

Making the Most of the Main Line

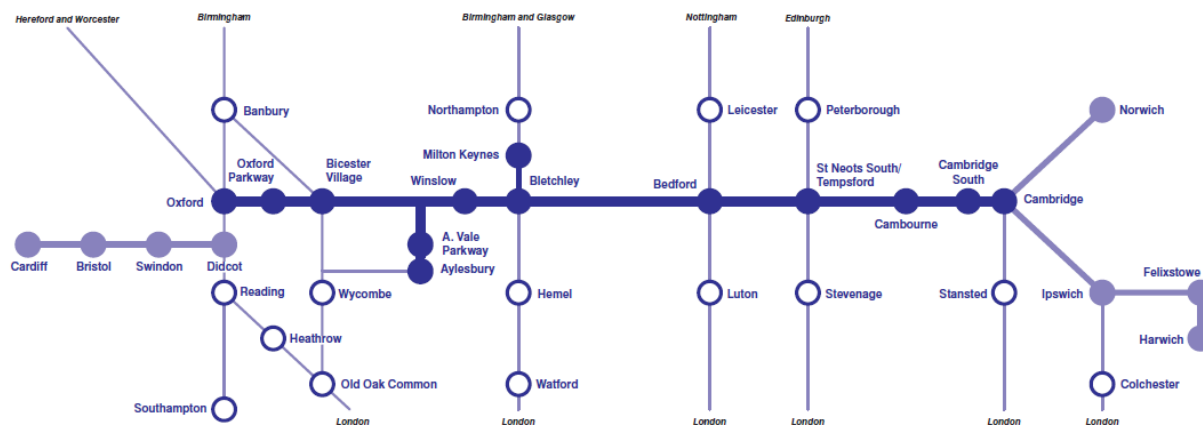


Figure 1: East West Rail Main Line

INTRODUCTION

Delivery of a strategic railway connecting East Anglia, with central, southern and western England has been a strategic priority for the local authorities comprising the East West Rail Consortium for over 25 years.

Oxford and Bicester were connected in 2015, and construction work is now underway on the Bicester to Bletchley/ Milton Keynes section, due to open by 2025. Under the leadership of the East West Railway Company, Bletchley to Cambridge via Bedford should be completed by 2030.

The East West Railway Company's scheme will support sustainable economic growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, a national economic priority for Government.

However, there is a need to go further in our strategic ambition for East West Rail which goes beyond the scheme currently being delivered. Indeed, delivery of the current East West Rail proposal should be just the beginning of the transformation in connectivity.

The longer-term potential of East West Rail to support planned growth and encourage further shift in both passenger and freight movements on to the rail network will require additional investment in its capacity and capability. Whilst there is much that remains to be done to ensure that the current East West Rail proposal is delivered, now is the time to consider the wider ambition and start identifying the longer-term ambition for East West Rail.

That's why we are championing the concept of an East West Main Line in order to truly realise the transformational potential of East West Rail.

The core focus for the East West Main Line is to achieve a step-change in east-west connectivity, linking Ipswich and Norwich with Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Oxford and beyond that towards Swindon and onwards to Bristol and South Wales. However, the benefit of the East West Main Line lies not just in the improved connectivity between those urban areas it directly serves, but also in the opportunity created where the route crosses the radial main lines centred on London. Removing the need for rail users to travel through London will additionally provide some relief to rail services on the radial main lines to/from the capital.

The creation of the East West Main Line will act as a catalyst for change. It is therefore important that the opportunities created by having improved access to rail services is used to shape future economic and housing growth proposals that are developed and brought through the planning system. It will also be essential that the investment in strategic connectivity is complemented by investment in improved local connectivity as part of a co-ordinated package of investment.

By expanding the benefits of East West Rail, the East West Main Line can have a transformational impact on the UK economy. It will improve connectivity to some of the fastest growing, innovative and successful economies in the country, including:

- The Oxford-Cambridge Arc: A national priority for Government, the Arc includes two of the world's leading universities at Oxford and Cambridge. It contains globally significant clusters in bioscience, aviation and space, advanced engineering and creative industries.
- New Anglia: Containing world-leading sectors in renewable energy (including the Energy Coast), agri-tech and animal sciences. Felixstowe is the UK's busiest container port, putting New Anglia at the heart of the country's logistics network.
- Western Gateway: The Western Gateway economic partnership covers a major economic powerhouse, containing some very high performing areas, such as Bristol, Bath and Swindon and the surrounding West of England, and the Cardiff Capital Region.
- Midlands Engine: The Midlands sits at the centre of the UK economy. The Midlands is also a gateway to the global economy, boasting Birmingham and East Midlands Airports alongside key ports such as at Grimsby and Immingham. The region is responsible for over a fifth of the UK's total manufacturing capability.

OUR FIVE-PRONGED APPROACH TO THE EAST WEST MAIN LINE

We have a five-pronged strategic approach to the main line:

1: COAST-TO-COAST

For East West Rail to realise its full potential, direct services must extend beyond Oxford-Cambridge. Its potential can truly be 'coast to coast'.

This means:

- Delivering the core scheme promoted by the East West Rail Consortium over the past three decades, including the Eastern Section to Norwich and Ipswich, and connecting Aylesbury to Milton Keynes. Both are fundamental elements of the East West Main Line.
- Exploring how places to the west of Oxford can be connected to the East West Main Line. There is potential for direct East West services to extend as far as Cardiff, via Didcot, Swindon and Bristol. This would create a genuinely strategic route from west coast to east coast.

In this way the East West Main Line can support a future strategic pan-UK transport network, as outlined in the Union Connectivity interim report.

2. NORTH-SOUTH CONNECTIVITY

It is important to recognise that East West Rail is not just about improving east-west connectivity: it is integral to improving connectivity in the round. The intersection of East West Rail with the historic main lines centred on London provides a unique opportunity to provide new travel opportunities that are not only more relevant to residents and businesses across the region but which avoid the inconvenience of having to travel into/out of London.

East West Rail (Oxford-Cambridge) intersects with six radial lines, including the West Coast Main Line, Midland Main Line and East Coast Main Line. East West services from Ipswich to Cardiff would increase this figure to 10.

