



The countryside charity
Bedfordshire

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EWR Consultation 2026 - CPRE Bedfordshire submission

CPRE Bedfordshire has contributed to all consultations undertaken by EWR Co since 2019. In all of those consultations we have to our best effort given feedback on the proposals and options set out at every stage of the project.

We have submitted a feedback form as CPRE Bedfordshire for this 2026 consultation.

However, we understand that this is the last consultation exercise that will be undertaken on EWR. In this case we are strongly of the view that the narrow focus of the issues listed for comment on the feedback form is completely at odds with claims made by EWR Co that there is a genuine interest in engaging with the views of local people and organisations.

CPRE Bedfordshire is submitting this document in addition to the feedback form to make our views known on the proposals as a whole, beyond the confines of the specific questions asked by EWR Co in the feedback form.

Section 9 - Environment

Green infrastructure, landscape and strategic connectivity for people and nature

The consultation document states that “Our approach to the environment is comprehensive, proactive and embedded in the decisions we make at every stage of the project.”

The National Planning Policy Framework’s approach to sustainable development includes an environmental objective to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment that is not limited to the consideration of designated sites.

CPRE Bedfordshire have great concerns that the approach to the identification and consideration of environmental impacts at the Route Option determination stage was confined to designated sites, such as, Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), SSSI’s and ancient woodlands. This narrow approach taken by EWR Co resulted in a failure to consider any recognition of impacts on valued landscapes which are strongly evident in the area of quiet countryside and rural villages that runs from Clapham to Colesden.

It is the strongly held view by CPRE Bedfordshire that a full Environmental Impact Assessment should have been carried out at the Route Option appraisal stage and informed the choice of the preferred route.

If a broader approach to environmental impacts been taken at the Route Option stage, then a deeper consideration of the negative impacts of the choice of Route E, (along with a more reasoned appraisal of the impacts of Route E on Bedford town centre) would have brought a better balance to the weighing up of the available options, and in our view, should have resulted in a different route choice being made.

As a result, the need for many of the environmental harm mitigations set out in section 9 of the consultation document, whilst worthy, would not be needed.

Section 10 - Transport

Assessing the impact on traffic and transport

This section looks at traffic and transport impacts during construction and operation. These impacts represent a further element in support of the view that a route which involves going through Bedford town centre is the wrong choice and carries high risks of the railway bringing many negative consequences to Bedford residents.

The intention to promote and enable active and sustainable travel routes is laudable but the opportunities to deliver these at a level that will offset the increase in car travel and congestion is highly doubtful and represents another key reason why CPRE Bedfordshire oppose the chosen route.

The intention to maintain and enhance car parking capacity at both St Johns and Bedford stations fails to recognise the reality of the inadequacy of the feeder roads around the station that provide the only means by which motorists will arrive at these stations. From our conversations at the consultation events, it appears that modelling activity to understand these pressures has not yet been completed. This is alarming and again throws doubt whether the required level of understanding of these matters was available to inform the route choice.

The negative impacts of pollution and congestion that will inevitably arise from significantly increased numbers of passengers accessing the Bedford stations are a major reason for CPRE Bedfordshire's continued opposition to the EW railway going through Bedford town centre.

Section 11 - Electrifying the railway

Discontinuous electrification

CPRE Bedfordshire supports the aspiration to avoid the use of diesel-powered trains for East West Rail trains.

However, there appear to be many unanswered questions about the viability/credibility of the discontinuous electrification approach. In particular will it be sufficient to power freight train services?

Section 13 - Fenny Stratford to Kempston

Concerns Regarding Millbrook Crossing Closure

The proposal to close Millbrook Crossing and divert traffic through Lidlington, utilising Bury Ware Road and exiting onto the A507 at the hill's brow, raises significant safety and welfare concerns. This diversion would require road users to navigate a route that is inherently riskier due to its topography and layout.

The A507 junction at the brow of the hill presents visibility challenges and increases the likelihood of accidents, particularly for those unfamiliar with the area. The alteration to the route would not only inconvenience users but also introduce additional hazards, making the journey potentially harmful and dangerous for all road users.

EWR Car Park Proposal at Lidlington Station

EWR Co have announced plans to construct a two-storey car park with a capacity for 490 vehicles adjacent to the new station being developed in Lidlington. During the recent EWR Consultation Event held at the Village Hall on Thursday, 14th May, some residents were informed that this facility would be suitable for individuals wishing to park at Lidlington and travel to the new Universal Theme Park.

In CPRE Bedfordshire's opinion, converting Lidlington into a park and ride location for Universal Theme Park does not serve the interests of the local community. The organisation believes that such a development would negatively impact the residents of Lidlington, prioritising external visitors over the needs and welfare of the village itself.

