



[info@cambridgeapproaches.org](mailto:info@cambridgeapproaches.org) [www.cambridgeapproaches.org](http://www.cambridgeapproaches.org)

## PRESS INFORMATION

29 May 2023

For Immediate Publication

### **Cambridge Approaches Appalled by EWRCo. Route Update Announcement**

**Campaign group calls for Bedford to Cambridge section of East West Rail to be dropped on grounds of poor business case and dependence on housing development to justify next steps.**

**Cambridge Approaches adds that EWRCo have demonstrated a complete disregard for wildlife and people living along the proposed line.**

William Harrold, retired engineer and co-founder of Cambridge Approaches, has looked at the economic case presented in EWRCo's recent reports that were released alongside the route announcement, including the appendices. He said, "From this, we can see that EWRCo. are flogging a dead horse. The Bedford to Cambridge section needs to be dropped, it has no rational business case or democratic credentials and the environmental impact of the railway, together with the assumed additional housing development is appalling.

"After spending a further £150 million of public money, and apparently ignoring their consultants' advice, EWRCo. have now announced substantially the same route that they proposed two years ago."

Dr Harrold added, "To their credit EWRCo have published a lot more of the business case. This shows that **the level 2 benefit to cost ratio for their preferred route has fallen from 1.31 in 2020 to a ridiculous 0.3 today.** There is no business case for this railway."

Cambridge Approaches says EWRCo have attempted to boost their business case by assuming a **population increase of 53,400 at Cambourne** from a base of 9,200 and **an increase of 44,000 at Tempsford** from a base of 500. All this outside, and in addition to, any local plan with no clear route to achieving it. Nor do they address the fundamental issue of lack of spatial plan and first/last mile solution. Even with all this, the benefit to cost ratio remains low at 0.59.

The campaign group says they have found **no commitment to address the 'Great Wall of South Cambridgeshire'**. EWRCo have also continued to give no serious consideration for the support of rail freight and have chosen a route that is completely unsuitable for that.

Local senior manager and scientist, Phillip Phan, from the Cambridge Approaches Working Group, says EWRCo have a total disregard for local communities. "EWRCo. argue that building the railway low in the landscape or, where necessary, in a trench, will spoil the view for passengers. Why are passengers

prioritised over local people, the taxpayers who are being forced to fund and suffer planning blight for this proposal? Why hasn't EWRCo accommodated the needs and addressed the concerns of tens of thousands of local residents?"

Local businessman David Lean, who is also in the Cambridge Approaches working group, said, "The building of the section from Bedford to Cambridge will lead to **years of construction woes** with the expensive but preferred southern approach to Cambridge, but not just for residents along the line.

"For example, we predict that the remodelling of Cambridge station will cause **a decade of train cancellations**. Based on HS2/EWR experience in Buckinghamshire we can also expect **serious damage to our rural road network and landscape** during the years of construction".

Despite stating in their report that "protecting the environment is a fundamental part of our decision making", Cambridge Approaches says **the report also confirms that the preferred Southern route has the highest environmental impact**. EWRCo acknowledge that the route chosen is the closest to the internationally protected Barbastelle bat maternity colonies at Wimpole and Eversden Woods. The company state they can mitigate the risk to the foraging maternal bats, but evidence from other large infrastructure projects, such as the Norwich ring road, shows that mitigating 'bat bridges' failed, and the bats left the area.

This route impacts three key chalk streams, the River Rhee, the Bourn, and Hoffer Brook, which are known to contain red listed species such as Brook Lamprey, Water Vole as well as Otter. The line will cross large swathes of agricultural land, impacting not only on food production and food security but on species of red listed (Conservation concern 4 in The Red List for Birds) birds such as the Yellowhammer, Sky Lark, and Linnet, but also mammals such as the declining Brown Hare.

Sadly, EWR Co seem to be prioritising the railway and housing potential over one of their fundamental aims 'to protect the environment'.

**Through this recent announcement, EWRCo. has confirmed their poor business case, irrational route choice and dependence on huge green field housing developments to boost Biomedical Campus growth into the Cambridge Green Belt. They have also demonstrated a complete disregard for people and wildlife living along the proposed new line.**

Ends.

### **About Cambridge Approaches**

Cambridge Approaches is a non-political campaign group founded in 2020 to challenge the EWR's approach to Cambridge and the business case for building the Bedford to Cambridge section.

Cambridge Approaches believes campaign groups are strongest when information and work is shared with other groups and that local groups are most effective at mobilising their communities. CA has strong links with other campaign groups and Parish Councils. It exchanges information and engages with BFARE, BCN Wildlife Trusts, CPRE, CBRR, STARC, many local parish councils, village based groups and others.

### **Captions:**

Five Photographs of the River Rhee taken by photographer Doug Thompson. Filename is the suggested caption.

1. A family of Swans on the River Rhee.jpg
2. Baby water vole on the river Rhee.jpg
3. The River Rhee at Sunset.jpg
4. The River Rhee.jpg

5. Water Vole on the River Rhee.jpg

Bedford to Cambridge Preferred Route.png. Suggested caption:

“200 years from now, people are going to be writing PhDs about the social and economic forces that led to a railway being built that looked like this. Phil Rodgers on Twitter.”

**Contact:**

**Cambridge Approaches Press Office**

David Lean (CA) 07776 188874

Phillip Phan (CA) 07875 756831

William Harrold (CA) 07595 951664

Cambridge Approaches Limited is a not for profit company registered in England and Wales. Company Number: 13165368