



Alan Francis

Milton Keynes

*By e-mail*

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7 December 2018

**Ref: OBJ/212**

Dear Mr Francis,

I write in response to your objection (ref: OBJ/212) dated 6 September 2018 on behalf of the Milton Keynes Green Party in respect of the Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order (the Order).

The East West Rail Western Section Phase 2 (EWR2) project will introduce a number of new services between Oxford, Aylesbury, Milton Keynes and Bedford. This will provide support economic growth along the line of route and provide rail links between locations which currently are only commutable via road, or via lengthy interchange via London. Network Rail appreciates the comments you have made about the improved connectivity EWR2 will bring.

The other points raised in your objection are addressed below:

#### **Princes Risborough to Aylesbury works removed from scope**

An earlier version of the East West Rail Train Service Specification had included the extension of the proposed Milton Keynes to Aylesbury service to London Marylebone via High Wycombe. To support this service, the single-track Princes Risborough to Aylesbury line was planned to be upgraded from 40mph to 80mph, with platform extensions at Princes Risborough, Monks Risborough and Little Kimble stations. This was removed from the scope of the Order in April 2016 as development work had by that time identified significant challenges in linking the West Coast and Chiltern mainlines, where pathing opportunities are limited, made more difficult with the single-track section between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury. As a result of these challenges the Department of Transport (DfT) instructed Network Rail to amend the Train Service Specification to provide an Aylesbury to Milton Keynes service, rather than a London Marylebone to Milton Keynes service.

#### **Double track between Aylesbury Vale Parkway and Claydon Junction**

In March 2017, a remit to undertake a "value for money" review that reduces the cost and accelerates the delivery of EWR2 was agreed between the DfT and the East West Railway Company. The review included a requirement to carry out an assessment of the route between Claydon Junction and Aylesbury Vale Parkway and determine the minimum

infrastructure requirements that provide capacity to deliver one passenger train per hour in each direction and deliver all existing Calvert waste trains. The report was received by the Secretary of State in June 2017. Timetable analysis was used to conduct the review and concluded that by upgrading the existing single line from the current 30mph line speed to 90mph and providing modern colour light signals with 8-minute headways, it would be possible to run both the existing Calvert waste trains and the proposed hourly Aylesbury to Milton Keynes passenger services on the single line.

The original double-track had been a minimum requirement when the hourly Milton Keynes to Aylesbury service was extended through to London Marylebone via High Wycombe, as a double track offered greater pathing opportunities between Claydon and Aylesbury Vale Parkway. However, in April 2016 the DfT instructed Network Rail to amend the Train Service Specification to provide an Aylesbury to Milton Keynes service, rather than a London Marylebone to Milton Keynes service, and therefore the flexibility provided by a double-track was no longer required.

Notwithstanding this, Network Rail can confirm that the single-track renewal along the Aylesbury/Claydon Junction corridor will be designed in such a way as to not preclude the installation of a second track in the future.

### **Bletchley chord**

The project does not propose any works to the existing track north or east of the proposed Bletchley high level platforms. Any provision for a future Milton Keynes/Bedford chord would require instruction from the DfT and, as none has been issued, no passive provision is being made.

### **Reversal of trains at Bletchley High Level (HL) platforms**

The infrastructure proposals in the Order, which have been extensively consulted upon, are based on the requirement to facilitate a specified train (passenger and freight) service pattern, as instructed by the DfT. Modelling of the timetable indicates some capacity for future growth within the infrastructure to be provided. Provision of any additional infrastructure or signalling facilities above those required to operate the specified services would undermine the business case for the project and would be outside the scope of DfT instruction as well as not represent value for money.

On the matter of how the proposed infrastructure is operated, in terms of passenger services, this is a matter that is decided upon between the Train Operating Company and the DfT.

