

Hitchin

Statement of Community  
Involvement

Network Rail, September 2009

HAVE  
YOUR  
SAY



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## 1 Executive summary

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Over four days in April 2009, Network Rail exhibited proposals to improve the rail network around Hitchin – benefiting services on the East Coast Main Line and between London, Hitchin, Letchworth and Cambridge.

The plans will take the line to Cambridge over, rather than across the East Coast Main Line improving performance and reliability and helping to increase future service levels.

In total 329 people attended the exhibition, 129 of whom filled in comment cards. 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Network Rail should be investing in making services more reliable.

Network Rail has continued the process of dialogue since the April exhibition, including a public meeting in Letchworth in July. This process will be maintained throughout the Transport and Works Act Order process and beyond.

## 2 Introduction

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Hitchin is at the heart of an increasingly popular railway. On the East Coast Main Line between London and Scotland, it marks the point at which the line divides towards Letchworth and Cambridge.

The last decade has seen a 35% increase in passengers travelling between Peterborough and London and an 18% increase in journeys between London and Cambridge. In the past ten years, the amount of freight carried by rail has increased by 60%.

In the long term, passenger growth is expected to continue and new infrastructure is needed to meet the demand for rail travel. In February 2008, Network Rail published a Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for the East Coast Main Line (ECML). This strategy explains the need to:

- Increase capacity for peak passenger services into and out of London and other urban centres
- Increase and improve long distance passenger services throughout the day
- Provide capacity for freight growth

Cambridge Junction, north of Hitchin station, is one of the key bottlenecks on the line and needs to be improved to meet these aims. At the moment, trains from Hitchin to Cambridge have to cross three other lines to switch between the ECML and the line to Cambridge. This reduces capacity for other services and makes the railway less reliable when delays occur.

In April 2009, at the time of the exhibition, Network Rail had selected an option that consisted of a mixture of viaduct and embankment taking a line to Cambridge over the ECML. These plans were presented to the local community, rail users and other stakeholders to inform and gather feedback.

### **3 The new plans**

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At the moment, trains from Hitchin to Cambridge have to cross three other lines to switch between the East Coast Main Line and the line to Cambridge. This reduces capacity for other services and makes the railway less reliable when delays occur.

By taking the line to Cambridge over, rather than across, the East Coast Main Line these problems are avoided. A new main link between the ECML and Cambridge will help to:

- Create extra capacity to run more services to and from London every hour
- Reduce delays to train services by nearly 18,000 minutes every year, making the railway more punctual and reliable
- Keep the railway open when essential maintenance is needed, by keeping one link between Hitchin and Cambridge active whilst the other is being worked on

### **4 Exhibiting the plans**

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Network Rail takes its relationship with the local community seriously. To this end, public exhibitions were put in place to:

- Engage with the local community before finalising the plans;
- Explain the proposals with good clear information; and
- Listen to feedback

A preview evening for councillors and council officers from North Herts District Council (NHDC) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), parish councils, resident's groups and rail user groups was held on 1 April in the Hitchin Priory – a town centre conference venue.

Following the preview evening, the exhibition was open to the public for three days at the following times:

- Thursday 2 April, 10:00 – 20:00
- Friday 3 April, 10:00 – 18:00
- Saturday 4 April, 10:00 – 14:00

A subsequent exhibition in Letchworth was held on 22 July at the Highfield school in response to a request from local residents to discuss proposals to manage construction traffic. See section 9 for further information.

**See appendix 1 for copies of the display materials**

## **5 Promoting the exhibition**

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Network Rail was keen to explain the plans to as wide an audience and encourage as much feedback as possible. A thorough programme of promotion was put in place:

- Approximately 4,000 flyers were delivered to homes in Hitchin and Ickleford, closest to the proposed line of route, inviting residents to the exhibition
- Posters were sent to North Herts District Council and the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative for display in the town centre, at council offices and the public library
- Adverts were placed in the Comet Group of newspapers (covering the Stevenage, Letchworth, Hitchin and Baldock areas) and the Cambridge Evening News in the week preceding and week of the exhibition. Together these targeted more than 225,000 people
- Editorial coverage was secured in the Hitchin Comet on 19 March, 26 March and 1 April, all publicising the exhibition
- Additional coverage was secured in the Welwyn & Hatfield Times, the East Anglia Daily Times, the Cambridgeshire 24 website and the Cambridge News along with rail trade press.

- Details of the exhibition and information about the proposals were available on the Network Rail website – [www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin)
- A board was placed outside the Hitchin Priory over the course of the exhibition to attract passing visitors
- Approximately 500 flyers for the exhibition and leaflets with details of the scheme were distributed at Hitchin station between 06:30 and 09:00 on 2 April
- Video footage of the proposed viaduct was featured on BBC TV East during the evening News on 2 April

**See appendices 2-4 for copies of the promotional material and appendix 5 for press coverage**

## **6 Consultation participation and gathering feedback**

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### **Exhibition**

In total 329 people viewed the exhibition. 28 attended the preview evening, with a further 301 visitors over the following three days.

### **Comments card and box**

A comments card was given to every attendee at the exhibition and there was a comments box where they could be placed after being filled in. The comments cards were printed with a freepost address on the back to make it easier to return to Network Rail for those who preferred to take the cards away with them. The cards had a blank space for comments to be written and three statements, where respondents were asked to rate – with a mark between one and five – how strongly they agreed or disagreed with them. 129 comment cards were received during and immediately after the exhibition in Hitchin.

### **Website**

The website's content included the information from the exhibition boards and it was advertised in adverts, on the flyers and in the leaflets. After going live on 2 April, there were 1,307 visits to the [www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin) website over a three month period, with a total of 1,545 page views.

### **Consultation e-mail address and phone number**

An e-mail address and phone number were set up and advertised in the leaflet, on the exhibition boards and on the consultation website. 31 people contacted Network Rail about the scheme through the email address.

## 7 Summary of feedback

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The response to the consultation was very positive. 129 comment cards were received after the exhibition in Hitchin. This represents nearly 1 card for every 2 people who attended the exhibition – a high rate of return.

With some cards raising more than one issue a total of 161 separate points were made. Of these, 69 comments (43%, by far the largest category) were positive and supportive of the scheme.

