



Mr Will Gallagher
Strategy Director
East West Rail Company Limited
Albany House
94-98 Petty France
London SW1H 9EA

Please ask for: Chris Pettifer
Direct Line: 01234 228881
E-mail: Chris.pettifer@bedford.gov.uk
Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Date: 30 August 2019

Dear Will

EAST WEST RAIL CENTRAL SECTION THROUGH BEDFORD

We have been encouraged by the level of engagement your team has sought with us over the last couple of months, in order to consider in more detail the practicalities of a Central Section route through Bedford Midland station.

In that context, the Council wants to make it clear that the routing of East West Rail through Bedford Midland Station is seen as a very high priority for the long-term prosperity of the town. Consequently, I would stress the council's commitment and willingness to adapt development plans in the one public estate project area and at Fairhill to protect the necessary rail corridor.

We are concerned, though, to ensure that the capital costs of the route through central Bedford are not increased unduly, putting its viability at risk.

The alternative alignment you are considering on the southern approach could potentially add to the capital cost of the scheme, but could also reduce the impact on current railway stabling arrangements, and reduce operating costs. We would like to be assured that both the CAPEX and OPEX financial benefits of the alignment are fully captured in your work.

We understand that you are considering provision of two separate tracks north of the station for the full distance until the East West line diverges towards Cambridge. We are concerned that this would add significant additional cost (which could include land purchase, and would certainly include major works to create a new bridge under Bromham Road). For this reason, we commissioned the attached technical note from our specialist rail consultants, SLC Rail, to look at the timetabling issues associated with the cheaper solution of the East West tracks joining the existing Slow Lines north of the station platforms.

The report shows that this approach provides up 40 minutes in each hour of capacity for East West Rail services. We would be grateful if this could be given detailed consideration in your option assessment process.

All of this is in the context of this Council's full and enthusiastic support for a route that goes through Bedford Midland. As set out in our March response to your route consultation:

- a route through central Bedford delivers 12% more economic benefits than a route bypassing the town to the south
- a central Bedford route will support the regeneration of the town by:
 - facilitating investment in the delivery of the Town Masterplan
 - enabling access to the employment and facilities of Bedford for residents of existing and new settlements across the Oxford-Cambridge arc
 - ensuring that connectivity being created by new services on the Western section of EWR will not be lost when the Central section opens
- Bedford Midland would become an interchange hub of national importance, enabling journeys much faster than are currently possible by rail between a large number of places in the arc, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and further north
- by contrast, a route bypassing Bedford to the south would damage the town's competitiveness, put at risk the vibrancy of the town centre, and could jeopardise our firm plans to construct a new station for the major committed development at Wixams

As ever, we are committed to working closely with East West Rail Company to bring the Central Section to fruition through central Bedford, and to ensure that the costs of construction are minimised to support the business case. We are happy to meet at any time.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Michael Headley

Attachment:

Technical Note – Implications of EWR Services Using the Slow Lines North of Bedford