The East West Main Line therefore has the potential to significantly improve north-south connectivity, putting passengers within a single interchange of all corners of mainland Britain. It could significantly reduce the need for people to travel into London for a connecting service, resulting in time savings and economic benefits, as well as releasing capacity in the capital.

The capacity released by HS2 could unlock new direct journeys on the West Coast and Midland Main Lines in conjunction with East West Rail, most notably from Northampton to Old Oak Common via Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Wycombe. There is also a case for direct services to Southampton, via Oxford.

The East West Main Line has the potential to improve surface access to airports including Heathrow, Birmingham, Luton, East Midlands, Norwich and Stansted.

However, realising these benefits will require significantly strategic planning around capacity allocation, timetabling and investment in new infrastructure. Given the long lead-in time for rail, this planning must begin now.

3. INTERCHANGE AND STRATEGIC TRANSPORT HUBS

As stated above, the East West Main Line's potential to connect to other services on north-south lines is very significant. But for this to be realised, interchange must be frictionless. This applies not only to interchange with other main lines, but with other modes, including local connectivity, too. The facilities provided at strategic transport hubs should ensure frictionless interchange between rail services for all users.

Several of our urban centres are currently developing transformational mass rapid transit schemes, including in Cambridgeshire, Milton Keynes and Oxford. East West Rail must offer seamless interchange with these schemes.

The East West Main Line can also be a catalyst for improving local connectivity, alongside regenerating the areas around stations and supporting planned growth.

4. FUTURE PROOFING THE MAIN LINE

This means:

- **Electrification:** Delivering East West Main Line as an electrified corridor, reducing carbon emissions and increasing capacity. By having an electrified East West Main Line, the ability to provide services to extended geographies is made easier as trains will be able to reach these destinations easily without the range limitations of alternative methods of traction power becoming a limiting factor in service provision.
- **Freight:** Moving more freight on rail is an important way of reducing emissions and congestion on our road network. Improving the Felixstowe-Nuneaton corridor is key to this, while there is a need to understand the potential long-term strategic role of the East West Main Line for freight.
- **Digital:** The transformational benefit of the East West Main Line to the region, its residents and businesses, will be enhanced further by ensuring it is delivered as a digitally enabled corridor, one that provides improved digital connectivity for both passengers and communities close to the rail corridor.

5. IMPROVING BROADER EAST WEST CONNECTIVITY

As outlined above, the East West Main Line will undoubtedly benefit places to the north and south of the region that are located away from the line. However, the legacy of London-centric radial routes means it will not solve all issues with east-west connectivity. This is particularly apparent where journey pairs don't cross the East West Rail route, for example Northampton to Peterborough. There is a clear need to address inadequate east-west connectivity to the north and south of East West Rail. Doing so will benefit the region as a whole, for example by increasing capacity on the Felixstowe-Nuneaton to carry more freight.

Ipswich and Norwich

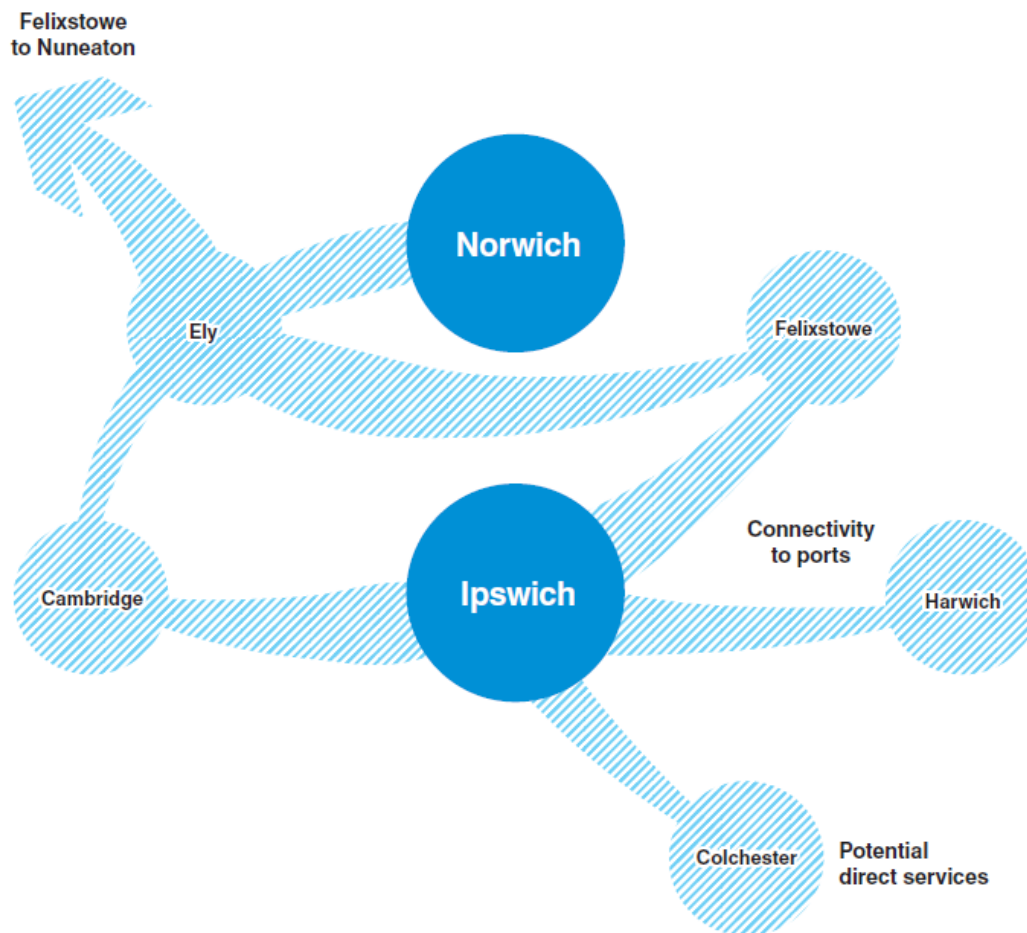


Figure 2 Opportunities for the Main Line in the Norwich/ Ipswich area

Introduction: The ‘Eastern Section’ improving connectivity from Cambridge to Ipswich and Norwich has been a fundamental part of East West Rail from the very beginning – indeed, it was Ipswich Borough Council which founded the Consortium. The East West Rail Consortium’s Preliminary Strategic Outline Business Case for the Eastern Section, published spring 2021, has found there is a strong strategic and economic case for investment. England’s Economic Heartland’s Passenger Rail Study Phase Two also found particularly high economic values in improving connectivity between Cambridge and Ipswich and Norwich. East West Rail connectivity east of Cambridge is a policy within EEH’s Transport Strategy and included within Transport East’s Investment and Delivery Plan.

