

raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

Issue 204 • Dec 2024

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EAST WEST RAIL MILESTONE REACHED OXFORD-MILTON KEYNES TRAIN

Photo from Phil Marsh on X/Twitter (@Marshrail), used with permission, of a Chiltern Railways test train at Bletchley station high-level platform on Monday 21 October 2024



MOMENTUM AT LAST FOR FULL OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE LINE AS PUBLIC CONSULTATION OPENS — PLEASE DO TAKE PART!

Inside this edition of RAIL EAST...

- EWR: consultation and St Neots
- Wisbech study published
- Possible new stations in Norfolk
- Creating an accessible and much busier railway in East Anglia
- Haverhill: railway not busway
- Felixstowe freight route upgrade?
- Beware of busways
- New Community Rail Partnership
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TOPICS COVERED IN THIS ISSUE OF RAIL EAST

From the chair – [p.3](#)

Our current hot topics – plus news of a planned inter-branch Railfuture meeting

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What we learnt from contacting all regional candidates in summer 2024

East West Rail (1) – [p.6](#)

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Not just lifts – a wider look at what “access” to the railway really involves

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How seeing the link as a shuttle dramatically affects the business case

Challenging powers that be over restoring the Haverhill link - [p.16](#)

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Busway economics – [p.18](#)

Do the busway sums always add up?

A new Community Rail Partnership – [p.19](#)

Good news about a fresh link in the CRP chain in the region

How to expand freight services at Felixstowe – [p.20](#)

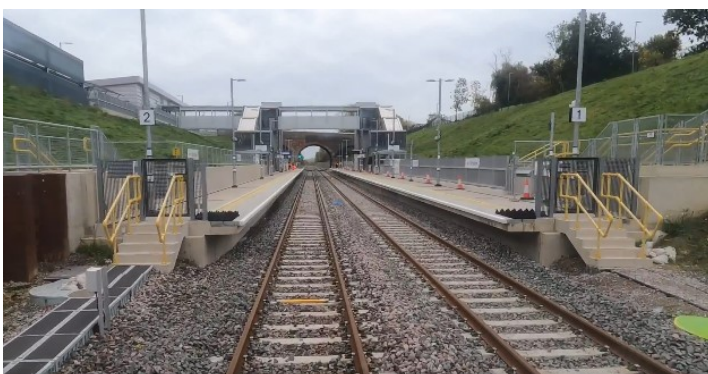
The expensive logistics cost involved in achieving extra capacity

News in brief – [p.22](#)

Rounding up local news – including a new memorial at Ely, reconfigured CrossCountry trains and access alterations at Nottingham

The Transport Focus presentation to Railfuture in Norwich on 28 September 2024 can be viewed at www.railfuture.org.uk/display3879.

East West Rail is the focus of this issue, and deservedly so, after such a long time. Chiltern Railways ran a test train from Oxford station to Milton Keynes Central station on Monday 21 October 2024, which is the first train to have traversed that route for 30 years. The Oxford-Bicester line was completely rebuilt and reopened in 2015 with a connection to the Chiltern Mainline, enabling direct services from London Marylebone station. But the complete rebuilding of the Bicester to Bletchley section, with work taking four years, is on a much bigger scale, involving some significant structures, such as the Bletchley Flyover, and construction of high-level platforms, as seen on the cover. The Bletchley to Bedford section should see some significant upgrades by 2030, with the brand new route to Cambridge opening in the mid-2030s. The photos below are from Network Rail, the left one showing Winslow station from the driver's cab.



VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

BY IAN COUZENS, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

As you no doubt know, the Budget statement has confirmed that the East West Rail - Bedford to Cambridge section will be going ahead, although no timescale has been given (we only know that the Oxford to Bedford through service should commence in 2030). The next step for the project is to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO), which is the equivalent of gaining planning consent where a major infrastructure project is involved. The first part of the DCO process is for a non-statutory public consultation to take place. You may recall this consultation should have taken place in summer 2024 but was put on hold when the General Election was called.



Now the new government has given its backing, the consultation, which started on 14 November 2024, is for a 10-week period and ends on 24 January 2025 (see dates, right).

It is very important that the consultation receives as many positive messages of support as possible, since we know there will be those speaking out against. Apart from Railfuture's official response, we will be appealing to all Railfuture members to participate in this consultation (as private individuals) and members will be emailed on how best to do this together with suggested points to make in support. Please also see the website <https://eastwestrail.co.uk>. Many thanks in advance if you can do this – the project cannot proceed further until the DCO is granted. See the Railfuture statement on page 6.

Railfuture East Anglia's other main campaign, to secure junction improvements at Ely North, didn't unfortunately get a Budget mention, despite an enormous amount of lobbying in the run up to the election.

We welcome other Budget commitments for the reinstatement of HS2 to Euston of course, and also for the TransPennine upgrade. Still, with such obvious benefits to the rail freight industry nationwide and contribution to the decarbonisation agenda, this infrastructure project surely has to find its way into the government's capital programme which is stated to exceed £100 billion over the next five years. Our attention now turns to the multi-year capital spending review to be released in spring 2025, and so we trust that Ely will feature in that!

Government backing for East West Rail is linked in with the remarkable growth in the Cambridge economy. The government will fund the recently established Cambridge Growth Company to develop plans for housing and appropriate transport infrastructure to accommodate the city's rapid growth. There will be an opportunity here for us to demonstrate how rail and light rail can play a significant role in Cambridge transport needs from multiple directions and not just the North South rail axis as at present.

Share your views

East West Rail is a new railway which would connect communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge, making it easier to reach the things that matter most.

You're invited to take part in our consultation and share your feedback on proposals for the new railway. The consultation will run from **14 November 2024 to 24 January 2025**.

There are several ways you can get involved:

- Attend our in-person or online events
- Visit our virtual consultation room
- View our proposals online and at information points
- Fill in our feedback form



To find out more about our proposals and to share your feedback, scan the QR code or visit: eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024

It's important everyone can take part in this consultation. If you have any queries or additional requirements, please get in touch at:

✉ contact@eastwestrail.co.uk 🌐 eastwestrail.co.uk
📮 Freepost EAST WEST RAIL ☎ 0330 134 0067

🌐 🔍 Search East West Rail

In-person events will take place from 2-7pm on weekdays and 12-5pm on weekends at the locations below:

- Oxford: 19 Nov 2024**
Oxford Town Hall
- Bicester: 21 Nov 2024**
John Paul II Centre
- Great Shelford: 22 Nov 2024**
Shelford Rugby Club
- Steeple Claydon: 26 Nov 2024**
Village Hall
- Bedford: 30 Nov 2024**
The Grand Hall
- Cambourne: 03 Dec 2024**
Cambridge Belfry
- Lidlington: 06 Dec 2024**
Lidlington Village Hall
- Bedford: 09 Dec 2024**
Bedford Swan Hotel
- Wilden: 11 Dec 2024**
Wilden Village Hall
- Tempsford: 13 Dec 2024**
Stuart Memorial Hall
- St Neots: 07 Jan 2025**
St Neots Town Football Club
- Comberton: 10 Jan 2025**
Comberton Village Hall
- Bletchley: 15 Jan 2025**
Bletchley Masonic Centre
- Woburn Sands: 17 Jan 2025**
The Summerlin Centre
- Cambridge: 18 Jan 2025**
The Clayton Hotel
- Cherry Hinton: 21 Jan 2025**
St Andrews Church

This is a task that the existing Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) seems not up to with its proposed busway scheme cutting into the Gog Magog hills to the southeast of the city. The busway which would terminate as a giant park and ride site on the A11 is essentially a scheme for car users. Yet it would compromise prospects for a future Haverhill railway with far greater potential, as the report prepared for Railfuture by JRC's expert demonstrates. The GCP is pressing ahead with a Transport and Works Order application for the busway, but with the scheme being heavily criticised from various quarters we can expect a public inquiry to take place next year in which we will press our case. The GCP chair in a recent attempt to disparage a rail link alternative has made several incorrect assertions which we have responded to. There is a separate article giving full details in this issue (page 16) and a brief look at the disguised costs associated with a busway (page 18).

Lastly, I would like to invite you to our attend our East Anglia branch public meetings (see the back page for future dates, with apologies for the change of venue) and inform you of a joint-branch event at Peterborough Museum from noon on Thursday 24 April 2025, when we hope to have several speakers – please make a note in your diary. We will offer a light lunch (donations to help towards costs are always welcome) but numbers will be limited to 60, so in the February 2025 issue of RAIL EAST we'll be informing you how to sign up.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA MEETING — SAT 7 DECEMBER

**Marlowe Room at the Clayton Hotel, 27-29 Station Road
CAMBRIDGE CB1 2FB from 14.00 to 16.30.
Refreshments provided. Free to attend.**

**NEW
VENUE!**

We hope you will be able to attend our free-to-attend Cambridge meeting, starting at 14.00. Our guest speaker will be Phil Hutchison (pictured right), who is the Head of Strategic Planning at Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). This includes designing the new train timetables.



