

East West Rail
Bedford to Cambridge
Route Option
Consultation

**RESPONSE FROM BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL**
March 2019



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Executive Summary

Bedford Borough Council (the Council) has always been a strong supporter of East West Rail (EWR). The Council's strategy is to work positively with the EWR Company and others to maximise its economic benefits.

Bedford Borough has a population greater than that of the cities of Oxford and Cambridge¹. The rail connectivity that currently supports its economic prosperity and growth is poor, other than to London. Recent reductions in rail service north of Bedford have made matters worse.

The Council's economic modelling shows that EWR is important to Bedford Borough's economy, **and that** Bedford Borough is important to the case for EWR. The Western section is forecast to create 225 jobs in the Borough, of which 135 are in the centre of Bedford. We forecast that the GVA impact in the Borough is 27% of the overall economic benefit of Western Section. The Central Section routed via Bedford Midland is forecast to create an additional 468 jobs in the Borough, of which 280 are in the centre of Bedford. The GVA impact in the Borough is 35% of the overall economic benefit of the Central Section².

Therefore, it is important that EWR delivers for Bedford. A route through the centre of the town will:

- Deliver 12% more economic benefits to Bedford and to EWR as a whole than a southerly route
- Support the regeneration of the centre of Bedford and the delivery of the Town Centre Masterplan, including major improvements to the station, the area around it, and its connectivity with the rest of the town
- Provide access to jobs and leisure in Bedford for people in new or expanded settlements served by the railway
- Enable Bedford Midland to become an interchange of national importance

The new national and regional connectivity that would be created through a transport hub at Bedford Midland are substantial, benefiting people right across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (Arc) and throughout the East Midlands. A wide range of journeys between Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire and places within the Arc would become possible by rail which are unrealistic today. These benefits have the potential to be even greater if the business case before Government for northbound connectivity onto HS2 at East Midlands Interchange is successful.

None of these benefits will be available if a route bypassing central Bedford to the south is chosen. Indeed by contrast, a southerly route has the potential to damage the town's competitiveness and future development compared to other settlements in the Arc, and put at risk the vibrancy of its historic centre.

¹ ONS 2017 Mid-Year Estimates: Oxford 154,600, Cambridge 124,900, Bedford Borough 169,900

² Existing settlements only

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The Council is committed to delivering a station at Wixams and our investigations show that an interchange station at the Wixams would be highly complex and is unlikely to be achievable given the development already taking place in the vicinity of the station area.

The Council has consulted widely with businesses, residents and with neighbouring authorities, and the overwhelming view is that for economic and policy reasons the right solution is for EWR to directly serve the centre of Bedford, meeting the strategic objective of the Department for Transport to “provide rail links between key urban areas”³

The Council has commissioned further work on the costs of Option E, with the objective of supporting EWR in value engineering the solution and reduce its cost, and will provide this to EWR Company by 22/3/19. It intends to continue engaging actively and positively with the EWR Company as its plans develop, and to ensure that the potential benefits of the new railway are fully realised.

Bedford Borough Council

March 2019

³ Route Option Consultation Technical Report

1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 The Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to East West Rail Company's Bedford to Cambridge Route Option Consultation.
- 1.2 The Council is very active in the development of rail solutions to advance its economic development. The Council has allocated over £15m to deliver the development of a new station at Wixams and is providing over £2m for the delivery of the Western Section.
- 1.3 EWR's consultation on the proposed new route between Bedford and Cambridge is crucial to the town's development. Five route options are suggested, of which three (Options A-C) bypass the town with a new station which is four miles south of it, and two (Options D and E) use the existing Bedford Midland station.
- 1.4 Bedford was a founder member of the EWR Consortium since its inception in 1995. We see the big picture in terms of the benefit for economic activity and new housing that the railway can support. Our strategy is to work positively with EWR to make the most of the economic benefits that the railway can deliver.
- 1.5 Section 2 of this response shows that the economic benefits of a route via central Bedford are significantly higher than those via a southerly route.
- 1.6 Sections 3 and 4 describe how EWR is a key factor in supporting the economic development of central Bedford
- 1.7 Sections 5 and 6 illustrate the substantial regional and national benefits that would be achieved by interchanging at Bedford Midland that would not be available if the railway takes a southerly route.
- 1.8 Section 7 describes our concerns about the impact and practicality of a southerly route given the proposed station at Wixams.
- 1.9 Section 8 comments on the costing of the Route Options.
- 1.10 Section 9 concludes by summarising the Council's recommendations for the Central Section Routing.