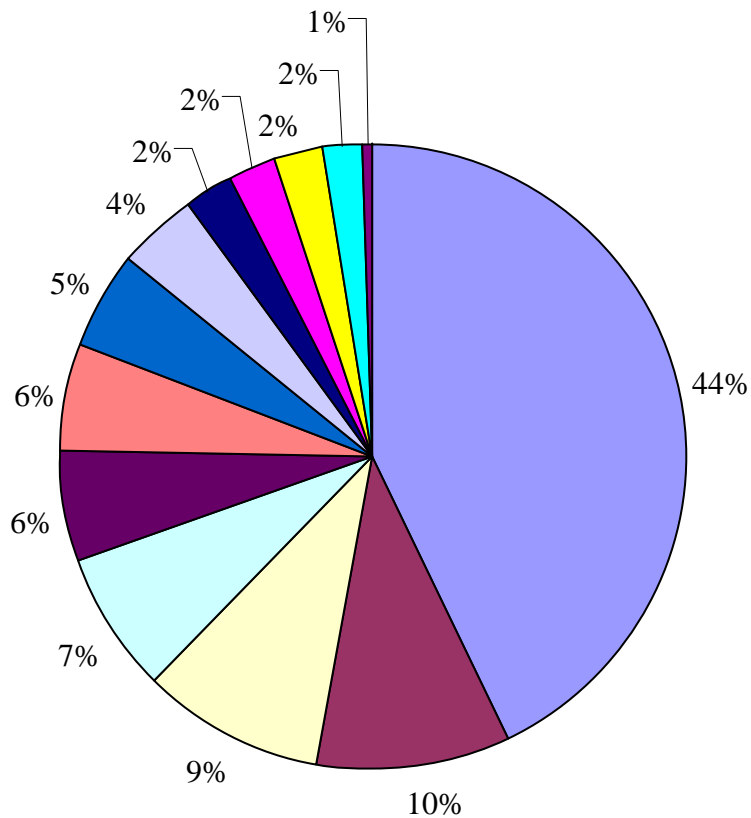
Respondents were also asked to rate three statements accordingly to how strongly they agreed or disagreed with them. Although all three statements drew high levels of agreement, the most important issue according to the 118 responses to the survey is improving service reliability – a key aim of the project.

Statement	% agree or strongly agree	Mean rating
Network Rail should be investing in making services more reliable	90%	4.5
An attractive environment around the new line is a high priority	78%	4.2
Managing disruption to residents caused by construction should be a high priority	73%	4.1

The following table details the kind of views and issues raised by those who responded to the consultation.

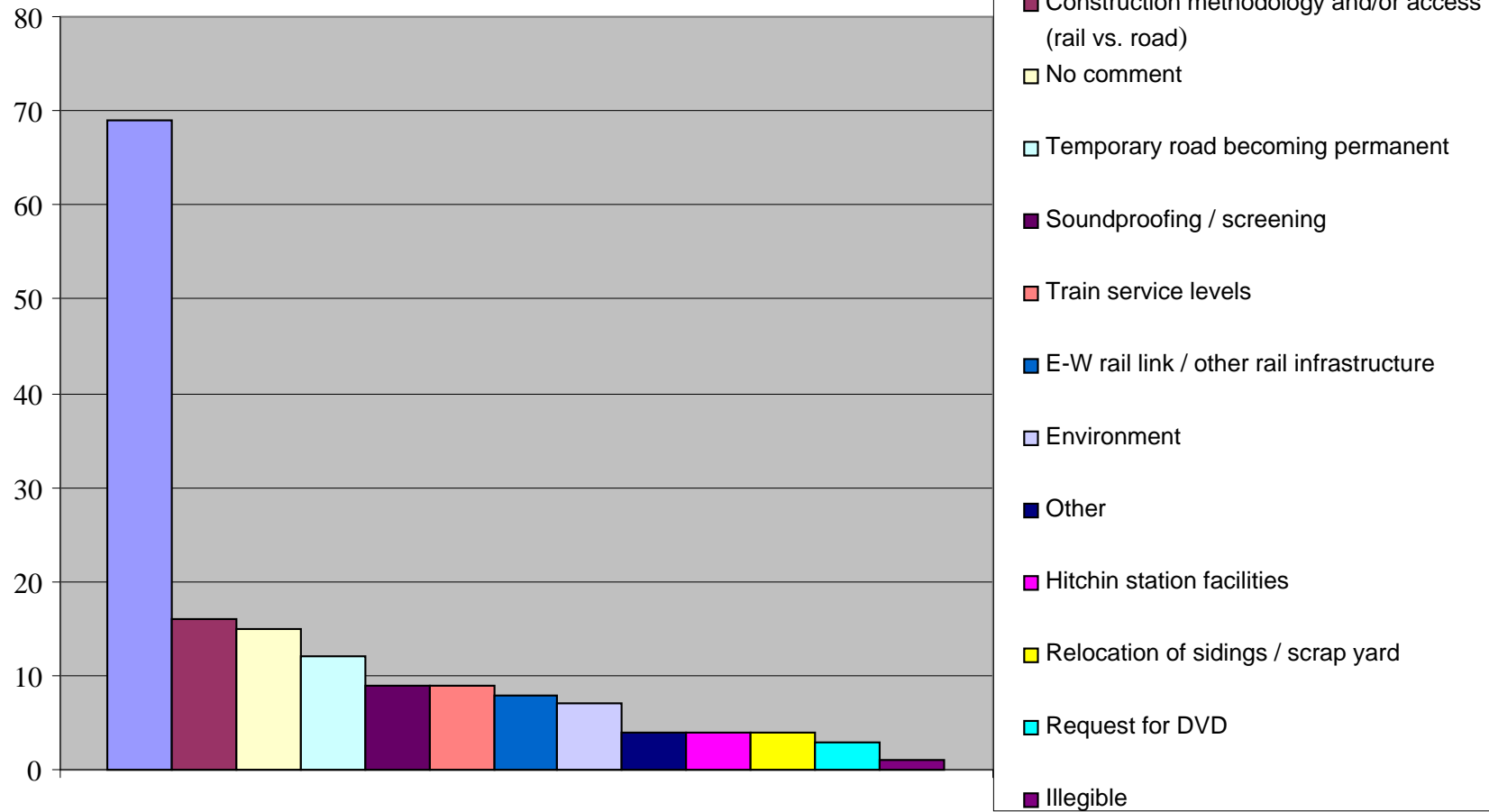
Issue / nature of comment	Number received.	%*
Positive / supportive comments	69	44
Construction methodology and/or construction access (rail vs road)	16	10
No comment	15	9
Temporary construction road becoming permanent	12	7
Soundproofing / screening of new line	9	6
Train service levels	9	6
East - West rail link / other rail infrastructure	8	5
Environmental considerations	7	4
Other	4	2
Hitchin station facilities	4	2
Relocation of sidings / scrap yard	4	2
Request for DVD	3	2
Illegible	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100</b>
* Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number		

**Comment card analysis - all issues**



- Positive comments
- Construction methodology and/or access (rail vs. road)
- No comment
- Temporary road becoming permanent
- Soundproofing / screening
- Train service levels
- E-W rail link / other rail infrastructure
- Environment
- Other
- Hitchin station facilities
- Relocation of sidings / scrap yard
- Request for DVD
- Illegible

### Comment card analysis



## 7.1 Positive comments

44% of the comment cards received were supportive of the scheme without raising any other issues and 69% of the total comments following the exhibition in Hitchin were favourable towards the scheme.

