



Ref:

23 January 2025

East West Rail

Dear David Hughes, CEO EWR, Ryan Robertson, EWR

Response to EWR Consultation Jan 2024 from Woburn Sands Town Council

Please find below Woburn Sands Town Council's response to the non-statutory consultation.

Resolution of key issues for Woburn Sands

Firstly, we wish to express our appreciation of your response to our previous feedback, specifically:

1. Removal of the road from Bow Brickhill Road to Hardwick Road through the Woburn Sands allotments/ Edgewick Farm which are key elements of our community green space;
2. Keeping the Woburn Sands level crossing open mitigating community severance between the two parts of the parish of Woburn Sands across the railway;
3. Keeping Woburn Sands station within the envelope of Woburn Sands and accessible to all our current population and surrounding parishes;
4. Enabling Woburn Sands to use all new train services with a fully functioning station for both local stations on MVL and express trains between Oxford to Bedford/ Cambridge.

The new proposals established clarity on key issues that are contentious including the four above, number and type of passenger services, freight trains, noise, downtime for the level crossing and electrification of the line across both options. This enabled us to focus on the key differences between the options on location of the station, differences in services, traffic and access and closure of other local stations, construction issues and challenges in integration with SEMK plans.

Marston Vale Line stations and service concept Options

Support for Option 2 in principle

We have given serious and detailed consideration to the two Options that EWR have posed for the future of rail transport in Woburn Sands, the Marston Line and the wider Oxford – Cambridge line. We have concluded **Option 2** will deliver the greatest benefits to our current and future residents by moving Woburn Sands Station a short distance to the west of the existing station, but still within Woburn Sands, and providing a modern station with facilities and car parking.

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Our decision to back **Option 2** in principle is based on all available information at the time of the consultation and the wider implications of SEMK which will have a considerable bearing on the town of Woburn Sands and its surrounding area in the future. Clearly there will need to be a great deal of further work to ensure that the potential outlined results in plans and delivery that are beneficial to our residents. We will be happy to work closely with you and MKCC to help design the plans in detail.

Woburn Sands current situation and future impact

Woburn Sands has a population of circa 5,000 residents with the neighbouring parishes of Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath and Wavendon having circa 7,000 residents. Add to this the future planned expansion (SEMK) the population is likely to grow by an additional 3,000+ households. Many of these residents consider Woburn Sands to be their town and will use the station in the future.

The existing Woburn Sands Station has almost no parking facilities and little opportunity to create parking for the station in the current location, and this is a major challenge for Option 1. There is a high volume of traffic that currently runs past the station, and this is likely to grow given MKCC expansion plans for SEMK.

Rail passenger numbers have been adversely affected in recent years by COVID and the extremely poor service/ cancellation on the existing Marston Line. However, when the Marston Vale Line is running a consistent service at train capacity, and there are direct rail links to Oxford and Bedford/ Cambridge, we think passenger numbers will increase significantly for local leisure and employment and commuting to London and West Midlands.

We believe having a new, modern station with all the connecting, accessibility and active travel facilities, including road infrastructure, transport hub (buses/ taxis/ MRT, cycling) along with parking for vehicles and bikes will meet the growing needs of Woburn Sands into the future. EWR will need to work with MKCC to ensure the most effective solution for the complex traffic and development challenges in SEMK. The station will also serve residents north and west of the railway who will have access without the need to use Newport Road.

The intention to bring new, regular services to Woburn Sands and along the Marston Vale Line is welcome, although this will bring significant new issues due to more trains, passengers and traffic. **Option 1**, retaining the station in the current location, has limited potential to deal with these new challenges.

The location of the new station in **Option 2** has some significant benefits for Woburn Sands, specifically:

- Residents will be able to access new rail services to both key local and fast services between Oxford, Bletchley, Bedford and Cambridge, as well as links to West Coast and Thameslink lines.
- The new station is within Woburn Sands parish and the envelope of development, ensuring it is within walking distance for our current residents.
- For many residents it will be no further than current journey, and has the potential to be easier to access on the path next to Fisherman's Crossing if this is appropriately developed. This needs significant thought to ensure plans with SEMK and local residents are designed well.

