

Harlton Village Dashboard: July 2026

Where things stand at 30 June 2026:

The East West Rail consultation closed on 9 June. EWR is now reviewing the responses and refining the proposed southern route. The Government remains committed to the project, although the detailed design, construction arrangements and mitigation measures are not yet settled.

EWR expects to submit its formal planning application, known as the Development Consent Order, in 2027. The next important milestone is its consultation summary report, expected in autumn 2026. This should show whether evidence submitted by Harlton and other affected communities has changed the proposals.

Harlton Parish Council's formal consultation response continues to call for a published assessment of the northern approach into Cambridge, via Cambourne, Northstowe and Cambridge North. If EWR continues with the southern route, the Parish Council's preferred mitigation is a tunnel from Highfields Caldecote to Cambridge South.

For Harlton, the main concerns remain construction traffic, noise and vibration, damage to roads and buildings, protection of the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory, water and chalk streams, loss of farmland and the absence of clear local benefits.

Why residents still need to remain involved:

The closure of the consultation does not end the opportunity to influence the project. Important decisions about the route design, tunnelling, construction traffic, working hours, environmental protection and compensation will be made before the planning application is submitted.

Continued local evidence and engagement will be essential if Harlton is to secure enforceable construction protections, proper environmental mitigation and meaningful benefits for the village.

What residents can do now:

Please continue to share local evidence with the Parish Council and village group. This could include photographs and information about road widths, drainage, flooding, vulnerable buildings, wildlife, farming impacts and access requirements.

Look out for EWR's consultation summary report in autumn 2026. We will compare it with Harlton's submission and report where our concerns have been accepted, rejected or left unanswered.

Harlton Parish Council has called for an independent Construction Ombudsman. Separate discussions between affected parishes have also considered a Citizens Charter setting clear and enforceable construction standards.

Issue	Current Position	What Harlton is asking for
Consultation and route status	EW R is progressing the southern route and the Government says that no alternative route is currently under consideration. Harlton Parish Council’s consultation response did not accept that decision as properly evidenced. It called for a public assessment of the northern approach via Cambourne, Northstowe and Cambridge North. The Parish Council also criticised the consultation process. There was no event close to Harlton, the feedback form contained restrictive word limits and Harlton’s village specific response had to be submitted through the general “other feedback” section.	Publication of the comparative evidence used to reject the northern approach, including costs, environmental impacts, development assumptions and forecast passenger use. The autumn consultation report should also explain how Harlton’s village specific evidence was recorded and considered.
Business case and Development Consent Order	The Government remains committed to East West Rail. EW R says the evidence supporting the scheme, including costs, benefits and passenger demand, will be published with its planning application in 2027. Earlier business case information has not been released because the Government considers it out of date. The current design assumes four trains an hour, with a possible fifth service. This will affect noise, vibration, observatory interference and the overall case for the railway. Harlton Parish Council’s formal response challenges the absence of an up to date business case and questions whether the forecast level of passenger use can justify the cost and environmental damage. It considers that the evidence should be available for public scrutiny before the Development Consent Order is submitted.	Earlier publication of the evidence on costs, passenger demand, train frequency and value for money, rather than waiting until the formal application is submitted.
Mullard Observatory, tunnel and alignment	The University of Cambridge says the proposed railway could seriously affect the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory through radio interference, vibration and light pollution. These risks would arise during construction as well as during railway operation. EW R says it is examining possible solutions, although no agreed design has been published. Harlton Parish Council’s formal position is that, if the southern route continues, a tunnel should extend from Highfields Caldecote to Cambridge South. The Parish Council considers that this would provide the strongest protection for the observatory, the Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation, chalk watercourses, farmland, wildlife and affected communities.	Publication of all tunnel and shielding options, including their length, depth, portals, construction methods, spoil movements, cost and ability to protect the observatory. The option assessment should consider the combined benefits for Harlton, farmland, wildlife, watercourses and the landscape.
Construction impacts and accountability	EW R’s consultation material identifies the road through Harlton as a primary construction traffic route, with more than ten heavy goods vehicles expected in each direction each day. Sections of the village road are approximately 4.8 metres wide and parts of Washpit Lane are approximately 3.3 metres wide. Listed buildings, older homes and the conservation area lie close to the road. A large earthworks storage area is also proposed north of the village, close to homes and the parish church. Construction routes, vehicle numbers, working hours, dust controls, compounds and compensation remain unresolved.	Removal of Harlton from the primary construction traffic route and proper assessment of a temporary access road from the A603 along the proposed railway corridor. Harlton also requires surveys of roads and buildings, enforceable controls on traffic, noise, vibration and dust, relocation or redesign of the earthworks storage area, protection of emergency access and a clear compensation and complaints process.

