

**Mr Simon Gardner and Dr Sarah Denley**  
**The Old Rectory, Rectory Lane, Kingston, Cambridge CB23 2NL**

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Grant Shapps MP  
Shapps@parliament.uk

19 May 2021

Dear Mr Shapps,

**Re: East West Rail Consultation and Proposals**

We are writing to express our concerns over the East West Rail (EWR) Consultation and Proposals, which affect our region in south west Cambridgeshire (Section D, Clapham Green to The Eversdens, Section E, Harlton to Hauxton and Section F, Great Shelford to Cambridge).

Firstly, we would urge decision-making parties to re-evaluate the objectives of the proposed railway linking Oxford and Cambridge and ask the following:

1. How will this train link be financially viable in post-Covid times when it is anticipated that travel will decrease dramatically with up to 40% of work being done from home? During our experiences of Covid-19 we have learnt a lot about the way we can live and how our economy can thrive without the need for so much travel. Our environment is cleaner and safer with less travel.
2. Why do we need this transport link - is the focus local journeys or long-distance travel between Oxford and Cambridge? Why are south Cambridgeshire villagers being asked to accept so much upheaval and impact when there are so few benefits and not even new local stations? What actual benefits does this proposed line provide to the residents who are the most impacted?
3. Why is the proposed line not planned to be fully electrified at the outset to reduce carbon footprint? The prospect of introducing outdated and dirty technology is against all policy for a greener environment. Diesel trains have very poor 'green' credentials. We feel strongly that we should not be promoting the building of such massive and impactful infrastructure.
4. Why has the very damaging impact of the embankments in many areas along the line in south west Cambridgeshire not been considered fully? Why has the option of tunnelling not been properly assessed when tunnel

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engineering is by far the softer and more acceptable option for the environment and people's enjoyment and safety?

5. Why has a northern route option into Cambridge not been given equal consultation? EWR have ignored requests for a northern approach to be considered in parity with their own preferred 'Option E'. We feel strongly that a northern route should be given equally weighted consultation with the proposed southern route.
6. Finally, when will residents and businesses have the opportunity to properly call into question EWR's plans with fair-mindedness? There must be live and open consultations and discussions with EWR representatives, where spontaneous questions can be raised by any individual, rather than being 'cherry picked' on Zoom calls.

On the evidence given so far, we are strongly against the proposed southern route on a number of counts:

- a. A northern route is potentially shorter and therefore less costly and will have significantly less impact on the environment and local economy during and after construction.
- b. A northern route will allow for the 3 new large towns to the north and west of Cambridge to connect. For example, the village of Northstowe is scheduled to grow to 10,000 houses and up to 25,000 residents. The current transport infrastructure does not support this kind of growth and so the railway and a new station could alleviate the burden on the roads and make a significant contribution to the economic success of the new towns. It could also provide residents with a more safe and environmentally efficient mode of travel if electrified.
- c. The proposed construction of the southern route is far costlier due to the number of new road bridges, junctions and widening schemes necessary.
- d. A northern route has significantly less impact on the number of household residences passing through two villages as opposed to ten on the southern route proposed.
- e. A northern route can better support freight as Cambridge can be bypassed entirely. In the south, the freight will have a huge impact on outlying local communities and on the city itself, in particular where widening to four tracks is proposed.
- f. A northern route has significantly less impact on the wildlife and nature. The southern route, which passes through Bourn Brook and

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Valley, will have a highly damaging impact on wildlife. It is an area of great natural environmental beauty which walkers and animals enjoy.

Chapel Hill and Money Hill will also be drastically affected - these are places of ancient historical importance that offer essential benefits to residents and visitors. They are key sites that compose the sensitive nature of the southern belt of Cambridge.

- g. The visual impact of the proposed railway embankments on the southern route 'Option E' will forever change the local villages and their environments. Dubbed the 'Great Wall' these embankments will be a blight on the landscape and will have a very damaging impact on residents and communities by cutting off and dividing communities and villages. The increased noise associated with the raised train track will have a massively negative impact on local property owners.
- h. Employment sites would be served far better by a northern route as there are more business centres to the north of the city. A northern route also supports a link to Stansted Airport and the Cambridge Science Park.

We feel strongly that decisions are being made by individuals who do not know or understand the very nature of Cambridgeshire and its necklace villages. The ten southern villages that are affected by the southern route are the 'jewels in the crown' of this area. Many of them will be changed and forever destroyed by the overwhelming impact of this proposed southern transport route.

