

The following draft response is being agreed for submission on behalf of Milton Keynes Council by the Cabinet Member for Climate and Sustainability, Jennifer Wilson-Marklew on 8th June 2021. As the consultation closes on 9th June 2021, this response is being submitted in advance, as agreed with East West Rail. Please take the following as our official response unless advised otherwise that any amendments were agreed at the meeting on the 8th June 2021 or during the Councillor call in period which expires on 18th June 2021.

**Milton Keynes Council response to:
East West Rail 'Making Meaningful Connections' Consultation (March 2021)**

Support for East West Rail

We strongly support the work being progressed to deliver the overall East West Rail (EWR) project. Connectivity has been a key factor in the successful growth and economy of Milton Keynes, and the EWR scheme will address existing deficiencies in east west connectivity by public transport. The scheme will increase the population within rail commuting distance of Milton Keynes, and further enhance the attractiveness of the city as a place to do business and invest in. With improved connections by rail to both Oxford and Cambridge, Milton Keynes will be a centre point in the wider Cambridge Oxford growth corridor, providing a strong foundation for future growth and economic development.

The delivery of EWR also specifically provides the opportunity for the transformational renewal and redevelopment of Bletchley Town Centre with Bletchley's location at the heart / mid-point of the Arc. We have recognised this opportunity and will be benefitting from a £22.7m Towns Deal award from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government for Bletchley.

We have particular interest in 'Project Section B', Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line, and welcome the inclusion of upgrading Bletchley station and other stations on the Marston Vale Line, however we would like to express some considerations in the following paragraphs regarding 'concept 1 and concept 2' as well as the level crossing options included in the consultation document.

Environment/Carbon Emissions

We support EWR's ambition to deliver a net zero carbon railway. We would like to request that Milton Keynes Council is also included in future documents alongside Bedford Borough Council and Cambridge City Council when stipulating 'the pledge to become carbon neutral by 2030' (point 3.5.2 technical report) and in addition, carbon negative by 2050 (Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050, 2020). We would also be keen to seek engagement with EWR to discuss and explore opportunities for a carbon neutral railway and the associated infrastructure in more detail when available.

Powering EWR Services

Given the carbon emissions ambitions stipulated above, in the consultation document, and following our previous consultation response in March 2019, we welcome the statement that the 'use of diesel-powered trains is not a project objective'. We also welcome the inclusion of potentially operating electric trains which are powered by overhead electric lines if other technologies are not likely to be

sufficient when decisions are required on EWR's long term fleet. We keenly anticipate further details in the statutory consultation later this year.

Freight on EWR

It is acknowledged that at this stage of the project the availability of freight on EWR cannot be quantified, however it is appreciated that the next design stage will consider in more detail the future growth demand for rail freight and we would encourage further details of freight analysis and freight paths to be included in the next statutory consultation later this year. We work with England's Economic Heartland on strategic freight matters as it is recognised that rail freight is essential for businesses and communities and can aid carbon emission targets. Therefore, in addition to EWR engaging with the rail freight industry to help understand the running of freight services on EWR, it would also be beneficial to engage with England's Economic Heartland as well as ourselves to collaborate on plans for freight ambitions, which includes supporting freight decarbonisation as well as shifting long distance freight from road to rail.

Maintenance Depot

We support the use of the Bletchley train maintenance depot to be modified and used as the main depot location for the maintenance of the EWR fleet of trains. We believe this will support the local economy by providing higher skilled jobs in the Bletchley area and support apprenticeship schemes run by the local Milton Keynes College.

Additional Works

It is understood that additional works to deliver EWR will be required in particular to highways and rights of way and plans for this are at an early stage. As highlighted in the consultation document, the extent of works required and the design will be examined at the next stage of design and that EWR will consult on more detailed proposals, however we would strongly urge earlier engagement and consideration for more detailed proposals with Milton Keynes Highways and Rights of Way Officers in particular for options where it may not be feasible to retain existing highways and where diversions and other mitigations are required, so to ensure collaborative decisions and minimal disruption.

General Principles

We welcome the preparation of a Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) and that the document will be made public. The consultation document does not specify when this will happen, therefore can we request it is shared with us at the earliest opportunity to ensure it aligns with our own code of practices and that standards are in place to minimise disruption to local communities, businesses and the environment.

