

**Minutes of the 782nd meeting of Toft Parish Council
on Monday 26 April 2021 at 7.00 pm
Held remotely via Zoom due to the current pandemic**

Present: Councillors: M Yeadon (Chairman), P Ellis-Evans, E Miles, K Popat, A Tall, J Wrycroft and L Borrell.

In attendance: 48 members of the public, including District Councillor Grenville Chamberlain, Alison Melton representing Anthony Browne MP and Mrs C Newton (Minutes Secretary, LGS Services).

**Open public session including reports from the County and District Councillors
This is an opportunity for all residents to give the Parish Council their views on the East West Rail (EWR) proposals ahead of the Parish Council discussing the consultation this evening.**

The Chairman explained that the Parish Council had contributed to the Cambridge Approaches fund which would only be spent if a Judicial Review was felt necessary. The Parish Council was a member of the group and Cllr Tall was also attending the Eversdens group as the Council's representative.

The Chairman advised the meeting was being recorded and no objections were raised.

Residents were invited to give their views on the proposed route options put forward by East West Rail for consultation.

Northern Route

- A resident believed that this was the preferred route and felt that the village should continue fighting for this.
- Cllr Chamberlain paid tribute to the excellent efforts of Anthony Browne MP towards having the Northern route considered. He expressed disappointment that the Northern route had not had the same consideration as other routes. A Northern route into Cambridge North station presented challenges but would help Northstowe and many thousands of residents and would provide the greatest use for the benefit of the greatest number of people. It would not be as direct for freight but the route could turn around to join the other line. Residents did not want the railway damaging the beautiful landscapes. It was necessary for the Northern route to be fully considered but it did appear that EWR were listening.
It was observed that Cambridge Approaches had offered a solution to freight continuing.
- A resident echoed Cllr Chamberlain's comments and added that there was a great deal of large new development in the area around St Johns Innovation Park, near Cambridge North station. This area would require new infrastructure, so would be an excellent route for the railway.
- Another resident agreed that the route should serve the large populations of Northstowe and Cambourne and taking the Northern route should avoid smaller villages being destroyed. Any line should be electrified and not diesel.
- Alison Melton Chief of Staff for Anthony Browne MP conveyed apologies from Anthony Browne MP and advised residents not to give up as EWR had shown some flexibility on other issues. The preferred site for a station was now for north of Cambourne and residents should push for consultation on the Northern route. Residents were encouraged to support the Parish Council's response and respond to the consultation as individuals. The CamBed RailRoad was running a petition with 10,000 signatures already supporting consultation on the Northern route. Anthony Browne MP will feed his views back.
- A comment was made that new development was taking place around Central Cambridge and the developable land was not in rural areas such as Toft and Barton.

- Cogent reasons should be put forward to justify support for the Northern route rather than just saying the railway was not wanted through our patch. Sensible comments should be made.
- The response should give good reasons why the Northern route is better, providing focused arguments from the Environmental and Economic perspectives. It would help the environment if the railway could be put in a trench whereas an embankment would become a permanent monument if it went through South Cambridgeshire. There was a strong economic argument to bring the railway into Cambridge from the North. The Northern route would serve a more densely populated area and enable commuting.
- Cambridge Approaches was commended for covering all the angles and residents should add to their arguments by adding extra voices. The outcome of this meeting would be shared with the village.
- Cllr Chamberlain encouraged both Parish Councils and individuals to respond. Referring to the Cambridge North development on the water treatment plan site and the North East Cambridge Action Plan, there would be 7000 new homes on that site, with only car parking spaces for one in every 2-3 homes, so it would need excellent public transport – the railway would provide it. Cllr Chamberlain stressed that the line should be electric, not diesel. If the cost of the Northern route was a few million pounds more it would be good value for money. He would include these arguments in his response.
- A resident criticised the EWR document for the lack of information and for making no reference to the potential 100 million – surely 1 million? additional homes to be built between Cambridge and Oxford.
- The lack of detail made it difficult to envisage the route.
- There would be strip development either side of the railway line. The Northern route met both the Economic and Environmental arguments with benefits for commuting and access to London and the new towns.