2. Economic Impact of Route Options

Strategic Context

- 2.1 The National Infrastructure Commission Report⁴ stated that “The success of the [EWR] railway will be dependent upon a high-quality reliable service, facilitating access to key centres as well as between residential, employment, commercial, cultural and leisure opportunities.” (p39).
- 2.2 The first two strategic objectives set by the Department for Transport for the EWR Central Section are now as follows⁵:
- Improve east-west public transport connectivity by providing rail links between key urban areas (current and anticipated) in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.
 - Stimulate economic growth, housing and employment through the provision of new, reliable and attractive inter-urban passenger train services in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.
- 2.3 These strategic objectives set out by both the NIC and the DfT recognise that **a key purpose of the railway is to link urban centres so that people can travel easily for work, business or leisure**. The activities they will travel for are, for the most part, in urban centres. Bedford town is the fourth largest settlement along the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge corridor after these three locations themselves, with an urban centre population of c.106,000. It has a major hospital located in the centre, and a campus for the University of Bedfordshire. Therefore, it would seem sub-optimal at best to construct a new railway which has a strategic purpose of improving connectivity between urban centres in the Arc, but which does not link to the urban centre of the fourth largest location on the route.

Economic Impact of Route Options

- 2.4 The Council recently commissioned economic modelling of the EWR proposals. The results of this modelling show that EWR is very important to Bedford Borough’s economy, **and that** Bedford Borough is very important to the case for EWR. The Western section is forecast to create 225 jobs in the Borough, of which 135 are in Central Bedford. We forecast that the GVA impact in the Borough is 27% of the overall economic benefit of Western Section. The Central Section routed via Bedford Midland is forecast to create an additional 468 jobs in the Borough, of which 280 are in Central Bedford. The GVA impact in the Borough is 35% of the overall economic benefit of the Central Section⁶.
- 2.5 The forecast economic impact of the Central section between Bedford and Cambridge is different depending on whether the route is through Bedford Midland or south of the

⁴ Partnering for Prosperity: a new deal for the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford arc, November 2017

⁵ Route Option Consultation Technical Report, January 2019

⁶ Existing settlements only

town. The table below shows the additional GVA impact of a route through Bedford Midland compared to a route via a station south of the town.

GVA Uplift £m per annum ⁷	Bedford Midland	Bedford South
Bedford Borough	18.53	16.47
Rest of EWR (existing settlements)	34.50	35.53
Interchange at Bedford Midland between EWR and MML	5.20	0.00
TOTAL	58.23	52.00

Figure 1 - Difference in GVA Between Bedford Midland Route and South of Bedford Route

2.6 It can be seen that:

- **The economic benefits of a Bedford Midland route are £6.23m pa (12%) higher than a route south of Bedford.**
- The impact of marginally longer times for through journeys on EWR via Bedford Midland is to reduce the economic benefits for other settlements slightly. However, this does not offset the other benefits of a Bedford Midland route shown.
- The economic benefits of interchange at Bedford Midland between EWR locations and locations north of Bedford on the Midland Main Line is significant, and would not be available via a Bedford South route. This is explored in detail in section 5 below.

2.7 The difference between the economic uplifts of the two routes on Bedford Borough is entirely a consequence of the impact on the centre of Bedford. The Bedford South route does not deliver any more benefits to the rest of the Borough than the Bedford Midland route does. This is shown in the table below.

GVA Uplift £m per annum ⁸	Bedford Midland	Bedford South
Central Bedford	10.71	8.66
Rest of Borough	7.86	7.83
TOTAL	18.53	16.47

Figure 2 - GVA Impact on Central Bedford

2.8 Further differences between the Bedford Midland and South routes emerge if potential further service enhancements are included. The table below shows the economic uplifts from:

- extension of Oxford-Cambridge services to East Anglia (as proposed by the East West Rail Consortium), East Midlands cities, the Thames Valley and beyond into the south west
- interchange at Bedford with classic compatible services onto HS2 (for which see section 6 below)

⁷ Spot year - 2033

⁸ Spot year - 2033

GVA Uplift £m per annum ⁹	Bedford Midland	Bedford South
Extension of EWR services to East Anglia and Thames Valley	30.60	28.98
Interchange at Bedford Midland between EWR and HS2 classic compatible services to Leeds	4.51	0.00
TOTAL	35.11	28.98

Figure 3 - GVA Impact of Future Service Developments

- 2.9 If all the impacts in this section are added together¹⁰, **the potential economic benefits of a Bedford Midland route are £12.36m pa (15%) higher than a route south of Bedford.**

New Settlement Opportunities for the Future

- 2.10 The Council recognises that one aim of the EWR Central section is to support new settlements in the Arc (and for new settlements to enhance the case for the railway).
- 2.11 During the preparation of its emerging Local Plan the Council recognised that it would be beneficial to allow the newly created and expanded communities to the south of Bedford to mature before introducing further change. This means that growth opportunities in Wootton, Shortstown, Wixams and Stewartby are limited for the duration of the Plan.
- 2.12 The Plan also considered the merits of four new settlement proposals, at Colworth, Twinwoods, Thurleigh and Wyboston. Whilst none of these has yet been allocated, it is likely that their promoters will submit them again to be considered for allocation in future plans.
- 2.13 The Council is committed to an immediate review of the current submitted Local Plan once it is adopted, so as to incorporate the new Standard Method of calculating housing need. Each of the potential new settlements, ranging in size from 4,500 to 10,000 dwellings, will be considered for inclusion in that Plan if submitted.
- 2.14 Each site is to the north of Bedford and would be better served by a northern route for EWR through Bedford Midland, as would much of the development potential between Bedford and Cambridge. In the Council's view, therefore, there is little or no scope to count further development south of Bedford against the benefits of a southerly route for EWR.

