

**East West Rail Consortium**  
**14<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

## **Agenda Item 10.3: London Road Level Crossing**

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the meeting:

- a) Notes the continuing pressure to identify a long term solution to this crossing, in the context of further development of East West Rail;**
- b) Commits to working with local Stakeholders to progress a solution.**

### **1. Background and Context**

- 1.1 London Road Level Crossing is one of the issues on the East West Rail risk register, in recognition that, as East West Rail develops and more services operate, a long-term solution needs to be found.
- 1.2 Annex 1 sets out the position on this issue last summer, at the time of the second round of consultation on the western section. In many senses, there has been little change, although Network Rail has now identified a short-term intervention that would reduce the barrier down time for Oxford bound trains, that is planned to be implemented in early to mid-2019.
- 1.3 Further work has also been undertaken by Network Rail to identify the further costs of taking a preferred option (for a grade separation between road and rail at the crossing) through the GRIP process – whilst it would depend on the exact scope of the work, this is expected to be of the order of £2-3 million.

### **2. Key Messages**

- 2.1. As explained in the annex, the crossing is not a significant issue for operation of the western section and sits outside the scope of this project. However, it has the potential to be significant for the operation of additional services through Bicester, which could arise from the operation of the central section.
- 2.2. Local Stakeholders continue to raise the importance of the crossing and a recent meeting of senior local Councillors took place chaired by the local MP, Victoria Prentis. That meeting resolved to press for further action.
- 2.3. Specifically, it was agreed that a Project Manager be appointed to take the proposals forward and develop a Project/Action Plan. It was also agreed to explore whether further work could be funded from EWR Work in Kind and/or central section funding. It was agreed that this would be explored through this Board.

### **3. Funding and Financing**

- 3.1 At this stage, further work needs to be done to quantify the further funding needs and project development programme, including a detailed cost, before a proposal or options can be submitted for consideration.

### **4 Other Issues to Note**

- 4.1 There is significant potential for partnership development of this project, given Bicester's status as a Garden Town and the potential for further development in this area, including that which may be facilitated by further enhancements to rail services and connections. It is not a case of East West Rail (or any other body) needing to resolve this unilaterally.

### **5 Next Steps**

- 5.1 It is proposed that a further report, setting out how work on this project could be progressed and funded, is to be prepared for the September meeting of this Group.
- 5.2 A further meeting of the MP / Councillor Group would then be held later in September to review progress.

**June 2018**



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## Annex 1 - London Road Level Crossing, Bicester Briefing for EWR Phase 2 Consultation July 2017

1. East West Rail Phase 1 has intensified use of London Road Level Crossing, previously only occasionally used for rail freight services. The crossing was considered as part of the Transport & Works Act into EWR Phase 1 in 2011. The T&WA Inspector concluded that an at-grade level crossing – albeit one that has been upgraded to meet safety requirements - was acceptable for that level of train service (2 trains per hour in each direction, now operating) *plus* the additional East-West Rail ‘core’ service envisaged to operate once Phase 2 was open (an additional 2 passenger trains per hour in each direction).
2. As a result, the crossing is not within scope of Phase 2 of the EWR project, i.e. the proposals currently being consulted upon.
3. Typical current “barrier down” times at the crossing are around 14 minutes in each hour, although they vary according to train direction. These are projected to go up to between 30 and 34 minutes with the introduction of the ‘core’ EWR service. Network Rail are looking at how down times could be reduced in the short term, especially for trains coming from London.
4. Future phases of East West Rail are proposed, but not yet committed or funded – and are therefore very unlikely to come forward until the 2024-2029 rail investment period at the earliest. These include the extension of the scheme to Cambridge/the east (the Central and Eastern Sections of EWR) along with additional passenger and freight services to support planned development on this corridor, which could include national ‘cross country’ services.
5. It is acknowledged that as and when this happens, this would place significant additional pressure on the crossing, significantly extending the barrier down time and road user delay period to an unacceptable level, especially given the level of development planned for Bicester.
6. Work has therefore been undertaken to investigate potential bridge and tunnel options to determine their feasibility and impact for consideration as solutions, should there be a time when this becomes appropriate. This type of solution would be extremely costly and disruptive to build, and there is currently no technical justification or funding identified for any scheme. However, it remains on the list of Oxfordshire Infrastructure requirements, supported by both Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council.
7. We are proposing that any further service upgrade for East West Rail over and above the core service specification proposed for Phase 2 would be contingent upon a solution for the London Road Level Crossing being approved and funded. Progress of a solution for the crossing is therefore closely linked to East West Rail Phase 2 being implemented, so that further phases can be taken forward.



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