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Network Rail

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Cambridge South station

Railfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities. We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in transport planning.

This response represents the shared view of three regional branches across the East-West Rail corridor – East Anglia, London and South East, Thames Valley.

We address the principal questions in the on-line survey in turn.

3 - Do you support a new station in the south of Cambridge?

Strongly support.

Reasons for your choice

The adjacent Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) is a relatively small area into which is concentrated Europe's largest biomedical research centre and three large hospitals. Two more hospitals are planned as are other research facilities, a conference centre, and hotels. The CBC is located in south Cambridge with extensive and well-established suburbs to its east, and the main railway lines to north-east London, central London and south London, Sussex and Kent providing its western boundary. These will soon be joined by the new railway line to Sandy, Bedford, Milton Keynes, and Oxford, and possibly serving destinations beyond that university city.

Currently over 20,000 people work on the site, but it is still developing and within five years it is estimated that there will be about 135,000 daily trips into and out of it. By some estimates this is more than currently enters/leaves Stansted Airport. The level of road transport using the CBC is already not sustainable and will become impossible to manage in the near future. Those working at the Campus are joined by large numbers of hospital patients and visitors.

The increasing catchment area for all these activities is the whole of East Anglia, the Home Counties, and the South Midlands.

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The proximity of the railway line is crucial. This will enable through train services, current and future, to call at the station from as far afield as via Peterborough, March, King's Lynn, Norwich, Ely, Newmarket, Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich, north-east London, Harlow, Stansted Airport, Brighton, Sussex, south London, central London, King's Cross, Stevenage, Oxfordshire, Milton Keynes, and Bedford. The travel to work area of Cambridge is already huge, and expanding; this rail connectivity will serve all of it with frequent direct train services, or beyond with just one change.

There are synergies between the skills of all the knowledge-based industries of CBC and those in the Thames Valley and Oxfordshire, Milton Keynes / Northampton areas, around King's Cross / St. Pancras, in Stevenage, Harlow, Norwich / Ipswich. The station and all its connected railway lines and services will encourage labour mobility throughout the region and its neighbours.

Currently the local interchange for people wishing to access the CBC by rail is Cambridge station and then bus. The new station will make thousands of journeys quicker and more convenient, and crucially encourage thousands of transfers from car trips to rail by providing that speed and convenience. It should be noted that the additional cost of providing large numbers of buses, with their associated maintenance costs, from Cambridge central station to provide peak demand to CBC will not be required.

The station will, with other measures, make the lives of residents who are neighbours to the CBC much more pleasant.

The station will enable workers to access a wide range of jobs from a very wide area by quality public transport, thus enabling much greater social inclusion than currently is the case, and hospital patients will be enabled to travel safely and quickly from over a wide area to what is increasingly the regional hospital hub.

Frequent local trains across Cambridge will encourage more local commuting onto rail too. The railways serving Cambridge are either providing or committed to providing that unique railway attribute: safe movement by volume and velocity.

In addition to the benefits identified in the immediate area of the proposed station, it will be in an ideal long-term strategic location. The preferred route for the proposed Central Section of East West Rail has been announced by DfT and the East West Rail Co. recently, and when completed this will join the north-south mainline just south of the proposed Cambridge South station. The Central Section will then provide a strategic link between the two critically important medical research facilities at Headington Oxford and Addenbrookes Cambridge. Oxford Parkway station on East West Rail's Western Section is already well situated for access to Headington on the north side of Oxford. Having a direct rail link between the two will further facilitate research by avoiding the more time-consuming need for scientists and other medical staff to travel via London in furtherance of their work.

4 - Which of the three options for the station location do you prefer?

Option 1 - Northern station location

5 - Why do you prefer this location?

We recognise that the station platforms will stretch past all three sites mentioned as options. However, the best site is adjacent to the Busway Bridge where the station concourse should we believe be built on a raft over the tracks with access leading down to the entrances of Astra Zeneca, the Royal Papworth Hospital, the Rosie Hospital and the General Hospital.

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These major centres of work traffic are between two and five minutes' walk away from the Option 1 Northern station concourse.

This site is also very close to the major Sixth Form College at Long Road with its 2,300 full-time students. These are drawn from all over Cambridge and Cambridgeshire. The college will be about 5 minutes' walk away from the Option 1 Northern station entrance. Adjacent to the college is the specialised 14-19 secondary school, the Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology, with 670 places. Footways should be improved to these sites, as necessary, as a part of the station development.

Current cycleways and footpaths can be improved, especially those following those already in existence adjacent to the busway to Great Kneighton and Trumpington to the west. Bus services from those places are already using the busway. These routes will obviate the need for general car access from the west.

Footways and cycleways already exist to most locations within the CBC to the east but must be improved throughout. (Currently the direct route through the campus for pedestrians and cyclists means either diverting around General Hospital's concourse or walking through it; this will have to be addressed.)

To discourage users transferring to the new station from originating points east of the station's immediate eastern housing catchment, road access for private vehicles should be limited both to and through the CBC (as it is currently, of course.) The new station should not generate any additional road trips, indeed it must aim to reduce them.

The station concourse should be large enough to handle an annual footfall of between 5 and 10 million a year. (Stansted Airport handles about 10million rail trips a year based on much more restricted connectivity.) Planning must be based on at least a Category B station.

The concourse should be warm, attractive to all users but especially to hospital users, patients and visitors. The colour schemes of the station must reflect the possible state of mind of patients and visitors and conform to "dementia friendly" standards.