### **Shortening of high level platforms at Bletchley**

As part of the changes to the scope of works in the Order, following instruction from the DfT, platforms at Winslow, Bletchley and Aylesbury Vale Parkway stations were reduced from the original 212m to 106m in length. The core train service schedule will now be operated using 4-car units and not 8-car units as was originally the case. The original driver for the 212m platform lengths was the single one train per hour in each direction “inter-regional” train service, which required the use of 8-car unit; this no longer forms part of the EWR2 core train service, due to lack of available train paths for it on the West Coast Main Line. In

addition, the Train Operating Companies that are likely to operate the EWR2 services are only likely to use 4-car units to operate the initial EWR2 services and hence the platforms now only need to be 106m long. However, the current station design at these three stations does not preclude the future extension of these platforms to 212m at a later date, if future EWR train services justify the need, which might be, for example, when the Central Section (Bedford area-Sandy area-Cambridge) comes on line.

### **Eastern entrance at Bletchley Station**

Whilst provision for an eastern entrance at Bletchley Station does not form part of the scope of the EWR2 scheme, Network Rail is working with Milton Keynes Council in relation to its long-standing aim of implementing an eastern entrance at the station. It is intended that a feasibility study is carried out early in 2019 to assess the appropriate location and timescales for an eastern entrance; however, if this were to be introduced, an eastern entrance would require separate funding and consent as it will remain outside the scope of the Order.

### **Enhancements at Fenny Stratford Station**

The scope of the EWR2 project does not include any changes to Fenny Stratford Station nor the single track formation along this stretch of the Marston Vale Line.

### **Replacement overbridge at Bow Brickhill level crossing**

Network Rail is aware of the proposed Caldecotte C (land to the North West of the Bow Brickhill level crossing) and the South East Milton Keynes Strategic Urban Extension development proposals (land to the South East of the crossing), both of which would potentially limit the future replacement of the Bow Brickhill level crossing on Brickhill Street with a new bridge. Discussions are ongoing with the relevant local authorities to identify the possibility of safeguarding a future route for a replacement option if it is deemed to be appropriate and deliverable.

### **Replacement overbridge at Woburn Sands Newport Road level crossing and introduction of a right hand turn into Cranfield Road**

As the scope of the EWR2 project does not include modification to the existing level crossing and highway at Woburn Sands, any requirements to address existing capacity and / or safety issues associated with the existing highway do not form part of the project scope and as such should be taken up with the appropriate local highways authority, in this case, Milton Keynes Council.

### **Barrier down time at Woburn Sands Newport Road level crossing**

The barrier downtime assessment noted the existing crossing is closed for 5m 16s in a typical hour. With the introduction of EWR2, this will increase to 10m 32s in a typical hour. This has been deemed an acceptable level of change. The extended crossing closure times are comparable to other busy level crossings around the UK which are considered to operate safely. Nevertheless, Network Rail has a duty to minimise the risk to as low as is reasonably practicable.

### **Cycle storage facilities at Woburn Sands and Ridgmont stations**

The scope of the EWR2 project does not include storage facilities at Woburn Sands and Ridgmont stations for cycles.

## **Electrification**

EWR2 was originally planned to be electrified as part of the Government's "Electric Spine" programme, which was intended to create a new electric rail corridor between Southampton and Sheffield, via East West Rail. When the Electric Spine programme was deferred by the Government in autumn 2015, the electrification of the EWR2 section was reduced to cover the route between Oxford and the West Coast Mainline at Bletchley only.

Subsequently, in October 2016, the DfT announced that plans to electrify the route between Oxford and the West Coast Mainline were also to be removed from the scope of the Order. DfT made the decision to defer the electrification of EWR indefinitely to allow project resources to be focused on opening the EWR2 section of the railway at the earliest opportunity. Following this decision, development of proposals to electrify the line ceased and it is now proposed EWR2 will be a wholly non-electrified line of route. However, any proposed new structures being built as part of the EWR2 project (including road and foot bridges) will allow sufficient clearance to accommodate electrification, should it be pursued in the future.

I hope the above clarifies some of your concerns regarding the Order.

If you are satisfied the concerns in your objection have been addressed please would you formally withdraw your objection by notifying the TWA Unit in writing and quoting ref OBJ/212?

The Unit's contact details are below:

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Yours sincerely,



Sophie Moeng  
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*For and on behalf of Network Rail*