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- The new location has the potential to alleviate some of the pedestrian pressure on the current level crossing, although it will create significantly more vehicle traffic which must be managed.

However, **Option 2** does create some significant issues on access, traffic management and pedestrian access at the level crossing and to the east of the station for children attending schools which are not addressed. For that reason, we still believe there is a need for a footbridge for schools and recreation to the east of the current station. We will add specific comments below. We also do not think **Option 2** provides enough to serve current and future users of Bow Brickhill station and therefore think that station needs to also be retained.

Marston Vale Level Crossings

Bow Brickhill (V10 Brickhill Street) - Retain as a CCTV crossing, or if crossing cannot be retained due to traffic impacts close and replace with new bridge to the east of the crossing.

Disagree. Access to cross the level crossing must be retained by vehicles and pedestrians/ cyclists. The proposed bridge has the potential to alleviate some of the current traffic issues, but this must not be a reason to close the station. The level crossing must be retained for access to the station of an alternative proposed that enables access the Bow Brickhill station via bridge for vehicles, cyclists, buses (including the new Loop bus travels through the level crossing) and for pedestrians walking across the railway and accessing the station.

Bow Brickhill station is currently used to access to Caldecotte and Tilbrook including the Technology Park, offices, housing in Browns Wood, Walnut Tree and leisure space of Caldecotte lake. It already serves the Open University campus which will remain at Walton Hall and is a vital connection to Oxford and Cambridge universities. In the future retaining the station at Bow Brickhill it will provide access for the west side of SEMK including the planned expansion. It is crucial that Milton Keynes has a station primarily for the purpose of enabling commuting to work and education within MK.

Bow Brickhill needs to be retained as one of the consolidated stations. Consideration needs to be given to how traffic could be the station could be developed alongside the planned bridge.

Browns Wood – Close and divert users to Pony Crossing

Agreed

Pony – Retain and upgrade to miniature stop light crossing

Agreed

Woodley's Farm – Close and extinguish crossing rights

Agreed

Fisherman's Path – Close and divert users to Woburn Sands level crossing

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Agree to closure only on the following conditions:

A footbridge and accessible access into the new station complex for Option 2 to accommodate foot passengers who would benefit from this shorter route to the station. An adequate, well-lit footpath will also be required to reach the bridge from Bow Brickhill Road. Diverting pedestrians to the level crossing is not an adequate solution – see below.

Woburn Sands (Newport Road/Station Road) - Retain as a CCTV crossing

Agree with following request:

Effective traffic management and road planning is required at the level crossing / Cranfield Road junction out onto Newport Road, as there will also need to be access to/ from new station. EWR will need to work with MKCC to find the most efficient and safe solution for traffic and pedestrian users. We request that the footbridge proposed and agreed for pedestrian access be built specifically to accommodate children, parents who are currently using the level crossing to get to schools in Woburn Sands and the recreation facilities on the south-east side. As the population of Woburn Sands grows there will be increased need for safe passage, and this is currently not safe or meeting accessibility requirements.

Mill Farm – Close and divert users via existing footpaths to Woburn Sands level crossing

Agree

Further comments

Whilst Woburn Sands Town Council have agreed to **Option 2** – to move Woburn Sands Station, there are additional points/requests that we have as follows:

Traffic and car parking

- It is essential that the new station has a car park with adequate parking spaces to avoid traffic from parking in nearby residential area e.g. Parklands / Redrow development (Woburn View).
- Car access to the new station is required from Newport Road into Elliott Road on the new Redrow Site. This is currently restricted in planning conditions but needs to be addressed for rail passengers wishing to access the station car park from Woburn Sands, Wavendon and eastern villages such as Aspley Guise. It is vital there is access for residents without creating additional traffic through Woburn Sands to access the station from Bow Brickhill Road. It is also of concern, however, that this will become a 'rat run' into/ from Newport Road to MK and SEMK so plans need to be made to mitigate this risk. We need to have access to the traffic modelling, so that we can add additional vital information as traffic has not been flowing as normal due to the lack of consistent service on MVL since Covid.
- We would like to see predictive figures for traffic queue flow clearance at the level crossing. This has the potential to be very disruptive for the Town with 25 minute per hour down times predicted. Minimising the time the level crossing down remains a key priority for our community to keep community severance to a minimum and enable schools to operate.