⁹ Spot year - 2033

¹⁰ Figure 1 and Figure 3

3. Bedford Town Masterplan

3.1 The Council sees the importance of EWR in supporting the regeneration of the centre of Bedford. In June 2018 the Council published a Town Centre Masterplan¹¹ to establish how Bedford can continue to develop as a more dynamic economy, and the town centre a vibrant hub of regional and national importance.

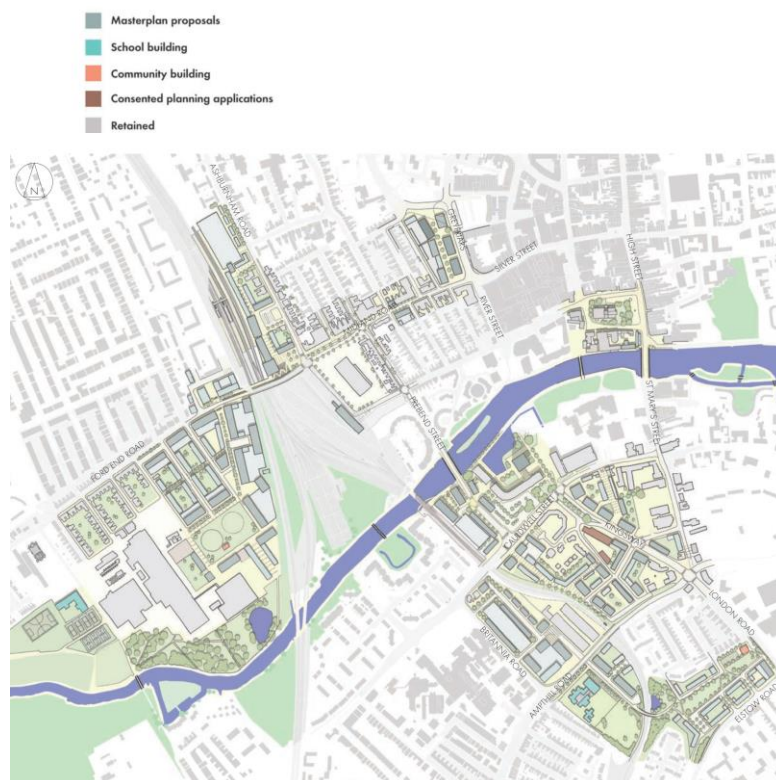


Figure 4 - Bedford Town Centre Masterplan

3.2 In the Foreword to the Town Centre Masterplan, the Mayor, Dave Hodgson MBE, writes: “Bedford benefits from a great strategic location both in terms of its links to London, but also as part of the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor. Unlocking the potential of the dozens of sites in and around the town centre and the station as well as transforming our streets and spaces capitalises on this opportunity. It will help to support the vitality of our town centre, support high quality jobs and improve the quality of life for existing residents.”

3.3 A vital element of the Masterplan is the regeneration of the area around Bedford Midland station, including:

- Making the station a prominent gateway to Bedford, with a new station building and entrance providing a better connection with the town centre.

¹¹ Bedford Town Centre Masterplan, June 2018 part of the one public estate initiative involving several public sector organisations including Network Rail.

- High quality public realm outside the station, including a new square.
- New residential and retail.
- Enhanced access to the station, by foot, bike, bus and car, maximising the potential for sustainable transport.
- Improved links and desire lines between the station and destinations in the centre of Bedford.

3.4 Section 4.2.1 of the Masterplan states: “The Station and surrounding sites presents an exciting opportunity for Bedford Town Centre. A comprehensive redevelopment of the Rail Station is a long-standing aspiration that is promoted within the Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) which was adopted in 2008, and the potential opportunity from East-West Rail provides further impetus.”

3.5 With the work proposed as part of the 'One Public Estate' programme¹², Bedford Midland will see investment in new car parking and better access. EWR provides the opportunity to regenerate the station as a 'rail hub', due to its close proximity to the historic town centre and its integrated transport connectivity. The station is centrally located, serving end to end journeys, whatever the preferred mode of transport, with rail, taxis, buses, cycling and walking and of course car parking being catered for. Improved transport connectivity, stimulated by the EWR project, will support the regeneration of the centre of Bedford, boosting jobs and the local economy and create a place for people to meet, relax, do business and thrive.