You may be aware that the rail industry has been trying to introduce a new timetable for the East Coast Mainline (ECML) for several years but without success. There are too many competing demands for new and improved services that have to work around bottlenecks such as the two-track section at Welwyn and long single-track section between Littleport and Downham Market. Phil will be able to explain the challenges and update us with progress and answer questions from the audience.



Construction of Cambridge South station is progressing rapidly, but there is a risk that it may lie dormant for several months until a new timetable can be introduced. Railfuture hopes not. That would be embarrassing!

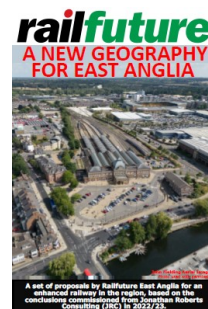
Our meeting after that, on 22 February 2025 in Bury St Edmunds, will have Mark Walker as our guest speaker. He runs Cogitamus Ltd, which specialises in public affairs and produces the regular Calling All Stations podcast featuring Railfuture Honorary President Christian Wolmar.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH GENERAL ELECTION CANDIDATES

BY IAN COUZENS

In the run up to the 2024 General Election we sent out two emails to each of the candidates standing in all constituencies within the area covered by the Railfuture East Anglia branch.

The first email was to encourage messages of support for our key campaigns of completing East West Rail from Bedford to Cambridge, and to get government go ahead for Ely North junction improvements.



The second email attached a copy of our *New Geography for East Anglia* report (above) with our vision for the East Anglian rail network up to 2050. Within the email itself we highlighted the key improvements from our report which would directly impact each candidate's own constituency and the surrounding area.

We know that election candidates would have been bombarded from many different lobbyists and causes, so it was pleasing to receive several positive responses and sometimes questions raised to our emails. Excluding courtesy replies, we received some 26 responses that positively supported our objectives wholly or in part. There was particularly strong support for East West Rail and Ely junction improvements, and it was clear that most respondents were already well aware of both these objectives. Although responses were received from candidates representing all parties, there was a relatively higher proportion from the smaller parties and independents.

There were a few qualified responses and suggestions that are highlighted below.

- A candidate for a Cambridgeshire constituency was keen that the existing station at Waterbeach should be retained. This is line with our current thinking, so that when the new station is built, the old one should be retained – even if temporarily mothballed.
- Another candidate was concerned that rail development in the Cambridge area should not result in massive overdevelopment. Although this could be a major challenge in the future, all our rail proposals stand scrutiny on existing expansion plans for new housing.
- A Peterborough candidate was keen to see a Wisbech to Peterborough service as well as Wisbech to Cambridge. Additionally, crossing our branch boundary, a Peterborough to Kettering/Corby service. In fact, that idea was put forward a few years back by the Welland Valley Rail Partnership – covered on pages 11/12 of RAIL EAST issue 188, December 2020 – where a short link at Luffenham (see red line on map) would make this proposal possible. A Norfolk candidate was keen to see the route from Norwich to King's Lynn reinstated. In the work on *New Geography for East Anglia*, Jonathan Roberts Consulting (which carried out the study for Railfuture) discounted this as a realistic possibility, but did consider that in time, developing a direct service via Ely, with speed improvements and ultimately an Ely chord, could compete with the A47 and that there would be demand for such a service.



Our press release led to the New Civil Engineer's story "Proposal to reinstate rail link to West Suffolk town backed by election candidates" about Haverhill.

Overall, this was a valuable exercise to undertake. Apart from the positive responses received, Railfuture has made an effective contact with all the newly elected MPs within our branch area as well as many more non-elected candidates across the political spectrum and representing a wide range of interests.

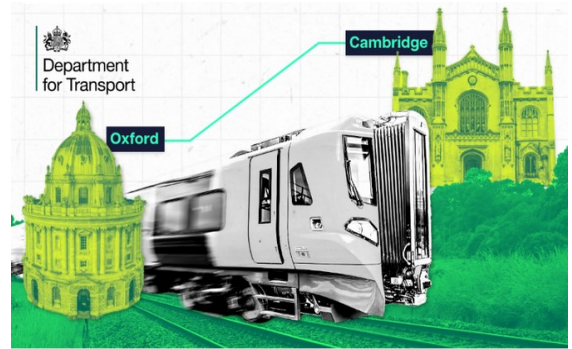
EAST WEST RAILWAY: BEDFORD - CAMBRIDGE "JUST GET ON WITH IT" SAYS RAILFUTURE

COVER STORY

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The East West Railway Company published the second non-statutory consultation concerning the proposed new railway between Bedford and Cambridge on 14 November 2024. You can see it at <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024>.

Below is a statement of support from Railfuture, together with our suggestions for making the new railway as useful as possible over the next 200 years! See the end of the article for information concerning the consultation process - please do reply to it offering your support. We have also sent all those members with an email address a link to it asking that they send support.



East West Rail

have your say



Railfuture fully supports the new section of the East West Main Line between Bedford and Cambridge, that will be routed through a redeveloped Bedford station to access Cambridge via Cambourne and the new Cambridge South station currently under construction. Various options have been considered in developing the proposals, and Railfuture's view on these options is as follows:

Milton Keynes / Bletchley area

We support redevelopment of the railway in the Milton Keynes area to enable the full potential of the new line to be realised. To this end the proposals must include an east-to-north curve at Bletchley to enable through passenger and freight services from Cambridge to Milton Keynes Central, Northampton and beyond. To ensure capacity for all current and future services, we support the widening of the rail corridor between Bletchley and Milton Keynes Central to six tracks. A new eastern entrance should be provided at Bletchley station to improve access to the new high-level EWR platforms and allow for the single-platform Fenny Stratford station, an 18-minute walk from Bletchley, to be closed (see following section).

Bletchley-Bedford (Marston Vale Line)

This section is crucial for the optimal development of services on EWR, and so in order to avoid increasing journey times or service frequency, the ten intermediate stations between Bletchley and Bedford should be reduced to a smaller number of more substantial 'travel hub' stations, with integrated active travel and bus links to nearby communities. These stations would benefit from the increased frequency of trains, providing an improved service for communities along this section of line while not restricting overall capacity across EWR as a whole.

Kempston Hardwick station is advantageously sited for the planned Universal theme park development to the south-west of Bedford, and this must be taken into account when deciding how to proceed with the existing station.

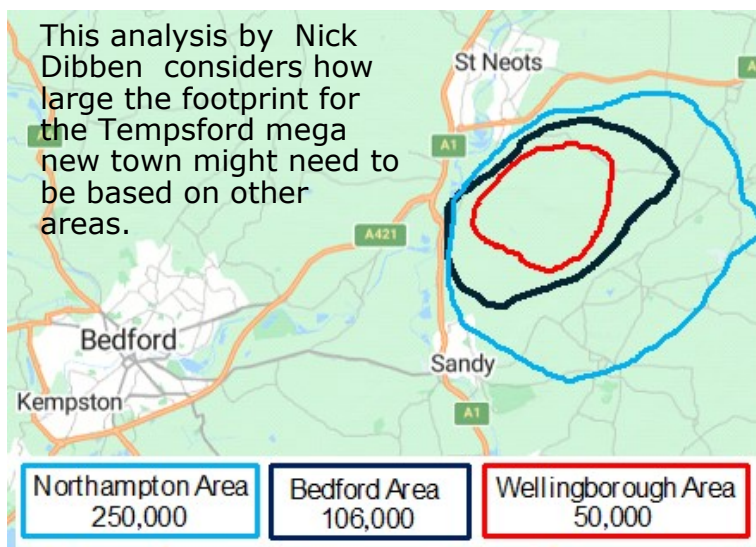
Bedford station

Railfuture supports the East West Railway Company's detailed analysis of the new route and the conclusions it comes to, including the difficult routing decisions around Bedford station. Current and future Midland Main Line traffic, as well as Thameslink services to/from London, must not be jeopardised by the proposed regular service on EWR; we therefore support redevelopment of Bedford station to provide full separation of services on the new line, including the addition of new through platforms on the eastern side, and an extra two tracks north of the station. There should also be a link between EWR and the slow lines of the MML at the north end of the station to allow freight services from the East of England to reach terminals closer to London, and to enable passenger services from St Albans, Luton Airport Parkway and Luton to continue on to Cambridge.

We also consider it essential that an additional platform be built on the Up Fast line to enable intercity services between London and the East Midlands to call at Bedford without the journey time penalties that currently prevent this, further increasing the connectivity benefits of East West Rail.

Tempsford / St Neots area

As Tempsford station is intended to support a major new development in future (upwards of 30,000 homes), we believe that the low-level ECML station should be future-proofed to allow for platforms to be added on the fast lines at a later date, enabling connectivity not just with Thameslink services but possibly also some long-distance trains to/from Yorkshire, the North East and Scotland. This would provide a much faster link to these destinations from Bedford and Cambridge, as well as increasing resilience on the East Coast Main Line when there are engineering works.



