

Harlton is a small, but historically significant village in South Cambridgeshire. Its existence as a settlement is almost certainly from the iron age onwards, as evidence of prehistoric land division has been recorded to the north of the village. The village continued as a settlement with the Roman road (A603) running close by and was recorded in the Domesday Book, 1086.

Whilst the whole of Harlton will be affected by the railway, over 50% of the village will be severely impacted by the proposed route, land take, construction and running of the railway. The proposed route runs very close to the village and will bring no benefits, only negative consequences to the population, wildlife, land and water. During and post-construction of the railway, there will be detrimental noise, vibration air and visual pollution, travel and business disruption and the destruction of farmland and historic landscape.

Harlton Parish Council has read the East West Rail Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping document and has raised the following concerns. This is perhaps not a comprehensive list, however given the short amount of time to raise such concerns, especially coinciding with the non-statutory consultation, it is the best we could do in the circumstances. We hope that EWR will keep assessing its methodology within its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and continue to challenge itself to produce better than best practice action on all environmental issues.

### **Air Quality**

EWR monitored the A603 near Harlton for air quality in 2021 (see page 203/1011 in the EIA Scoping Report). There was no monitoring of air quality in the village itself.

**Consideration for the Scoping Opinion:** If EWR want a recording of air quality in the village of Harlton, a monitoring device should be placed within the settlement. It should not rely on a single recording of a device outside of the village as this is a distortion of facts.

### **Agriculture and Soils**

The land take that EWR is planning is mainly grade 2 and 3a highly productive cereal growing land. Looking at evidence of other development sites (HS2, World War II airfields) where topsoil is scraped away and at a later date returned, yields may be reduced by as much as 50%. In a time of ensuring food security and relying more on domestic production, rather than imports, this is a very worrying figure for the whole UK population.

**Consideration for the Scoping Opinion:** What are EWR plans to return the land to farmers in a condition that will enable yields similar to when EWR took them from the farmers?

### **Biodiversity**

1. The vulnerable barbastelle bat communities known roosting sites at the Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Areas of Conservation and Hardwick Wood (Site of Special Scientific Interest) need to be protected (by law) along with their foraging routes and flight paths. Barbastelle bats (and many other varieties) have been located as far as Haslingfield and Grantchester. The overbridge between Harlton and Haslingfield and the embankments close to the village can only have a detrimental effect on the bats flight paths, fanning and foraging behaviour. No mitigation has been planned near Harlton, and mitigation planned for Eversden (bat bridge, tree/sapling planting) is a little researched stab in the dark. Plus, the time it takes to construct the railway, before mitigation is in place could well decimate/obliterate the already rare barbastelle.

2. The proposed railway, plus its enormous (up to 11 metres) embankments passing the Eversdens and the A603 before gradually reducing in height to the north of the village. The visual and noise impact is significant
  
3. Other wildlife under threat from EWR include red kites, buzzards, water voles, badgers, deer and game birds. The loss of wildlife habitats, fields, farmland, water courses will decimate the biodiversity of the village and surrounding area. The mitigation offered by EWR is inadequate and could well see species of fauna and flora disappear from dust, water, air, noise or vibration pollution.

**Consideration for the Scoping Opinion:** There are so many environmental impacts that could be addressed by a tunnel directly from Cambourne to Cambridge South. What are EWR plans in this respect?

How does EWR plan to mitigate the environmental destruction during construction of the railway? Harlton will lose hedgerows, ditches, trees, farmland - of which could be fundamental to the existence of species such as the barbastelle bat. How will species, such as barbastelle bats, survive before mitigation (if any) is in place? How will EWR monitor such fragile species during and post-construction? The document mentions desk based research used in compiling evidence. What proportion of wildlife research will be done from a desk? Will EWR ensure that wildlife is properly researched, in situ, by specialist, independent groups? Will this research become publicly available to view? Harlton Parish Council would be happy to assist in the stewardship of species found in its environs.

## Historic Environment

The diversion of Washpit Lane due to the location of the proposed railway is through an area of prehistoric land division and ancient pasture, which is present along the Bourn valley. It is also very close to ancient earthworks, listed as a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. By diverting the road through this landscape, the visual and historic nature of the land will be lost forever.

The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrating its 650th anniversary this year. This ancient structure will suffer from noise and visual disturbance of the landscape

**Consideration for Scoping Opinion:** What will EWR do to protect this special landscape? Will there be a thorough archaeological assessment of the area? Will the scheduled monument area be protected by the land disturbance/road building?

How will EWR protect the setting of the church and the scheduled monument in the landscape when a huge embankment is proposed, cutting off vistas and permanently altering the historic scenes. A 1km 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility', is not enough in a predominately flat landscape, such as the area to the north-west of Harlton.

## Human Health

So far, EWR has not assessed the detrimental state of villagers' health with the possibility of the railway looming over us.

**Consideration for the Scoping Opinion:** Ongoing consultation, understanding the negative consequences of building this railway and mitigation, needs to be properly assessed and formally brought into the EIA. The assessment of villagers' responses allied to their geographical location to the non-statutory consultation should be included and responded to as part of the EIA.

## Landscape and Visual

The impact of huge raised embankments on the visual aspect of Harlton has not been properly assessed.

## **Socioeconomics**

Businesses and venues located within the village and on Washpit Lane and farms need identifying, contacting and working with as the construction and running of the railway will severely impact their work. Little to date seems to have been done by EWR.

