

Comberton East West Rail Campaign News

Our campaign statement

In November 2020, following a public meeting organised by Eversden Parish Council, the Eversdens EWR Working Group was formed to campaign for a better approach to the East West Rail project. Comberton Parish Council agreed at its December meeting to set up its own working group and to join forces with Eversden's working group. The Group's campaign is founded on six key assumptions:

1. **The threat to our local environment, communities and infrastructure, posed by the East West Rail project, is real and severe.**
2. **East West Railway Co's current choice of route option E is not acceptable.**
3. **We must lobby for a full and fair evaluation of a better way: a northern approach into Cambridge.**
4. **We must act now before it is too late.**
5. **We must work with other communities to achieve a strong, united voice.**
6. **We can each do something to help.**

If you have any questions about our campaign, please email our Working Group via parishclerk@comberton.org or cpc-ewr-wg@comberton.org

1. The threat posed by the East West Rail project is real and severe

The threat posed by the East West Rail project to our local environment, communities and infrastructure is very real. Although the precise route has yet to be determined, it is increasingly obvious that we are in very serious danger of having a major new railway line built right on our doorsteps.

In January 2020, East West Railway Co confirmed that it had selected route option E as its preferred 'corridor' for the Bedford to Cambridge section of the East West Rail project. For our purposes, this means that the line is expected to run to a new Cambridge South station through a narrow corridor that runs between Caxton and Great Shelford. East West Railway Co will be consulting on options for specific route alignments *within* that narrow route corridor in early 2021. The corridor is depicted below:



In practice, the width of the route corridor as it passes between the Eversdens and Comberton is expected to be very narrow. The need to avoid the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory, south of the A603, seems likely to push the line towards the southern edge of the corridor, past the south-west edge of Comberton and close to the Eversdens.

Fears may have been confirmed by surveys that have been conducted or requested on behalf of East West Railway to the south of Coimberton. Information about survey requests has been gathered and plotted on a satellite map of our local area by the Cambridge Approaches Group. The map provides evidence that East West Railway Co is considering a route that will run south-east in very close proximity to Little Eversden, and exceptionally close to Lowfields.



All of us need to be aware of this looming threat. To make matters worse, it is all too clear that this will not be a 'mere' commuter line: it will be freight-capable. Once the Eastern Section of the East West Rail line is completed, **we can expect it to be very heavily used to satisfy the huge demand for freight transport from the East of England ports.**

2. East West Railway Co's current choice of route option E is not acceptable

We do not believe that East West Railway Co has made a persuasive case for a rail line in route option E, and in particular, for a route in the planned corridor between Cambourne and Great Shelford. East West Railway Co's previous consultation in 2019, which preceded the selection of route option E, was fundamentally flawed: the

consultation was neither full, fair, nor transparent. Many residents in potentially affected communities were unaware of East West Railway Co's proposals; the consultation did not draw adequate attention to key aspects of the proposed rail line that are fundamental to the acceptability of any route choice (including the practical inevitability of the rail line's use as a major freight line from the East of England ports); and for communities in South Cambridgeshire, the choice presented was no choice at all – it was a choice of equally bad options. All options presented in the 2019 consultation assumed that the new rail line would approach Cambridge from the south, and would carve a relentless path through rural environments and communities without any local benefit.

3. We must lobby for a full and fair evaluation of an alternative option: a northern approach into Cambridge

East West Railway Co's approach to date is particularly unacceptable because of its continuing failure to give full and equal consideration to an alternative approach, which would see the East West Rail line enter Cambridge from the north.

Over two years ago, **CamBedRailRoad** developed an alternative route proposal for a 'Northern Approach'. Unlike all of East West Rail Co's route proposals, this alternative would enter Cambridge from the north, through Cambridge North station. Full details can be found at <http://www.cambedrailroad.org>.

A Northern Approach would avoid our local communities, but it would also bring many other, wider advantages:

- It keeps this busy new commuter and freight line to an already existing travel corridor;
- it will provide a rail-link from the north of Cambourne which would serve the large existing population and future expansion plans;
- it would connect the new and growing Northstowe development to Cambridge;
- it would link in with proposed light rail and guided bus plans;
- it would also still allow access, through Cambridge, to the new Cambridge south station that will serve Addenbrookes and the growing Biomedical Campus.

A Northern Approach deserves our emphatic support.

4. We must act now before it is too late

East West Railway Co's plans are advancing rapidly. East West Railway Co currently plans to carry out a non-statutory consultation exercise on 'route alignment options' within the Route Option E corridor early in 2021. We can already guess from the survey requests received by local residents and landowners where East West Railway Co's thinking is heading. We should not wait for that consultation: to have a chance of success, our fight for a better approach must begin right now.