Eastern Section: Improving connectivity east of Cambridge to Ipswich and Norwich creates significant economic opportunities for Suffolk, Norfolk and neighbouring Essex to benefit from, and support, the substantial growth being generated in Cambridgeshire and the west. It will connect people with jobs and leisure opportunities and will improve business to business connections, in Ipswich and Norwich and throughout the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. It will create new opportunities and wider economic benefits through housing growth, connectivity for jobs and access to a wider workforce across the entire rail corridor.

Colchester: The pre-SOBC also highlighted the potential for direct services to begin at Colchester in Essex, via Ipswich to Cambridge and beyond. Indeed, the option to extend services beyond Ipswich to Colchester performed slightly better from a value for money perspective than the options terminating at Ipswich.

Felixstowe and Harwich: Suffolk is home to one of Britain's critical global trading gateways: the port of Felixstowe, Britain's largest and busiest container port, which contributes over £2.4bn to the UK economy. The Port of Felixstowe has plans to double its handling of containers. Both the Port of Felixstowe and the Port of Harwich have recently been successful in achieving Freeport status - combined this will deliver £650m to the local economy. It is therefore imperative that rail routes from the two ports continue to be improved to ensure that they can support the economy and protect the growth of UK business and trade.

Delivery of the Eastern Section will also generate a significant economic impact in the freight sector, with the key benefits of linking among others:

- Felixstowe to the South West and South Wales, bypassing the existing routes through London; and
- Felixstowe to the Midlands and North West, bypassing the existing route through Leicester.

It would similarly provide capacity relief for services on the Great Eastern/Great Western main lines between Felixstowe and Reading (eg freight services from North Thameside) and for services on the East Coast/West Coast main lines between Sandy and London and Bletchley and London.

Felixstowe-Nuneaton: Transport East, England's Economic Heartland and Midlands Connect all strongly support the ongoing programme of capacity enhancements on the internationally important Felixstowe to Nuneaton rail corridor. The Felixstowe to Nuneaton strategic rail corridor plays an increasingly fundamental role in driving the UK's international trade, providing the main strategic rail link for freight between the ports in the East and the Midlands, the North and Scotland. The corridor is the UK's highest priority rail freight corridor and supply chain, directly supporting trade with the rest of the world. Seventy per cent of containers that arrive at Felixstowe - the UK's busiest deep-water port - are delivered to Midlands, Manchester, Liverpool and Yorkshire, with demand forecasted to rise. The three STBs are committed to shifting this freight from road to rail. Enhancing capacity on this route will not only increase freight capacity, but also unblock passenger rail services that travel from our regions to London, the North and Scotland. Corridor enhancements will also enable non-London bound rail freight from the Eastern ports to avoid the need to travel through the capital, and create new rail opportunities, such as the East West Rail Main Line.

Cambridge

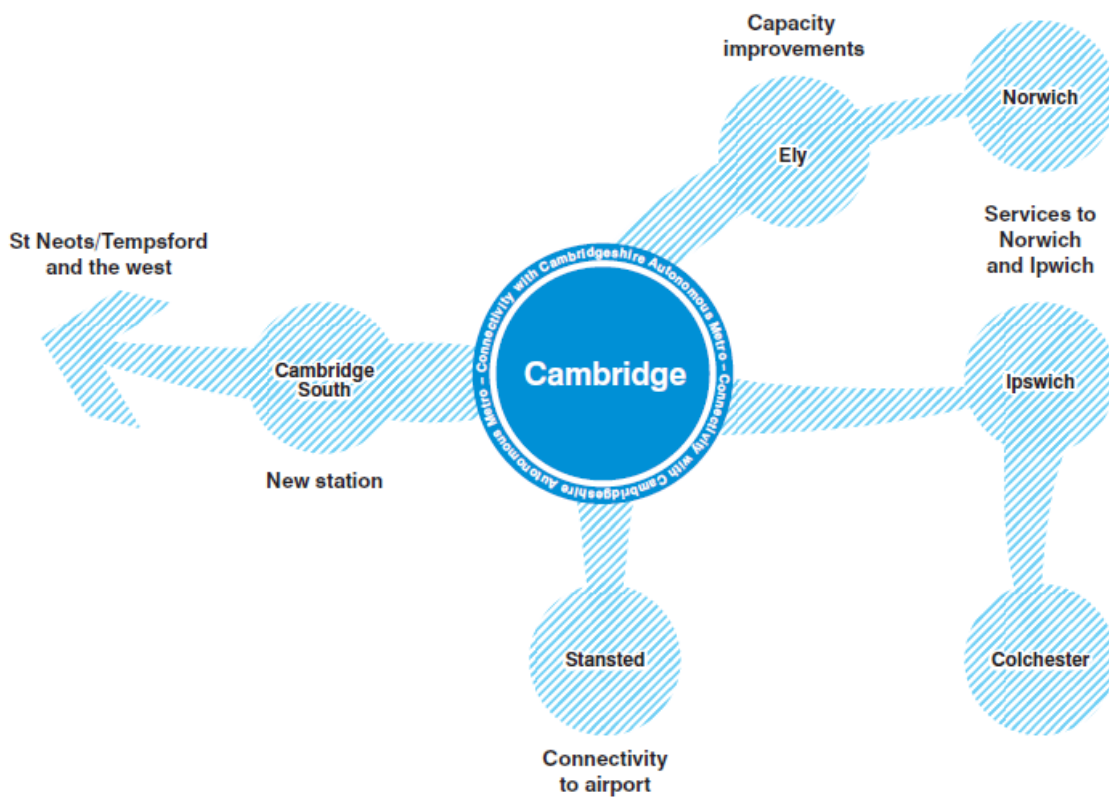


Figure 3 Opportunities for the East West Main Line where it intersects at Cambridge

Introduction: Cambridge lies on two main routes to London, the WAML and a branch of the ECML. It also has cross country links towards the Midlands and East Anglia. East West Rail, combined with the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro, is set to transform sustainable journeys in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. However, as discussed above, Cambridge should not be East West Rail’s ‘bookend’ – the ‘Eastern Section’ is a fundamental element of the East West Main Line.

