



Questions to EWR

1. Interchange Station for ECML to be at Tempsford

The consultation only considered Tempsford and St Neots South as locations for Interchange Station for ECML. There is only highly speculative housing development in these areas – nothing committed and even if developed would be smaller population than St Neots. It should have considered St Neots existing station as location for Interchange Station for ECML. That would better serve existing residents and passengers.

Why is speculative property development being prioritised over the needs of existing residents?

No, speculative property development is not being prioritised over the needs of existing residents. It is important to clarify that East West Rail's (EWR) remit is to make journeys easier and create new opportunities for local people by building fast, reliable and sustainable public transport: not to build homes.

However, when refining our designs, we have balanced the needs of existing and planned housing growth. Planned growth is a useful consideration as it shows current Local Authorities' current appetite to expand existing settlements, as well as increase the population within the catchment area of EWR stations. Such growth would result in higher levels of demand for the new transport link.

Central Bedfordshire Council has commenced a review of its existing Local Plan but has yet to consult on its proposed future spatial development strategy. The adopted Central Bedfordshire Local plan indicates that the A1 corridor, including Sandy and the area north to Tempsford, may have a greater future potential for large-scale growth as a result of service improvements to the East Coast Mainline (ECML) and also dependent on routing of EWR.

Creating a new station at a Tempsford location has a greater potential to support economic growth to come forward than a new station at St Neots, due to constraints at the St Neots location in relation to existing developments and infrastructure. Development at Tempsford would also enable the redevelopment of brownfield land at RAF Tempsford. The higher growth potential of Tempsford than St. Neots was validated by advice received from Homes England.

Ultimately, any new housing will be up to local decision-makers – including Local Authorities – who will confirm and approve development plans.

2. 6 tracks north of Bedford station

6 tracks north of Bedford station requires demolition of 66 properties. This is very unpopular and is leading to people opposing the whole of EWR. 4 track option is claimed not to have enough capacity so 6 track preferred.

Why has EWR Ltd failed to consider the 5-track option which would provide sufficient capacity and not require any house demolition?

We did consider two 5-track options for north of Bedford Station at the 2021 consultation: one with an additional track to the west and another one with an additional track to the east. We concluded that the western track option would not be feasible to build, and the eastern track option would have the same impact on nearby properties as the 6-track options whilst not providing the capacity and performance required to run a reliable service.

You can read more about the appraisal we conducted assessing all possible tracking options north of Bedford in the 2021's Consultation Technical Report (pages 268-296) – [here](#).

However, we recognise the impacts that two additional tracks have on local residents and businesses and, by challenging the design, we have found ways to reduce the number of properties affected in the area from 98 to 66; 38 properties likely to be acquired and/or demolished and 28 properties may lose part of their garden or parking area.

We have also launched the Need to Sell Property Scheme. We have developed it following feedback received during the 2021 consultation and it supports eligible property owners who have a compelling need to sell but who have been unable to do so other than at a substantially reduced value because of the EWR Project by enabling them to apply for their property to be purchased at its unblighted market value. The full eligibility criteria for the scheme and further information are available – [here](#).

3. Service on Marston Vale line

Service on Marston Vale line reduced from 4 fasts and 1 slow to 2 fasts and 1 slow each hour. Fasts will have to be 30 mins apart with the stopper in one of the 30 min gaps. At LRG presentation on day of publication Will Gallagher of EWR Ltd talked about service "every 20 mins" on Marston Vale line. That is not possible with 2 fasts and 1 slow each hour.

Which is being proposed - 2 fasts and 1 slow each hour or service every 20 mins? It can't be both.

We have looked further at the potential number of passengers that could use stations on the MVL and we believe that three trains per hour (tph) would serve the needs of passengers, instead of the previous planned four to five tph. Although this is a reduction in the number of tph, we are comfortable that this revised frequency – two fast trains and one slow train, roughly every 20 minutes in each direction – will sufficiently accommodate passenger numbers, allow for efficient travel, and provide adequate services to communities.

As we continue to work on the designs for EWR, we will consider all three services together in identifying the best timetable and stopping pattern for the communities along the line. We will be able to share an update on this at the Statutory Consultation, which we expect to hold in the first half of 2024.

4. Extension of Marston Vale stopper to MK Central

Report claims that only 1tph stopper can be justified by pax numbers on Marston Vale line. But if the service was extended to MK Central at the Bletchley end it would attract far more passengers. This is technically possible by reversing at Bletchley (no need for a new chord) and was part of the London Midland franchise but was never implemented. Increased passenger numbers might justify 2tph stoppers on Marston Vale line giving a vastly improved service to communities along the line.

Why has extension to MK Central from Bedford direction not been considered?

The extension of the line from Bedford Station to Milton Keynes Central was considered as part of the development of options for the section between Bedford to Oxford, but after careful analysis and evaluation it was ultimately ruled out.

As part of the development of initial options, 57 Scheme Options were identified for the Bedford to Oxford route section. The options were assessed and the analysis took into account the existing railway. Rather than seeking to replace the railway, the focus was on optimising the service and existing infrastructure.

However, we recognise that there may be a long-term aspiration for this extension between Milton Keynes Central and Bedford Station in the future, and we are delivering EWR in a way that it does not preclude this option from being developed.

With the proposed EWR services, passengers coming from Bedford will be able to change at Bletchley Station to connect with trains travelling up the West Coast Main Line to get to Milton Keynes Central Station, including EWR's from Oxford. Our aspiration is that the timetabling will allow a reliable and seamless connection between Bedford and Milton Keynes.