Planning and Logistics

Similar to the above but regarding additional works, we appreciate acknowledgement in the consultation that local highways and planning authorities will be consulted with in regard to highways routes to and from sites. Can we also request early engagement in the planning of these routes to ensure minimal disruption when highways and rights of way are required to divert or close. We can utilise our own communication means as well as EWR's to ensure as many residents and road users are aware of diversions and closures as early as possible.

Works on Existing Railways

It is understandable that there are many factors to consider when delivering a new railway, especially one as complex as EWR which utilises existing rail lines, however there is some concern that one option being considered for works is the closure of most if not all of the Marston Vale Line. We acknowledge that there are potential benefits to this as it might minimise prolonged periods of disruption and possibly provide some certainty for users on the level of service and alternative arrangements. Also, it is acknowledged that the service is likely to resume sooner with closures of the

line. We request that engagement is undertaken with relevant Council Officers before any decision on closures of the Marston Vale Line is considered.

Concept 1 and Concept 2

It is pleasing to see that EWR acknowledges the importance of the Marston Vale Line and local connections to existing users and this has been considered in the proposals and consulted on early prior to a formal statutory consultation later this year. It is recognised that both Concept 1 and Concept 2 proposals suggested will significantly improve east west connectivity for Milton Keynes, which supports Milton Keynes' commitments to grow significantly by 2031 and provides opportunities to grow further by 2050, supporting employment growth and strengthen its role as a regional employment hub in future years.

Concept 1

Concept 1 is welcomed as it offers additional EWR train services as well as retaining the existing Marston Vale Line, however it is appreciated that by retaining the existing line, passengers would only have access to EWR services from two stations in Milton Keynes, and that other existing stations and infrastructure will not receive upgrades. This concept is recognised as valuable as it continues to serve the local community whilst providing better strategic connections for longer journeys e.g. between Bletchley and Bedford, however it is also recognised that by retaining the existing line, services may be less reliable and some journeys may be slower than in concept 2 (p.120 and 127 consultation report). It is also accepted that if Concept 1 were to be chosen, Bow Brickhill and Fenny Stratford would only be served by one train per hour with the local communities only benefitting from the ability to change trains at either Bletchley or Woburn Sands to access a wider set of destinations and experience faster journeys. In addition, it is recognised that Concept 2 offers the potential for alternative first mile last mile provision meaning Bletchley and Woburn Sands stations could be more accessible than by the hourly rail service. This investment in first mile last mile is likely to provide benefit not only to rail users but to the wider community and Milton Keynes as a whole.

Concept 2

Concept 2 evidently appears to meet future travel demands and needs more significantly in comparison to Concept 1 by providing improved connectivity and faster journeys (p.120 and 127 consultation report). It is recognised by us that this concept provides a more reliable service by removing the low usage stations and consolidating them without the need for passing loops at Ridgmont, and it also delivers improved stations and facilities. It is recognised that Concept 2 provides a 'once in a generation opportunity' to upgrade the Marston Vale Line and offers a more comprehensive and long-term benefit. This would benefit the future growth plans for Milton Keynes.

Whilst it is also recognised that the number of people who would unfortunately be disadvantaged by the closure of these stations would be relatively small, this could potentially have a very detrimental impact on these local communities. Specifically, the potential closure of Fenny Stratford and Bow Brickhill Stations is of concern, and we could not support the closure of this station based on the information included in the current consultation.

It is welcomed that the technical report (p.119, point 7.3.36) references that 'EWR Co would also seek to improve the options available for journeys to and from the stations (sometimes referred to as "first mile / last mile connectivity") to support and improve sustainable travel and user experience.' We would strongly recommend that mitigations for users who may need to travel further due to station closures are thoroughly considered and proposals for these mitigations are considered in conjunction with us prior to the next statutory consultation. The statutory consultation needs to include more detail on specific first last mile improvements to be delivered by the project.

It is our view that a relocated Woburn Sands Station would better serve both new (such as the South East Milton Keynes Development) and existing communities and provide wider benefits to the whole of the south of Milton Keynes. This is providing the Bow Brickhill Station closure and station relocation is accompanied by measures to improve access to the new station. We also have concerns about the ability to access Woburn Sands Station in its current location in terms of the Mass Rapid Transit, bus, cycling pedestrian and by private vehicular means due to the constraints surrounding the site and the lack of access across Newport Road when the barrier is down.

EWR's engagement with England's Economic Heartland for 'First Mile / Last Mile (FMLM) connectivity' to seek improved connections to stations is welcomed and further engagement with us will help inform the most advantageous options available. We would like to seek clarity and assurances of the FMLM options, and that funding for these mitigations is secure before any station closures are decided upon. We would not be able to support station closures without assurances on the scale of station connectivity improvements and the funding that will be available for these.