## **Sound, Noise and Vibration and Electro-magnetic Interference**

Given the typology of the land and the proposed elevation of the railway to the north-west of the village, Harlton Parish Council considers the negative impacts of sound, noise, vibration and electro-magnetic interference on the village as unacceptable. The study areas, outlined on p113 of the document, state that operational airborne noise will be 300m from the project railway, whilst ground borne rail noise will be 125m from the project railway. Given that the land is typically flat close to Harlton, these distances don't seem to be very far away from the noise and that many of the houses in the village will be able to hear the same level of noise from their gardens and from their houses, c.500m-1km away.

On page 98, the document states that EWR will only consider effect of electro-magnetic interference on schools/homes that are within 50m of the track.

In EWR's Environmental Update Report, Nov 24, 11.2.5, it states that 'residents are few until south of the A603 Cambridge Road, so potential impacts from noise are likely to be limited.' To brush off the disrupting noise of a railway and the far reaching pollution that the proposal will inevitably bring is shameful. The introduction of a new noise in a rural environment will be a blight on all the rural population, no matter how few. EWR need to acknowledge this and mitigate accordingly.

**Consideration for the Scoping Opinion:** Firstly, why only 50 metres for electro-magnetic interference? Comberton Village College is located next to the proposed railway. What kind of environmental impact will this have on the school? What kind of mitigation will be put in place? Secondly, what about the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory? How will this sensitive site withstand the electrical interference and vibration? What about the electro-magnetic interference emitting from the signalling masts, of which there are two between Comberton and Harlton? It seems as if this issue has not been researched or explored thoroughly. In the document, EWR state the design will have the 'greatest possible separation from sensitive receptors and keeping the alignment low in the environment'. Currently, the proposed design across the fields of Harlton is on unacceptably large embankments. Not only will the electromagnetic interference be an issue, so will vibration, noise, sound and air pollution. Currently the proposed study areas do not take into consideration the majority of housing in Harlton, even though most of the village will be severely effected by noise and vibration. We hope that the statement in 6.8.13 assessment 'may need to consider impacts outside these buffers where noise modelling suggests a need for this' becomes a reality.

## **Traffic and Transport**

1. EWR are promoting housing growth as an economic reason for building the railway. The railway is promoted as a way to stimulate housebuilding for 94,000 additional people along the route between Bedford and Cambridge. EWR estimate regular passenger numbers of circa 5000 per day. The rest will use the roads and an EWR report (Environmental and Technical Report, figure 4.1, Appendix 4, May 2023) confirms there will be more cars on the road.

2. There are no stations planned near to the villages between Cambourne and Cambridge. This means driving miles to the nearest station which defeats the object of the railway.

**Consideration for the Scoping Opinion:** What are EWR plans to mitigate road traffic congestion and the significant carbon emissions that will result?

Harlton along with many other small villages has narrow roads and the community is worried that there could be a significant increase in heavy traffic through the village (one of the three access roads being single-track) during construction (due to road severance or temporary closure) and post-construction (with the increase in car users due to extra house building, from EWR's dependent development plans). Journey times by car, bus, foot or bicycle are likely to be extended significantly, are likely to be more dangerous (especially for pedestrians and cyclists) and there will be a decrease in economic growth (due to length of time travelling to access school, work, facilities).

The risk of a regular and reliable bus service during the ten years of construction is a huge issue. Children in further education need to get to Comberton Village College or into Cambridge, plus villagers need to access places of work.

**Consideration for the Scoping Opinion:** Could EWR provide a detailed plan for each affected village outlining how bus services, schools and access to other services will be maintained throughout the construction phase?

What are the identified routes for construction? Has the risk to roads and buildings been assessed? There are 16 listed buildings in Harlton, some are made with Clunch. These will not withstand huge amounts of change to vibration from construction and increased heavy traffic mobilisation.

## Water Resources

1. The Environment Agency is opposed to all new building in Cambridgeshire until the water supply problem is resolved. Building a railway and EWR 'dependent development' for 94,000 people in addition to those already in the local plan will put significant additional pressure on water. Water scarcity is a real issue and future housing cannot be guaranteed drinking water until extra reservoirs and desalination plants are built at more cost in 2040 and beyond.
2. The railway will utilise great amounts of water during construction.
3. The Bourn Brook and various springs between Harlton and neighbouring villages are vulnerable courses of water.
4. The proposed route runs very close to an historic mustard gas storage site and a storage facility for explosives, near the A603.
5. 'The assessment will use a study area of 1km from the centreline of the proposed railway.' What about during construction, when huge swathes of land either side of the line will be used as compounds, construction zones and haul roads?

**Consideration for the Scoping Opinion:** What are EWR plans to minimise the use of water during the construction of the railway and how do they plan to supply water for the new housing in the interim? Residents are worried.

Further detail needs to be put forward about the water courses and springs, how they are to be assessed and monitored, especially during construction of the proposed railway.

Has EWR assessed the area around the explosive manufacturing facility and the WWII chemical weapon storage area and scoped into their plans the possibilities of disturbing contaminants that could pollute ground water and soil/farmland?

EWR, in the document, 6.11.11, states assessment of water will be 1km from the centreline of the railway. What about the construction zones, which could be in place for up to 10 years? The scope of water assessment should cover construction zones/compounds/haul roads too. In 6.11.21 EWR states that 'many impacts scoped in for assessment would take place during construction and

potentially result in temporary effects'. To assume longer term effects on hydro morphology would be accommodated into the design and are therefore scoped out assumes too much. They should be scoped in to cope with every eventuality and consequence of disruption to the water environment.

## **Conclusion**

Harlton Parish Council is perplexed by EWR's insistence to proceed with this proposed route, when even their own research demonstrates that other routes into Cambridge are less environmentally damaging.