Cambridge South: Cambridge South will be located near to Addenbrooke's Hospital and Cambridge Biomedical Campus - key employers and site for new homes in the south of Cambridge. Planned to open in 2025, the station will be on the Cambridge line and West Anglia Main Line, and should also sit on the East West Main Line once it opens a few years later. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is working on the Outline Business Case, and as long as the project is approved at each stage, the station could be open by 2025.

Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro: The Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM) will bring high quality, integrated public transport to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It will connect towns, villages, major employment sites and the city of Cambridge; offer fast, frequent, clean and reliable journeys; cut congestion by reducing car use; and improve the environment and air quality by using zero emission vehicles. The CAM will provide

interchange for a number of East West Rail stations, including Cambridge, Cambridge South, St Neots and Cambourne, greatly improving onwards connectivity.

Ely: Ely is a growing market town, and it is served by an extremely busy railway station. Due to the junction layout, trains can be delayed, and it is not possible to add more regular services to other areas beyond Ely. Improving rail capacity around Ely aims to increase public transport use into and out of Ely; increase growth opportunities around Ely; allow for more freight to travel by rail into the wider region, instead of by road; and allow for more passenger trains through to the wider region. Network Rail are working on the Business Case and expect to move forward to the next stage in 2021.

Stansted Airport: East West Rail provides opportunities to significantly improve surface access to Stansted Airport via interchange at Cambridge.

St Neots/ Tempsford

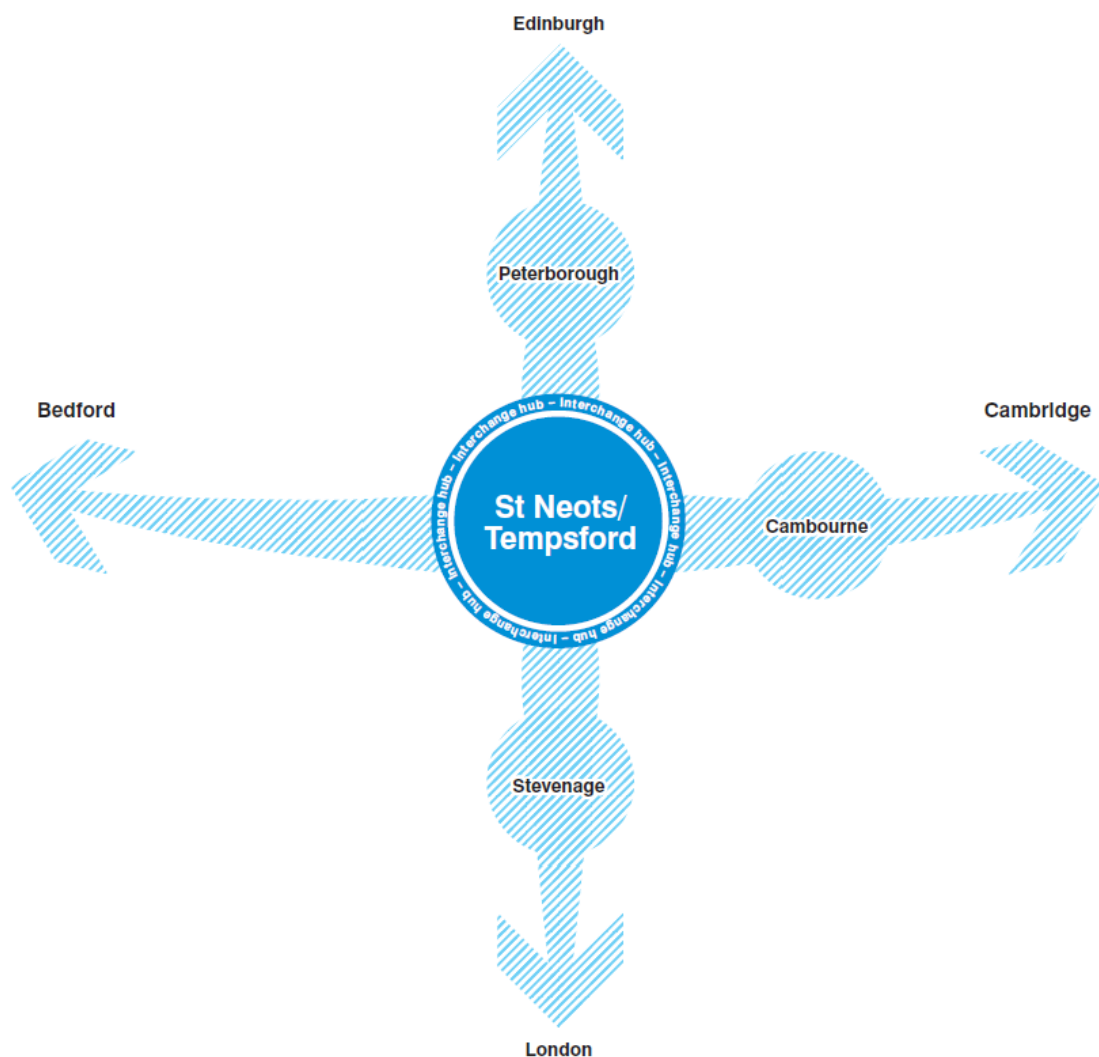


Figure 4 Opportunities for the East West Main Line where it intersects at St Neots/ Tempsford

The East West Railway Company is planning to build a new station between Sandy and St Neots which it says would benefit from a 'potential' new connection to the East Coast Main Line. Given the strategic value of interchange, including for Peterborough to the north and Stevenage to the south, we will continue to make the strongest case for the new station to connect into the East Coast Main Line, and for the new station to be regarded as a Strategic Transport Hub.

