



Meeting note

Project name	East West Rail - Bedford to Cambridge and Western improvements
File reference	TR040012
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	21 October 2022
Meeting with	East West Railway Company Limited
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which Applicants (or others) could rely.

Project Update

The Applicant explained that it is preparing a consultation feedback report and is undertaking environmental surveys for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The Applicant is planning to submit a Development Consent Order (DCO) application for railway refurbishments and new rail infrastructure between Oxford and Cambridge, some of which involves taking / affecting greenbelt land. The Inspectorate asked if the DCO is for three sections of the railway, to which the Applicant stated the portion between Bedford to Cambridge was subject to a section 35 Direction, whilst the remaining works could be associated development.

With regards to the programme, the Applicant explained that following the non-statutory consultations that have taken place to date, it anticipates that the preferred route will be announced in Q1 2023. The Applicant confirmed that the date for submitting an EIA Scoping Report is unknown at this time and the Inspectorate requested that they be informed as soon as practicably possible when this timeframe is known.

The Applicant advised that it is seeking to submit the application during 2025 and confirmed that it anticipates presenting one route option at statutory consultation. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to have regard to optioneering of other linear schemes such as the A303 Stonehenge and AQUIND Interconnector, particularly around the consideration and justification of the route options appraisal that has resulted in the scheme which is to be applied for.

Consultation

The Applicant has run its second non-statutory consultation from 31 March to 09 June 2022 in which it received more than 9,500 responses. The Applicant has consulted stakeholders about high level route options between Bedford and Cambridge.

The Inspectorate asked the Applicant about the results of the non-statutory consultation and Local Planning Authority (LPA) consultation, in which the Applicant explained it has a good relationship with Network Rail and Natural England and has engaged in regular discussions. The Inspectorate asked whether the Applicant was intending to set up Technical Working Groups (TWG) which can be useful in structuring pre-application discussions and for the preparation of Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) at a later stage. The Applicant work on its stakeholder engagement strategy is ongoing.

AOB

The project has been listed as one of the “infrastructure projects which will be accelerated as fast as possible” in HM Treasury’s Growth Plan 2022. The Applicant explained that affordability of the project is a key consideration and is looking to accelerate the scheme through the consenting process and construction phase.

The Inspectorate posed a question about the use of the proposed new scheme for rail freight as well as passenger rail and power supply to the railway in light of net zero ambitions. The Applicant stated that such discussions are ongoing, and no decisions have been made to date. The Applicant did however explain that it had made a commitment to achieve net zero carbon and that this would influence the power supply and rolling stock options. The Applicant explained that this is currently being discussed with the Department for Transport.

The Applicant explained that as part of the need to demonstrate the affordability of the scheme, the scope of the scheme is still being considered. The Inspectorate questioned what the process would entail, and the Applicant replied that the overall aim (for example the scale and design aspirations of the stations) would remain, but the details would be reconsidered.

The Inspectorate asked if the Applicant has started negotiations with landowners from Cambridge in which the Applicant explained that it has contacted landowners in 2021 and discussions are ongoing in attempt to agree options for the land as early as possible.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant will keep in contact with the Inspectorate regarding timescales on the project.
- The Applicant will start working on Statements of Common Grounds and work with local authorities