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11 March 2019

Dear Sirs

**East West Rail Bedford to Cambridge Consultation 2019: Response from the University of Cambridge**

I am writing on behalf of the University of Cambridge in response to the East West Rail (EWR) consultation.

The University welcomes the progress being made to develop the much needed EWR link between Oxford, Cambridge and beyond and agrees with the strategic objectives identified within the consultation document.

As a major employer within the Cambridge region we are aware that around 50% of our 12,300 staff commute to the city from outlying areas. This has resulted in door to door journey times for many that are in excess of 1.5 hours due to congestion on the highway or poor connectivity/services on public transport. We estimate that between 30-40% of our staff living outside of Cambridge could benefit from the opportunities EWR has to offer in terms of reduced journey times, improved accessibility and access to affordable homes. We see significant potential benefits to the University through the widening of its local Labour market, and for existing students and staff through improved partnerships and knowledge transfer programmes that could be made possible by the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

Our response addresses the questions raised within the consultation and provides an insight into the University's key priorities for the development of this corridor, which are loosely aligned to those set out within the consultation documents. These include:-

- **Linking Oxford and Cambridge:** The University of Cambridge strongly encourages the selection of any route capable of facilitating *both*:-
  1. Direct access to and from Oxford and Cambridge, which considerably reduces overall journey times.
  2. A service capable of facilitating economic and housing growth and addressing rural connectivity.

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The University agrees that all routes proposed offer considerable journey time savings over current arrangements. Therefore we must support those route(s) which give priority for the greatest potential housing growth and improvements to rural connectivity. With this in mind we have identified the following as our key priorities:-

- **Building door-to-door connectivity:** The University welcomes the opportunities provided by EWR. In particular:-

**Generally:** It is critical to the University and many other employers that our staff have the opportunity to live within reasonable door-to-door travel times. EWR should therefore aim to enhance homes-jobs connectivity across the Cambridgeshire area. This will widen the net of affordable homes for the Cambridge Labour market and reflect a central tenet of Cambridge's 2014 Devolution Deal.

This is particularly relevant to key workers and other low paid staff across Cambridgeshire but also specifically those based on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) for whom ease of access is currently limited.

**Specifically:** We support the potential EWR brings to address the public infrastructure deficit to the West of Cambridge, where nationally significant housing sites of over 20,000 people are growing without adequate public transport. EWR could provide a solution to this as well as the knock-on congestion problems on the A428 and A1309 and other key corridors should suitable interchange facilities be provided.

- **Integrating existing transport systems:** The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) are together delivering £1.6bn of devolution agreements, principally focused on transport infrastructure. EWR will need to work carefully with local partners to ensure its final route compliments existing regional projects that, at our end of the central corridor, already include Cambridge South Station, the CAM Metro and associated public transport improvements along the A428 and A1307. This will be critical for achieving integrated transport access to Cambridge's key employment & research sites, including; West Cambridge, The Science Park to the North as well as Granta Park and Babraham Research Campus to the South East.

In addition to large infrastructure integration EWR must also enable first/last mile sustainable travel solutions for existing and new communities along its route to facilitate door to door sustainable travel. This should be achieved through route design and station locations that maximise housing development (including affordable and key worker housing) and reduce the need for further rural traffic generation.

- **Supporting existing corridors:** Our most economically productive transport corridor is that connecting Cambridge to London. Linking EWR into this corridor, preferably through a Cambridge entry-point at Cambridge South, will be essential for connecting the "Golden Triangle" of London, Oxford and Cambridge. There are also important but less well-developed corridors between Cambridge and Norwich (specialising in Agri-Tech) and between Cambridge and Ipswich (specialising in IT), both of which would benefit from the Eastward expansion of EWR in the future. In addition, the connection to the East Coast Mainline, avoiding the Cambridge to Peterborough via Ely, will be extremely valuable for linking Cambridge and its hinterland more effectively with northern parts of the UK. Indeed, existing University models suggest that current patterns of growth will facilitate the northward, eastward and southward expansion of the Cambridge Cluster. The final alignment of the ARC's entry into Cambridge should be selected with this in mind.
- **Enhancing the environment:** EWR should consider how it can realise its objectives with a net gain to the natural capital of the region. We welcome the proposed additional work to fully assess the impact of the scheme on the environment.

- **Utilising technology:** We encourage EWR to consider how it can incorporate cutting-edge data and transport technologies from both Cambridge & Oxford to make the rail connection a “living lab” for commuters and emerging innovations. This will help ensure the Oxford-Cambridge ARC delivers on the government’s construction and rail sector deals while simultaneously improving cross-country infrastructure.

The University agrees with the process undertaken in identifying the five proposed routes and welcomes the proposals to access Cambridge from the south for the reasons identified within the consultation document.

We believe that all proposed routes have the ability to address the University’s priorities to some degree. However, in order for the University to identify a preferred option we would welcome further information to address the following questions and concerns:-

- What is the housing (including affordable housing) opportunities along each of the corridors? We note, for example, the uncertainty surrounding the future of Bassingbourn as a possible housing site/community. We would therefore welcome further information on the timescales for realising its housing opportunities, as well as similar opportunities offered along each of the proposed routes. It is important, in our view, for proposed rural or semi-rural rail stations to have close-proximity housing supplies and avoid generating significant traffic of their own.
- What are the infrastructure costs associated with realising the housing potential along these corridors?
- The consultation document does not include costs for the proposed Bassingbourn station and we would welcome further comparative information.

The investment in the EWR and associated infrastructure along the corridor is welcomed and will support existing and future investment by the University and others. It will help to ensure that Cambridge remains a growing and sustainable centre of excellence and a world leader in the fields of higher education and research. It will help the city to nurture its growing industries and will facilitate a further expansion of its knowledge-based economy, while retaining the high quality of life and place that underpins our city and supports its standout economic success. It will help spread access to Cambridge’s many opportunities to communities across its hinterlands and is essential for the University and the local authorities to deliver on their proposed commitments in the years and decades ahead.

We fully support and remain committed to the overriding aim of the EWR. This task is more important than ever if we are to sustain Cambridge’s pace of growth and meet the challenges posed by Brexit on the one hand and productivity decline on the other.

The University’s commitment to supporting innovation-led growth can be clearly seen through its consistently high levels of investment in research and learning: we are currently delivering around £150M p.a. of capital investment across our estate, from the Cambridge Biomedical Campus to central and West Cambridge. This includes direct investment by the University, and significant funds levered in from government, research councils and philanthropy. This comes in addition to significant investment for housing and community infrastructure at Eddington, whose first homes were filled in the last quarter of 2017.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the points raised in this response, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



Jason Matthews