Bedford

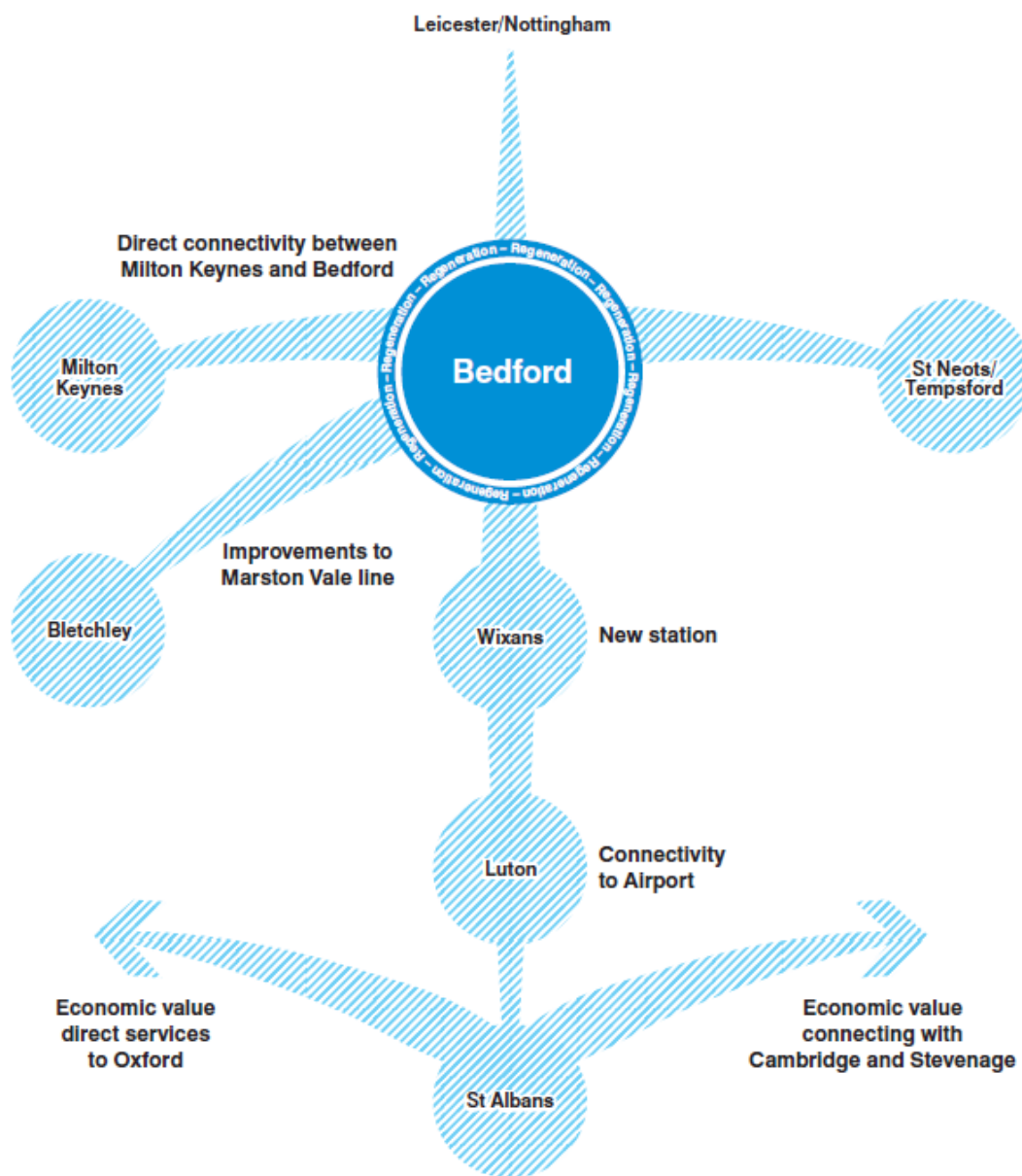


Figure 5 Opportunities for the East West Main Line where it intersects at Bedford

Introduction: Bedford is an important stop on the Midland Main Line from London to the East Midlands. It is also the northern terminus for one of the Thameslink branches, this gives direct access to the South of England via London Bridge. Bedford is also the eastern terminus of the Marston Vale line from Bletchley. The strategic interchange at Bedford on the Midland Main Line provides a number of opportunities for new and improved journeys by rail. Most notably, the Midland Main Line links with two significant international gateways at Luton and East Midlands Airport, with the Main Line having particular potential to improve sustainable surface access to Luton. However, there is a need for enhanced connectivity on the Midland Main Line. This must include as a minimum restoration of services previously removed. As things currently stand, connectivity with Milton Keynes (and the West Coast Main Line) is also constrained by the need to change at Bletchley.

Bedford to Milton Keynes: The EEH Passenger Rail Study identified the economic value of a direct service between Bedford and Milton Keynes. This could be achieved by extending a Bedford – Bletchley service onto Milton Keynes, noting the requirement for additional infrastructure or a reversal move at Bletchley. Such an improvement would also improve connectivity between Northampton and the East West Main Line (for more information see Milton Keynes section below).

Luton Airport: The East West Main Line provides an opportunity to significantly increase the catchment area for surface access to Luton Airport by rail. It would currently require interchange at Bedford, though there is potential for direct services. Current timetabling Investment in the DART further increases the potential for frictionless journeys to the airport from people in the region. The EEH Passenger Rail Study identified the economic benefits of an additional direct service between Luton and Bedford. This additional service could be extended onto Kettering and cities further north (Leicester/Nottingham/Derby) to address the removal of direct services from May 2021.