Examples of comments received include:

- “A well presented exhibition with very helpful staff. Excellent all round”
- “Proposal is very welcome and should be undertaken as soon as possible”
- “I am very pleased to see a great plan/ development coming to fruition. It will help the operator (FCC) immensely and improve the line as a whole, Thank you!”
- “Actually a very encouraging development and a vote of confidence in our railways that is almost French in its conception.”
- “Good exhibition, well presented. The reps were informed and helpful. Sooner it happens the better.”
- “I applaud the scheme for the flyover at Hitchin. Please press ahead asap.”

## 7.2 Construction methodology

The two main themes within this category were the extent to which the viaduct should be extended either side of the ECML and how construction material should be brought to site. This second issue can be further subdivided to include comments on the route presumed road traffic would take. At the request of some residents, a separate meeting in Letchworth was arranged to tackle this issue specifically and this issue is reviewed separately in section 9.

Examples of comments received include:

- I agree with the construction of the viaduct and it should reduce the delays as a result. My own slight concern is that the viaduct is visually appealing. Clearly cost is the major issue but it would be nice to have a striking design to look forward to
- Has due consideration been given to the use of rail transport for bringing aggregates and construction materials to site? I did not see this mentioned in the presentation

Consideration was given to bringing materials to site via rail at an early stage in the planning process and rejected for a number of reasons, including:

- Existing rail sidings to unload the material are in the centre of Hitchin and would require the onward transportation of material by lorry through the town centre of Hitchin – something it has been sought to avoid.
- The lack of suitable locations to site an area to unload material brought by rail
- The lack of capacity on the network for the number of trains it would take to bring the material in – were material to be transported by rail, this would increase considerably the amount of night-time work required

### **7.3 Temporary construction road**

The third most significant issue when assessed by number of comments. Here the desire was expressed that any temporary road built for construction traffic be retained and upgraded for use as a permanent way in and out of the nearby industrial estate. This would need to be led by North Hertfordshire District Council as the powers granted by the Transport and Works Act do not allow land to be acquired for a third party or for a purpose not directly related to the scheme.

Examples of comments received include:

- “It would be good if you could get Hertfordshire Highways to agree to work with you so that your temporary access road could become a permanent access road to the industrial estate. Otherwise I think the plan is excellent.”
- “It appears a golden opportunity for the Highways department to take over your temporary access road as a second access road to the industrial area to reduce the number of lorries in the town.”

### **7.4 Soundproofing and screening**

9 comments (6% of the total) were received on this issue.

- “Priority is soundproofing. Rails should be laid on the cushioned effect which is I understand available, also clear plastic sound proofing on the raised (viaduct / embankment) sections should be considered. High boarding, sound proofing would

be visually not acceptable, therefore clear plastic type used if suitable. Also trees could be planted where appropriate. Viaduct is preferred to embankment as more "open" aspect and takes less land."

- "Reduce any excess noise using 'cushions' as described between sleepers and rails."
- "The most essential priority is for the new line (which is raised) to be "baffled" for quietness. Keeping the sound to a minimum is the most important criteria."

The Assessment of Environmental Impact evaluates the issues described here, with chapter 3 looking at Noise and Vibration. It concludes that the scheme is unlikely to result in a direct noise impact at nearby properties. However the cumulative effect of this project and other planned enhancements to the East Coast Main Line is likely to be a slight adverse noise impact on properties on Bury Mead Road due to the increased use of the East Coast Main Line.

## **7.5 East – West rail link**

These comments refer to the aspirations and plans to restore a rail link between Oxford and Cambridge that avoids travelling via London. One of the route options considered by the East West Rail Consortium is a central route that could go through or close to Hitchin. The proposals do not preclude the possible construction of the East – West link, but do not actively further the prospects.

- "Get on with it!! The sooner this is finished the better! Hope that there will be provision in the design to allow EAST - WEST route traffic in the future."
- "This is an important piece of new railway and it has my full support. If the east/west link is to come about this means by passing is essential. I look forward to using it"
- "Interesting scheme. Please get on with it. (And the East-West project) (Bedford - Sandy - Cambridge)"

## 7.6 Environment

A total of seven comments were received about environmental factors – 4% of the total.

Examples included:

- “You should compensate for damages to the natural habitats by restoration elsewhere.”
- “Any environmental objections I may have seem to have been mitigated. I certainly welcome this scheme - certainly long overdue”
- “Replacing any wildlife habitats destroyed / affected by the scheme eg Bury Mead Springs Nature Reserve would be a good thing.”

Chapter 4 of the Assessment of Environmental Impact looks at Landscape and Visual Impact. The mitigation proposals for the works include the planting of native trees and shrubs on the proposed embankment supporting the new link.

## 7.7 Relocation of sidings

An issue similar to the potential permanent use of the temporary construction road and the East – West rail link, in that it does not fall directly within the scope of the project – and could not be included within the Transport and Works Act Order. Reviewing the comments, Network Rail is aware that local groups and residents would like to see the sidings relocated away from the station towards the industrial estate. For this to happen, a third party (for example a freight operator) would need to express an interest and demonstrate a profitable business case for the move. The issue will not be taken forward as part of this Transport and Works Act application.

Comments received included:

- “Network Rail should close down the aggregate / scrap metal yards at Hitchin station and open the old sidings at the old gasworks as a replacement. Noise suppression should be the priority in relation to the new flyover.”

## 7.8 Less common issues

More than one person requested a copy of the 3-D video 'fly-through' shown at the exhibition – a positive endorsement of the materials produced for the exhibition. Another respondent wanted to know the distance between the location of the viaduct and the footbridge over the ECML to the north. A third wanted to know if the Access for All programme of improvements to stations would be coming to Hitchin.

**See appendix 6 for a list of comments received.**

These questions have been responded to, with copies of the flythrough supplied on DVD.

## 8 Letchworth and construction traffic

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One comment card was received following the exhibition regarding the proposed route for construction traffic:

- “Concerned about heavy traffic in residential area between Icknield Way and Wilbury Road, Letchworth particularly at blind bend - should use A505 & A6141 to A1M. Why not use railway to bring material to site. NHDC are interested in reopening sidings next to site”

This was followed by an email to the [hitchin@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:hitchin@networkrail.co.uk) address along with two letters from residents along the proposed route on the issue requesting more information and for a meeting in Letchworth on the issue. Subsequently North Herts. District Council also asked for an event in Letchworth to allow residents on and near to Wilbury Hills Road to discuss the proposals with Network Rail representatives. Responding to these concerns, Network Rail attended the NHDC Letchworth Area Committee meeting on the evening of 22 July. Network Rail also met the local MP, Oliver Heald, to discuss this issue on 8 July.