Planning should commence to provide a new station on the eastern edge of St Neots, where significant housing development is ongoing alongside the projected EWR route; the town has a population of 38,000 and such a station would provide the area with improved transport links to Bedford and Cambridge, including to the Biomedical Campus via Cambridge South.

Cambridge area

We fully support the decision to route the new line to the south of Cambridge, joining the Cambridge-Hitchin line into the city via a junction near Hauxton. The southern approach will help the full connectivity of EWR to be realised through direct continuation of services to Norwich and Ipswich without necessitating a reversal, as well as providing direct access to the Biomedical Campus via Cambridge South. With the introduction of EWR services along the new line, the corridor between Shepreth Branch Junction (south of Cambridge) and Coldhams Lane Junction (north of Cambridge) will become increasingly busy; this section of the railway should be widened to four tracks to provide adequate capacity.

Significant population and employment growth is planned all along Cambridge's railway corridors. Terminating trains at Cambridge station represents an inefficient use of limited platform space. It is therefore recommended that more trains be timetabled to continue through Cambridge 'across the city' to terminate at new stations at Waterbeach New Town and Cambridge East (on the Cambridge to Newmarket line). These should be designed as 'turnback' stations to allow frequent service levels; Cambridge North should also be remodelled as the current track layout limits its use for terminating trains. The single-track line towards Newmarket must be redoubled to allow trains travelling on EWR to continue towards Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich and Felixstowe.

Traction and Conclusion

The East West Main Line is essential **now**, as well as in the long-term, for supporting the environmentally necessary modal shift from road to rail for both passenger and freight traffic. 'Discontinuous electrification' is not suitable for freight traffic and would lead to the continued use of diesel locomotives under electrified lines, while passenger rolling stock would be limited to diesel-electric or battery-electric bi-mode units, of which widespread adoption has not yet happened in Britain. The line should be electrified along its full length to enable electric traction to operate from day one, including the section south of Oxford to Didcot, on the Great Western Main Line.

We recognise that although major infrastructure projects are process-driven and can take several years to reach the construction phase, in the meantime the 'Oxford-Cambridge arc' is continuing to grow; its roads are bursting at the seams, so the "just get on with it" mantra requires urgent funding commitments and rapid action on the ground. Timely delivery of the scheme should be seen as a test of the government's commitment to reforming the planning process, and to supporting economic growth. We look forward to engaging with the upcoming consultations on EWR and the Development Consent Order to follow.

Now that the EWR Consultative Document has been published, Railfuture is strongly urging members to use the consultation process to register their individual support for this transformative project. Members are being emailed with guidance about key points to convey in any submissions they decide to make. Note that the consultation deadline is 24 January 2025. And of course, Railfuture will be submitting its own detailed response prior to the deadline. More about this in issue 205, published in February 2025. Respond at: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024>.

EAST WEST RAIL – CONSENSUS GROWS TO SERVE ST NEOTS

BY TOM WATTS

In RAIL EAST issue 202 I wrote that East West Rail should be better connected to the town of St Neots, and the potential for an additional station on the eastern side of the town giving direct access to EWR for approximately 38,000 people.

As a brief recap, the current proposals would see the new line parallel the A428 that forms the eastern boundary of the town, skirting the edge but with no direct connection – thus forcing passengers to/from St Neots to travel via Tempsford and reducing the potential benefits of the line as a whole. I would like to follow up on some promising developments that have occurred in the past few months.

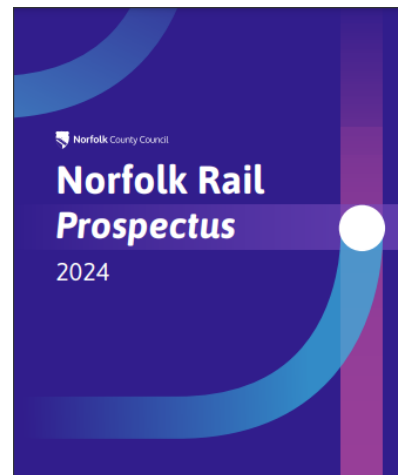
Firstly, I have been in contact with the EWR company to raise these points, and while the company's response cited the extra cost of an additional station and the possible increase in journey times (and by extension perceived reduction in service quality) resulting from an additional stop, they acknowledged that "the EWR design does not preclude someone from constructing a station in this location should there be sufficient demand and benefit in the future." The distance between Tempsford and St Neots EWR stations would be greater than that between other pairs of stations that EWR services will call at (such as Cambridge Central and South), and any increase in journey times – at most a few minutes – would surely be an acceptable trade-off in exchange for adding 38,000 people (plus future residents of the 4,000-house development at Wintringham) to EWR's direct catchment. While there is no doubt that a town of this size would provide sufficient demand and benefit immediately, particularly given the large population compared to populations served by stations at Winslow and Cambourne, the confirmation that there are no *physical* obstacles to a station in the area is certainly a major boost to its prospects.

Furthermore, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority has also signalled its support for a better connection with EWR for the town; at a public meeting on 22 July 2024, the Transport & Infrastructure Committee stated that "the current plans for these access routes" – as yet unspecified active travel links to the Tempsford station – "have been deemed inadequate by the Combined Authority, necessitating urgent attention and rectification as the scheme continues to evolve." Since then, the Committee has also had its first official discussion on EWR post-election and described a number of "critical areas of concern" on which it is seeking feedback: among these, including day-one electrification, is "Linking to St Neots and exploring the potential for a new station".

When I first started writing to town councillors about a new station, the responses were positive but suggested it was too late to raise; now with the backing of local authorities, I hope that the upcoming consultation will be a chance to convince the EWR company to rethink leaving the town off the line.

NORFOLK NEW STATIONS REVIEW BY IAN COUZENS

Norfolk County Council has appointed consultants to look at the prospects for potential new stations within the county. Several locations will be considered and hopefully the results of the examination will be fed into the Norfolk Rail Prospectus which sets out the county's rail priorities over the next decade or so. The existing draft of the prospectus had been criticised by Railfuture and local councillors for being far too negative towards new sites, so the decision to appoint consultants to reassess potential for new stations is very welcome.



Apart from a relook at a site to serve the Broadland Business Park (photo below), where feasibility work has previously been carried out, we are very pleased that candidates include Hethersett/Thickthorn, southwest of Norwich on the Cambridge line, and Long Stratton between Norwich and Diss on the Great Eastern main line. Railfuture has long advocated these as potential sites. This is both for reasons of new housing and also to provide more accessible stations for residents in the southwest of the Greater Norwich area compared to accessing the city's only station at Thorpe.



Image of Broadland Business Park from the air, shown on the <https://broadlandbusinesspark.co.uk/> website.

As we would have expected, the Hethersett/Thickthorn proposal will look at two potential locations. One will be at or near to the old Hethersett station site, midway between Norwich and Wymondham and very close to the A11 at that point. The other will be closer to Norwich and not far from the Thickthorn interchange between the A11 and the southern bypass.

We are also pleased that a new station site is being looked at to the south of King's Lynn, where again new housing is planned and accessibility for many local residents would be improved compared to accessing the existing station. Further sites to be considered are at North Thetford, again due to more housing, Postwick, east of Norwich on the Wherry Lines and another site in the Rackheath area on the Bittern Line. However, Railfuture believes in this instance it makes sense to develop the existing Salhouse station to cater for the new North Rackheath development which will be built adjacent to it.

This is a very high-level review and the consultancy budget will be thinly spread over a number of potential sites. Even if the review shows potential for some of the sites it doesn't imply any commitment by the County Council to progress further, apart possibly from Broadland Business Park. Nevertheless, this is a very welcome development in the county's rail policy, and we look forward to seeing the results of the study in spring 2025.

MAKING THE EAST ANGLIA RAILWAY NETWORK FULLY ACCESSIBLE AND EVEN BUSIER – PART ONE

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

In some ways the railway network is already more accessible than the road network. Everybody can use the rail network. Only car users can use the road network. And remember: to use both networks we have to pay. But is access to the railway network easily accessible for all? The short answer is, of course, no it is not.

So, how do we make it better? We begin with the recognition that the passenger railway hitherto has been designed to serve London's needs. In the recent past that is the way it survived the negative attention of those who do not understand the enabling function of public transport and particularly the vital role of the railway.

But things have changed. East Anglia is itself becoming one big commuting area — especially for the wealthier knowledge based industry workers who can afford it. London's needs are always important, but our own big cities need the railway in ways never seen before. As we've pointed out before, the growth of our cities hasn't always been kind to the existing railway. Cambridge fine but Norwich, Colchester, Peterborough, Ipswich?

Accessibility

What should the aim be to make the railway more accessible? Two examples... Norwich and Cambridge.

There are several definitions of this. Level boarding, the step across from platform to train. We have seen that this very real problem can be mitigated. Build the platform up and across to the train or get the train to close the gap as the Greater Anglia Stadler-built low-floor trains with extendable steps do so well. Making sure those with mobility issues (everybody sooner or later) can actually get to the train.