¹² OPE is an established national programme delivered in partnership by the Office of Government Property (OGP) within the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Association (LGA). It provides practical and technical support and funding to councils to deliver ambitious property-focused programmes in collaboration with central government and other public sector partners.

4. Accessing Bedford

- 4.1** The Council recognises the importance of developing new or enlarged communities along the Cambridge-Oxford Arc if the deficit in housing availability and affordability in the corridor is to be addressed. The Consultation document identifies, in particular, major new settlements that could be served by the railway between Sandy and St Neots (Routes B to E), around Camborne (Routes A, B and E) and Bassingbourn (Routes C and D). However, it seems likely that very few of the people living in these new settlements would choose to travel to work (or engage in leisure activities) by rail in Bedford if a Bedford South route is chosen. This is because a short commuting journey would involve an extended journey time and an inconvenient change at an EWR Bedford South station.
- 4.2** On the other hand, a route via the centre of Bedford would give these new communities direct access to the facilities and job opportunities that the town offers, supporting the economic development of the town.
- 4.3** By way of example, the table below seeks to estimate the journey times from Cambridge to key locations in Bedford, accessed either via Bedford South or Bedford Midland. It can be seen that in all cases the journey time to access central facilities via Bedford South is longer and more inconvenient, unless passengers chose to use a taxi. This is contrary to wider and EWR-specific public objectives to provide sustainable transport solutions (as noted at 2.1 and 2.2 above). Similar differences would apply for journeys from new settlements on the line to Cambridge, such as suggested for Camborne or Bassingbourn.

To	EWR	Change	Thames-link	Taxi	Walk	Total
Bedford Midland						
Via Bedford South	23	8	4			35
Via Bedford Midland	24					24
Bedford Hospital						
Via Bedford South	23	8	4		16	51
	23			15		38
Via Bedford Midland	24				16	40
Harpur Shopping Centre						
Via Bedford South	23	8	4		14	49
	23			26		49
Via Bedford Midland	24				14	38
Council Offices						
Via Bedford South	23	8	4		14	49
	23			15		38
Via Bedford Midland	24				14	38

Figure 5 - Journey times in minutes from Cambridge to central Bedford locations¹³

¹³ The journey times in this table are estimated as follows. EWR journey times are taken from the Consultation Technical Report Table 1 p38, noting that “The journey times between Bedford and Cambridge are estimated for the Bedford station that EWR would serve.” The interchange time is assumed to be half of the proposed frequency between Cambridge and Bedford of 15 minutes. The

- 4.4 Bedford will benefit significantly from the opening of the EWR Western Section through direct trains between Bedford Midland and Oxford, starting in 2023. This will enhance the competitiveness of Bedford town, and by 2027 it is likely that passenger traffic on the new service will have fully built up. It is possible, for example, that people will make decisions on where to live based on using EWR to access work in central Bedford. However, a south of Bedford route for the Central section opening several years later will **remove this centre-centre benefit**, as the trains would most likely be diverted away from Bedford Midland.¹⁴ This would be a detrimental step.

Conclusion

- 4.5 For the reasons outlined in sections 2, 3 and 4, the Council is firmly of the view that the potential economic benefits of East West Rail will only accrue to Bedford if the Central Section is routed via the centre of Bedford, and that a **southerly route has the potential to damage the town's competitiveness** compared to other settlements in the arc, and put at risk the vibrancy of its historic centre and future development.

MML journey time is assumed to be the Thameslink journey time between Wixams and Bedford Midland. Taxi journey times are taken from AA Route Planner with a 3 minute allowance for interchange to the taxi. Walking times are calculated using the function on Google Maps.

¹⁴ P20 of the Consultation Technical Report: "If EWR services were to serve a new station to the south of Bedford, this could have implications for the planned service between Oxford and Bedford Midland that it is currently anticipated will follow the completion of the EWR western section. This will be considered further in advance of selecting a preferred route."

5. Enhancing National and International Connectivity Through Bedford Midland

National Connectivity

- 5.1 The national and regional connectivity that would be created through a transport hub at the existing Bedford Midland station are substantial**, complementing its enhanced role as a high-quality gateway to the town. With East West Rail routed via the station, a wide range of journeys between Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire and places within the Oxford-Cambridge arc would become possible by rail, which are unrealistic today. For example, Nottingham to Cambridge 39 minutes faster, Leicester to Oxford 26 minutes faster, Kettering to Bicester 76 minutes faster, and Corby to Aylesbury 88 minutes faster.
- 5.2** The graphic below illustrates the potential. It shows current rail journey times in blue compared with those that would be available via EWR through interchange at Bedford Midland (in yellow).

