vibrations. HA said they would ask the environment team to confirm this. AM mentioned that current advice would be less than 45DB is acceptable. SC reaffirmed that EWR Co would confirm this with the environment team.
- 6.19 NE asked if there was anything from neighbouring sections that had been changed that SC would be able to mention or talk through. SC responded including updates to Access to farmland, provision of extra wetland, the movement or removal of several construction compounds, and biodiversity net gain recommendation implementations.
- 6.20 SE raised that there were few houses on Royston Lane and asked how their access would be impacted. SM added there are two or three bungalows in that area. SC confirmed an action would be taken to confirm impacts on these properties.
- 6.21 SM mentioned there's fireworks storage nearby to those bungalows known locally as the "gas woods". SC said he would look into that.

## **7.Creating meeting summary notes**

- 10.1 SJ described the process for creating the meeting summary notes for this meeting. It was outlined that there was nothing confidential discussed in the meeting. However, sensitive information may be shared in future meetings, which may impact the decision to publish the notes. SW emphasised the need to manage expectations relating to what parishes can keep confidential.
- 10.2 SE asked if comments at this meeting would be recorded and recognised as feedback and reiterated that it would be nice to have a cycle path alongside the railway to Comberton so that they can catch the train. ME reassured that comments would be captured and can be commented on in the minutes

## **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](#). They reiterated that EWR Co would return with further updates though were not yet sure on the format.
- 8.2 SJ mentioned that if any attendees have further questions, these can be sent to [localrepresentativegroups@eastwestrail.co.uk](mailto:localrepresentativegroups@eastwestrail.co.uk).



## Summary of Actions

**ACTION 1:** EWR to provide an update from the Environmental team on how trees will be maintained during maintenance period.

**ACTION 2:** EWR to provide a table which outlines surveys undertaken, and links to where publicly held information will eventually be uploaded.

**ACTION 3:** EWR to confirm rationale behind locations for noise and air quality surveys.

**ACTION 4:** EWR to discuss how concerns can be raised by residents around the conduct of contractors (referencing recent crop spraying incident).

**ACTION 5:** EWR to confirm whether the example of Norfolk has been considered as part of bat access through the viaduct.

**ACTION 6:** EWR to confirm the location of where construction compounds will go, after having been moved from the south of Comberton College site.

**ACTION 7:** EWR to ensure the Parish Online Mapping Programme is considered moving forward.

**ACTION 8:** EWR to confirm the alternative sites under consideration for the Harlton Construction and Logistics site.

**ACTION 9:** EWR to confirm the decibel level that EWR is working towards for the entry and exit of trains to and from tunnels.

**ACTION 10:** EWR to confirm how homes near Royston Lane will be able to access nearby roads, and whether an additional access road will be built.

**ACTION 11:** EWR to confirm that 'The Gas Woods' (fireworks depot) has been considered.

**ACTION 12:** EWR to confirm that feedback on active travel from Cllr SE has been logged, as well as other comments from the session.

## Attendees

### EWR Co attendees

- Sarah Jacobs (SJ) - Senior Stakeholder Manager
- Stephen Christian (SC) - Project Manager
- Natalie Wheble (NW) – External Affairs Director
- Haitham Ayoubi (HA) – Engineering Manager

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## **Local authority councillors**

- Cllr Laurence Damary-Homan – Cambridgeshire County Council, Sawston & Shelford ward

## **Parish Councils**

- Cllr Simon Moffat (SM) – Comberton Parish Council
- Cllr Norman Evanson (NE) – Comberton Parish Council
- Cllr Isabel Robinson (IR) – Harlton Parish Council
- Cllr Liz Hales (LH) – Haslingfield Parish Council
- Cllr Sharon Erzinclioglu (SE) – Little and Great Eversden Parish Council
- Cllr Andrew Martin (AM) - Barton

## **Apologies**

- Barrington CP
- Toft CP
- Cllr Lisa Redrup – South Cambridgeshire District Council, Harston and Comberton ward