Woburn Sands (relocated)

It is understood that there is no requirement to relocate the Woburn Sands Station in Concept 1 and whilst there is current capacity to lengthen platforms to accommodate four-car EWR trains (p.116 consultation document), the site is heavily constrained by surrounding development which presents a challenge for any future demand growth and opportunities for expansion. We support the relocation of Woburn Sands Station as this will not only offer a new and modern station, but also benefits the proposed Milton Keynes South Eastern development. Given that this site is expected to accommodate 3000 new homes, the current station might not be able to accommodate future demand. The relocation of Woburn Sands also fits our aspirations for Mass Rapid Transit by providing potential land required for a Mass Rapid Transit route which can serve the station. We recognise that keeping the existing station will serve the existing communities better, particularly those in Woburn Sands, however we believe there is potential to improve access to the station to mitigate this impact.

Ridgmont Station (relocated)

We support the relocation of Ridgmont and the prospect of a modern station which also acts as a multi-modal interchange. Whilst we acknowledge the relocated station might inconvenience those who currently reside near to the current station, it is welcomed that consideration is in place for a new pedestrian and cycle path from the old site to the new. The relocated station supports the Milton Keynes proposals for a park and ride in this area and offers the potential for a co-located bus and rail-based park and ride at this location. The relocation of Ridgmont station also supports a potential future area of growth to the south east of Milton Keynes (MK Strategy for 2050, 2021). Options for demand-responsive services to be investigated to link the station to surrounding areas are supported and we welcome the opportunity for EWR to engage with our Strategic Transport Team and Passenger Transport Team to explore solutions in conjunction with its own 'MK Connect' demand responsive transport services prior to the next statutory consultation.

Bletchley Station

EWR is the catalyst that we are using to deliver the transformational redevelopment and renewal of Central Bletchley, to include the surroundings of Bletchley Railway Station and crucially the adjacent town centre. The £22.7m Town Deal programme for Bletchley is viewed by MHCLG as being a 5-year timeframe which means that we will be delivering a number of Town Deal projects to dovetail with the forecast opening of the EWR Western Section (i.e. 2024/25).

We agree that with the new EWR rail line and regeneration aspirations, Bletchley will be placed as an important intersection of strategic east-west and north-south (WCML) rail links. Bletchley station will become an important transport hub and requires works to expand by adding two platforms along with

a new footbridge, and additional works are also required to accommodate additional services to Bedford and Cambridge.

We appreciate the recent engagement in the design process and consideration for a range of options for Bletchley station. The inclusion of an Eastern entrance at the station is also very welcomed and we look forward to continued collaboration on designing a station which also fits with the aspirations to redevelop the area and transform placemaking in the immediate vicinity. The importance of an eastern entrance to ourselves and stakeholders in Bletchley to stimulate the transformation of the town centre is reflected in circa £4m of Town Deal funding being allocated towards a new transport hub which includes the eastern entrance.

Cambridge Services to Milton Keynes

We request that EWR look at options for delivering a direct rail service connection between Cambridge and Milton Keynes Central. The obvious opportunity is when Connection Stage 3 delivers the additional two trains per hour between Cambridge and Bletchley. Instead of terminating at Bletchley, these could reverse north to Milton Keynes Central.

Air Quality

There are some concerns around air quality with the planned changes to Bletchley station due to the station's proximity to the Cemex Roadstone Coating and Cement Batching plant and the indicative areas for station works. Consideration may have been given to this already, but it would be useful to understand better what the relationship between the two sites will be and what impacts to air quality this may have.

Contaminated Land

With regards to the extension of the platform or relocation of the platform at Woburn Sands, there are potential sources of contamination in the area of the station. It is not considered that any potential contamination will prohibit development or limit the design, but consideration will need to be given to this when more specific plans are made. Similarly, when construction works are carried out in Fenny Stratford, for the protection of construction workers, building materials and material management due to potential historical contamination in this area.

Flood and Water Management

We are a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and is disappointed with the lack of Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) incorporated in the EWR project proposals throughout the Borough of Milton Keynes. We recommend proposals are designed to Local Authority standards rather than Network Rail standards.

Fenny Stratford Additional Track

We have no objections regarding the required additional track between Bletchley and Fenny Stratford and it is understood that the additional track is required to increase capacity and reliability of EWR. It would be appreciated if designs for track layout options and bridges are shared at the earliest opportunity as to allow us time to consider factors such as environmental impacts of the works.

