East West Rail – Update

What is East West Rail?



East West Rail is a new railway connecting communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge, transforming connectivity across the region.

It will make journeys easier and more reliable, connecting people and communities with jobs, education, businesses and essential services.

About me

Ben Rule, Railway Operations Director (EWR Co.)



Why the Ox-Cam Growth Corridor matters

The Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor is one of the UK's most important economic regions and a global centre for science, technology, innovation and tourism.

Jobs | Education | Business | Opportunity

Brings together world-leading universities, research, businesses and talent, the region has significant potential to attract investment, boost productivity and support sustainable growth.

serves
3.5 million people

supports
2 million+ jobs

connects a
£143bn economy

Supporting Growth Globally, Nationally, Regionally and Locally

EWR will play a defining role in the future of the Corridor with impacts far beyond the delivery of the new rail network:

At the global level

East West Rail will enhance passenger access between the Corridor and international gateways such as Stansted and Luton Airport, supporting inward investment and export growth.

At the national level

EWR will strengthen connections between the Growth Corridor and the rest of the UK, improving access to the industrial, manufacturing and logistics centres that businesses need to grow.

At the growth corridor level

EWR brings together four regional cities, nine universities and world-class expertise into a single integrated ecosystem, at the scale required to compete as a leading global innovation cluster.

At the place level

New stations and enhanced connectivity will act as catalysts for local growth, supporting better access to jobs, services, healthcare, education and amenities in new and existing communities.



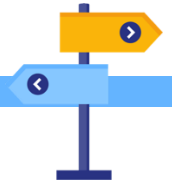
What this means for Stansted Airport



Universal

Universal's UK theme park is projected to attract more than 8.5 million visitors in its first year, rising to 12 million by the 2050s.

Once East West Rail is complete, rail journeys from Stansted to the resort could take around 70 minutes, making the airport a natural gateway for international visitors.



Ox-Cam Tourism

East West Rail will establish direct rail access from Cambridge to a wide range of tourism destinations.

Visitors will be able to reach Oxford, Bletchley Park and Bicester Village without changing at London, as well as the proposed Puy du Fou historical theme park.



Larger workforce

East West Rail is designed to open up the labour market by making it easier to travel from new housing, such as the planned new town at Tempsford, to jobs across the corridor.

This would allow Stansted to recruit airport and airline staff from across the Growth Corridor, widening the talent pool..



Sustainable airport access

East West Rail will give passengers and staff a practical alternative to the car.

Strong public transport links also support Stansted's commitment to increase the share of passengers arriving by public transport, helping to cut emissions and congestion around the airport.