Greater Anglia publicity photo of the 'sliding step' on their Stadler trains.

But it is even more than that. In Norwich, the city has stridden away from the railway. For many journeys the main station is not accessible or convenient for much of the residential areas or businesses. To counter that, we have suggested additional stations that will make joining a train easier and more logical, at Thickthorn/Hethersett on the mainline to Cambridge and Stansted Airport and with a change, to London King's Cross. It would add a couple of minutes onto the journey for some but take many more minutes off Cambridge journey times for many more potential users. On other routes out of Norwich, an enhanced station at Salhouse (pictured, right), showing out-of-use station building and a new station at Long Stratton will do the same thing. More stops as Salhouse, new stations as at Long Stratton or Thickthorn will have to provide good facilities to allow transfer from foot, bicycle, bus and yes, the car.



Cambridge's growth has been friendlier to the railway. Nearly all the new housing and industrial development has been alongside or near the railway – most on post-industrial brownfield sites, some, luckily, around the historical station. But even here new stations have been developed to make access to the unique attributes of the railway... volume, velocity and safety... South station, North Station, East Station, Waterbeach new town. Cambridge's development will soon be enhanced

by the addition of a new railway too, East West Rail (EWR). Cambridge has its new stations. But they too will need enhanced cycle and walking routes, better bus links, car parking.

Before coming to the above four points, what else is needed? First and obviously, a good, frequent, fast train reliable service.

The Ely to Cambridge railway is an example of what can happen if you provide one. At Ely three routes become one that leads on to Cambridge, providing a frequency of a minimum of four trains an hour all day long, several more in the peaks. So, enough capacity off peak with 23 railway coaches an hour. The result is that rail carries 43% of all traffic along the Ely-Cambridge corridor each day.

All our rail routes must have a minimum of two trains per hour ... Norwich-Cambridge, Peterborough-Cambridge, King's Lynn-Cambridge, Bishops Stortford-Cambridge 3tph (2tph all stations + one semi fast). The Royston link has 4tph and that to Cambourne will have at least 4tph plus all the branch lines.

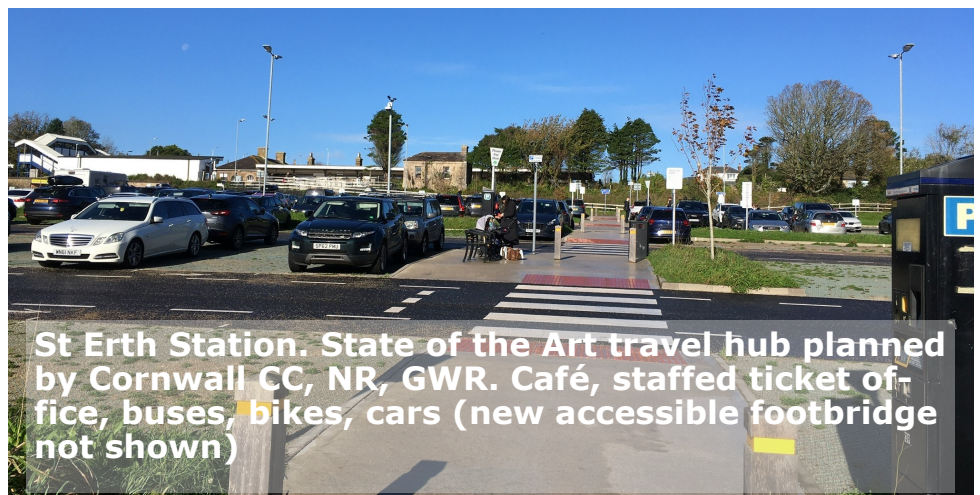
Next, we should think about the smaller places with stations where many potential customers live but find local access to the railway station inconvenient and even hard. They use their car as a result. However, surveys show many of them would use rail if services were frequent and access better.

Frequency may be relatively easy to provide – but what of **access**? Many settlements have grown without a single thought given to walking / cycle routes to the station. The map, right, shows a portion of Attleborough. Alongside the railway approach to the town from Thetford, there are many relatively recently built homes. No thought evident of how to access the station. The green line shows the distance as the crow flies. The red lines show the actual distance to walk or cycle from most homes. An inducement to active travel?



This is the responsibility of local authorities to plan (not pay for).

All new estates – including “windfall” sites that are not in the local plan – must have new active travel links to the station (and main bus stops) as a part of their planning permissions. Local authorities should also work out how to provide active travel routes from established suburbs to the station and of course, work gradually to provide them. Careful way marking from every area of the village(s)



St Erth Station. State of the Art travel hub planned by Cornwall CC, NR, GWR. Café, staffed ticket office, buses, bikes, cars (new accessible footbridge not shown)

and town to the station must be provided... and maintained. And all stations must become easy safe places to use. "Easy stations" – unstaffed to staffed?

All stations are infinitely better places nowadays than they were 30 years ago. But as usage grows, shelters including canopies, waiting rooms, information points, secure cycle storage must keep pace... no room for complacency. And car parks must keep pace too.

Station car parks

What are station car parks for? Are they provided to make access to the railway easier and thus create modal shift from road to rail – or are they there to make money for the train operating company and indirectly for the Treasury?

Currently, we suggest, it is a bit of the former, but the actual outcome is mostly for the latter.

Is that right? No. The future role of the railway must be to get as many people as possible out of their cars onto trains to reduce traffic into all our major regional towns. A formal quality safe car park must be provided to enable modal shift. Users should not be penalised for making that transfer. Currently railway parking fees are high and make the concept of using the train for the final part of the journey to work, often a relatively short journey, unthinkable for many to contemplate on a daily basis.

A token fee perhaps, plus train fare in one transaction. And to stop non rail users taking up free spaces in the car park, the fee is reduced to the token fee once a train fare is paid to produce a valid train+parking fee ticket to ride.

Of course, we want as many people as possible to walk or bike to the station – and better buses travelling along more and better routes must integrate with the trains. All stations must provide interchange with all these modes, but cars to access the railway will always be part of the mix in rural areas and must be provided for.

Currently nearly all stations have informal car parks plus some formal. Street parking near stations in places like Newmarket, Ashwell & Morden and Newport shows the latent demand. The station must become the focus of all modes. It will be a long process but planning for that must start now. Currently the situation at places, like the three above, demonstrates only lip service to modal shift and no respect for the user.

// Cheaper deal at station car parks

We have introduced a new pay by hour tariff for 31 of our station car parks, so people have a cheaper option if they're not planning to park all day.

Although some car parking charges are ridiculously expensive (perhaps more than the train fare) Greater Anglia introduced cheaper PAYG charges at some of its stations.



Part Two of this article in the next issue (205) will look in detail at how rail can be better configured to cope with future demands and challenges.

RESTORING WISBECH - MARCH RAILWAY LATEST NEWS SHUTTLE SERVICE REPORTS PUBLISHED BY NETWORK RAIL

BY PAUL HOLLINGHURST

The plans to reopen the railway from March to Wisbech have just reached another critical point, with Network Rail publishing its long-awaited *March to Wisbech Strategic Option Appraisal Report* and *Wisbech-March Connection Socio-Economic Appraisal Options Indicative Report* which together identify the costs, benefits and options for the scheme.

Recent History

Before presenting the results, a bit of recent history about previous work and findings might be helpful, as the reopening scheme has now been progressing for over ten years.

By 2020 a business plan had been produced and there was great optimism when the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Board approved the plan. The Business Case decision was based on a service of two trains per hour operating between Wisbech-March-Ely-Cambridge, producing a very good benefit cost ratio of up to 3:1 and was deemed "good value for money". It was based around the town's current population of some 35,000 people and not conditional on the additional housing planned, which nevertheless, will double its population. The railway will enable the housing plans to be progressed.

Improvements to the adjacent road network and utility costs would be around half of the project's predicted £200m cost (which excludes risk) as all level crossings would be abolished, several to be replaced by road over rail bridges. There would be a station close to Wisbech town centre, together with a 200-space car park and bus interchange, a passing loop at Coldham and a cycleway parallel to the railway between Wisbech and March.

From 2021 to 2022, Network Rail's Design Delivery team conducted a comprehensive feasibility review. This identified a number of areas where further work would be needed; it was also clear that the assumption paths would be available through Ely for a service to Cambridge was very uncertain, given the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement scheme continues to be unfunded. It was decided to evaluate the reopening initially as a shuttle between Wisbech and March to remove this dependency.

March to Wisbech Strategic Option Appraisal Report

This brings us to the *Option Appraisal Report* which was completed in April 2024 but only now made public. This report, produced by Network Rail's Engineering Services and Light Rail Knowledge teams, evaluates all available on-rail modal options, focusing on the potential introduction of a shuttle passenger service between March and Wisbech.