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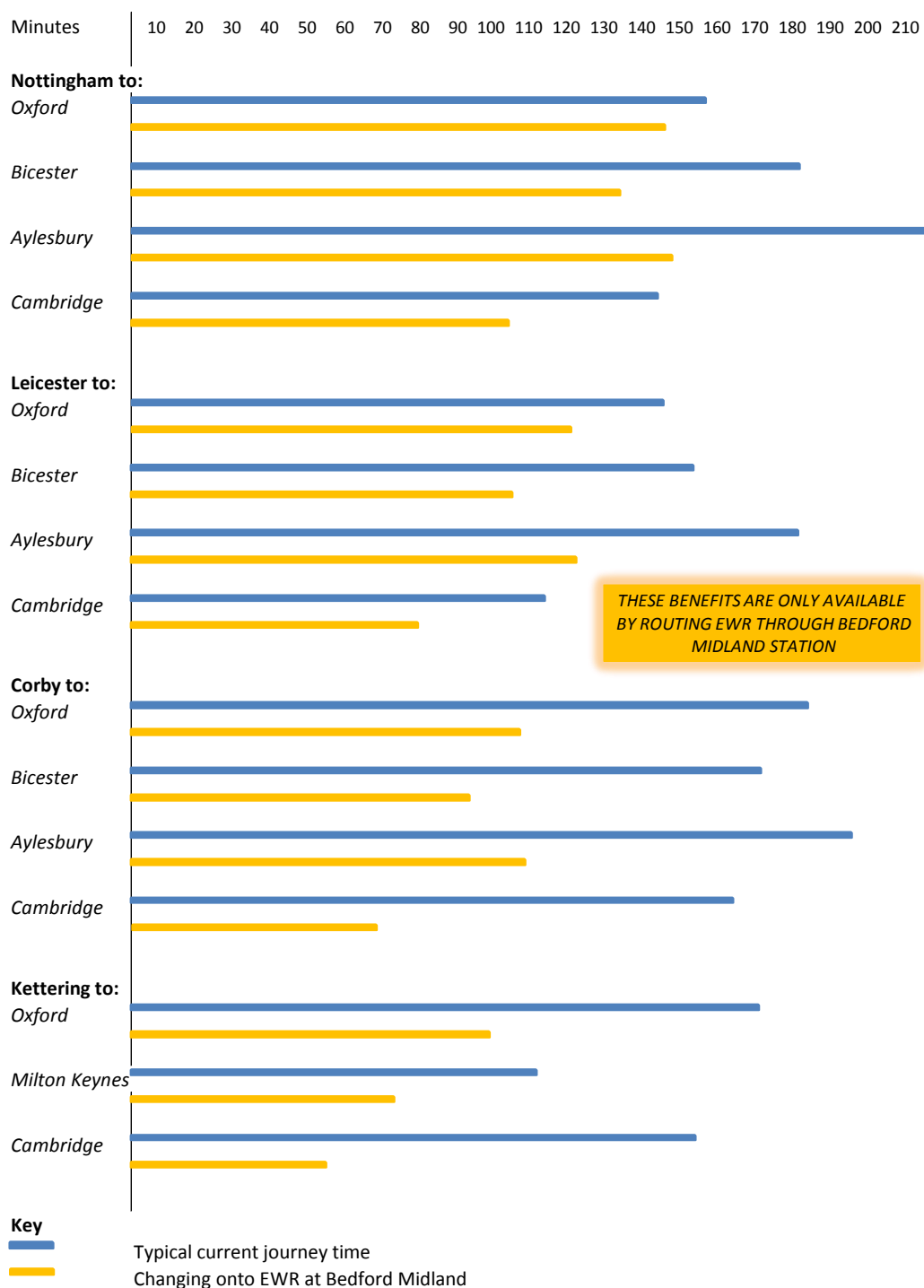


Figure 6 - Potential journey time benefits of interchange with EWR at Bedford Midland¹⁵

¹⁵ Journey times based on the following assumptions. 1) Current typical journey times are taken from National Rail Enquiries. 2) Interchange at Bedford Midland assumed to be 8 minutes towards Cambridge (i.e. Circa half of the frequency of 4 trains per hour), 15 minutes towards Oxford and Bicester (ie half of frequency of 2 trains per hour) and 8 minutes to Bletchley (4 tph). 3) Interchange at Bletchley for Milton Keynes or Aylesbury assumed to be 10 minutes. 4) EWR journey times taken from/inferred from the Central Section route consultation, and from EWR website: Bedford to Oxford 58 minutes, Bedford to Bletchley 21 minutes, Bedford to Bicester 44 minutes, Bedford to Cambridge 24 minutes, Bletchley to Aylesbury 28 minutes

5.3 An interchange hub at Bedford Midland would create journey opportunities that benefit the entire Oxford-Cambridge Arc, the growing towns and cities within Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, and Nottinghamshire.