The meeting of 22 July was well attended, with approximately 40 residents along with local councillors present. Five Network Rail representatives attended, with the display boards from the April exhibition and a 'fact sheet' with information on estimated traffic levels (**see appendix 7**).

Concerns centred on the chosen route and many of those attending stated they would prefer traffic to use the A505 to access the site, or for traffic to be split between the A505 and the A507 to reduce the amount of traffic using Wilbury Hills Road. Other issues raised were around the suitability of Wilbury Hills Road for heavy construction traffic and included requests for traffic calming measures and temporary or permanent speed restrictions.

These issues are addressed in chapter 11 of the Assessment of Environmental Impact, which details the reasoning for the preferred route to site.

Subsequent to the meeting on 22 July, two requests for a further meeting to debate the issue of the preferred route for construction traffic were received along with three comment cards (**included in appendix 6**). Given the previous levels of public engagement and the basic difference in view on the most suitable route to site, a further meeting was not arranged immediately although we intend to meet again with the residents of Wilbury Hills Road before the end of the objection period subsequent to the submission of the Draft Order.

## **9 Conclusions**

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Network Rail's plans were received positively on the whole, especially in Hitchin where the viaduct and new line will be constructed. We will seek to build on this good will throughout the life of the project.

Issues that need some further consideration mainly relate to environmental factors and minimising the disruption that could be caused by the construction of the viaduct. Of these, the most significant appears to be managing the disruption caused by construction traffic. A full Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken and the Environmental Statement, submitted as part of the Transport and Works Act Order application details the measures Network Rail will undertake to mitigate the impact of the new line.

We will continue to work with North Herts. District Council and other statutory and non-statutory stakeholders over the life time of the project to make sure the scheme can be introduced with the minimum of disruption.

# Appendices

## 9.1 Appendix 1 – Exhibition display materials

# Welcome



### This exhibition has been organised by Network Rail, the company that owns and operates Britain's railway.

Here we explain our plans to improve the rail links between London, Hitchin and Cambridge.

This is your chance to:

- See our plans
- Ask the team questions
- Have your say and give us your comments

We will consider all your feedback carefully before we finalise our plans.

### The growing railway

Hitchin is at the heart of an increasingly popular railway. On the East Coast Main Line between London and Scotland, it marks the point at which the line divides towards Letchworth and Cambridge.

The last decade has seen a 35% increase in passengers travelling between Peterborough and London and an 10% increase in journeys between London and Cambridge. In the past ten years, the amount of freight carried by rail has increased by a massive 60%.

In the long term, passenger growth is expected to continue. So we need new infrastructure to meet the demand for rail travel. In February 2006, Network Rail published a Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for the East Coast Main Line. This strategy explains the need to:

- Increase capacity for peak passenger services into London and other urban centres
- Increase and improve long distance passenger services throughout the day
- Provide capacity for freight growth

Cambridge Junction, north of Hitchin station, is one of the key bottlenecks on the line and needs to be improved to meet these aims.



\*www.networkrail.co.uk/rus



[www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin)



# Our plans



## The problem

At the moment, trains from Hitchin to Cambridge have to cross three other lines to switch between the East Coast Main Line and the line to Cambridge. This reduces capacity for other services and makes the railway less reliable when delays occur.



## The solution

By taking the line to Cambridge over, rather than across, the East Coast Main Line these problems are avoided.



Aerial view of proposed new line



## The benefits

Creating a new main link between the East Coast Main Line and Cambridge will help to:

- Create extra capacity to run more services to and from London every hour
- Reduce delays to train services by nearly 18,000 minutes every year, making the railway more punctual and reliable
- Keep the railway open when essential maintenance is needed, by keeping one link between Hitchin and Cambridge active whilst the other is being worked on

Current track viewed from footbridge



Proposed solution



Current west view



Proposed solution



# Working with others



These proposals have been developed working closely with North Hertfordshire District Council and other important stakeholders. As the plans continue to develop we will keep working closely with the council to make sure that local opinion is properly represented.

## Building considerably

We have thought carefully about how to make sure the new line is as low profile as possible – a mixture of embankment and viaduct. As our plans have evolved we have tried to reduce the amount of material brought to site by increasing the length of the viaduct. However, a substantial amount of material will need to be brought to site by lorry. Network Rail is committed to building considerably and will do everything we can to keep disruption from this work to a minimum.

With this in mind, our current proposals include a plan to build an access road to the site to separate our construction traffic from Hitchin and Letchworth town centres. We plan to use the A507 to reach the site with access via Stotfold Road, just north of the railway bridge.

Network Rail runs a 24 hour helpline on 08457 114141 and once construction is underway a team of regional community relations advisors and a manager covering the area will be able to respond to any concerns.

## Next steps

We want to apply for permission to build the line later this year. We hope this will be granted by early 2011, allowing us to start work on the project later that year. This would mean that trains would be running on the new line around the beginning of 2014.



Current view from Icknield Way



## The environment and the community

Network Rail takes its responsibilities to local communities and to the environment seriously and will undertake a full environmental impact study of the proposal. This will look at issues including:

- Landscaping
- Ecology
- Archaeology
- Rivers and flooding
- Noise levels
- Contaminated land

We know these issues are important and want you to have your say on how we deal with them. Our final plans will take into account these factors and your feedback.

## Have your say

Thank you for visiting our exhibition, we hope you've found it helpful. Please let us have your comments on our comments cards or speak to a member of the Network Rail team here today.

Alternatively, you can also comment by email on [hitchin@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:hitchin@networkrail.co.uk)

Or call us on: 020 3356 9373

Proposed solution



9.2 Appendix 2 – flyer



### 9.3 Appendix 3 – poster

**HAVE YOUR SAY**

**Bringing you a better railway**

We've got plans to improve the railway between London, Hitchin and Cambridge.

Come and have your say at our exhibition:

Thursday 02 April	10am - 8pm
Friday 03 April	10am - 6pm
Saturday 04 April	10am - 2pm

Adam Room, Hitchin Priory, Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 2DL

[www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin)

**Network Rail**



9.4 Appendix 4 – newspaper advert

**HAVE YOUR SAY**

**Bringing you a better railway**

We've got plans to improve the railway between London, Hitchin and Cambridge. Come and have your say at our exhibition.

Thursday 02 April	10am - 8pm
Friday 03 April	10am - 6pm
Saturday 04 April	10am - 2pm

Adam Room, Hitchin Priory, Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 2DL

[www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/hitchin)

**Network Rail**



## 9.5 Appendix 5 – newspaper coverage

The Comet, 19 March 2009

### **Flyover plans revealed**

PLANS for a rail flyover that could increase services will go on display next month.