	The proposed realignment of Washpit Lane and the new bridges at the A603 and between Harlton and Haslingfield create unresolved road safety and access concerns. The Parish Council has asked how residents will reach Haslingfield Primary School, Harston surgery, bus services and other essential facilities during construction. It also seeks safe arrangements for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, farm vehicles and emergency services.	Require an independent road safety assessment, clear sight lines and safe junction arrangements at the A603, together with a construction phasing plan that maintains access before existing roads are closed. Diversion routes and road closures should be agreed and communicated with the village well in advance.
Water, chalk streams and environmental protection	The proposals include the diversion of approximately 500 metres of Long Brook, which forms part of the local chalk stream system. Harlton Parish Council is concerned about pollution, habitat loss, the wider loss of wildlife and the risk posed to protected species, including barbastelle bats and water voles, during construction. It has also sought assurances that the works will not reduce the reliability of Harlton's water or electricity supplies.	Detailed plans for the Long Brook diversion, including baseline surveys, pollution controls, wildlife protection, independent monitoring and immediate remedial action if damage occurs. EWR should also confirm how construction water and electricity demands will be met without affecting village supplies.
Farmland and four track area	The potential loss of farmland, construction land and land required for the proposed four track section remains a major concern. Restoration, long term farm viability, access and compensation have not been explained in sufficient detail. The affected land includes productive Grade 2 and Grade 3A agricultural land. The impact is greater than the land taken directly for the railway because remaining fields may become fragmented, inaccessible or uneconomic to farm. Temporary construction use may also cause lasting damage through soil compaction, contamination and altered drainage.	Seek farm by farm impact information, access plans, soil handling standards, restoration obligations and compensation principles. Press for the smallest possible permanent land take.
Local benefits and connectivity	The Parish Council welcomed the proposed walking and cycling connection towards Haslingfield and asked whether it could also accommodate horse riders. It also requested mature planting, effective landscape screening and long term maintenance of new habitats and drainage features. EWR and the Government have not yet set out a wider package of benefits or compensation for communities facing the greatest disruption.	Safe walking, cycling and equestrian connections, mature planting and effective screening, long term maintenance of landscaping and drainage ponds, road protection and support for affected landowners and businesses. Wider proposals such as a community fund or local station should be developed as additional village priorities.

Note 1: Andy Burnham's recent speech placed emphasis on local influence over transport, infrastructure and economic growth. Any change in national leadership should provide an opportunity for Harlton and neighbouring parishes to seek clear commitments on local influence, construction protection and community benefits.

Note 2: The Defence Investment Plan announced on 30 June places fresh pressure on public capital spending. Departments have been required to contribute one per cent of their capital budgets from this year, while the Department for Transport has been asked to find up to £700 million in additional savings from roads funding. The Government says investment in rail infrastructure and bus and rail services will be protected under the announced measures, and East West Rail was not specifically identified. The plan therefore does not directly alter the Government's current commitment to East West Rail. However, with a further £4.7 billion of defence funding still to be identified in Budget 2026, the wider pressure on public investment reinforces the need for urgent scrutiny of whether East West Rail remains affordable, justified and a responsible use of public money.