International Connectivity

5.4 In addition to the substantial national and regional connectivity that would be available through interchange at Bedford Midland shown in Figure 6, the station would serve as a hub for access to six international airports including Heathrow and Gatwick, all within a journey time of less than 100 minutes, creating a wide range of airport journey opportunities across the region, as shown in Figure 7.

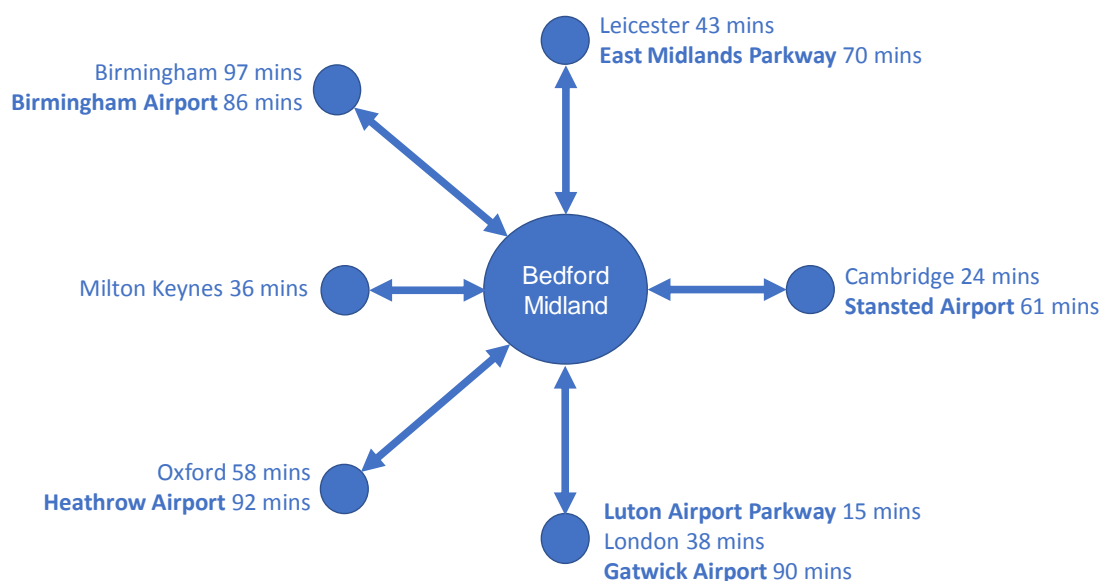


Figure 7 - International connectivity through interchange at Bedford Midland¹⁶

5.5 This international connectivity would also help Bedford attract new businesses and inward investment.

¹⁶ Shows faster journey times. Times taken from National Rail Journey Planner and EWR information as per footnote **Error! Bookmark not defined.**15. Connections assumed to be 8 minutes to Cambridge and 10 minutes at Bletchley, Milton Keynes and Farringdon (for Heathrow). Crossrail journey time to Heathrow taken from public data.

6. Connectivity with HS2

6.1 Midlands Connect submitted a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to DfT in June 2018 for classic compatible services from the Midland Main Line onto HS2 at East Midlands Interchange. Active development of the SOBC is underway with the support of DfT and HS2. The preferred option involves a St. Pancras to Leeds service, calling at Bedford Midland, with the modelled journey times as shown below. The SOBC shows this as having “high” value for money.