At this point the Chairman asked for a show of hands as to whether the Parish Council should continue to support the Northern route. 42 of 46 people supported the Parish Council continuing to support the Northern route.

North East and South West Routes (Cambourne South station)

- The route is very close to Hardwick Woods. The environment will be destroyed by diesel engines.
- The route will cut Toft off from Comberton and Hardwick and from the Doctors' surgery in Comberton and the hospital in Cambridge. If there are no crossings it will be necessary to go back on one's journey. The impression received from Cambridge Approaches was that there would be no crossings but maybe a bridge over roads and footpaths. The Chairman confirmed that he had written to seek clarification of this from East West Rail.
- Is there anything more definitive in the band on the EWR documents as to where the line would go?
- There is a huge difference between a bridge and a big tunnel when walking. Footpaths will be affected.
- As the detail has not been provided, how can a decision be made as to what route would have the worse impact? Comberton Village College pupils cycle or walk – there are risks from taking a long tunnel or from the temptation to cross the railway rather than take a longer way round. The Chairman explained that no elevation drawings had been received; despite being requested, there had been no response.
- An elevated railway from Comberton to Hardwick would be a substantial structure which would have to cross two roads.
- Concerns were voiced about expressing a preference between alternative routes, that if a preference was given for any other route, they would rely on that.
- Alison Melton was asked about elevation drawings and shared a link:
Eastwestrail-production.S3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/public/EWR-core-section-Alignment-9.pdf

This showed that the elevation of the line would be between 3m – 8.4 m above ground level and showed where bridges went over the roads. There were concerns about communities being severed. The lack of diagrams had been raised by Anthony Browne when he met Will Gallagher of EWR, who had confirmed they did not intend to produce these until the statutory consultation. He had confirmed that Harlton and Haslingfield would not be severed. Ms Melton encouraged the Parish Council to contact them now about road crossings, footpaths, and bridleways, stating which ones it did not wish to lose, and giving specific comments on each one. The Chairman is to contact her with details of road crossings where matters were unclear.

- Sound will travel more if the line is raised up on an embankment – why is it on an embankment? The Eversdens have signs up against the railway – should Toft consider doing this? The Chairman confirmed that Toft would have signs up very shortly.
- EWR had confirmed a 1:80 gradient and the line was understood to be carrying freight.
- The route would involve substantial embankments to cross Bourn Brook and would have a very great impact on the surroundings and was not a preferred route at all.
- The track elevation in some places would be 10 m and more.
- Concerns were expressed about safety for children at Comberton Village College together with the pollution arising from diesel fumes and noise affecting teaching.
- Alison Melton undertook to send the links to the document showing the elevation of the embankment along the route. The document was screen shared showing the existing ground level in green and the height of the elevated track in red. The elevation varied between 2.3 m - 8.4 m above ground level for the section shown. Cllr Chamberlain pointed out that this was the track level and did not include the height of the train and electricity lines.
- A resident stated he did not support either option. As a member of Toft Historical Society there was not one path he would sacrifice as these were very historical routes, and no footpaths should be destroyed.
- Another stated it was not possible to decide between these two options as so much information was missing.
- A landowner agreed that it was unfair to expect people to choose between routes given the lack of knowledge. At a meeting with EWR this week the engineers could not provide the necessary information regarding access and waterways. He felt the Northern route should be supported as the Southern route would result in so much loss in this area.
- A resident highlighted the need to be specific when responding in favour of the Northern route and make individual responses. The Parish Council was asked to give pointers on what to include in favour of the Northern route.

The Chairman noted that no-one was in favour of selecting between the two Southern routes and the objections to both would be considered.

What features should be incorporated into the design to minimise the negative impact?

