



Planning & Economic Growth
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Reference OBJ/244

Dear Secretary of State

**The Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order
Transport and Work Act 1992**

I refer to the Council's letter of 6th September 2018 setting out its views on the aforementioned Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) documents published by Network Rail on 27th July 2018, together with your response of 19th December.

On 23rd January 2019 I received Network Rail's response to the Council's objection, a copy of which is attached for your information. The Council appreciates that the TWAO and the forthcoming public inquiry relate to Phase 2 of the East West Rail (EWR) western section.

On the basis that, as set out in Network Rail's response of 24th January 2019, it is not currently planned to undertake any further line speed improvements to the Marston Vale Line either as part of Phase 2 of the EWR western section or subsequently, then we are prepared to remove that element of our objection.

The Council appreciates why, **solely as part of Phase 2 of the EWR western section**, the replacement of the level crossing on Manor Road in Kempston Hardwick with a bridge carrying the road over the MVL is justified.

However we feel that the response from Network Rail completely missed the point of our letter of 6th September 2018 that any consideration of the eastern end of the western section is inextricably linked to consideration of the EWR central section. This is particularly relevant as the East West Rail Company has today launched consultation on route options in the preferred corridor for the EWR central section. Three of the five options being consulted upon indicate that the western end of the central section could commence as far south as Wixams.

In September 2018 the Mayor of Bedford committed to contribute to the cost of a new station at Wixams, a circa 4500 home development about 3 miles south of Bedford. A

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chord between the Marston Vale Line (MVL) and the Midland Main Line (MML) in the Stewartby area continuing as the EWR central section east of Wixams, would facilitate interchange between EWR services and those Thameslink and East Midlands rail services which use the MML, providing access to Luton and its airport as well as to Bedford and beyond.

Furthermore, Network Rail recognised in 2012 that the inability of the tight radius in the St John's area of Bedford to accommodate 775 metre long freight trains would be a constraint given the role of the EWR western section as part of the then strategic electric freight spine between the south coast ports and the east Midlands/south Yorkshire. The Council's view is that a chord between the MVL and the MML in the vicinity of Stewartby not only provides a more natural connection to the EWR central section, but with the inclusion of north facing links onto the MML is the preferred option for removing this constraint to freight on the wider EWR scheme.

We believe that the above two points strengthen the arguments for a chord between MVL and MML in the vicinity of Stewartby, together with rail links onto the MML to/from Bedford. This chord and links, along with continuation of an EWR central section route east of Wixams in the mid 2020's would then result in the proposed bridge carrying Manor Road in Kempston Hardwick over the MVL becoming redundant within about 2-3 years of its completion. This is counter to the principle set out in the National Infrastructure Commission's Interim report published in November 2016 of 'avoiding abortive costs'.

We therefore wish to retain our objection to the issue of the proposed bridge carrying Manor Road over the MVL in relation to consideration of the route for the EWR central section, and would urge that you review whether the Manor Road bridge is required dependent on the outcome of the Preferred Route decision on the EWR central section, which is expected in August 2019.

Yours sincerely



Keith Dove
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