

Transport and Works Act 1992: Application for the proposed Network Rail (East West
Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order
SUPPORTER 373 Mr John Henderson
STATEMENT OF CASE

I am a regular traveller between Bedford and Milton Keynes, and occasionally to Bicester and Oxford. I travel by car and / or train and occasionally by bus. Whichever mode or route I use, the trip is difficult. The scheme potentially will bring a huge benefit to my travel life, and by extension to fellow travellers, will benefit many lives. However, the benefits will be only realised if the train service is really reliable and has the capacity to absorb all those who wish to travel. Therefore I support all the design features of the scheme that will allow Network Rail to operate and maintain the railway effectively; that allow quick intervention under upset conditions; and will allow the capacity to be expanded in the future, for example by provision for platform lengthening.

I would go further and say that the design needs to be improved to be user-friendly and community-friendly. Specifically I would advocate improvements to the scheme in three areas:

better facilities and access at stations;

better access for passengers and others who need to cross the line; and

better access for construction traffic that minimises the impact on local residents.

Turning particularly to the pedestrian crossings at Lidlington and Woburn Sands.

They are well used on school days and I do hope NR's data relating to the number of

users have been collected on school days. I believe subways or bridges are justified in those two places on the grounds that all similar crossings west of Bletchley are replaced in the scheme by bridges. If the cost is really not affordable, I suggest considering automatic locking of the gates when a train approaches as I know is the practice in Germany. Refuge areas can be provided on each side of the track next to the gates, so anyone crossing when the gates lock is not at risk.

Network Rail has called the scheme sustainable. To earn that badge the features of I've just outlined are necessary; but they are not sufficient. At the heart of sustainability is the environment. Every scheme for development needs to recognise the very poor record of nature conservation in this country and I welcome the natural compensation measures incorporated into the scheme. They will not only benefit the bats, newts and rare plants, but all the species that need the same type of habitat; for example, bird species once thought common but in fact no longer are.

It's not just the birds and bees that will benefit from the compensation. People enjoy living near to green spaces, especially areas with trees and wildlife. Indeed some people are willing to pay a premium to live near such locations and so there is commercial benefit to EWR as well as a natural one.

Another aspect of sustainability is the impact of the scheme on air quality. Estimates of air pollution caused by the scheme are made in the Environmental Statement. These estimates include pollution from other sources, roads etc., the cumulative impact. However, it is interesting to note that while the estimates allow for certain

future roads, they do not, as far as I can tell, allow for any impact due to the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway. This seems to be an error given the progress the road proposal has made. Overall, it is interesting to contrast the sustainable features of EWR with the Expressway with its far greater land requirement and pollution levels per user. It's regrettable that there will be no inquiry to decide between EWR and the Expressway with the consequent financial and environmental advantages of having one transport project serving the corridor.

In conclusion I note that this inquiry represents the success of a 25 year campaign by the Consortium and by NGOs to re-open the line. But the culmination of the scheme now depends on coordination with HS2, the schedule of which is rigidly set; so it's important that the necessary consents are granted in time.

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