The exhibition by Network Rail will show proposals for a new junction to the north of Hitchin which would enable the Cambridge Line to go over, rather than across, the East Coast Main Line.

A spokesman for the company said: "At the moment trains from Hitchin to Cambridge have to cross three other lines to switch between the East Coast Main Line and the line to Cambridge. This reduces capacity for other services and makes the railway less reliable when delays occur. The new junction would avoid these problems."

The company first mooted the idea of redeveloping the line three years ago and now want to show their plans to residents so they can have their say.

The network anticipate the flyover would create extra capacity to run more services to and from London every hour, reduce delays by around 500 hours and enable trains to keep running when maintenance is needed.

The exhibition will be held at Hitchin Priory from April 2 - 4. Members of the project team will be on hand to answer questions.

Welwyn & Hatfield Times, 31 March 2009

### **New viaduct will reduce delays on East Coast Main Line**

PLANS to reduce rail delays, journey times and passenger overcrowding in Times Territory have been unveiled.

Network Rail, which owns and operates Britain's railway infrastructure, wants to build a £55m viaduct on the East Coast Main Line near Hitchin.

The company believes the bridge would help remove one of the UK's worst rail bottlenecks, with the effect that delays and journey times between London and Cambridge would decrease.

A public exhibition of the plans will be held at Hitchin Priory, in Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, from April 2-4.

Network Rail route director Richard Lungmuss said: "The investment we are planning in the Hitchin area is about improving transport links, reducing delays to passengers and increasing the number of services.

"Rail users the length of the country will feel the benefits of this scheme as we remove the biggest remaining pinch point on the East Coast Main Line.

"We're excited at the prospect and now we want rail users and the people of Hitchin to have their say."

The exhibition times are as follows;

Thursday, April 2 - from 10am to 8pm

Friday, April 3 - from 10am to 6pm

Saturday, April 4 - from 10am to 2pm

The Comet, 1 April 2009

### **Plans for £55m rail viaduct go on show**

Plans for a new viaduct which planners say will remove one of the worst rail bottlenecks in the country go on show tomorrow (Thursday).

Designs for the £55m project to the north of Hitchin, at a track intersection known as Cambridge junction, will go on display at Hitchin Priory.

The project will take the Cambridge Line over the East Coast Main Line which track owners Network Rail say will improve services between Cambridge and London.

Richard Lungmuss, route director at Network Rail said: "The investment we are planning in the Hitchin area is about improving transport links, reducing delays to passengers and increasing the number of services.

"Rail users the length of the country will feel the benefits of this scheme as we remove the biggest remaining pinch point on the East Coast Main Line. "We're excited at the prospect and now we want rail users and the people of Hitchin to have their say." Residents will be able speak to representatives from the company at the Priory.

Network Rail hopes to apply for permission to build the line later this year with a prospective finishing date sometime in early 2014.

The exhibition will be open on Thursday from 10am to 8pm, Friday 10am to 6pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm.

Cambridge News online, 2 April 2009

### **£55m rail link for Cambridge trains**

THIS is the video which shows a new proposal which could speed up journeys for passengers travelling between Cambridge and London.

Travellers have been promised more trains and fewer delays when a massive new link is built.

Network Rail has unveiled plans to construct a £55 million viaduct near Hitchin - removing what it calls "one of the country's worst bottlenecks".

Instead of having to cross the East Coast main line, as they do now, Cambridge trains will be able to zoom over it. At present, trains travelling from London to Cambridge have to cross three other lines to switch between the East Coast main line and the line to Cambridge.

A spokesman for Network Rail said: "This reduces capacity for other services and makes the railway less reliable when delays occur.

"The new rail link would avoid these problems completely, cutting delays to train services by nearly 18,000 minutes every year, and helping to create the capacity to run more services to and from the capital every hour."

Richard Lungmuss, route director for Network Rail, said: "The investment we are planning in the Hitchin area is about improving transport links, reducing delays to passengers and increasing the number of services.

"Rail users the length of the country will feel the benefits of this scheme as we remove the biggest remaining pinch-point on the East Coast main line - we're excited at the prospect."

He said the company hoped to apply for planning permission later this year, with construction scheduled for 2012. If approved, the new link would be completed by 2014.

It is part of a £35 billion nationwide spending programme by Network Rail.

More than £1 billion of this will be spent in the Anglia region over the next five years.

The programme includes putting on extra trains, making trains longer, station improvements and providing extra capacity for freight. Track will also be renewed.

One of the biggest projects will be the building of an additional 'island' platform at Cambridge station costing nearly £31 million.

This will allow longer trains to use the station.

The Comet, 5 August 2009

### **Residents fear road misery when Hitchin rail loop is built**

RESIDENTS in North Herts face a year of misery on the roads when the £54m Network Rail Hitchin rail loop is built.

Hitchin councillor Judi Billing said: "Nobody is going to escape the consequences of the building of this rail loop. We are just going to have to grin and bear it. In Hitchin there has been a lot of disruption recently and residents have been quite brave.

"This rail programme is about progress."

But Lucy Kitching-Ward of Wilbury Hills Road, Letchworth GC says the prospect of having one heavy lorry carrying tons of equipment passing her home every two minutes means misery for her and other residents.

"I am not opposed to the rail link but more should be done to keep all of the construction traffic away from Letchworth," said Mrs Kitching-Ward.

"I want to see a full public consultation before formal planning is applied for in October as there is only a six week period after the application for anyone to lodge objections and observations to North Herts District Council (NHDC).

"I have estimated that a heavy goods vehicle will be passing my doorstep every two minutes on top of all the other traffic. Network Rail told us there will be on average 280 construction vehicles a day using the A507. It will be hell here when the project starts.

"The whole of the road to the A507 will be involved. They intend to bring every ounce of plant, material and equipment and personnel along that road. Why can't Network Rail split the traffic 50/50 with the A505 which is an A road to take the additional traffic with no trouble at all? Why does it all have to come past Fairfield Park and along Wilbury Hills Road which isn't even a B road?"

Her neighbour Richard Robinson said: "This has come like a bolt out of the blue to residents. Wilbury Hills Road is a very bad road to cross at the best of times and it is also a major route to Fearnhill School with the footpath right next to the road.

"We need a full public consultation to try and take some of the traffic away from this area."

NHDC councillor Michael Paterson, who represents Letchworth East, said: "Nothing is set in concrete. Network Rail is being advised this is the route they might take."

"As far as the council is concerned everybody's concerns will be taken on board and I can understand their fears."

Network Rail says Hertfordshire County Council, NHDC and the local police have suggested using the A507 would be the least disruptive route.

The construction site will be accessed from Stotfold Road, just north of the railway bridge with traffic going backwards and forwards via the A1.