We accept that freight travel must be accounted for and where-ever possible this should be done via the greenest methods possible and avoid cities and highly populated areas.

#### **Specific Concerns with Proposed Section D: Clapham Green to The Eversdens**

As residents of Kingston, we are directly affected by the proposals on this section, and it is the area we know in most detail. We are deeply concerned about the environmental impacts of alignments 8, 2 and 6 which will greatly impact the delicate balance of wildlife surrounding Bourn Brook and Bourn Valley.

The impact of constructing and sustaining a track along the stretch from Cambourne South to Little Eversden is nothing less than devastating to wildlife and the beauty of this part of Cambridgeshire. This truly is an area of great natural beauty, sitting between historic villages. We have a world-renowned environment for bats, the gentle balance of which would be forever destroyed.

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The embankments which are proposed in this vicinity would be highly detrimental to the beauty and enjoyment of the surrounding countryside. It would be totally out of keeping with the historic, important, and vernacular architecture and would forever harm the appeal of the landscape. As addressed above, the proposed embankment has been dubbed the 'Great Wall', which conveys how local people feel about this. It would dissect local communities irrevocably and be nothing short of an eyesore. It would be hugely irresponsible to construct it as proposed.

There is also an issue that the proposed embankments are sited near schools. Would children have to walk through a long culvert to get to the local school? This would not be an acceptable option. We reiterate, residents prefer the option of trenching wherever possible and would like to understand why this has not been fully considered? The proposals by Cambed Railroad have been completely ignored - why?

Moreover, residents are concerned that the impact of noise pollution would be greatly increased by the proposed trainline being elevated. The monetary costs and the high cost of the carbon footprint of importing soil and other materials to create the embankments is also difficult to justify. We must ask again, why is the option of trenching the line not being fully explored? Other countries use this form of trench technology and engineering with great success, and it has much less visual impact on the countryside and must surely have less impact as a sustainable option for wildlife, people and traffic.

Residents of Highfields Caldecote are concerned about the proposed construction of a train viaduct which divides their village into two. It would change the nature of the village and create a very urban feel to what is a small village. Later to be covered in graffiti, the viaduct would soon become an eyesore. It would be highly inappropriate.

The villagers of Harlton, Haslingfield and nearby Barrington are particularly sensitive to the proposals for Chapel Hill and Money Hill, as already noted above. These landmarks will be enormously affected and forever lost for their ancient historical value. These are most important sites and landscape features to local people and visitors and the proposed track cuts right through them.

Our small village of Kingston, which is a particular jewel, has a very traditional village layout which would be completely blighted by the proposed track coming within 350m of its ancient church. The track is proposed to crossover the small village interchange with Caldecote and Toft and this would have a huge impact on people's enjoyment of the area. City-dwellers enjoy 'escaping' here for bike rides and walks.

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There is great apprehension that many villages would be cut off and divided in a way that would forever change the way people can live and travel about locally. For example, there is huge concern that the village of Newton will be cut off. It is already devoid of local services and it is one of the most attractive and enjoyed hamlets in the vicinity.

In addition, the proposed new viaduct between Newton and Harston would be devastating to the residents and locals. Locals are also keen to know that the Haslingfield to Harlton road would stay open in the face of the proposed embankment. Again, this could leave the small village of Harlton stranded and surrounded by an ugly 'great wall' which would cause many problems for cyclists, walkers, and local residents.

Residents of Harston, who are majorly impacted, have not even been given a station as any compensation for the upheaval. Local residents are also concerned about the proposal for Hauxton Road. How will the properties close to this site be served? It is impractical to close the road at this junction and will create a huge problem for local traffic of all kinds. There will also be a massive impact on noise and pollution at this point.

There is great dismay at the requirement for a four-track line and the devastating impact it will have on this area. A likely increase in freight travel would create much traffic through an area that it is not equipped for this kind of load. It will be a perpetual nuisance in terms of noise, disruption and pollution and have a very detrimental impact on people's enjoyment of their property. There is also the devastating impact on local air quality. Again, why cannot there be a commitment to immediate electrification?

In summary, residents of many villages do not have the opportunity to benefit from the proposals by EWR but there will be a massive negative impact on their daily lives.

Finally, if the 'powers that be' decide to press ahead with the EWR project, and we personally need much more convincing of its value, we are strongly of the view that a northern Cambourne to Cambridge route should be evaluated in the same way that EWR's 'Option E', the southern Cambridge route was. We believe a fair consultation would find that a northern route into Cambridge would create a much less impactful and damaging route.

We very much hope that our views will be taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely

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