The four core options considered in this report are:

- *Option 1*: Provision of a heavy rail system – a conventional heavy rail solution between March and Wisbech station. A fixed connection to the mainline at March provides access to existing heavy rail depot facilities and rail maintenance vehicle access.
- *Option 2*: Provision of a Tram Train (hybrid heavy/light rail) system – a Tram Train solution between March and Wisbech station, with an option for a fixed connection to the mainline at March for access for rail maintenance vehicles.
- *Option 3*: Provision of a tram (light rail) system – a light rail solution between March and Wisbech station, with no passenger service connection to the mainline railway. There is space north of March station for the provision of a depot and other support facilities.

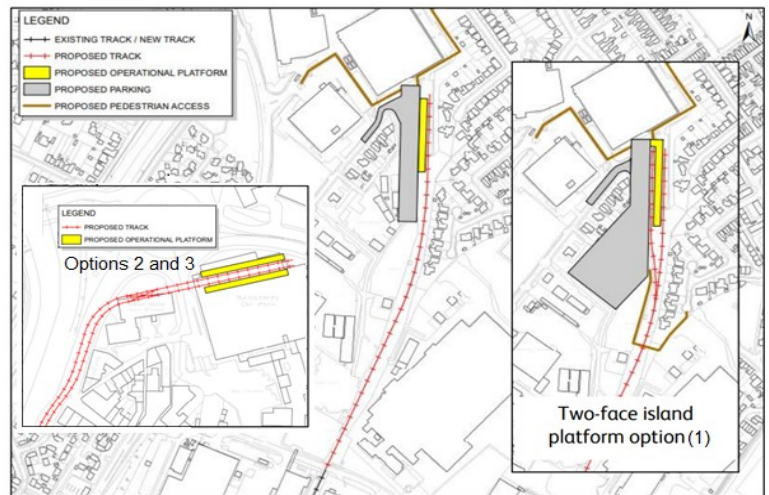


- **Option 4:** Provision of a very light rail (VLR) system – a very light rail solution between March and Wisbech station, with no passenger service connection to the mainline railway. There is space north of March station for the provision of a depot and other support facilities.

All options facilitate a rail shuttle service for passengers between March and Wisbech based on two trains per hour in each direction supported by a single track with a passing loop (double track) midway.

All options include a new terminus station at Wisbech, positioned adjacent to the end of Oldfield Lane, to the south of the Nestlé Purina site, north of Weasenham Lane, on the site of the former railway goods yard. Options 2 and 3 include a further option for light rail running to a terminus in the centre of the town at Horsefair.

The Network Rail report explores these station options in more depth – for further detail, see item 12 at <https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=125>



Now to the critical Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) estimates – which are shown in table 3.11 of the report (see link above, and summarised in chart right). This shows that the project has a very low BCR of between 0.10 and 0.27, dependant on the preferred option. This figure falls well below the threshold typically required to justify investment in transport infrastructure, where schemes with a BCR of 1.5 or higher are generally considered more viable.

Modal Option	Cost Advice Range AFC (Based on 1Q 2024)	BCR (Core Results)	Unassured cost estimates sensitivity test	BCR (using unassured costs)
Option 1 - Provision of Heavy Rail	£189-230m	0.10	£189-230m	0.10
Option 2 – Provision of Tram/Train (Hybrid Heavy Rail/Light Rail)	£147-179m	0.18	£122-148m	0.22
Option 3 – Provision of Light Rail	£149-182m	0.19	£108-132m	0.23
Option 4 – Provision of Very Light	£142-173m	0.22	£105-129m	0.27

So why has the BCR dropped so substantially from values up to 3:1 as calculated in the 2020 Business Plan? The costs are broadly similar to the £152m for tram-train and £200m for heavy rail suggested in 2020, versus £147-£179m and £189-£230m respectively today. However, the BCR has dropped from 2.5-3.0 down to 0.18 for Tram-Train and 2.0-2.5 to 0.1 for heavy rail, i.e. the shuttle service only has benefits of around 5% of the through service proposals.

March to Wisbech Transport Corridor: Core Options

Source: Mott MacDonald analysis

ID	Mode	Service	Station Location	Capital Cost Estimate (£ Q2 2019)	Benefit Cost Ratio
DS1	Tram-Train	Wisbech-Ely-Cambridge 2tph	Wisbech Town	152.5	2.5 – 3.0
DS2	National Rail	Wisbech-Ely-Cambridge 2tph	Wisbech Town	200.4	2.0 – 2.5
DS3 (LC)	Guided Busway	Wisbech-March 3bph	Wisbech Town	75.1	0.5 – 1.0

Wisbech-March

Connection Socio-Economic Appraisal Options Indicative Report

The benefits are looked at in detail in the second *Wisbech-March Connection Socio-Economic Appraisal Options Indicative Report*.

The devastating effect of not having a through service to Cambridge is best shown in table 3.6 of the report (see top of next page). This shows that the journey time saving is only from 132 minutes to 111 minutes – whereas a direct rail service from Wisbech to Cambridge could be envisioned to take 40 mins from station to station.

Table 3.6: Estimate of demand and associated benefits for Wisbech – Cambridge flow

Wisbech to Cambridge Flow per annum										
DM ⁱ GJT	DS ⁱⁱ GJT	VOT Saved	DM Demand	DS Demand	DS Demand Adjusted ⁱⁱⁱ	Change in Demand	Net Revenue ^{iv}	Existing User VoT ^v Benefit	New User VoT Benefit	Change in Pax Rail Miles ^{vi}
mins	mins	Mins	Pax p.a.	Pax p.a.	Pax p.a.	Pax p.a.	£ 000s p.a.	mins	mins	Million p.a.
132	111	21	8,000	34,000	60,000	52,000	550	160	530	1.6

Having said that, the 111 mins seems unduly pessimistic due to assumptions about the interchange time in March and also the poor frequency from Cambridge to March. The shuttle service has left the scheme to the mercy of the poor existing rail service along the corridor which Railfuture continues to campaign about – a service where the last train from Cambridge is at 21:00, and there is next to no service on Sunday mornings.

The result is only 60,000 passengers per year – or 164 a day – or assuming most of these are return journeys, just 82 return journeys a day. Overall, the report suggests flows giving 148,500 passengers per annum. In contrast to this, the 2020 report suggested 451,000 passengers travelling per year to and from Wisbech, which looks reasonable when compared to King's Lynn with its half hourly direct rail service with 757,034 entries and exits in 2022/23.

Table 3.7: Typical flows and estimated demand to/from Wisbech

Passenger flows to/from Wisbech			
Key Flows p.a.		Between 3,000 to 2,000 trips p.a. on each flow	Less than 2,000 trips p.a. on each flow
Cambridge	52,000	Huntingdon	Leeds
Peterborough	25,500	St Neots	York
London BR	23,000	Bury St Edmunds	Manchester BR
March	14,000	Bishops Stortford	Birmingham BR
Whittlesea	4,500	Grantham	Nottingham

Meeting with Fenland District Council

The findings were presented to Fenland District Council. It expressed a preference for train-tram and train options, with several councillors noting that while the BCR is an important consideration, it should not be viewed as the sole determining factor. Members suggested that the service should be extended to Ely and Cambridge, with strong opposition to a shuttle service as a viable option. There was also discussion around the potential for extending the service to King's Lynn.

It was recommended that the station be situated in the centre of Wisbech, despite the additional costs this would incur over Option 1. There was consensus that a station located at Horsefair would offer greater advantages than one within Wisbech's existing train station footprint.

The Way Ahead

Options discussed at the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority Transport and Infrastructure Committee meeting on 4 November 2024 included further investigating option 2, and possibly option 1 to look at the benefits in more detail and Consideration of Interim Measures.

This is a viable and valuable scheme which has been caught up in the impasse about capacity through Ely, ending up with the proposals to simply link a shuttle to the existing poor rail service, providing little in the way of journey savings and an appealing service. Small wonder the projected BCR is so dismal. Once the capacity issues at Ely have been sorted out, this will be a very well used service with strong benefits, transforming the prospects for Cambridgeshire's largest town without a rail service, and supporting future housing in Wisbech. It is in this context that the benefits should be evaluated, and the shuttle service should just be seen as a stepping stone to this ultimate goal.

RESTORING THE RAILWAY TO HAVERHILL – HOW THE GCP HAS GOT IT WRONG

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

As many RAIL EAST readers will know, the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), also known as the Cambridge City Deal, has continued to push through its plans for a bus-only road, called Cambridge Southeast Transport ("CSET") from the Cambridge Bio Medical Campus to a large park and ride site five miles away alongside the A11 trunk road near Granta Park Research Campus.

Haverhill, 10 miles further on, where several thousand of its 30,000 residents travel to work in Cambridge, is barely considered.

The CSET project was formulated many years ago by a previous administration when the circumstances for the development of Cambridge were quite different to current circumstances. Not only has the political hue of the county changed, that of the surrounding region has too, along with a recognition that the needs of the people of Haverhill must be met. The GCP however has decided to perpetuate the continuation of an historic social injustice which has left Haverhill poorly connected to jobs, education, healthcare and leisure in Cambridge. Truly left behind.