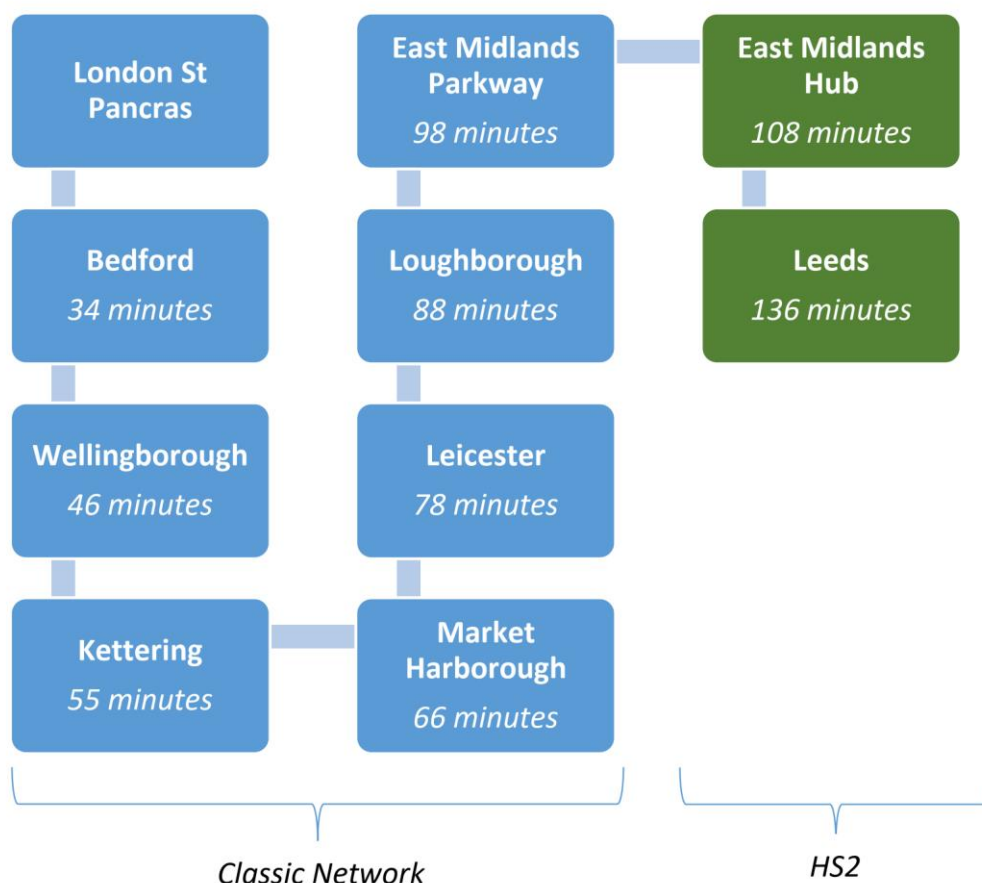


Figure 8 - Journey times modelled by Midlands Connect in Classic Compatible SOBC

6.2 For the East West Rail project the inference is clear: connectivity for the Cambridge-Oxford arc via Bedford Midland could become even more important, with a range of new national journey improvements through interchange at the station on top of those identified in Figure 6 above. Examples are shown in Figure 9 below.

Journey	Current Rail Journey Time (mins)	Potential Journey Time via Bedford Midland (mins)	Improvement (mins)
Cambridge – Leeds	171	134	37
Oxford – Leeds	201	175	26
Cambridge – East Midlands Interchange ¹⁷	144	106	38

Figure 9 - Journey time benefits through Bedford Midland with HS2 classic compatible services¹⁸

Conclusion

6.3 The important point is that none of the national and regional benefits in Figure 6, many of the international benefits in Figure 7 and none of the HS2 connectivity benefits in Figure 9 would be available if a route bypassing central Bedford to the South were chosen. This is because:

- Passengers making these interchange journeys would have to change twice: at Bedford South and Bedford Midland, substantially eroding the journey time benefits, and accruing two sets of interchange penalties.
- Stopping long distance inter-city trains on the Midland Main Line at Bedford South is unlikely to be acceptable politically or economically, as it would almost certainly lead to the further erosion of calls at Bedford Midland. The town of Bedford would be taken off the railway map other than for local and commuting journeys to London.

¹⁷ Nottingham for current rail journey

¹⁸ Current journey times are taken from www.nationalrail.co.uk. Journey times via interchange at Bedford Midland are calculated by using the journey times shown in Figure 6, plus the journey times on EWR and interchange times at Bedford described in Footnote **Error! Bookmark not defined**.13.

7. Impact of Routes South of Bedford on Wixams

- 7.1** The Consultation Technical Report (p20) states that: “A new station to the south of Bedford could be located either slightly to the south of the A421 or alternatively near the new settlement of Wixams. The eventual location would be a matter for more detailed consideration of route alignments after selecting a preferred route option.”
- 7.2** Wixams is a new settlement planned to have 4,500 new homes (of which 1,000 are built and occupied), including employment areas and a railway station on the Midland Main Line to be served by Thameslink. The proposed station is fully in line with Government policy to bring new housing, employment and transport together. The delivery of the station supports one of the major sustainability elements on which the development of the new settlement was based.
- 7.3** Plans for the station at Wixams are well advanced. The Council is fully committed to its construction on the site shown on Figure 10, and has already approved funding for the station. The Council has also secured a commitment from the developer to £13m under a section 106 agreement towards the cost of the station; this agreement expires in 2024. A more detailed business case and further engineering detail are in development, and these will be considered at the Council Meeting in June 2019.