5. We must work with other communities to achieve a strong, united voice

To obtain the best solution for South Cambridgeshire, we need a united voice. To that end, the Comberton EWR Working Group is working to build a powerful coalition of local communities and local representatives across the route option E area in South Cambridgeshire, to unite and fight together for proper consideration to be given to a Northern Approach into Cambridge.

6. We can each do something to help

We can achieve real impact if we all play our part. Every resident in Comberton can do something to help our cause:

- signing the CamBedRailRoad petition for proper consideration for a Northern Approach into Cambridge;
- writing to local representatives and Ministers;
- spreading the word to neighbours, friends and colleagues;
- staying informed.

Further information about what you can do to help can be found below.

What are we doing to achieve our objectives?

1. The activities of the Comberton EWR Working Group

Comberton EWR Working Group is working through its sub-groups to achieve its objectives in several ways. These include:

- raising local awareness about our campaign objectives through leafleting, professional campaign roadside signage, and a planned social media campaign;
- collaborating with other local communities to support their efforts in raising awareness and fighting for a Northern Approach;
- exploring the possibility of legal challenge to East West Railway Co's decision-making.

2. Contacting us

If you have any questions about our campaign, please email our Working Group via cpc-ewr-wg@comberton.org or parishclerk@comberton.org

3. Important campaign resources

You will find links below to:

- [the website of the Cambridge Approaches Group](#), which is working with Comberton and other local communities across South Cambridgeshire to lobby for a better approach
- [the Twitter page of the Cambridge Approaches Group](#)

What can you do to help?

1. Please write to your MP, District and County Councillors, Mayor, Government Ministers and EWR

We are asking all local residents to write to object to East West Railway Co's current plans for route option E and demand that proper consideration be given to a Northern Cambridge Approach.

You can create a single email, copied to additional addresses. It would be very helpful if your emails could be addressed to all of the following:

- Anthony Browne MP (anthony.browne.mp@parliament.uk)
- County Councillor Lina Nieto (Lina.Nieto@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)
- District Councillor Aiden Van de Weyer (cllr.vandeweyer@scambs.gov.uk)
- District Councillor Ian Sollom (cllr.sollom@scambs.gov.uk)
- Mayor James Palmer (james.palmer@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
- Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport (shappsg@parliament.uk)
- Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk)
- East West Rail (contact@eastwestrail.co.uk)

Below are some key points that you might consider including in your letters:

- Route option E is unacceptable for our local community and for many other local communities in South Cambridgeshire.

- The next consultation on route alignments should not take place without full and equal consideration being given to a Northern Cambridge Approach, against the background of other proposed infrastructure projects and local housing plans.

More specifically:

- Route option E is not using the existing travel corridor of the A428 and connecting with proposed road upgrades, light rail and guided busway plans.
- Route option E does not connect/adequately connect existing and growing settlements between St Neots and Cambridge, including Cambourne and Northstowe.
- It is unacceptable that the public has never been made properly aware of the inevitability of this line being a major freight line, rather than a mere inter-urban commuter railway.
- EWR's proposal to run diesel trains through our countryside and within a short distance of numerous villages raises significant environmental and public health concerns.
- Route option E may destroy important wildlife habitats including the protected habitats of the rare very Barbastelle bats.
- Essential local roads may no longer be passable, specifically the essential minor road linking the Eversdens to Toft and Comberton.
- The 2019 non-statutory consultation did not include a Northern Approach into Cambridge; as a result the public has never been given the opportunity to consider and evaluate a northern approach on an equal footing with routes that approach Cambridge from the south.
- The planned 2021 consultation must be paused so that a Northern Cambridge Approach can be considered in a joined-up way alongside other proposed infrastructure projects for South Cambridgeshire and local housing plans.

2. Please sign CamBedRailRoad's petition for a fair evaluation of a Northern Approach into Cambridge

CBBR launched a petition some time ago demanding that the proposal for a Northern Cambridge Approach be fairly evaluated alongside alternative routes proposed by East West Railway Co. As yet, this demand remains unsatisfied. This demand deserves our strong support. All residents of Comberton should [sign this petition, which is linked here, without delay.](#)

3. Stay informed

Keep up to date by subscribing to the latest updates from the Cambridge Approaches

Group: <https://cambridgeapproaches.org>. or

through the Comberton website on Comberton.org/parish-council/ewr

How can you contact us?

You can contact Comberton EWR Working Group about our campaign via cpc-ewr-wg@comberton.org

Or parishclerk@comberton.org o