

**Comberton Parish Council's response to the
EWR Statutory Consultation April to June 2026**

The proposed alignment of the EWR crosses the road between Toft and Comberton in between the Meridian Golf Course and Comberton Village College. It then proceeds south along side South Street and Royston Lane and crosses Royston Lane then the A603 and proceeds on to Harlton and through Chappel Hill.

The key point that Comberton Parish Council (“**CPC**”) wish to make is that the southern approach to Cambridge is the wrong approach. The northern approach is far better for the following reasons.

The northern approach would:

- be less environmentally destructive;
- take away less prime agricultural land;
- involve less impact on local residents as its mostly along existing travel corridors and an existing train line;
- be cheaper to build;
- follow an already established travel corridor (namely the A428);
- pick up on the new conurbation of Northstowe;
- still be able to end up at the Bio Medical Centre (“**BMC**”).

There really does not seem to be a good reason to use a southern approach to Cambridge.

Our assertions are backed up by the EWRCo. Affordable Connections Project, which recommended a northern approach to Cambridge as cheaper, less environmentally damaging, easier to construct and better for freight at all levels. It could connect to all Cambridge stations, including Cambridge South and the BMC.

The EWR route has to go under, or more likely over, existing roads, railways and rivers. There are so many such obstacles on the southern approach to Cambridge that the proposals have the railway running on 10 metre high embankments or viaducts much of the way – the Great Wall of South Cambridgeshire. Quiet residential areas would be trashed, farms cut to pieces and wildlife damaged. We await EWRCo.'s specific proposals, but given the absence of business case, the costs of mitigation would be a huge issue.

In regards an overland southern approach to Cambridge, CPC have the following concerns about the project's impact on our village and its residents.

1. The latest plans show a construction vehicle access road from a very sensitive part of the village. It seems that the Lot Way footpath is to become a permanent maintenance track/road for vehicular use. A major concern is that the access is

onto Royston Lane, halfway between the sharp bends at the South Street End and Church Lane. Royston Lane, at this point is in a Conservation Area!

Our major concerns that need to be fully assessed and publicly addressed by EWRCo as part of the DCO process are:

- Highway safety impacts - narrow lane, sharp bends, visibility (blind rise), vehicles turning, pedestrians, horse riders, dog walkers, school children, cyclists, amenity;
- Construction vehicles using access through a conservation area ;
- Size and frequency of construction vehicles, especially given the very poor state of the road surfacing;
- Heritage impact (Grade 1 listed St Mary's Church), nearby listed buildings and other houses in the conservation area;
- Noise, vibration, dust, lighting and air quality impacts on nearby residential properties;
- Impacts on Rights of Way and recreational users – it is an ancient footpath after all;
- Potential structural and dilapidation impacts on historic buildings and residential property adjacent to the route;
- EWRCo need to establish an alternative access arrangement that avoid Church End Conservation Area entirely;
- Cumulative impacts from construction and permanent maintenance routes;
- Details of, and proposed structural monitoring, dilapidation surveys, compensation arrangements for affected residents; and
- Loss of tranquillity and rural character.

EWR had assured a number of our residents at your previous non statutory consultations that haulage routes would avoid "sensitive areas". Lot Way is highly visible in the landscape and from the western end of the village. It is one of our few footpaths. Given the exceptional sensitivity of this location, we strongly believe the proposed maintenance access arrangements are inappropriate and would result in unacceptable harm to residential amenity, highway safety, historic environment and the special character of the Church End Conservation Area.

There should not be any construction traffic on South Street/Royston Lane. It is a very narrow road in a particularly appalling state of disrepair. Any construction access from this road will inevitably make things worse.