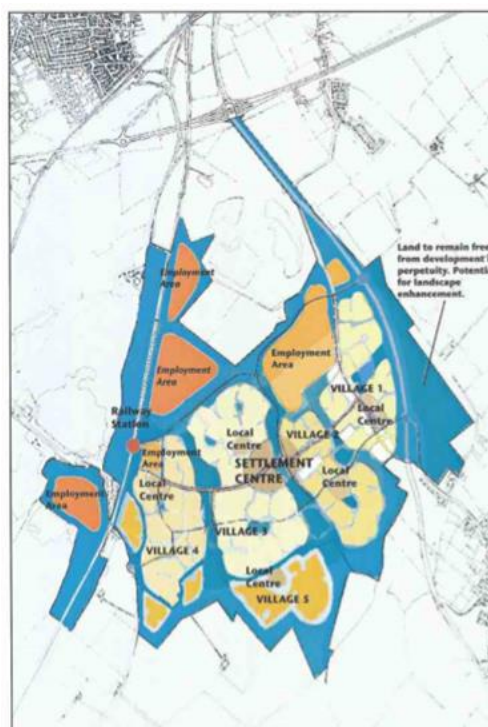


Figure 10 - Location of Wixams Station

- 7.4** The location of the station, with the section 106 agreement associated with it, is now fixed within the settlement design. It is highly unlikely that this footprint can be changed, with significant large scale development already committed and consequently it is difficult to see technically how an interchange point could be delivered.
- 7.5** After the Wixams Thameslink station is built, it would seem improbable that a second Thameslink stop before Bedford would be practical. There is therefore a risk that an overoptimistic view of the ability to deliver a Wixams interchange would actually lead to

a situation where no interchange was possible at all, dramatically reducing the assumed benefits.

- 7.6** The proposed Wixams station supports the substantial housing growth already committed on the site. In the Route Consultation document it is suggested that under Options A, B and C (the southerly routings), the railway could support additional housing south of Bedford¹⁹. The Council's view is that this housing is already committed – at Wixams - and cannot therefore be counted as a benefit of EWR.

¹⁹ E.g. "Could support additional homes to the south of Bedford" Consultation Technical Report Table 2 p39

8. Route Engineering and Costs

- 8.1 EWR provided the Council with a Briefing Paper entitled “East West Rail – Central Section Bedford Midland Cost Drivers” on 25/2/19, and this paper was the subject of a meeting with EWR on 1/3/19. This has given the Council insufficient time to consider its response to the issues discussed at the meeting to incorporate them in this document for the consultation deadline.
- 8.2 However, it is the expectation of the Council that it will be in a position to provide to EWR a supplementary response by 22/3/19, including further engineering and cost analysis.
- 8.3 In the interim, the Council’s view is that the consultation documents and the Briefing Paper take a broadly pessimistic view of the risks and costs of the Bedford Midland Route options and a broadly optimistic view for the Bedford South options.
- 8.4 For Bedford Midland routes, EWR has asserted major costs for the relocation of the sidings, significant station redevelopment costs, realignment of the routes through St Johns Bedford to achieve straight platforms, and viaduct across the Great Ouse river – all with limited justification or engineering challenge.
- 8.5 For Bedford South routes, it is not clear that EWR has fully accounted for the complexity of avoiding constraints such as the new Energy From Waste, B&M and Aldi sites currently under construction, the numerous historical pits, landfill sites, and consented development sites on both sides of the MML between Millbrook and the A421/A6. In particular, a railway through the Wixams will have significant impacts on the masterplan and properties already constructed.
- 8.6 Route Options D and E would both be consistent with the economic and connectivity requirements of the Council described in previous sections. However, it is important to understand the approach and issues of neighbouring Authorities, and to that end we have consulted with them and recognise that there is wide support for Option E. The Councils of Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City have provided a letter supporting Option E, and this Council supports this view. Our further engineering analysis, therefore, will focus on seeking to reduce the cost of Option E.
- 8.7 The Council is also concerned at the journey times stated in the Consultation documents which imply average operational speeds that appear unrealistically high. We wish to see further justification of the journey times stated, because if they are too low it is even more important that EWR maximises the benefits through greater demand and interchange opportunity.
- 8.8 The Council understands that EWR and Network Rail are continuing to refine the solution and costs of the Options. This includes for example a more cost-effective solution to the interface between EWR and the existing Thameslink depots in Bedford.
- 8.9 The Council seeks assurance from EWR that EWR and Network Rail will continue to work with it as the project develops.

9. Summary and Conclusions

- 9.1 In this consultation response the Council shows that a route through central Bedford delivers 12% more economic benefits than a route bypassing the town to the south.
- 9.2 The Council argues that a routing through central Bedford will support the regeneration of the town by:
- Facilitating investment in the delivery of the Masterplan it has already developed.
 - 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 through new services on the Western section of EWR will not be lost when the Central section opens.
- 9.3 Bedford Midland would be 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.
- 9.4 The Council is concerned that a southerly routing:
- Would have the effect of ensuring that the economic benefits of EWR bypass the town, damaging its competitiveness and putting at risk the vibrancy of the town centre.
 - Will not sustain further growth because opportunities within the southern area of Bedford are now exhausted.
 - Will result in the removal of the Western Section Oxford-Bedford service from Bedford Midland some four or five years after its introduction
- 9.5 That an interchange point cannot be provided at the location of the Wixam Station as the footprint for the station area is already defined.
- 9.6 The Council has commissioned further work on the costs of Option E, with the objective of supporting EWR in value-engineering the solution and reducing its cost.
- 9.7 The Council stands ready to meet EWR Company at any time to take the discussion forward.