Toilets must be provided at concourse level and on both island platforms, with a "changing places very disabled" toilet on the concourse.

Lifts to each of the island platforms must be duplicated to ensure at least one lift is always working given the need to attract patients and visitors from a wide area. Given the high footfalls predicted escalators should also be provided. Care must be taken to eradicate all potential sources of stress.

The concourse should have a range of cafés and shops, designed to be used not just by rail travellers but as a destination station for the large numbers of workers on the site.

The eastern entrance is through a narrow piece of land (the 'orange' road). We recommend that instead of dropping down from the concourse to this land, a wide covered walkway bridge, possibly with a travelator, be built extending over the CBC ring road towards Astra Zeneca and the Royal Papworth Hospital. It should reach ground level close to the entrances of those two facilities and several others nearby. This would provide a safe, warm environment for several thousand rail users a day.

This walkway could be extended to other developments as they occur, eg the planned rebuilt General Hospital. Covered secure cycle parking provision should be here.

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A simple western entrance to the concourse should be provided down into the adjacent country park and onto the busway bridge. With detailed planning and an attractive station externally, the station and country park should complement each other. Covered secure cycle parking provision should also be here.

Both island platforms must have canopies covering their full lengths. This is a natural courtesy to users but also reflects the fact that boarding and alighting and exiting at destination / originating stations takes place in a variety of ways. They can also contribute significantly to minimising trains' station dwell-times, and therefore improve service performance, by encouraging passengers to make full use of the whole platform length.

The platforms must have level access to some (wheelchair spaces) coaches, if not the whole train.

6 - What do you think about the access proposals for your preferred location?

Historically local residents in the established suburbs to the east of the CBC have been promised that there would be no general road access to the station, other than for security and necessary services. We believe that this station should be constructed in a way that honours these promises.

We would not want to see the development of the west side 'red' road coming off Addenbrookes Road and accessing the station for general drop-off other than taxis and for buses. The main purpose of this route should be as an additional cycle and pedestrian access. Any general access provision will certainly be difficult to manage.

The 'orange' additional new road should be for security and service vehicles only. If taxis are allowed into this road presumably from / to the eastern suburbs other traffic will be difficult to manage.

The station must be developed in such a way as to encourage walking, cycling, and bus use, with facilities allowing easy access for disabled vehicles only.

We emphasise that residents neighbouring the CBC feel overwhelmed by the current traffic congestion caused by the huge volume of road movement into it. This station must be planned to make their quality of life better through less congestion and vehicle movement with its associated noise, air and particulate pollution.

The station planning must involve the provision of well-planned, safe, well-lit, carefully way-marked footpaths and cycleways, linked to carefully thought-out bus stops, throughout the CBC site. Bus use throughout the Campus should be linked to already paid-for fees within the train fares.

7 - Do you have any further comments on the proposal?

Sectors of the railfreight industry are producing plans for various express 'parcel' services whether on existing passenger train services or by a new generation of express (parcel) services. This station is to serve one of the most globally-important centres of biomedical research. There will be a need to transport medical samples etc very quickly. The station should include rooms (with mess facilities) which couriers or any of the staff in adjacent research institutes can collect or deposit samples eg blood. The station planners should consult with current operators of such services to ascertain their needs eg Intercity Rail Freight.

What we want, in summary:

Good cycle links into the adjacent community including schools; 'state of the art' secure cycle parking provision; an easy link to nearby bus stops with buses operating directly to nearby residential districts both via the busway and public roads; start of service / end of service staffing on concourse and on platforms; ticket issue through station host as well as machine and smart card; retail / catering from day one in concourse; warm enclosed waiting rooms on platforms; canopies over full length of platforms; two lifts from each platform to concourse bearing in mind that many users will be visiting a hospital (lift redundancy imperative), cycle hire / cycle repair / sales shop; toilets at concourse level and on platforms; large warm concourse that is part of over-line research development; users and station neighbours to be at the heart of all planning for this new and invaluable resource that will serve all of East Anglia and much of southern England.

What we do not want:

Any additional road traffic generation created by the station, any provision for car parking; any provision for car based drop off / pick up, unlimited public road access; completely free access for taxi / hire car to adjacent residential area.

This is however going to be quite a challenging station catering for different travel markets. On the one hand hundreds building to thousands of commuters in the daily rush hours. Business people, researchers, (of all nationalities / languages / cultures) on visits etc. for meetings during the day (needing wifi and plug points etc.) mixing with people of all ages, degrees of infirmity, visual impairment, deafness etc. visiting the site at the same time. Wheelchair access is important. The station must be staffed, with full ticket issuing facilities, from first train to last.

Timescales and future planning

The planning and consents for this station must be concluded and obtained by the end of 2020 to enable construction to start as soon as possible leading to completion by or before 2025.

East West Rail Co must be involved in the planning to enable the station to be up and running for day one of EWR services.

All trains passing the station should be timetabled to call. The station will serve hospitals and research facilities of national as well as regional importance.

Planning the new station's track layout should be done in conjunction with the planning for the remodelling Cambridge 'Central' track layout and that at Cambridge North. Neither the latter stations is currently able to handle the increasing demands being asked of them.

We look forward to being able to continue contributing our support and suggestions during further rounds of consultation on this vitally-important, and urgently-needed, new station.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS
Railfuture
Director for Infrastructure & Networks

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