To counter this injustice, Railfuture East Anglia has advocated the restoration of the railway back to Haverhill as it is economically bound tightly to Cambridge – a fact recognised by the people of Haverhill, as over 5000 of them signed a petition calling for the restoration of their railway. To test if their plea was correct, we decided to spend a very considerable amount of our members' money on a consultancy to research the feasibility of the railway restoration. The Jonathan Roberts Consulting (JRC) report came back with the startling conclusion that many thousands would use the railway just in the peak hours, let alone the rest of the day. We sent the report to the GCP and all the Councillors concerned in Cambridgeshire as well as in Suffolk.

We asked for meetings with relevant officials and Councillors **but did not receive a single acknowledgment or reply from a Councillor, at the County or specifically at the GCP, nor with an official.**

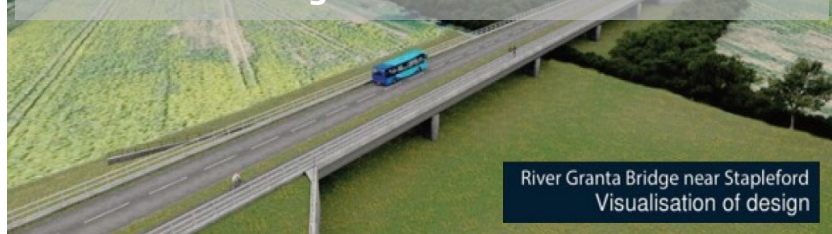
The leading politicians involved with the promotion have clearly been wrongly informed about the railway restoration, as they have come up with statements in the public domain containing several assertions that are simply wrong.

One such is that where the old rail line used to be, it had been built on and it would be complicated (and of course expensive) to come up with a completely new alignment. This is just not true. There are very few places where it has been built on – and in all cases it is not difficult to create short new alignments to avoid them. The CSET bus road is going to use part of the railway alignment in any case.

A second assertion is that since the rail line closed, the A11 and the A505 have been built, and any new rail line would need an "enormous number of structures to overcome all these roads. This would be a very complicated thing to do, incredibly expensive to build, massive landscape and ecological impact, so these things are complicated."

Yes, but the CSET busway itself has a number of large structures (see image, right) costed into it, so this clearly isn't seen as a problem there. The costs are larger going on to Haverhill as it is further, but the better outcomes are huge. We are talking about 200 years into the future. Not short term.

The substantial River Granta viaduct would be required if the railway route was restored to a railway. The costs of this will not be much more than the bridges needed to cross the A11 at Granta Park. Image GCP.

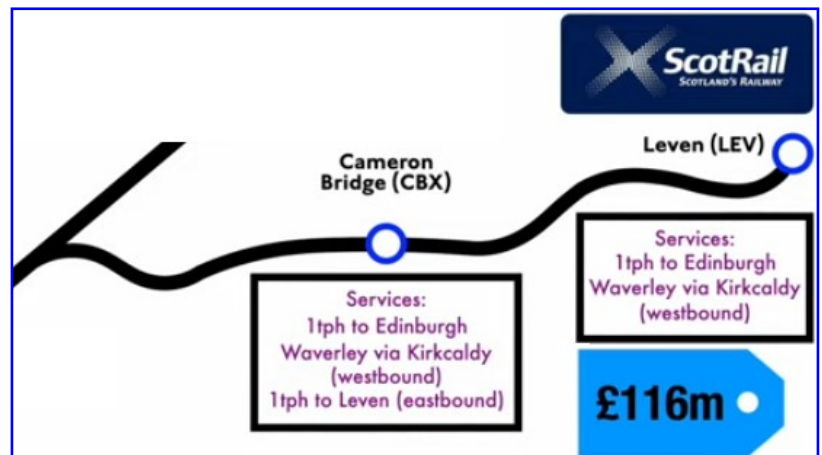


River Granta Bridge near Stapleford
Visualisation of design

The third assertion (a quote attributed to Cllr Meschini in the local media) is that "the GCP did review reports about going into Haverhill during the early stages of CSET; there have been other reports produced by rail lobbying companies since. The status has not changed, the rail link would cost in the region of £800 million to reopen, it is not possible to do that, there is nothing to kill, it was never alive I'm afraid. There have been several reviews into new rail schemes by governments of various colours, Haverhill has never made the cut, it is not viable".

Again, this is simply not true – the reopening was classified as "a good case for future development" by the Department for Transport's Restoring Your Railway team. The GCP chose to completely ignore this opportunity. The cost of £800m is plucked out of thin air. We go by precedent of previous railway projects, a much better way of estimating the potential costs of Cambridge - Haverhill Railway Restoration, based on two recent rail projects.

First, work to restore the six-mile-long railway from Thornton to Levenmouth in Fife, got underway in March 2022 and included repairs to existing bridges, rebuilding one completely, construction of two new stations at Cameron Bridge and Leven as well as laying six miles of new track. Cost for the double track heavy rail line is £116m or £19.3m per mile. Trains are now operating (frequency doubles in 2025). Bases for overhead stanchions were constructed whilst it was being built (something that could have been done on East West Rail) and the line will soon be electrified.



A second well-known example is The Borders Railway in Scotland, which was in a comparable state to the Haverhill route, has seven stations, and cost £353m for 35 miles. So £10m a mile in 2012 prices or £14m per mile at today's prices (using CPI) for a single-track restoration including land purchase and restoration of the trackbed. This included engineering works far larger than anything on the Haverhill line.

For Haverhill an overall cost of £400m would allow £28m per mile for 14.5 miles, which should be achievable given the examples above, even allowing for £2m a mile for land purchase using the figure being used for the busway. Here is the crux of the matter. The short GCP CSET bus road from the Cambridge Bio-Medical Campus to a large car park by the A11 is 5.5 miles long and is estimated by the GCP to cost £162m. This is mainly of use to those with cars. The railway will be available to all. That is social justice.

However, the costs should not be seen in the context of the size of the GCP's budget, as funding would come from other sources, and its value to the local economy is something where the railway will make a much more significant impact than the bus road.

The fourth assertion stated that it is "a spur, so it will get you to Haverhill and back ... not attractive to the rail industry unless you can carry on into Suffolk or Essex, which is not currently envisaged. What you can do is have a corridor, that we have identified and we have got in front of us today, which is flexible. If you wanted to carry on CSET onto Haverhill later, you had the funding and you wanted to convert it into a tram or a train, you could do that".

We do not know where the GCP gets the comment about it not being attractive to the rail industry – to an extent that is irrelevant – what matters is whether the scheme is attractive to the local authorities and they can work with the rail industry to accommodate it. (Greater Anglia has stated it would certainly work the restored railway.) It would not be “a spur”, it being 18 miles from Haverhill to Cambridge Central station, its services could operate right across the Cambridge City region, to Cambridge North and Waterbeach New Town for just one example. No other form of transportation would get people to their jobs across our growing conurbation so quickly and reliably.

So, the railway option was not looked at. As the study that we funded shows, the railway would have far better outcomes than the CSET bus road. Railfuture East Anglia is disappointed at the lack of proper diligence in looking at all options, especially in view of the national plans to super develop the Cambridge region with thousands of new homes and jobs. A railway will have the capacity needed as the region develops over the next 30 years and more.

The CSET simply will not be able to do the job. Even its promoter acknowledges that it will be running at capacity from “day one”! Its £160m plus should be spent on providing a railway directly into the heart of Haverhill and Cambridge. We will of course make the case for Haverhill very strongly at the forthcoming Transport and Works Act public inquiry.

BUSWAYS AND CAMBRIDGESHIRE **BY PETER WAKEFIELD**

Cambridgeshire local authorities have form in getting things wrong when it comes to promoting busways.

The original busways, built on former railway lines between St Ives and Chesterton Junction in north Cambridge and south of Cambridge station to Trumpington, were predicted to cost £116m. “Much cheaper than a railway restoration” was the received wisdom at the time. In the event costs rose to £152.5m to build, with almost immediate repairs additionally of £43m. Yet another closure of the busway track took place from 28 October to 18 November 2024 in north Cambridge for various repairs, including damage caused by tree-root damage. A supposed benefit of the busway over rail was that it would be ultra reliable and maintenance free, not requiring any renewals for at least 30 years. Clearly untrue.

Of course, we argued that a railway restored from St Ives to Chesterton Junction (now Cambridge North) would enable trains to continue south across Cambridge on existing railways. The buses from the dedicated busway had to push their way into Cambridge centre on the crowded Histon and Milton roads.

Recently the GCP has just completed two major upgrades of those two roads from near the city centre to improve bus journeys to the busway. Beautifully done but costing over £10m for Histon Road and over £32m for Milton Road. Not just bus lanes but vital cycle ways too. (The equally vital cycle way along Hills Road cost just £1.2m). Many would say the total cost of the St Ives busways to date is not the first prediction of £116m but £152+43+32+10m – or roundly £237m.

So, beware of the “cheaper” busway option.