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Pedestrians

- We request that EWR revisit the Network Rail **approved plan** for a footbridge at the school crossing to give children, parents and pedestrians (particularly with accessibility needs or with buggies) safe access to the schools and recreation areas in Woburn Sands (MKCC and Central Beds). We appreciate that faster trains require closure of smaller crossings, but this has never been addressed and is putting pedestrians at risk.

New station for Woburn Sands

- Private funding for the build of the new station is a concern, particularly in view of the developer, O&H, already losing some of their land. S106 Tariff monies need to be ringfenced for the benefit of funding community infrastructure and not for funding the building of a new station. The new station must not disadvantage our community in the services it will need for increased residents and passengers.
- Arrangements need to be made for the Loop bus to stop at the new Station and be able to continue its route effectively. Planning needs to include the planned MRT despite Woburn Sands not being included in the first phase of plans.

Bow Brickhill station

- We ask that EWR retain the station at Bow Brickhill as part of Option 2. The residential population in that area Caldecotte, Walton Park, Walnut Tree etc along with planned development (SEMK) and with 1500 new homes also planned in the parish as contained in the local plan (MK2050). as well as high levels of employment in the area with new warehouses, Red Bull, Tilbrook business park and the Open University campus (which will not be moving to CMK). In our view justifies the retention of a railway station and will potentially bring both local passengers travelling to/ from work and for leisure within Milton Keynes, and for longer journeys linking to Oxford, Bedford and Cambridge. The Loop bus also stops at Caldecotte which adds to a transport hub option. There is potential for the MRT to stop here too in the future.

Construction of new station and track

- Disruption due to construction traffic is of concern and we request agreement to timetabling of this traffic
- EWR must not decommission the existing station in Woburn Sands before the new station is commissioned and open. The town cannot be left without a fully functioning station and level crossing preventing traffic and pedestrians at any time.
- Noise is of concern, especially for those residents living adjacent to the railway line therefore we request EWR install the TATA supplied 'quiet' rail track or an equivalent technology.

Route Wide Matters

We like the proposed services – trains every 20 minutes and believe this is essential to provide an efficient commuter service. If there were any shortfall in these services, we believe it would affect passenger numbers, reliability and reliance on EWR as a viable commuting service to reach cities including Milton Keynes, Oxford, Bedford, Cambridge, London and Birmingham.

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We are in favour of the hybrid electric solution to power trains which is much better than the proposed diesel trains.

Feedback on the consultation

It was unfortunate to schedule the Woburn Sands consultation face-to-face meeting only one week before the deadline for feedback, as this has left many residents without enough time to understand the new proposals. In view of the volume of feedback from Woburn Sands last time and the number of residents engaging in that process by attending the Summerlin Centre, EWR staff were not available to a high number of residents to answer questions. We requested an extension to the submission end date and a further face to face consultation, but this was rejected by EWR.

We believe you have lost out on the potential to gain much support for your proposals through this scheduling and request that you do not repeat this timetabling in the formal consultation.

It would have been useful to separate the MVL element of the consultation materials from the Bedford to Cambridge element. Most of the feedback form is for Bedford to Cambridge, which little space given to the complex elements of the MVL. We are responding to the MVL proposals and do not have an opinion about the proposals for Bedford to Cambridge. We believe that a service running from Oxford to Bedford will be beneficial for residents.

Thank you for your attention to these matters and we look forward to working with you in the future as EWR plans progress to the satisfaction of Woburn Sands Town Council.

Yours faithfully

Wendy & Alex

Councillors Wendy Green and Alex Poppleton
On behalf of Woburn Sands Town Council

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