A spokesman for Network Rail said: "We recognise that construction could have an impact on people who live nearby and we are continuing to consult with the local community on our plans in order to minimise any impact."

Network Rail hopes to apply for planning permission by the end of this year and is hoping permission will be granted in 2011 with work starting the same year and be completed early 2014.

## 9.6 Appendix 6 – comments from cards

<p>Priority is soundproofing. Rails should be laid on the cushioned effect which is I understand available, also clear plastic sound proofing on the raised (viaduct / embankment) sections should be considered. High boarding, sound proofing would be visually <u>not</u> acceptable, therefore clear plastic type used if suitable. Also trees could be planted where appropriate. Viaduct is preferred to embankment as more "open" aspect and takes less land.</p>
<p>There is little reason why this improvement should not go ahead at full speed! Ideas: 1) A siding into the Hitchin industrial area to move bulk goods - ie scrap metal. 2) Convert temporary road into bus + HGV access to Hitchin ind area. 3) Bring in all heavy materials by rail! That's how railways were originally built?</p>
<p>The scheme eliminates the conflict with the up fast slow but introduces a conflict with the down slow when the 2 x hourly Cambridge trains move from the down fast - down Cambridge. The new loop should leave the down fast and run between the down fast and down slow before crossing the ECML on the flyover this would eliminate all conflicts.</p>
<p>The proposed viaduct on the West side could increase noise level for residents of Ickleford. Request that special track sound proofing specifications be applied to this section of the viaduct.</p>
<p>An excellent scheme. I hope the temporary access to the industrial estate will become permanent.</p>
<p>Concerned about heavy traffic in residential area between Icknield Way and Wilbury Road, Letchworth particularly at blind bend - should use A505 &amp; A6141 to A1M. Why not use railway to bring material to site. NHDC are interested in reopening sidings next to site</p>
<p>Proposal is very welcome and should be undertaken as soon as possible</p>
<p>Well explained and set out. Good for Hitchin commuters is keeping services via Hitchin. I would encourage trees around line to reduce noise, be attractive and reduce CO2.</p>
<p>It seems essentially a sensible proposal that will cause relatively little disruption. Of what material will the viaduct be built? From how far away will it come? Will it look reasonable after 10 years weathering?</p>
<p>A lot of people walk down the lane from the Wilbury pub to Ickleford then alongside the field to get to work. Will you put in a footbridge.</p>
<p>Good informative exhibition and well staffed! The project is long overdue but most welcome now it is nearly here. Now start planning the East to North link chord ready for the East - West Rail Link!</p>

I appreciate the problem but am very concerned about the environmental impact of the new line, in terms of the way it will look as it cuts through the landscape. Thank you for the opportunity to feed into the proposal.
It would be good if you could get Hertfordshire Highways to agree to work with you so that your temporary access road could become a permanent access road to the industrial estate. Otherwise I think the plan is excellent.
Provisions should be made for a road bridge so that the industrial estate is <u>not</u> encircled.
Network Rail should close down the aggregate / scrap metal yards at Hitchin station and open the old sidings at the old gasworks as a replacement. Noise suppression should be the priority in relation to the new flyover.
I look forward to being on one of the first trains over the flyover. Please can I have a copy of the DVD
We found the exhibition in the Priory very interesting regarding the flyover on the Cambridge line and are pleased to know it is at last going to go ahead. The people at the exhibition were very welcoming and helpful.
Well run exhibition in Priory. Pleasant welcome and guide. Plans seem well thought out and should improve rail services without too much disturbance to public.
I attach particular importance to a solution which does <u>not</u> reduce the service at Hitchin station to Letchworth G C etc and Cambridge (or to Peterborough). A flyover from the down fast line alone is not supported.
It appears a golden opportunity for the Highways department to take over your temporary access road as a second access road to the industrial area to reduce the number of lorries in the town.
Get on with it!! The sooner this is finished the better! Hope that there will be provision in the design to allow EAST - WEST route traffic in the future.
I have lived in Hitchin for a very long time and now I live at Haynes. I still drive to Hitchin station to travel into London as the service is better than the Bedford line. Hitchin is <u>excellently</u> run by staff. I am in total favour of the proposals and look forward to greater improvements! Good luck!!!
I also strongly support the proposed East - West link whether via Stevenage / Luton or Sandy / Bedford to improve transport links from Hitchin which are extremely poor if travelling west from Hitchin.
Looks like a very good plan, provided the location of the viaduct stays where it is on the plan and doesn't end up further north or west.
I am very much in favour of this project on safety grounds. Only one query - will pile driving

not take place in the evening and on Sundays.
As the development is going through an unattractive part of town, you should hurry up and build it.
I agree this is important & high priority. When the line is built, Hitchin passengers must see an advantage more trains, faster trains, more reliable service.
Pedestrian access to the station also needs improvement. One way this could be achieved is to provide access from the footbridge located south of the station
1) I fully support the project. 2) Please negotiate with HCC and NHDC to leave the construction road in place so it can be used as base for access to industrial area - the underpass might need to change position. 3) improve frequency and journey times for N. Herts stations - not just Cambridge and East Coast. 4) Progress the idea of extra track to speed up the fast Cambridge trains
With a huge amount of topsoil to make up the embankment why not reclaim from the proposed site by making a larger hole (landfill after) or re-landscaping and lower a valley. This would save costs and help with less "lorry movements".
As assured by Network Rail staff at exhibition, I trust the site and site traffic will not cause disruption in built up areas of Hitchin particularly Bury Mead Road
Reduce any excess noise using 'cushions' as described between sleepers and rails. Proposed scheme acceptable not variation explained 1/4/09 by using alternative track - which would extend viaduct over Ickleford. Should be investing in longer trains for commuters.
A well presented exhibition with very helpful staff. Excellent all round
I would like to know the difference between the Northern edge of the proposed viaduct and the footbridge at Icknield Way
Good plan, helpful staff, please make your printed directions bold and bigger
Sounds very sensible as long as the money is available to create a project that falls within budget/timescales and doesn't need completely re jiggng as in case of WCML upgrade ie, rugby flyover
I think this is a sensible scheme
Because of the height of the proposed line, the noise will carry further and affect the inhabitants of Ickleford more. Also in winter the line will be seen clearly to residents in Ickleford, soundproofing and screening essential
Good to see progress approaching, any short term disruption should hopefully be worthwhile
Good presentation, well thought out except that Ickleford ignored on map, no river or Arlesey