Super-sized Cambridge? The busway capacity was probably just right for “ordinary Cambridge”. Certainly not for the Cambridge of the future.



A NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR THE EAST

BY PETER FEENEY

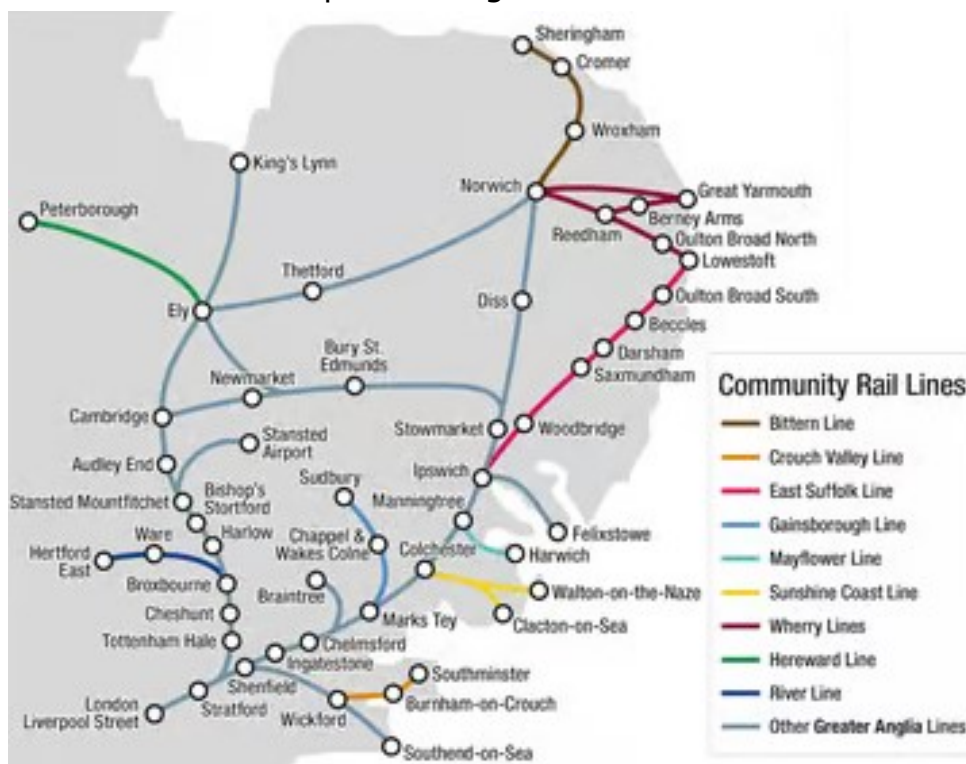
Greater Anglia (GA) announced the formation of its sixth Community Rail Partnership (CRP) in a press release on 17 October 2024. Joining the five existing CRPs in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk, the 55-mile Mid Anglia route connects Cambridge and Ipswich via Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket. Soham on the Ipswich - Ely - Peterborough route is also likely to be included within the partnership. The funding partners GA has now got on board to support the initiative reflect that geography – from the Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council in the west to four local authorities in Suffolk, West Suffolk, Mid Suffolk, Ipswich Borough and Suffolk County Council. This is probably the largest collection of contributing bodies in any of the East Anglian CRPs, and reflects the enthusiasm of authorities along the route to support modal shift from road to rail and create extra social capital in communities along the line.

Based on the excellent track record of the established CRPs operating in our region, we would expect projects aimed at promoting rail use in the many communities along the line to result in much greater awareness of the practical benefits of rail travel and so increased passenger volumes.

The press release from GA indicated that SCC had agreed to host the CRP officer from its Endeavour House base in Ipswich, an arrangement that is already working effectively with the East Suffolk CRP. The Mid Anglia route has seen strong recovery since the COVID trough, with high passenger volumes indicating continuing growth in travel for work, study and leisure.

MARPA, the rail user group for the Mid Anglia route, has long been an advocate for the establishment of a CRP. Its chair, Ross Taylor, commented that "It is with great excitement, and a little relief, that MARPA welcomes the recent news of the announcement of the Community Rail Partnership for the Ipswich to Cambridge railway line. MARPA has for many years campaigned for this outcome to bring relevant local authorities and interested parties together for the benefit of the route. This is an already busy railway with passenger numbers increasing each year, and MARPA looks forward to working formally with others to enhance the experience of all users".

Of course, the new CRP has not got off the ground yet, but it is disappointing that GA has not updated the map on its website (right) to at least indicate that it is in the process of being formed.



See: <https://www.greateranglia.co.uk/about-us/community-rail-partnerships>.

FELIXSTOWE FREIGHT – OBSTACLES TO INCREASING CAPACITY BY DEREK MONNERY & PHIL SMART

Many of us have been campaigning for years to reverse the 1980s “rationalisations” (or more accurately capacity reductions) that took place at the time that our lines were re-signalled and, in some cases, electrified. Since that time the number of freight trains coming out of Felixstowe has increased massively, with most of them bound for depots in the Midlands and north of England.

From Felixstowe, the cross-country route, via Haughley Junction, north of Ipswich, through Bury St Edmunds and Ely to Peterborough, is the obvious route for these trains to go. However, operational difficulties on this route, including single-lead junctions, a long single-track section between Soham and Ely and various speed restrictions, mean that there is currently no capacity for more trains. Indeed, it has proved impossible to increase the frequency of the Ipswich to Peterborough passenger train service from two-hourly to hourly because of this congestion, even though an extra train has already been supplied to operate an hourly schedule. This whole route needs a comprehensive upgrade if it is to allow extra trains to relieve the parallel A14 trunk route of the procession of HGVs that run along the road.

Starting at the Peterborough end, the double track route to Ely contains the last bastions of Victorian semaphore signalling in East Anglia as well as several level crossings. This section needs an upgrade as current operations are labour intensive. At Ely North Junction, although the through route to Ely is double track, the branches to King’s Lynn and Norwich leave the main line through one totally inadequate single-lead junction (shown in red in the Network Rail diagram, right) before expanding to two pairs of tracks going north.



The Ely area has several level crossings and weak bridges with a 20mph speed limit for safety reasons. From Ely station, the route southeast towards Bury St Edmunds is only single track for the 4.7 miles to Soham station. Moreover, much of the formation was built only for a single track. Fortunately Hawk Bridge (pictured, right) over the Great Ouse, a mile east of Ely Dock Junction, was built for future double track and was rebuilt for it in 2007 following the derailment of a freight train that destroyed the old bridge.



From Soham, the route is double track. Near Newmarket, the single-track branch from Cambridge comes in, and this too has a single-lead junction. The Bury St Edmunds station area has a 30mph speed limit due to the track layout. At Haughley Junction, the route joins the main line from Norwich at another single lead junction. All these single-lead junctions can cause congestion, as trains may need to wait for another train passing in the opposite direction.

Following infrastructure improvement work completed 10 years ago, a new double track direct route towards Felixstowe is available via the Bacon Factory curve (named after the Harris meat factory that stood on this site). The story of the Bacon Factory Chord enhancement is told by Phil Smart in RAIL EAST issue 202 (June 2024).

Turning to the Felixstowe branch itself, this leaves the double track main line to Lowestoft at Westerfield station. This too is a single lead junction, requiring trains to Felixstowe to use a facing crossover before the station and to proceed wrong line through the up platform. Plans were put forward to restore a double crossover at this junction, but these have been shelved.

The Felixstowe branch is largely single track, though the formation is wide enough in most places for double track. There are two passing loops, one at Derby Road station, and a recently built long loop in the Trimley area. This layout is adequate for today's traffic, but when constrictions at Ely, Soham and Haughley are removed, congestion on the branch could be a problem at times of perturbation. It should be noted that the Port of Felixstowe is very keen to transfer more freight to rail to improve its environmental credentials.

