

8th October 2026

The Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road
London, SW1P 4DR

Dear Secretary of State,

**Stop East West Rail through Bedford - the opportunity to save the country
over £1 billion.**

We are writing this “Open Letter” to you, which has been copied to local MP’s, in order that you are aware of our deep concern and that of many people in and around Bedford regarding:

The madness of taking East West Rail through the centre of Bedford and,

how the country can save a minimum of £1bn on construction costs alone.

East West Rail Company has decided, despite the concerns of many in the local population, that “**Route E**” running through the centre of Bedford is the way forward for the Bedford to Cambridge section of E/W Rail.

Rejecting the lower cost and more sustainable option of “Route B” (see map on page 6), running south of the town and incorporating a **Bedford South Parkway Station** (originally suggested by Network Rail), connecting to Midland Mainline and Thameslink trains, taking traffic away from Bedford Town Centre.

This, despite the route through Bedford causing:

- a) Development chaos across the town that will last for years.
- b) The demolition at considerable cost of around 70+ private homes in the town, causing great personal hardship, and a further 30+ commercial buildings.
- c) Serious environmental pollution to central Bedford and the approaches due to a huge increase in traffic.
- d) Massive increase in noise pollution due to the additional and higher speed train movements including freight through the town, particularly in the southern part of Bedford.
- e) Destruction of the North Bedfordshire countryside.

Bedford will be the only major town or city along the E/W Rail route that will not have a Parkway Station – Oxford will have “*Oxford North Parkway*” - Milton Keynes will have “*Bletchley*” – Cambridge will have “*Cambridge South*”.

Whilst other more forward looking large towns/cities, are looking to reduce traffic through their town centres and introduce more environmentally friendly “Active Travel Schemes” - focusing on pedestrian areas, segregated bike lanes, buses and trams etc.

Reducing air pollution and improving the health of their populations.

E/W Rail Company and those promoting the Bedford Town route have closed their ears to the adverse environmental impact of their route choice.

In fact, to date, no detailed “Environmental Impact Assessment” has ever been undertaken comparing the Bedford town route to the southern “Parkway Station” alternative.

Construction costs

Following in the footsteps of the massively over budget HS2, E/W Rail Company appears to have determined their route choice by considering the option which would provide their civil engineering “**Partners**” with the most profitable civil engineering contracts possible.

Due to the hilly terrain north of Bedford, a considerable number of **hugely expensive viaducts** will be required and some **very deep and extensive “cuttings”** e.g. through the “Clapham Hills” and beyond.

Had they chosen the Southern Route B which follows a much flatter terrain - fewer and cheaper viaducts and cuttings would be required.

Retired local professionals with relevant experience, volunteering for the Campaign Group BFARe, have calculated that by using the Southern Route B, or a modification of it, rail line construction costs would be around £1 billion lower.

A huge cost saving!

Further savings

And this does not take into consideration the additional hundreds of millions of pounds that would also be saved by:

- 1. Not having to demolish approx. 100 properties in Bedford and compensate the owners.**
- 2. Massive New Town Centre Multi Story Car Parks and a New Station at St Johns will not be required.**
- 3. The costly disruption to Bedford Hospital caused by the movement of St John’s Station will not be necessary.**

The health of the citizens of Bedford and their “quality of life” will be massively improved if vehicles are not encouraged into the town centre.

The East West Rail Company is totally out of touch with local sentiment on these issues.

This was brought into sharp focus by their recent proposal to route future traffic to the proposed new Bedford Station multi-story car park, through the densely populated “Queens Park” residential area.

This, quite rightly, generated huge local concern causing E/W Rail Company to have to change their proposal.

It brings into question the decision making processes followed by E/W Rail Company and highlights how “out of touch” they are.

See here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c24gegj8my5o>

The Way Forward An “Independent Review”

CPRE Bedfordshire is calling on Government to undertake an urgent, “Independent Review” of the manner by which the E/W Rail Company has determined the Bedford to Cambridge route.

and

To look again at the cheaper southern option, Route B with a Bedford South Parkway Station, comparing both the costs and a detailed “Environmental Impact Assessment” of the 2 alternatives, before things are allowed to go any further.

With Government budgets under pressure from all sources, it is extremely important to ensure that the E/W Rail Company has chosen the most cost effective and environmentally sustainable route for the Bedford to Cambridge section of the East West Rail project.

Taking E/W Rail through Bedford will be an economic and environmental disaster.

We hope that the Government would not wish to see a repeat of HS2 “runaway costs”, when a clearly cheaper and more effective southern route option is available.

We look forward to your confirmation that an “Independent Review” of the East West Rail route choice will be undertaken, together with an “Environmental Impact Assessment” of the 2 options.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Jenkins, Vice Chair
CPRE Bedfordshire

Copied to: Richard Fuller MP, Mohammad Yasin MP, Blake Stephenson MP, Alistair Strathern MP

Note: CPRE is a strong supporter of the concept of East West Rail.

It would close a gap in the national rail network and offer the potential to remove car and freight traffic from the Ox – Cam Arc road network and, reduce pressure for new road construction.

Providing local residents and visitors with a modern, sustainable transport option.

Route B

The Lower Cost and More Sustainable Option with Bedford South Parkway Station

ROUTE B

Bedford South – Sandy (re-located north) / Tempsford area or south of St Neots