Road shown. Elevated tracks will cause increased sideways noise towards Ickleford. Existing trees are commercial grown with limited lifespan, permanent sound proofing required
Maintain the access road after the construction is complete refer to local authority
Obviously this bottleneck needs sorting. I can only encourage plans that will improve services. I think the proposal is a good plan and I doubt it can be improved
I agree with the construction of the viaduct and it should reduce the delays as a result. My own slight concern is that the viaduct is visually appealing. Clearly cost is the major issue but it would be nice to have a striking design to look forward to
I am very pleased to see a great plan/ development coming to fruition. It will help the operator (FCC) immensely and improve the line as a whole, Thank you!
Disruption to train services should be minimised during the construction of new Cambridge line
I think there has to be a more aesthetic way of providing the line, the bridge is unsightly and damages the view and I think it should be done differently i.e. low level
This is an important piece of new railway and it has my full support. If the east/west link is to come about this means by passing is essential. I look forward to using it
Good! We do need more infrastructure in South East England - it is so overcrowded. We need more railways roads, airports, waters supplies. Good luck with your planning application. I only hope the cost will not be put on the present too high rail fares!
FAO Peter Maynard re Access For All - Hitchin Station. Is there plans to roll out Access for All at Hitchin Station? If so when?
Actually a very encouraging development and a vote of confidence in our railways that is almost French in its conception.
All stations to take 12 coaches, upgrade the Hertford Loop as a quicker alternative to relive viaduct at Welwyn (power and signalling upgrade). All consistent with Transport Vision.
The proposal looks very good
The proposal appears to be generally satisfactory from all points of view. Hurry up and complete it!
Agree with the scheme to improve the line to Cambridge. Very concerned that the County/District Council have not identified a site for the road from industrial areas. Please address the problems with Cambridge Road Bridge.
As the stated objective of the Temporary Construction access road is to keep construction traffic out of Hitchin - please liaise with NHDC with a view to making this road a more permanent facility which is badly needed now for scrap metal lorries.
Good ideas. Lower your costs by getting Herts CC funding. Turn access road into a

permanent relief road for Caldwell industrial estate. PS email address doesn't work and no one answers your phone, this is a shambles after such a well produced and engaging booklet.
yes, absolutely. Go ahead with the plans for the new Hitchin-Cambridge link. Also build a new viaduct between Welwyn and Welwyn Garden City
You should compensate for damages to the natural habitats by restoration elsewhere.
Please have more direct trains to Hatfield from Hitchin in the morning peak hours
This is an fantastic idea. It should be done as soon as possible.
The viaduct and embankment solution is an intrusion to the green belt. An under pass taking van depot north of the station and part of the common, with vans realignment should be an acceptable solution.
I think the solution to the problem is a very good one. Ensuring the impact to the environment is kept to a min.
Please start as soon as possible.
I strongly support these proposals which are long awaited in implementation.
Good exhibition, well presented. The reps were informed and helpful. Sooner it happens the better.
as a train driver, I am slightly concerned that it sounds as if all Letchworth bound traffic will be leaning on a single yellow. Apart from that it's a good and much needed scheme.
The plans certainly look good as long as the concerns are mitigated. E.g. environmental impact, disruption during construction, noise issues at Ickleford
Any environmental objections I may have seem to have been mitigated. I certainly welcome this scheme - certainly long overdue
Very informative presentation, lovely setting, friendly presenting Network Rail employees
Useful exhibition. I hope this is built as soon as possible.
Glad to see this project is finally going ahead
Interesting. Plan overdue, no doubt, seems a good one, leaving much of the 'ancient' line and arrangements intact (and allowing a good view, no doubt in the future 'in train'). A good bit of modern thinking. [should ~~ much like a free pear of all Hitchin's rail layout -ongoing?]
Please clarify if any disruption is anticipated on new work to the embankment/viaduct for residents of the Millstream Close development off Grove Road, Hitchin. The existing embankment Runs at the side of this development.
This would be a very successful solution to a very busy route - which seems to be well thought out and very sympathetically achieved
Most of the confusion and objection about this scheme is due to lack of communication with local people - the <u>actual</u> scheme is absolutely fine

The current proposal seems to affect no homes and if the infrastructure of footpaths etc is maintained this should be a real asset to anyone using the local rail network.
proper access to Stotford Road during construction - traffic lights will be required.
This flyover should be a very high priority Tho extra tracks through Welwyn. Reduced journey times on EML important. All daytime/nights should go in "joint" [cant read]
The plans make good sense. Anyone affected should be compensated. Let's get the project completed as soon as possible.
Looks good. Please can I have a copy of drawing No. CV-007?
Anything which makes the rail network better is a plus as long as the environment is taken into consideration.
To improve journey times, close Welyn North Station
The sooner the better!
All in favour - sooner the better
1) Good - pleased to hear that the money is validated - get on with it! 2) I'd be interested to receive a plan of the aerial photo (p.2) so I can write to NHPC about getting permission for a permanent road from Cadwell Lane Industrial Estate out to Old Road 3) Ask First Capital Connect to construct a lift at Hitchin Station
The proposed relief construction appears to be highly desirable. I hope that the longer term effects will be as thoroughly researched as possible and co-ordinated as well as possible with the proposal to keep heavy lorries away from the residential area.
It is a good, well thought out scheme, I hope it won't spawn further development, also that the viaduct blends in unobtrusively as possible
This appears to be an elegant solution to the problem
Proposed solution looks most impressive. As traffic increases it will surely be needed.
A very good idea long overdue.
I understand HRUG has been wanting such improvements for some time. I hope all your consultations go through quickly and smoothly.
Seems like a sensible proposal! I like the idea of keeping one route open for flexibility also future works etc
It's a very good idea.
EXCELLENT OVERALL ESPECIALLY when more freight and passenger traffic is manifested from the North. However please retain existing "down" crossovers, which for fast down Cambridge trains will still be overall quicker if up/slow-fast tracks clear. 2) be mindful of possible EAST/WEST route crossing from the west at this point, if not using Stevenage or Sandy as crossing point. Thank you.

I remember hearing about this many years ago and is good to see it is finally being done.
Interesting scheme. Please get on with it. (And the East-West project) (Bedford - Sandy - Cambridge.)
A very worthwhile scheme.
This is long overdue. Pleased to see construction traffic thro urban area will be kept to a minimum
The most essential priority is for the new line (which is raised) to be "baffled" for quietness. Keeping the sound to a minimum is the most important criteria.
Has due consideration been given to the use of rail transport for bringing aggregates and construction materials to site? I did not see this mentioned in the presentation.
I applaud the scheme for the flyover at Hitchin. Please press ahead asap.
To improve rail access for residents of south Hitchin, please provide pedestrian access to bottom of station car park from existing footbridge by William Ransom school
Please can we have a bridge and road into scrap yard to make lorrys use it. At the moment the lorrys can only get in one way they should be taken away from the Residents roads
Presentation was excellent & informative. DVD was excellent (any chance of DVD copy please??) Many thanks.
Lack of capacity is a huge issue which hopefully will also be addressed by these changes.
NR told me that materials will be shipped in and out by lorry as this is cheapest. I think unpleasant disruption to people living adjacent to this site should be minimised. Even if rather more expensive, use rail to transfer materials wherever possible
Sounds a reasonable proposal - go for it!
The wider environmental impacts need to be considered and addressed with imagination and for the long term. A positive approach to mitigation and the impacts beyond the lines footprint will result in an attractive, sustainable and bio diverse environment
Whilst doing this upgrade, a relief road should be included to the industrial area to keep the traffic away from the residential areas of Hitchin. This road has been talked about for ages and is long overdue.
Grave concerns over noise, in particular, and visibility. Sound of trains echoes across the hollow at present so maximum effort to minimise sound on both line and under it is needed. I feel an embankment would be best for this, also for visibility in the long term
I assume there will be sufficient rolling stock for this new plan? We are given the impression that it's hard to come by - which I find ridiculous.
Replacing any wildlife habitats destroyed / affected by the scheme eg Bury Mead Springs Nature Reserve would be a good thing.

