



The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
Westminster  
London  
SW1A 2AA

Mike Barlow  
BFARe  
5 Egremont Mews  
Bedford  
MK41 7GL

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

### **East West Rail (EWR) – Route Through Bedford and on to Cambridge**

We write as a group of alarmed Parish Councils, Borough Councillors, Environmental groups and residents of North Bedfordshire. Together we form BFARe (Bedford for a Re-Consultation) and met with the former Minister for Transport in March 2021 to highlight our grave concerns regarding the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, East West Rail.

We would like to request that you intervene on our behalf and either call for a re-consultation on the route selection between Bedford and Cambridge, or a review this project for cancellation. We ask this for the following reasons: -

- An opaque and deeply flawed consultation process
- Massive incremental and irreversible environmental damage
- Lack of local democratic process and community engagement
- Escalating and hidden costs for the selected route

Despite our meeting with Chris Heaton-Harris and the subsequent consultation process in summer 2021, fundamental questions remain unanswered regarding the project, its environmental impact, cost inconsistencies and the lack of transparency. Our concerns can be summarised as:-

- The irreversible and massive impact on unspoilt rolling North Bedfordshire countryside, rather than a route that follows an existing transport corridor as per DfT guidelines, such as the A421 South of the River Great Ouse.
- Lack of relative carbon calculations at route selection stage, resulting in a route 7km longer through much more challenging terrain, creating a significantly higher carbon footprint to build than alternatives, contrary to Government decarbonisation objectives.
- The lack of proper local engagement with impacted communities, putting North Bedfordshire in similar political territory as Amersham and Chesham. An inadequate consultation process that omitted large numbers of negatively impacted residents on the selected route, therefore skewing the route corridor choice.
- Avoidance of local accountability through the support given by the Mayor of Bedford Borough to this route in the consultation in 2019. The route selection was not debated or voted on at Full Council and the Mayor acted unilaterally without consultation with local residents (a Mayor who now signals that EWR is a “Government Project” – firmly positioning the blame at your door).
- Lack of transparency on costs during the route selection consultation in 2019 and again in 2021 – costs have escalated, but EWRCo are hiding these from public view. The Information

Commissioner is currently investigating whether withholding of this vital information is against the public interest.

- Absence of a credible business case, especially following COVID, the long-term impact on travel demand, and the demise of the Ox-Cam Arc development requirements. In any event, emerging strategies for future housing reveal the chosen route is least able to serve future development areas.
- Failure to consider last-mile connectivity in Bedford and the existing congestion, pollution and air quality issues. The use of diesel trains will further negatively impact health and the environment in Bedford as will a new freight route running through the town.

The Parish Councils and other BFARe members would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you directly. We have put forward a credible, less damaging, less costly and more environmentally sensitive alternative that meets all stakeholders' objectives, but fear EWRCo are pressing on regardless.

We are keen to work with EWR and DfT to ensure this strategic investment achieves the goals of EWRCo and Bedford Borough Council in a more sustainable manner that improves the lives of residents without permanently destroying North Bedfordshire countryside.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Barlow, Chair of BFARE

On Behalf of:

Bletsoe PC

Colmworth PC

Keysoe & Bolnhurst PC

Renhold PC

Thurleigh PC

Woodlands Park Ward of Brickhill PC

CPRE Bedfordshire

Clapham PC

Great Barford PC

Ravensden PC

Roxton PC

Wilden PC

Wyboston, Chawston & Colesden PC

cc:

Wendy Morton, MP, Minister of State for Transport

Dr Catherine Terry, EWR Deputy Director at DfT