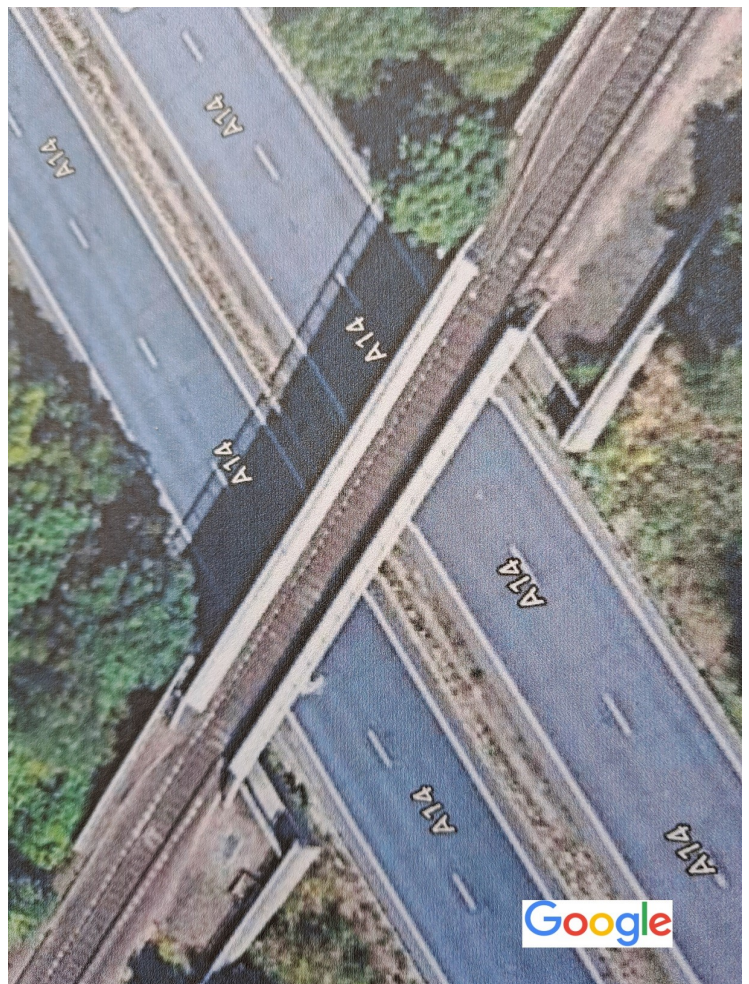
How could the infrastructure of the Felixstowe branch be improved to make room for extra traffic? As stated above, a long passing loop was added in the mid-2010s between the village of Trimley St Martin and Trimley station. Originally this contract was part of a plan to double track the branch from Derby Road station to Trimley station, but this scheme was cut back as medium-term projected traffic levels did not justify the expenditure for the full scheme.

Between Westerfield and Derby Road stations the single line skirts the east side of Ipswich and includes a high viaduct over Spring Road which only has room for a single track. Apart from the Westerfield end, there is little scope to double track this section.

From the Derby Road station loop, the line runs eastwards over two recently built bridges, both of which have abutments wide enough for double track but with only single-track bridge spans provided (see photo below). Both would need to be replaced by double track spans. The second of these crosses the A14 trunk road, which may be a major engineering headache, because both the railway and the road are extremely busy.

In fact, the only time this work could be completed is over the Christmas to New Year period when traffic is light. Resources to complete this work would need to be meticulously planned and booked several years in advance, so it may be better for these works to be let as a separate contract. For this reason, current thinking is that double track could be installed from the site of Orwell station (to the east of the A14) towards Trimley, either as another passing loop or all the way to Trimley. This would provide the required extra capacity in the interim, without incurring the costs of the major infrastructure works described above.

If a future government wants to transfer a lot more freight to rail, then it will need to invest substantially to double track the full length of line east of Derby Road, including the replacement A14 bridge.



NEWS IN BRIEF

East Midlands Trains – changes at Nottingham station

East Midlands Trains (EMR) operates a frequent train service through our region from Norwich to Nottingham, Chesterfield, Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool. Connections from all over East Anglia are made at Ely. Many of us travel frequently to Nottingham on this service.

EMR made us aware that changes at Nottingham station would be made just days before they were implemented on Monday 4 November, albeit for a trial period of three weeks, until 17 November; to evaluate their impact, which will negatively affect some passengers making an interchange at the station, requiring a longer walk.

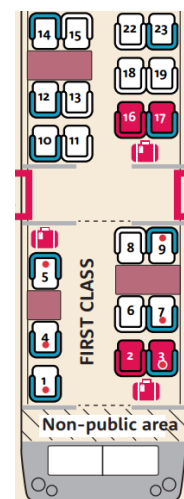


For the trial, the public footbridge crossing over the platforms halfway along their length had access to the platforms sealed off, with all access to the platforms being through the gate line situated in the main concourse at the western end of the station. The concourse is, of course, where the ticket office, shops and cafes are situated. The closure, which might not be made permanent if it is found to cause problems or many complaints are received, is linked to efforts to counter fare evasion at the station. This matter is also covered in the October 2024 issue of Six Shires Rail (see <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display3856> page 4) for the Railfuture Lincolnshire and East Midlands branches.

CrossCountry makes more space by abolishing first class area

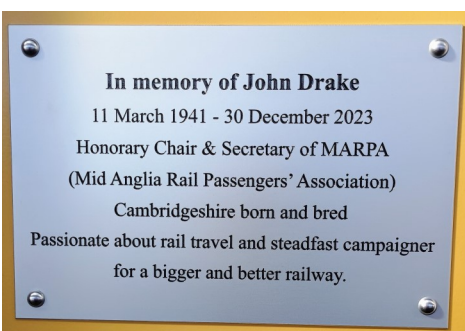
CrossCountry Trains is to remove first class on its Stansted Airport – Leicester – Birmingham, and Nottingham – Birmingham – Cardiff routes from the introduction of the new timetable on 15 December 2024. Hopefully this will help to reduce overcrowding on these frequently very busy services.

The current various sub-classes of Class 170 (Turbostar) units will be refurbished with a standard interior. The abolition of first class provides 11 extra standard class seats per three-car unit. The graphic (right) shows the current train layout, with 2+1 seating in the first class area.



Remembering John Drake

This issue of RAIL EAST is published nearly a year since John Drake, former chair and secretary of MARPA, died at the age of 82. To commemorate him and mark the contribution he made to the work of MARPA, the committee worked with Greater Anglia to provide a memorial plaque at Ely station. Ely seemed the natural choice - a station where, over the years, John would have spent countless hours changing trains as he made his many rail journeys around the region.



A brief ceremony was held at the station on Friday 11 October, a sunny and fresh autumn day, where members of his family, MARPA colleagues and Alan Neville representing Greater Anglia gathered to remember John and witness the unveiling of the plaque - located on platform 1 at Ely, a few metres to the right as you enter the station.

NEWS IN BRIEF CONTINUED

GREATER ANGLIA GETS A NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR — BUT FOR HOW LONG?

Railfuture East Anglia was sorry to see Jamie Burles leave Greater Anglia after more than a decade as Managing Director — we wish him well at Network Rail — and welcome his successor, Martin Beable (right). It is unclear how soon the company will be brought under public ownership and how long his role will continue, but the majority of management will remain. Greater Anglia has been one of the best performing operators (it won Operator of the Year again at the National Rail Awards in 2024) and we hope that the government will stand back and give the railway operators freedom to act in the interest of passengers, whilst providing the necessary funding for some vital upgrades in our region, not least Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) and Haughley Junction (see pages 20-21).



As well as promoting strategic enhancements to the rail network, Railfuture and rail user groups will be pushing for continual improvements to the service that passengers receive, improvements to accessibility and the facilities at stations. Change brings uncertainty, but whoever runs the railway in the future, it must not be allowed to fall into a derelict state, as shown by Brandon station building.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RAIL EAST

We welcome contributions from Railfuture members, people whom we have sent a copy or readers who just discover it on the website. Please send articles for possible inclusion in RAIL EAST to Peter Feeney, who collates all submissions and prepares them for the newsletter. Good quality photos are appreciated, and really are essential in order to make RAIL EAST visually attractive.

All submissions by **20 January 2025**, please, but articles covering late news will be considered just before sending to the printer two weeks later.

RAIL EAST is formatted by Jerry Alderson.

RECEIVING RAIL EAST BY POST OR ELECTRONICALLY?

Thank you to Railfuture members who have agreed to receive RAIL EAST by email. This helps to keep Railfuture's costs down and so spend funds on rail campaigning.

You can be emailed a copy of RAIL EAST on the same day that it goes to the printer, so you will receive it more than a week before other people. To switch to receiving it by email, please contact Lloyd Butler, who manages our database, at renewals@railfuture.org.uk. Your co-operation will be appreciated.

The latest RAIL EAST is always at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/rail-east/>.

JOIN RAILFUTURE — FOR A BIGGER, BETTER RAILWAY

Railfuture is funded entirely by the public, who use the railway. This means that it can stand up for their interests; hopefully RAIL EAST proves this, with its justifiable criticism (plus much-deserved praise — Railfuture *promotes* rail travel, after all).

Railfuture works *constructively* with the rail industry, government (national and local), businesses and stakeholders to improve and expand the railway.

Annual membership fee is **£20** (£22 for joint membership); under 26 years can join for just £14. Join online at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/> using a credit/debit card or PayPal.

railfuture East Anglia

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**NEW
VENUE**

MEETING DATES AND VENUES

SATURDAY 7 DEC 2024

Marlowe Room, Clayton
Hotel, 27-29 Station Road

CAMBRIDGE

CB1 2FB

SATURDAY 22 FEB 2025

Friends Meeting House
St John's Street

BURY ST EDMUNDS

IP33 1SJ

SATURDAY 21 JUNE 2025

St Mary's at Stoke
Stoke Street

IPSWICH

IP2 8BX

A flyer for our meetings is always at: www.railfuture.org.uk/east/meetings.
This includes a map of the venue and directions from the station.

Follow Railfuture East Anglia on Twitter <https://twitter.com/RailfutureEA>

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