Ridgemont Station and Park and Ride Concerns

The likelihood of Lidlington being used as a park and ride location increases because the construction of the proposed new Ridgemont Station, situated near M1 Junction 13, is scheduled to occur late in the East West Rail (EWR) project. Ridgemont Station would be ideally positioned to serve as a park and ride facility, but its development appears contingent upon planning permission being granted for 3,000 new homes at Apsley Guise. EWR Co intends to seek developer contributions to fund the building of this station.

However, these 3,000 homes are not currently included in the Central Bedfordshire Council's adopted Local Plan (2021). Despite this omission, EWR Co representatives at the recent consultation event expressed confidence that the homes would eventually receive planning approval and be delivered, thereby facilitating the station's construction.

Extended Closure of the Marston Vale Line (MVL)

The Marston Vale Line (MVL) is set to be closed for an extended period to allow for necessary bridge replacements. However, there has been no clarity provided regarding the exact duration of this closure. Furthermore, at this stage there is no information about when services to Bedford will be entirely withdrawn. This lack of detail creates uncertainty for regular users of the MVL, as well as for those who rely on continued rail access to Bedford for work, education, or other essential travel needs.

HGV Construction Routes and Impacted Residential Areas

Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) construction routes for the proposed works are set to pass through several residential areas, leading to concerns about increased traffic, noise, and disruption for local communities. The areas directly affected include Woburn Sands, Aspley Guise, Husborne Crawley (excluding Church End), Brogborough, Lidlington, and Marston Moretaine. Although Stewartby will experience less impact, the routes will affect Kempston and Bedford to a much greater extent. The presence of HGVs in these neighbourhoods is likely to exacerbate existing challenges, potentially diminishing residents' quality of life and raising safety concerns for pedestrians, cyclists, and other road users.

Section 14 - Bedford

Bedford Station The development of a new station with improved facilities and the focus on active travel routes connecting passengers to safe walking and cycling routes, making it easier for people to access the town centre and riverside area is welcomed.

However, the choice of Route E as the preferred route which involves routing of EWR through Bedford town centre via two new stations is one of the main concerns of CPRE Bedfordshire because of the inevitable increase in traffic congestion and pollution that the route will bring.

The impact of active travel routes to the station, whilst welcome, seems to be overstated. There seems to be an assumption that the increase in car journeys associated with the introduction of EWR will be minimal and will not give rise to the need for any significant increase in car parking capacity at the town centre stations. From our enquiries at the consultation events, it appears that modelling of traffic impacts has not yet been completed.

CPRE Bedfordshire have great concerns that traffic modelling for Bedford town centre was not undertaken at a much earlier stage so that the findings could have been part of the factors considered before the preferred route was chosen.

In our view an accurate appraisal of traffic impacts at the Route Option stage should have led to the rejection of Route E in favour of a route that runs south of Bedford rather than running through Bedford town centre.

CPRE Bedfordshire also have great concerns about the siting of the multi storey car park to the west of the station. Access to the car park is proposed to be via Hurst Grove and Ford End Road. This routes traffic through narrow residential streets in locations which will cause significant disruption to people in the nearby communities. Again, the lack of traffic modelling data makes it difficult to judge the extent of this disruption, but in our view this proposal has distinct disadvantages compared to locating the car park to the east.

The proposal to acquire more properties on Ashburnham Road, presumably for demolition, to develop construction compounds, logistics and workforce facilities should be avoided. This measure is totally disproportionate, and we urge that an alternative plan should be devised as an alternative.

CPRE Bedfordshire are very supportive of the case that has been made by the Protect Poets campaign group to develop alternative plans which would prevent the need to carry out large scale demolitions of residents' homes.

The impacts on people's homes in this area represent another major reason why the chosen route through Bedford town centre is a very poor choice, particularly when a much better alternative, running south of Bedford could have been selected.

River Great Ouse Area

The railway would rise onto the new 1.1km (0.7 miles) long River Great Ouse viaduct to the north of the Great Ouse Way (A6). The viaduct would be up to 18 metres high at deck level. It would cross over the River Great Ouse twice, as well as the Paula Radcliffe Way (A6).

The River Great Ouse viaduct would represent the introduction of a major piece of infrastructure in close to a very busy road junction where there are a wide range of business premises including supermarkets as well as the Bedford Modern School campus.

The area largely industrial and the ground underneath the proposed viaduct does not include any well-developed attractive open green space, but the viaduct would represent a highly intrusive negative feature adding further to what is already a poorly developed commercial area where there is a complete absence of thoughtful design.

Section 15 - Clapham Green to Colesden This section of the railway in particular represents the most intrusive aspect of the chosen route on Bedfordshire countryside and rural villages. The construction and operation of this section of EWR in Bedfordshire will have a very negative impact on an area which is essentially made up of quiet rural countryside and rural villages. The construction of the railway would inflict irreparable damage and negatively impact on the character of the area.

Paul Jenkins

Vice Chair CPRE Bedfordshire

8th June 2026