Marston Vale: The East West Railway Company has said that it is not possible to introduce a fast, reliable and frequent service on East West Rail without making a significant investment in the Marston Vale Line. The existing infrastructure means the line is slow, with just one train an hour, taking 42 minutes to do 16 miles. People had the opportunity to give their views in the consultation which ran in spring/ summer 2021. Whatever the final decision, there will be a need to carefully consider how local connectivity to and from Marston Vale stations is improved so that as many people as possible can benefit from the East Main Line. England's Economic Heartland is currently working with the Company to consider how this can be achieved.

Bedford regeneration: Bedford station is already an important transport hub in the region. The introduction of East West Rail services means the station and supporting infrastructure need a range of improvements to make sure sufficient capacity is available for trains to be punctual, so that customers receive the service and experience they should expect. These improvements can support future aspirations for more jobs, prosperity and growth in this lively, diverse town. In particular, improvements to Bedford station would contribute to the regeneration of the area immediately around the station, and for the centre of Bedford.

Wixams: The new railway station is required as soon as possible to support planned growth. Wixams Station is likely to be a single stop away from Bedford, offering a quick interchange opportunity for people to continue their journeys towards Oxford or Cambridge.

St Albans to Oxford/ Cambridge: The EEH Passenger Rail Study with Network Rail has identified the economic value of direct services from St Albans (on the Midland Main Line) to both Oxford and Cambridge. This would likely be achieved through the 'southern east-west corridor' as outlined in the EEH Passenger Rail Study Phase One.

Milton Keynes and Aylesbury

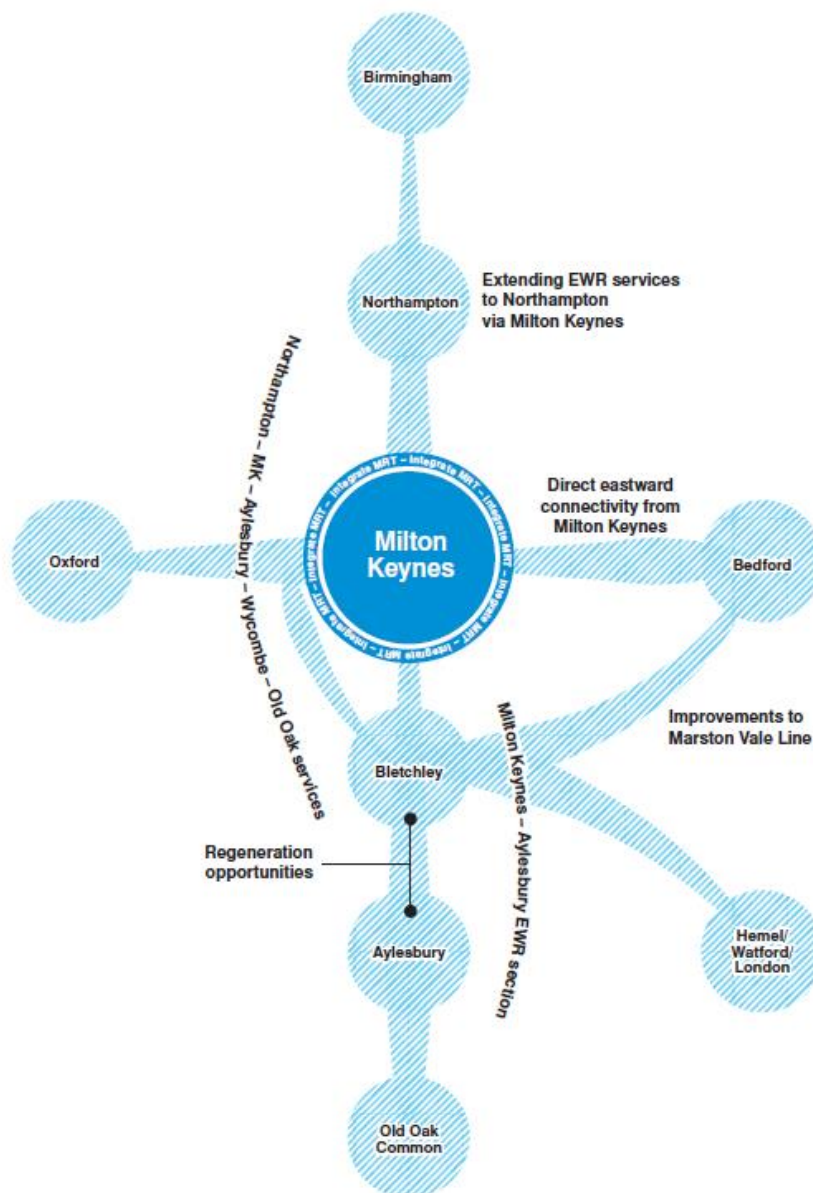


Figure 6 Opportunities for the East West Main Line where it intersects at Milton Keynes

Introduction: The East West Main Line intersects the West Coast Main Line at Bletchley. There are a number of opportunities to improve how East West Rail connects into this section, most notably to improve East West Rail connectivity to Northampton, Milton Keynes and Aylesbury. The West Coast Main Line provides good access to Birmingham and London Euston, with frequent and fast services from Milton Keynes, making it a key point for interchange on the East West Main Line. However, interchange possibilities eastwards of Milton Keynes are constrained by the need to interchange at Bletchley and then Milton Keynes to access fast and frequent services into London and Birmingham. Delivery of the link from Aylesbury to Milton Keynes is a fundamental part of East West Rail and must be delivered as soon as possible.

Milton Keynes connectivity with East West Rail: Under the current scheme, Milton Keynes will be served by East West Rail with direct services initially to Oxford. These services will greatly improve connectivity to Bicester and Oxford, however access to locations eastwards will require an interchange at Bletchley. The lack of direct services from the east (Bedford and Cambridge side) to Milton Keynes means that the transformational impact of East West Rail for the town is limited. Given Milton Keynes' already important role as a regional interchange hub with connectivity to the West Midlands and North West, and the fact that Milton Keynes is in one of the top 10 UK economies, this is a missed opportunity. It will also impact on passengers travelling from the east who will need to interchange at Bletchley and travel to Milton Keynes if they wish to reach the full complement of West Coast Main Line services. The National Infrastructure Commission highlighted its concerns about this in its Partnering for Prosperity report, and called for the case and options to be investigated. The two realistic options for providing full EWR access to MK Central would be: a) A new rail chord at Bletchley enabling direct links between Bedford and MK Central. It is understood that capacity constraints on the West Coast Mainline [WCML] even with High Speed 2 delivery would require an additional line parallel to the WCML in addition to the chord. b) A new line north out of MK Central which would pass through north Milton Keynes eastbound to Bedford, linking back with the existing Marston Vale Line in the Stewartby area. The EEH Passenger Rail Study identified the economic value of a direct service between Bedford and Milton Keynes. Such an improvement would also improve connectivity between Northampton and the East West Main Line.