2. What will happen to the purple areas (construction yards) after the construction has finished? We would need a commitment from EWR that they would be returned back to prime agricultural land, to a specification that the local farmers find acceptable.
3. The need to maintain access along all affected roads such as:
 - a. the road between Toft and Comberton;
 - b. Royston Lane;
 - c. the A603;
 - d. Washpit Lane; and
 - e. the road between Harlton and Haslingfield.
4. The need to adequately maintain road surfaces where construction traffic will be using local roads. Ensuring all potholes and broken edges of roads are kept repaired as quickly as possible from any damage occurring. They are already in an appalling state of disrepair (especially Royston Lane/South Street and the road through Harlton).
5. The need for mitigating the disruption to the CVC secondary school, especially during exam times. The construction is going right by the edge of the school which is the largest school in Cambridgeshire.
6. Mitigating Noise pollution from construction.
7. Reduction in the height of any embankments to the lowest height possible. 11m above ground level is completely unacceptable. The railway should go under the A603 not over it, and the same is true of the Bourn Brook.
8. There is no evidence that Green Bridges, and Bat Underpasses work for Barbastelles. The proposed route crosses the Core Sustenance Zone of the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, which is a maternity roost.
9. Any construction compounds to be a minimum of 150 meters from any residential properties.
10. Ensuring access along all footpaths are maintained, especially the Lot Way between the Church in Comberton and Toft.
11. All foot path bridges must also cater for bicycles.
12. We need to ensure that all local bus routes remain unaffected.

13. We need to have a construction ombudsman or SCDC representative who can communicate with EWR about issues and concerns raised by residents during the construction phase (estimated to be between 7 and 10 years) so that locals have a voice and to ensure EWR listen. Unlike in Buckinghamshire where EWR completely ignored residents' concerns and issues.

14. We would like to see a footway and cycle path built alongside the rail route.

15. Given that you have chosen a route that is ill suited to rail freight why not save money and remove support for it?

Below are the specific concerns of the Comberton Village College which the line runs adjacent to:

1. We understand that the rail line will be using fossil fuelled locomotives and these will be neighbouring the open spaces of the College grounds. Given the several outdoor spaces are used for both school and community groups, from 8am - 10pm, almost every day - has there been an ongoing environmental damage assessment and will this impact compromise the growth and development to young pupils within our college and local community?

2. Through a recent decarbonising project, the school has moved its original oil fuelled heating system to a 750kw ground source heating system. Given the depth and complexity of this system, has it been assessed that this system might be compromised by the initial development of the line, but also longer term operational impact. We would be concerned by resonance disturbance, as well as energy loss, particularly given the boreholes (60 in total) are located to the western edge of our campus and are to a depth of 200 metres.

3. As is regularly reported within most modern media, young people are managing an extraordinary amount of mental health challenges. Unfortunately, we do see there is an increase in self-harming and consideration for suicide as a result. It is not uncommon for a train line to be considered as part of a coping strategy, which would have devastating consequences for the child, their family, the school community and anyone responsible for the moving locomotive. What level of mitigation will there be along the boundary and to what extent will this restrict access beyond the immediate boundary of the College - including local bridges?

4. In the longer term, we understand that delivering this project will lead to some significant disruption in access to the village. Given our college provides

education for 2,000 young people and employment for approximately 500 staff, will the school be able to remain fully operational? Given the routes to school include journeys which take approximately 50 minutes, any changes to routes of buses could make the departure time in the morning unmanageable for families. Can we have reassurances that this will be considered within the planning of any road disruptions?

Railway station

1. If the line proceeds despite the objections set out above, Comberton Parish Council requests being consulted on the provision of a railway station to serve the Comberton community. The Council does not at this stage take a formal position on the preferred location, although a logical option may be near the point where the proposed route crosses the B1046 to the west of Comberton Village College.
2. Transport links between Comberton and Cambridge have weakened over time. The No. 18 bus service does not operate in the evening or on Sundays, its route is indirect, and road journeys are often slow and unreliable, particularly at peak times on the A603, Barton Road, and comparable approaches to Cambridge. In practice, cycling can often be faster and more reliable than travelling by road.