Level Crossings on the Marston Vale Line

Level crossing closures understandably need to be reviewed with the development of EWR and it is acknowledged that with more frequent and faster trains, safety is of paramount importance. Level crossing closures however will clearly cause communities major concerns and issues and therefore decisions for closures must be completed with careful consideration and agreement with the relevant stakeholders and communities prior to a preferred option being presented at the next statutory consultation. We have assessed the options presented in the consultation and would like to highlight the following points.

Fenny Stratford

Please note that in point 7.6.19 of the technical report, reference is made to Simpson Road being served by bus route 18, however this service no longer operates. The area is instead covered by demand responsive transport services as an alternative travel option (MK Connect).

Vehicular Connectivity Option 1

This option presents concern that Staple Hall Road will experience more traffic including heavy vehicles. As this is a residential street, this option is unacceptable and not supported.

Vehicular Connectivity Option 2

Commercial businesses at the southern end of Simpson Road are both north and south of the level crossing. Closure of the crossing will result in additional movements past the residential areas with additional constraints of on-street parking. The proposals essentially create a long cul-de-sac industrial access road to serve the units with a width of around 5.3m–6m. This is a sub-standard width for industrial access roads which would be expected to be 7.3m. Two-way HGV movements at the widths of Simpson Road will create conditions of conflict. This option will create additional turning and stopping movements at a point where national speed limit applies leading to the potential to introduce accidents onto the network. In addition, there will be inconvenience to pedestrian and cyclists which this route will need to cross and therefore this option is not supported.

Point 7.6.27 of the technical report suggests that the proposed new link road would be situated on land already owned by Milton Keynes Council, however our GIS records suggest only the grid road corridor is owned by us and the land is privately owned. Please contact relevant Officers at Milton Keynes Council to clarify prior to this option being explored further.

Vehicular Connectivity Option 3

This option presents the same issues as highlighted above for Vehicular Connectivity 2 and therefore the option is not supported. In addition to this, access to Bletcham Way using Fenny Lock roundabout would be difficult as the land required for the new link road has planning permission for two industrial units.

It is inevitable that all vehicular options will increase vehicular traffic. Also, the options will create two cul-de-sacs either side of the level crossing which cause issues for deliveries and refuse vehicles which would need to deliver and turn in the road. This creates an increased probability of long vehicle reverse movements and the associated risks with this. The closure of the level crossing will impact on general connectivity with vehicles south of the railway needing to reach north of the railway forced into using the new link road which will add at least 2.5km to journey distance (route using Watling Street/Bletcham Way and link road on south side). Simpson Road north of Staple Hall Road currently has a relatively low level of traffic and is essentially a quiet lane. Cyclists can use this route comfortably, however, use of the Simpson to accommodate HGV and other traffic movements will change the nature of the route and its attractiveness for cyclists.

Pedestrian connectivity Option 1

This option is not supported as it presents no facilities for cyclists and is a longer route for pedestrians/cyclists. Although it is accepted that the existing route has no separate cycling facilities, cyclists only have a relatively short distance to travel between Watling Street and north of Staple Hall Road to reach the low traffic sections of Simpson Road. The non-vehicular route along Watling Street is an intimidating environment for cyclists with high traffic volumes. This option would need to consider the suitability of the route in particular in the dark and in winter months.

Pedestrian connectivity Option 2

A new pedestrian bridge retains pedestrians on a desire line however cyclists are not mentioned. Either the bridge needs to be designed to accommodate cyclists or an alternative safe and convenient cyclable route is also created.

Pedestrian Connectivity Option 3

This option presents an inconvenient route and off a desire line. Similar to the above, no details have been provided as to whether this is cyclable.

Whilst all the options create conditions of inconvenience to pedestrians and cyclists, we would prefer Pedestrian Connectivity Option 2 as the other options entail rerouting pedestrians which look circuitous and unacceptable given the extra distance between businesses and properties north of the line and Fenny Stratford Town. Pedestrian Connectivity Option 2 should only be considered if a ramped crossing were to be included as this would allow better access.

Overall, the Fenny Stratford level crossing closure will lead to network connectivity issues for vehicles, pedestrian and cyclists as well as creating the potential to increase accidents. It will also cause the isolation of a small community that will have to take a circuitous and lengthy alternative route in order to access local facilities. Therefore, we do not support any of the vehicular and pedestrian options presented for the level crossing closures at Fenny Stratford and we would request that the level crossing remains open at this location and alternative options should be explored that retain Simpson Road open to vehicular traffic, pedestrians and cyclists.