<b>Comments received subsequent to 22 July</b>
I am opposed to use of Stotfold Road / Wilbury Hills Road for all construction traffic to the site. I suggest access is shared with the A505. The 'preferred route' has many inherent dangers which will be made worse if this route is exclusively used.
Wilbury Road serious danger points – current speed limit too high, existing parking on road / congestion, dangerous bends / junctions, cemetery entrance / restaurant / mobile home site, school children walking etc, buses + bus stop near bend, access out of side roads
Your company has failed to keep the residents of Stotfold Road informed of any meetings in Hitchin or Letchworth or correspond with us. We will be effected with increased traffic from 2015 onwards.

## **9.7 Appendix 7 – 22 July meeting, fact sheet content**

### **Hitchin Cambridge Junction fact sheet**

#### **Background**

On the East Coast Main Line between London and Scotland, Cambridge junction (just north of Hitchin station) marks the point at which the line divides towards Letchworth and Cambridge.

Hitchin and Letchworth are at the heart of an increasingly popular railway. In the past ten years:

- Passengers travelling between Peterborough and London have increased by 35%
- Journeys between London and Cambridge have increased by 18%
- Freight carried by rail has increased 60%

Cambridge junction is a key bottleneck and needs to be improved to:

- Increase capacity for peak passenger services into London and other urban centres
- Increase and improve long distance passenger services throughout the day
- Provide capacity for freight growth

At the moment, trains from Hitchin to Cambridge have to cross three other lines to switch between the East Coast Main Line (ECML) and the line to Cambridge, reducing capacity and making the railway less reliable. By building a viaduct to take the line to Cambridge over, rather than across the ECML, these problems are avoided.

### **Consultation**

Throughout the development of our plans, we have worked closely with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) and other stakeholders. As the plans develop, we will continue to do so to make sure local opinion is properly considered.

In April this year, we held a public exhibition in Hitchin. Feedback from this was very positive. Nearly 50% of the comments received were entirely in favour of the scheme. Many others also backed the proposals – but asked for other factors, such as replanting of trees, to be taken into account.

One request was for us to exhibit our plans in Letchworth, to discuss how construction traffic might impact on Letchworth and, in particular, the Wilbury Hills Road area.

### **Minimising impact**

We have thought carefully about how to minimise the impact of our plans. We have sought to make the new line as low profile as possible – a mixture of embankment and viaduct. As our plans have evolved we have tried to reduce the amount of material brought to site by road by increasing the length of the viaduct.

We have discussed potential routes to site with Hitchin County Council (the highways authority), NHDC and the local police. A priority from these discussions has been to separate construction traffic from Letchworth and Hitchin town centres. This is best achieved by reaching the site from Junction 10 of the A1(M) via the A507 / Wilbury Hills Road with an access point off Stotfold Road, just north of the railway bridge.

### **Alternatives**

A number of alternative road routes were considered and ultimately rejected because they would come closer to the town centres and / or affect a greater number of residents.

We also looked at transporting the material required by rail. This was rejected for a number of reasons, some of which are outlined below:

- The ECML is already heavily congested – the reason for building the viaduct – and it is not practical to schedule the number of freight trains required to bring the material to site
- Loading material onto rail would most likely require initial HGV use in another location
- If material was delivered by rail there is presently nowhere suitable to unload it. Sites west and east of the station would both mean construction traffic travelling through the centre of Hitchin to reach Cambridge Road / Stotfold Road and building a new site to unload would probably prove counterproductive in that it would require a similar level of construction traffic as building the embankment itself

### Traffic impact assessment

As part of the planning process, we have carried out a full traffic impact assessment. The table below shows the present and anticipated levels of traffic on Wilbury Hills Road during 2012 – the period over which the vast majority of construction will be undertaken.

Because a detailed programme of work is still to be worked out and a contractor to be appointed these are only estimates. However, they are thought to be ‘worst case’ estimates and it is probable that less traffic would use Wilbury Hills Road than shown below and that this level of traffic would only be for a part of 2012, not the full year.

### Wilbury Hills Road traffic

	Busiest hour AM (southbound)	Busiest hour AM (northbound)	Busiest hour PM (southbound)	Busiest hour PM (northbound)	AAWT (both ways)	Number of HGVs per day
Present levels of traffic	540	280	300	420	7800	160

Anticipated construction traffic – 2012	70	30	30	70	560	280
Total	610	310	330	490	8360	440
<b>Percentage increase in traffic</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>N/A</b>

AAWT – a measure of the average number of vehicles using the road on a working day

Busiest hour – the 60 minute period in which the most traffic is recorded

HGV – Heavy Goods Vehicle

In exceptional periods – likely to be no more than one or two days at a time, traffic could rise to some extra 650 vehicles a day rather than 560. These extra vehicles would be mostly off-peak and this would mean an approximate 13% increase in traffic over a present average working day, rather than 7%.

### Next steps

We plan to apply for a Transport and Works Act Order in October of this year to seek the power to build the viaduct and new line. This process sees the Secretary of State for Transport make the ultimate decision as to whether or not the scheme should go ahead and usually involves a public enquiry. As part of this process, North Herts District Council would also hold a public consultation into the proposals.

Part of our application will include a full Environmental Statement detailing the impact of the work on aspects such as traffic levels and the natural habitat. This is being written at the moment and will be a publicly available document.

We hope a final decision to confirm the scheme can go ahead can be made during 2011. Initial work would then begin towards the end of that year. Most construction (the building of the embankment and viaduct) and associated traffic would happen in 2012, with the line ready to open at the end of 2013.

**Contact us**

If you have any comments or questions about our plans, our helpline is open 24 hours a day on 08457 114141. Alternatively you can email us – [hitchin@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:hitchin@networkrail.co.uk)

**END**