Aylesbury to Milton Keynes: Aylesbury is a key location for housing growth. However, its rail connectivity to the rest of the region is poor as a result of being situated at the end of a commuter line from London. The vast majority of journeys require transit via London. A link between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes has been an integral part of the East West Rail core scheme for many years and was included in Network Rail's TWAO for the 'Western Section' approved by the Secretary of State. East West Rail would open new connectivity from Aylesbury to the north and reduce the need for all but the most local rail journeys to travel via London. Oxford will be reachable via an interchange at Winslow giving a faster but still circuitous connection. The MML, ECML and WAML will be accessible via an interchange at Bletchley on to the East West Rail central section services. It is worth noting that whilst currently, the road network provides the best option for journeys from Aylesbury, the journey times on road are in themselves, not particularly quick which gives rail an opportunity to be much more competitive on a wide range of journeys. East West Rail is also

a key part of the wider Aylesbury Garden Town project and the regeneration of the town centre. The Consortium will continue to make the strongest case for the East West Rail section between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes, via Aylesbury Vale Parkway (a station adjacent to the Berryfields Major Development Area) to be confirmed as soon as possible.

Northampton-Old Oak Common: The combination of delivery of the East West Rail link between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes, and HS2, creates opportunities to develop a new regional service linking Northampton, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Wycombe, allowing easier access to Heathrow Airport and HS2 (via Old Oak Common interchange), supported by the provision of a twin-track solution between Aylesbury and Princess Risborough.

Bletchley regeneration: Milton Keynes Council is seeking to deliver the transformational redevelopment and regeneration of Central Bletchley, to include the environs of Bletchley Railway Station, over the local plan period to 2031 in conjunction with the proposed delivery of EWR. There is a specific policy underpinning this objective in Plan:MK. East West Rail will place Bletchley at the intersection of strategic east-west and north-south rail routes linking to key centres of economic activity, both within and beyond the region. Bletchley's location at the mid-point of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc will facilitate rail journey times to both Oxford and Cambridge of circa. 40 mins. The journey time from Bletchley to London Euston on the WCML is circa. 30 minutes on faster rail services whilst Birmingham can be reached in little over 1 hour. The improved accessibility and connectivity created by EWR will create an important transport hub that will act as a catalyst for new investment in Bletchley and transform its future prospects.

Marston Vale: The East West Railway Company has said that it is not possible to introduce a fast, reliable and frequent service on East West Rail without making a significant investment in the Marston Vale Line. The existing infrastructure means the line is slow, with just one train an hour, taking 42 minutes to do 16 miles. People had the opportunity to give their views in the consultation which ran in spring/ summer 2021. Whatever the final decision, there will be a need to carefully consider how local connectivity to and from Marston Vale stations is improved so that as many people as possible can benefit from the East Main Line. England's Economic Heartland is currently working with the Company to consider how this can be achieved.

Milton Keynes MRT: Milton Keynes has ambitious plans for a mass-rapid transit system serving the urban area and its rural hinterland. This is likely to provide interchange onto East West Rail stations including Milton Keynes Central, Bletchley and Marston Vale stations. It will be important to ensure the MRT fully integrates with East West Rail services.

Northampton to Oxford: The EEH Passenger Rail Study found a high economic value in better rail connectivity between Northampton and Oxford. A direct service between Oxford – Northampton could be achieved, for example, through an extension of an East West Rail Oxford – Milton Keynes service.