- A resident advocated greater use of cuttings.
- The elevation above ground would result in noise. If acoustic fencing were incorporated, rather than a standard timber fence, it should be a densely wooded green barrier of compacted earth, with willow and tree planting to reduce the visual and acoustic impact, and protect birds
- A suggestion was made that there should be cycle paths and footpaths alongside the railway. Cycle ways should be linked if possible.
- A resident emphasised the importance of the MP's support and influence in order to make a strong case. Alison Melton explained that Anthony Browne was working hard on this and had attended several meetings with various parties to push for a consultation on the northern route. He had publicly supported the station North of Cambourne but as he was not a rail expert he had not yet backed either the Northern or Southern route as he wanted a comparison of both to get the best solution. He was fully supportive of a full consultation on the Northern route.

Need to buy scheme for landowners (Compulsory purchase)

There were no comments.

Any Other Business

- A resident asked what was the best way to respond. Alison Melton stated that it was best to respond via the EWR consultation online. It was possible to order a full paper pack of consultation documents, including a technical pack, from their website. If anyone's property was going to be affected, Anthony Browne MP could offer help and residents could contact him. Appendix F of the documents gave information on why the Northern route was rejected. Residents could also respond by email as more information could be included. It was observed that EWR was taxpayer funded so anyone had the right to respond. Residents could also sign the CBRR petition.
- Residents suggested that the Parish Council should endeavour to influence the MP and Mayoral candidates. It was suggested that responses be copied to the MP as it was important to gain his support.
- Environment – there is a rare population of bats nearby, of which there are only 6 colonies in the UK. This needs to be protected.
- It was highlighted that East West Rail were not responding to questions and if they did they would not tell you who was responding to the contact. The consultation was fundamentally flawed. The brochures did not even include a picture of the proposed embankment.
- A resident asked if Cambridge residents had been informed that freight would be going through Cambridge.
- A comment that the route was a political issue not an engineering issue and the MP had to take a stance on it. A resident expressed the caveat that the northern route might be a disaster for other people and the MP might have to be careful as there would be losers elsewhere.
- Alison Melton agreed that this was a critical issue as the MP represented all of South Cambridgeshire and needed to take a balanced view. The northern villages have the same concerns that he has to be mindful of.
- A resident asked for the MP's choice to be made known.

The public session closed at 8.43 pm.

The Chairman encouraged residents to

- respond to the consultation by 9 June, and to email and copy in the MP.
- go to the Cambridge Approaches website where there is a petition to sign.
- On Thursday at 6 pm Anthony Browne MP is hosting a meeting which all residents can log into – details are available on Anthony Browne's YouTube/Facebook site.

Alison Melton was thanked for attending. She undertook to email links to the documents for the long section drawings and a link to Anthony Browne's website.

1. Apologies for absence and declaration of interests**1.1 To approve written apologies and reasons for absence**

Apologies were received from Anthony Browne MP (attending House of Commons)

1.2 To receive declarations of interests from councillors on items on the agenda

None.

1.3 To receive written requests for dispensations and to grant any dispensation as appropriate

None.

2. East West Rail proposals – to consider response to the consultation

The Chairman proposed a working group should draft a response and circulate this to all members to respond. The response should focus on the Environment, engineering, and

economic arguments and should focus on the Northern route consultation, making no response on the other routes.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council should respond to the consultation by letter and incorporate evidence from tonight's meeting. (Prop MY, 2nd AT, unanimous)

RESOLVED to carry out another mail drop to all residents giving the key points of the meeting, and to place a note in Calendar encouraging residents to respond personally using the key points as guidance if they wish. Residents should respond as individuals not households and should do it now if they have not done so already.

RESOLVED that Cllr Yeadon should draft an article for Calendar, Next Door and Facebook.

RESOLVED that Cllr Tall should draft a response to the consultation and circulate it to Parish Councillors by 15 May. (Prop MY, 2nd PEE, unanimous)

Cllr Tall is to email details of the alignments. It was observed that the viaduct from the Caldecote turn was to be 15 metres tall and 600 metres long.

Eastwestrail-production.S3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/public/EWR-Core-Section-Alignment-8.pdf

3. Closure of meeting

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 9.38 pm.

SignedChairmandate.

