

England's Economic Heartland Business Unit  
c/o Buckinghamshire Council  
Walton Street  
Aylesbury  
HP20 1UA

*please reply to:*

70 Dynevor Road  
Stoke Newington  
London  
N16 0DX

[aking@englandseconomicheartland.com](mailto:aking@englandseconomicheartland.com)

[roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk)

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Dear Sir/Madam,

## **Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford Connectivity Study: call for evidence**

Railfuture is Britain's leading and long-established national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passengers, 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 and development planning.

### Question One: What are the key themes for the study area?

What are the over-arching themes the connectivity study should look to consider when developing a package of potential measures? Please identify three themes you consider to be the most important.

These could include: • Decarbonisation • Accessibility • Safety • Levelling up • Access to public transport or walking and cycling provision • Digital connectivity • Environment

Theme 1: Decarbonisation. Front and centre of national and therefore regional policy agendas, highlighted by expectations in countdown to COP-26. "*Think global : act local*" acknowledges global challenge depends on cumulative local initiatives, such as transport in EEH. Rail is major contributor to decarbonisation through mode shift and fleet changes as electric road vehicles are not a complete solution (eg 'Oslo effect' particulates, congestion).

Theme 2: Accessibility. Transport connects communities and them with goods and services. Needs to be inclusive and accessible to all; 'levelling up' must mean addressing disparities.

Theme 3: Access to public transport or walking and cycling provision. Sequel to the above. Rail is central and needs 'first mile - last mile' connectivity, by healthy and environmentally-friendly means.

Take these together as a package, to give a greater market share even if the overall market for travel is reduced post-Covid (at least in the short term).

[www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk) [www.railfuturescotland.org.uk](http://www.railfuturescotland.org.uk) [www.railfuturewales.org.uk](http://www.railfuturewales.org.uk)  
[www.railwatch.org.uk](http://www.railwatch.org.uk)

## Question Two: What do you consider to be the key movements in the area?

For example: • Based on your experience, what are the key journeys being made in the study area? • How are these journeys being made? Could they be made by a different mode of travel in the future (including virtually)? • Why are these journeys being made (employment, leisure etc)? • Are there gaps in connectivity which means that people cannot easily connect between key places?

Key movement 1: Northants (major towns especially in East Northants) – Peterborough + Cambridge.

How now / how future? Now: private car including the A14. No rail provision. Buses limited and slow.

Future: rail difficult without massive new construction:

(1) EWR via Bedford and St. Neots will help (especially for Cambridge and East Anglia)

(2) the Welland Valley Rail Partnership plan for Kettering – Corby – Stamford – Peterborough – Wisbech would be a major enhancement; a west-north link between EWR and the ECML would be an alternative. In other corridors, high-quality buses, fully integrated with rail.

Why? All purposes including employment, education, healthcare, retail, leisure including visiting friends and family.

Gaps? Rail non-existent for all this at present.

Key movement 2: Northampton and nearby towns (eg Brackley) – Oxford.

How now / how future? Now: private car including A43. No rail provision. Buses limited and slow.

Future: rail via EWR Northampton – Milton Keynes – Oxford will help considerably.

Supplement with high-quality buses integrated with rail, especially for West Northants towns which are unlikely ever to be rail-connected.

Why? As Key movement 1, and also as part of longer journeys eg to / from Thames Valley, Southampton, South Coast.

Gaps? Rail non-existent for all this at present.

Key movement 3: Internal travel across Northants eg Kettering / Wellingborough – Northampton (and similar interactions between towns in and closely bordering the county, eg Market Harborough, Banbury).

How now / how future? Now: private car. No rail provision. Buses limited and slow.

Future: limited rail options but Market Harborough – Northampton and Wellingborough – Northampton should be explored (probably as alternatives). Otherwise, high-quality buses, fully integrated with rail.

Why? As key movement 1, with greater local interactions.

Gaps? Rail non-existent for all this at present.

## Question Three: What are the key connectivity opportunities and challenges in the study area?

For example: • Where are the opportunities to improve connectivity (location specific)? • What types of opportunities and challenges exist? • Who do you think would benefit from improving connectivity in this area?

Connectivity improvement: East West Rail

Where? Didcot – Oxford – Milton Keynes – Bedford – Cambridge with through services beyond Milton Keynes to Northampton.

What type? Rail – built to mainline standards, with electrification at the earliest opportunity and provision for freight.

Who benefits?

- ~ Rail users, who will have journey opportunities either not available or very difficult at present. People using connecting services (eg Corby – Oxford via interchange at Bedford); note need to provide for intermediate journeys, including interchanges with the intersecting other routes (WCML, MML, ECML), and not just end-to-end journeys.
- ~ Road users, through modal shift from private car freeing road space and reducing congestion.
- ~ Local residents, through reduced noise, pollution, community severance from road traffic.
- ~ Businesses, through greater access to potential employees and customers.
- ~ Localities, through economic stimulus, agglomeration benefits.

## Question Four: What interventions do you think the study should consider?

The outcomes of the study will be a package of interventions to improve connectivity in the region. Are there any interventions you think should be considered during the development of the study?

Intervention 1: Rail, as outlined above.

Intervention 2: Light rail / equivalent in major centres: Oxford, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Cambridge, Peterborough. Perhaps using VLR technology (WMG Coventry). 'Last mile' etc, as well as local connectivity within the larger towns.

Intervention 3: Buses to fill gaps in rail network where rail interventions will never be viable: high-quality, accessible, bus priority measures, integrated fully with rail (including timetabling and good interchange at stations).

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS  
Railfuture  
Director for Infrastructure & Networks  
Vice-Chairman, London & South East regional branch