Oxford and the west

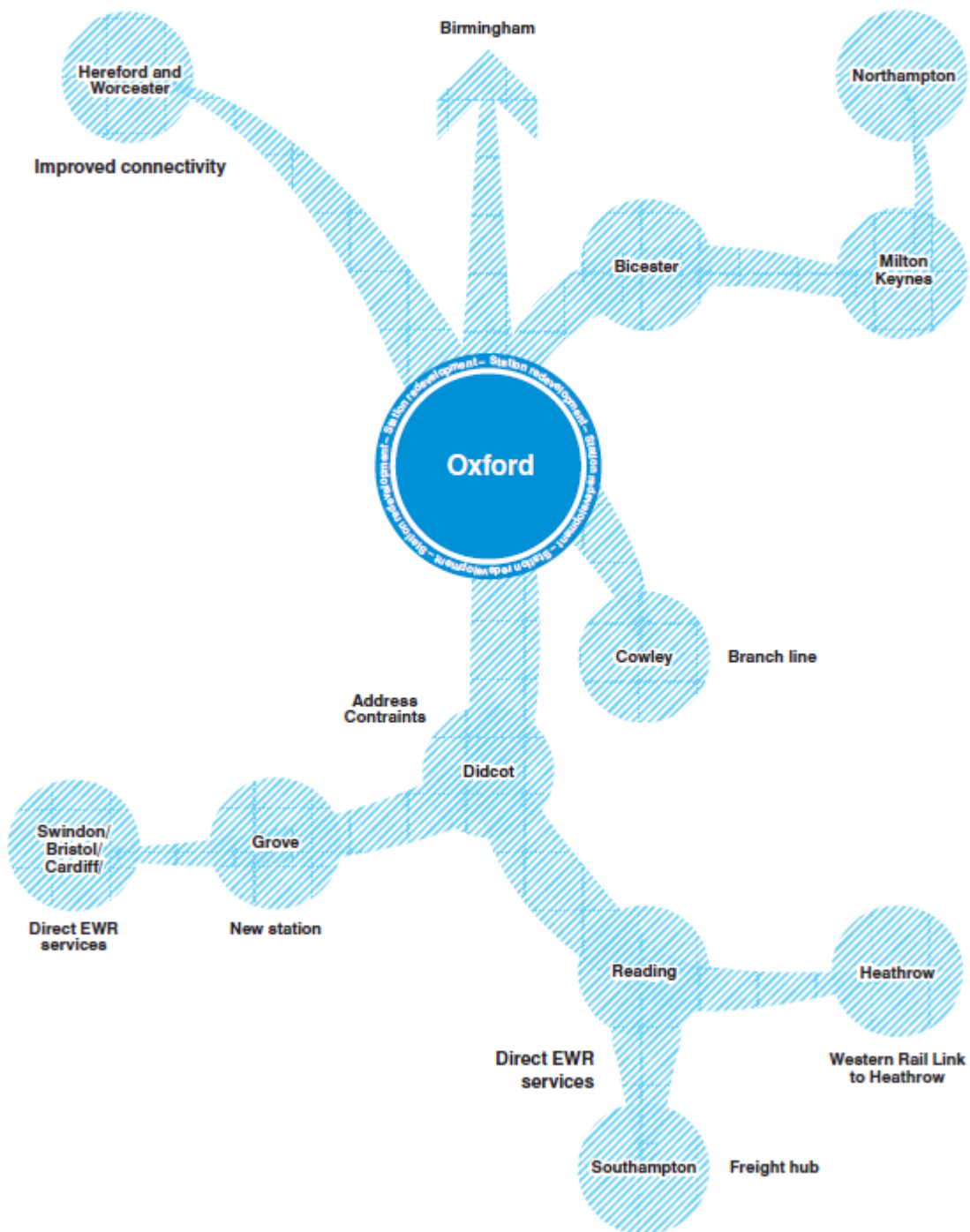


Figure 7 Opportunities for the East West Main Line where it intersects at Oxford (note need to add line about Bicester London Rd)

Introduction: East West Rail has the potential to transform the connectivity that Oxford has with the rest of the region. The Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study (ORCS) highlights ways, and the benefits of improving the connectivity towards Birmingham and particularly to the

South and West, including connectivity to Swindon and Bristol which is currently severely lacking. However, realising this potential will require a number of interventions to increase network and station capacity.

Oxford Station: ORCS has made clear the importance of addressing the capacity bottleneck at Oxford Station, and accelerating development and delivery of required enhancement, within the principles of the Oxford Station masterplan. This is required to deliver on ORC's vision for additional through services in the future. The masterplan includes an overarching vision to create a new transport interchange and a distinctive gateway to Oxford, maximising the development potential of the Oxford Station Area and generating a positive dynamic with surrounding opportunity sites.

Cowley Branch restoration: The Cowley branch will connect Oxford Science Park and Oxford Business Park to Oxford Station, thus putting these important economic assets within a single interchange of East West Rail. ORCS proposes two trains per hour from Cowley to Marylebone via Oxford and Bicester Village.

North Cotswold Line: The North Cotswold Line Task Force brings together county councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships covering the 86-mile route between Hereford, Worcester and Oxford. In January 2020, the Task Force submitted its case to government for a doubled two trains per hour North Cotswold Line service between Worcestershire, Oxford and London and this is now being assessed by the Department for Transport and Network Rail. In parallel, the Task Force set out its aspirations for additional local trains as a metro-style service between Hanborough and Oxford to support West Oxfordshire housing growth, the visitor economy and to encourage a shift from road to rail for journeys to Oxford or London. These improvements would put Hereford and Worcester within a single interchange of Cambridge, avoiding the need for cross-country journeys via London.

Oxford Station to Didcot Parkway: ORCS has made clear the importance of addressing capacity constraints at Didcot, including upgrades which enable the direct access on to the Great Western Main Line.

Services to Bristol/ Cardiff: Western Gateway STB' Transport Plan identifies the importance of a 'Western Innovation Corridor' which links London and the South East to South Wales. The corridor facilitates connectivity between the Western Gateway and other key locations for research, academia and innovation such as Oxford, Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone and Basingstoke. The strength of the corridor's economy creates a significant travel demand. Western Gateway STB's Rail Strategy proposes direct services between Bristol and Oxford via Swindon and Didcot. The Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study (ORCS) proposes a direct Cambridge-Bristol service. Moreover, the EEH Passenger Rail Study found economic value in direct connectivity from Bristol to Cambridge and Oxford, and from Swindon to Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. There is therefore considerable scope for the Consortium to work with partners across the region and develop a business case for East West Rail services from Bristol, or even extending this out to Cardiff.

Reading and Southampton: The EEH Rail Passenger Study highlighted the economic opportunities from improved connectivity to Reading and Southampton. This would be via

the Cross Country Line. ORCS proposes a direct East West Main Line service between Cambridge and Southampton via Oxford, Didcot and Reading.

Oxford to Northampton: The EEH Passenger Rail Study highlighted the economic value of improved connectivity between Oxford and Northampton. A direct service between Oxford – Northampton which could be achieved, for example, through an extension of an East West Rail Oxford – Milton Keynes service. This could serve as one of the additional trains required for the Milton Keynes – Northampton flow.

Grove Station: ORCS proposes a new station at Grove on the Great Western Main Line, which could benefit from extended East West Rail Main Line services.

Western rail access Heathrow: Currently, journeys from the west of Heathrow requires an interchange at London Paddington, which results in passengers doubling back on themselves to reach the airport. The result is a greatly extended journey times, although the Western Rail Link to Heathrow project would obviate going via London and should contribute to a greatly improved journey times. It could therefore be an option for East West Rail passengers who wanted to avoid the inconvenience of travelling into central London.

London Road Level Crossing, Bicester: As part of the East West Rail 2020/21 Consortium Work Programme, funding was allocated to progress a Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (OAR) for London Road, Bicester. The OAR work sets out and appraises options for interventions that will help enable continued access to and from Bicester Town centre as level crossing downtime increases in line with train service frequencies. In particular, it considers what measures should be prioritised for investment once train service frequencies increase once East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge is delivered. The East West Railway Company is also consulting on options for London Road.