Bow Brickhill

Options 1 to 3 shown for Bow Brickhill each present issues regarding the grid road status of the V10, which is considered to be a key grid road linking the urban area of Milton Keynes to the A5 and the A4146. Additionally, the options include three road junctions in close proximity as well as deviation from road design standards which is of concern. Option 1 impacts land owned by MKDP as well as land at South Caldecotte which is a site allocated in the current Local Plan for commercial development. In addition, option 2 and 3 impacts land owned by Red Bull, and option 4 affects MKDP land, Red Bull land and the land in South Caldecotte. Option 3 is similar to Option 2, however presents more issues and is likely to have additional impact on land and therefore in our view should not be considered. Please note that all four options do not include non-vehicular access, and this should be included in the next statutory consultation.

Option 4 seems to offer the best compromise in that the land take required seems more conservative and retains the grid road network, however there is concern that the option does not mention inclusion of Redways for cyclists and options for bus lanes or a Mass Rapid Transit system. It is unlikely from the diagram shown for Option 4, that the proposed new roads and bridge would be able to accommodate this without the requirement for more land, without which future connectivity options will be compromised.

We would strongly recommend that the option for a V11 extension between Browns Wood and Old Farm Park is further explored and would support further work (we are undertaking a technical feasibility study) on this as an alternative to the four options presented in the consultation document. We encourage EWR to consider and contact the relevant officers regarding this option as traffic would be rerouted away from Bow Brickhill and onto the V11 without the need for land take at Tilbrook and Caldecotte with only a pedestrian and cycle bridge required and/or it is possible for the current level crossing at Bow Brickhill to be retained. The V11 option would be built to grid road standard and allow opportunities for an MRT in future. Further details can be found in the Milton Keynes South East Strategic Urban Development framework (<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/south-east-milton-keynes-strategic-urban-extension>).

Browns Wood

Similar to Bow Brickhill we would recommend and encourage further consideration of the extension of the V11 as an alternative to the three options presented in the consultation document. Should the V11 extension in this area go ahead then then this would negate the need to install a standalone bridge or underpass. It is welcomed that viable crossings are offered as options for this level crossing closure and Option 3 would be the preferred option with Option 2 also acceptable, but some issues are highlighted below. Any bridge crossing or underpass should allow for proper segregation of pedestrians from other forms of traffic, for both safety and amenity purposes.

Option 1

Significant development is proposed for this area and therefore consideration needs to be given to a large increase in usage by all types of user and physical ability. This option would not offer accessibility for all and is therefore not considered a viable option.

Option 2

This option resolves the accessibility issues of Option 1 and would not result in the loss of green space associated with Option 3 and is therefore acceptable, however there would be greater visual impact and the route would be less direct.

Option 3

This is likely our preferred option. It would have less visual impact and remain a direct route, meaning a footpath diversion would not be required. This option however would result in the loss of a greater amount of green space and an underpass would require lighting to ensure the public felt safe in using it.

Pony

The Pony crossing at Old Farm Park is a Bridleway so there is an expectation that the route will be suitable for cyclists which is not clarified in the consultation document. All options are supported with Option 3 and the underpass being our preferred option. Please see below for some additional points.

Option 1

The railway line is already elevated above the surrounding land at this location, so a significant length of ramp at the appropriate gradient would likely be required and this would result in a more convoluted route. There are concerns that the proposed steel structure to the north could have a visual impact on the neighbouring properties. Long elevated sections of bridge or ramps are not generally favoured by horse riders, owing to the open character and exposure of the crossing, particularly with trains passing underneath, and the surface of the bridge itself can be noisy when used by equestrians. This less direct option would also be less convenient for cyclists and pedestrians. A horse could spook on either a bridge or in an underpass, but the consequences of this happening on a bridge could be more significant. A horse spooking depends on many factors including the range at which the train comes into sight and/or earshot, the visibility as it passes, together with how reactive or accustomed to trains each individual horse is. These factors would be amplified on a bridge in comparison to an underpass.

Option 2

The same issues as Option 1 are still relevant, but this would also involve a further diversion off the existing direct bridleway line, potentially requiring users to double back on themselves. Option 2 is considered less favourable than Option 1.