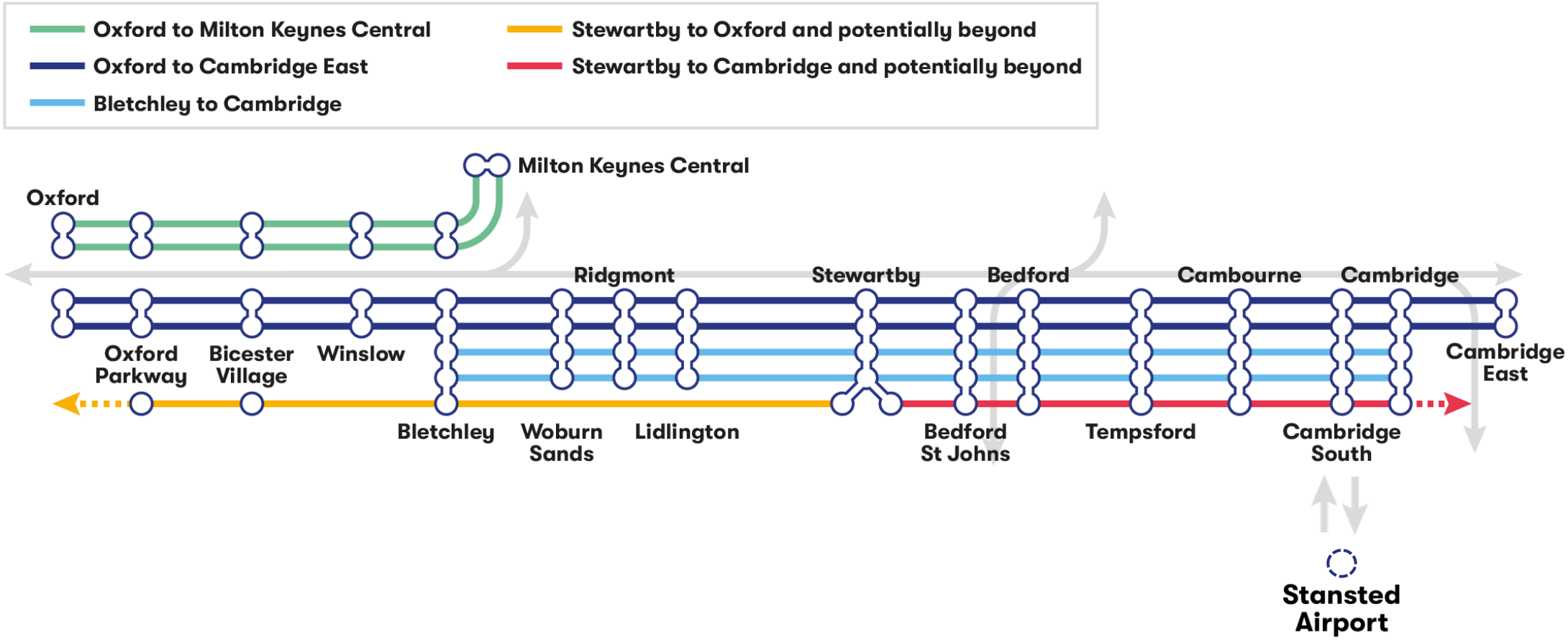
Innovation Corridor

EWR is expected to boost the regional economy by £6.7bn every year by 2050.

Direct access to Stansted would connect research and technology businesses, and their international investors and clients, to a major airport without a journey via London.

Progress and plans for delivery

EWR train service specification for passenger trains



How East West Rail is being delivered

Delivered

Oxford–Bicester upgrade completed.

Bicester–Bletchley railway rebuilt.

Bicester–Bletchley handed to Network Rail.

Chiltern Railways appointed as operator.

Current

Preparing Oxford–Milton Keynes services.

Accelerating parts of the wider programme.

Early 2030s

By 2030:
Start construction of new Tempsford station.

Early 2030s:
Marston Vale Line upgraded and electrified.

Four trains per hour between Oxford and Stewartby.

Four new stations on the MVL, including Stewartby, and improvements at Bletchley station.

Mid to late 2030s

Mid-2030s:
Bedford station upgraded.

Up to four trains per hour serving Bedford from the west.

New eastern entrance at Cambridge station.

New Cambridge East station.

Mid-to-late 2030s:
Full railway open.

All new stations operational.

Latest progress

As plans continue to develop, we're refining proposals in response to consultation feedback, technical work and emerging opportunities across the region, helping ensure the railway is designed to meet future needs.

Supporting future growth

- Tempsford station plans brought forward in line with local growth plans
- Cambridge East station included in proposals to strengthen connectivity across Cambridge

Planning for future demand

- Longer trains proposed to support anticipated demand at peak times
- Up to five services per hour planned on parts of the route

Shaping the railway

- 80+ design changes informed by consultation feedback
- Latest consultation completed in 2026
- Designs being finalised for DCO submission in Autumn 2027

Looking ahead

Feedback, assessments and ongoing technical work will continue to inform the development of our proposals ahead of submitting a Development Consent Order (DCO) application and progressing to the next stage of the project.

We aim to submit our DCO application in Autumn 2027. The application will bring together our proposals at that stage of development, while some detailed design work would continue as the project progresses.