Option 3

This is the preferred option as horses and riders are likely to experience a calmer use of the structure as the noise and visibility of trains will be reduced. The bridleway will also retain its direct line which

will be convenient for equestrians, cyclists and pedestrians. Good design enhances peoples use of a route, and an underpass is likely to involve shallower gradients than bridges, and since the railway is already on an elevated alignment to the surrounding land, an underpass would seem to fit more naturally here. This option would mean the horse remains on solid ground throughout the structure itself, and it would be subject to fewer variables in terms of design specifications. The underpass should be lit, and any ramps should be at an appropriate gradient and would require a suitable non-slip surface. Sufficient height and width must also be provided, and the length should be kept to a minimum so that, if possible, the exit remains visible. The design should be suitable for horse, cycle and pedestrian use.

There are plans for significant development in the immediate surrounding area of this crossing, resulting in increased use. The land to the north and south of the crossing forms part of the south east Milton Keynes developments. Over time, the route will likely change from a relatively rural path, to one used by all ages and abilities and level of mobility. Therefore, such increased usage should be accounted for in the planned improvements for this crossing.

Woburn Sands

It is appreciated that options are limited in Woburn Sands for alternatives to level crossing closures and while we favour option 1, this is by no means ideal and there are many issues surrounding this. For example, we are aware that a large gas pipe runs through the proposed location of the bypass which could possibly make option 1 unfeasible. Therefore, we request further engagement and investigation of alternative options as explained below of a combination of options 1 and 2. Impacts for both Options 1 and 2 are significant and we would request modelling and junction impact assessments to be carried out to fully quantify the impacts.

Option 1

We would favour this option of a bypass from a strategic viewpoint as it fits around Milton Keynes aspirations for growth in south east Milton Keynes and provides future opportunities to become a Mass Rapid Transit route. However, the bypass itself presents several issues in that it creates almost a cul-de-sac for Woburn Sands. Deliveries including HGVs which access the town will lead to vehicle movements down residential roads in order to turn to return to the bypass. Further assessment of Hardwick Road and The Leys would be needed to check their suitability.

Additional issues include increasing journey lengths from north of the railway into town as there will be a significant detour. This may have a significant on local businesses and the high street as people may choose to travel elsewhere north of Woburn Sands. Also, this option potentially creates additional pressure on Hardwick Road which has on street parking, and bus services (MK Connect) might be severed and potentially unviable.

From a Rights of Way point of view, this is still the preferred option. The suggested benefit from a bridge being provided at School Crossing would be welcomed as before its closure this was a popular route that avoided the vehicular level crossing to the west. However, the proposed road may have an impact on other public footpaths to the north of the crossing, namely Wavendon Footpaths 4 and 5 which are located just south of No.1 Newport Road, Wavendon. Any bridge crossing or underpass should allow for proper segregation of pedestrians from other forms of traffic, for both safety and amenity purposes. The loss of Mill Farm crossing would result in a required amendment to the promoted Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and a loss of an onward connection to the rights of way network for Woburn Sands Footpath 5 into Aspley Guise. We would support this crossing being retained and since the Sewerage Farm crossing and its footpath to the north shall be stopped up, it would also be supportive of an additional footpath being created leading north to connect to Cranfield Road near Park Farm.

Option 2

We do not support this option as it leads to unacceptable delay (40 minutes closures an hour) for all road users and queues potentially impacting on further junctions. Vehicles may be encouraged through other routes such as via Aspley Guise, particularly if the Aspley Guise level crossing is replaced by a bridge. In addition, whilst the main vehicular level crossing would remain open there would be no footbridge provision at School Crossing.

Neither Options 1 or 2 offer the retention of Fisherman's Path, which supplies a direct link to open countryside to the north and south of the railway for local residents. The proposals would result in a diversion taking the user across to Woodleys Farm crossing and then directly back on themselves on a route of over an additional 800m. If this public footpath does need to be diverted across to Woodleys Farm crossing, then a small stepped-only footbridge, as a compromise to those who can negotiate steps would be welcomed at Fisherman's Path in addition to the Woodleys Farm crossing proposal.

We would like to suggest an alternative option which would be building a bypass but also retaining the existing Woburn Sands level crossing. This could allow road users and pedestrians to either choose to wait to have access to cross the level crossing or use the bypass. Further research and modelling would be required to explore this option.

Given the issues associated with both options presented, and the impact and strength of feeling in the local community, we would like to request that EWR investigate an option for sinking the rail line for Newport Road / Station to pass over it. Alternatively, consideration should be given to bridging the rail line over the road, however this could have undesirable visual and noise impacts.