



Route Update Report

Oxford to Bletchley, including Bicester and the London Road level crossing

Work to construct the railway between Bicester and Bletchley is underway and DfT is currently in the process of procuring an operator to run these services from 2025.

Potential improvements to Oxford Parkway and Bicester Village stations are still being considered. We're also conducting further work to identify the best option for London Road level crossing in Bicester. We'll decide upon our proposals and consult upon them prior to any application for powers to construct the new rail link.

We're considering what work is required at Oxford Parkway and Bicester Village stations to serve the additional passengers resulting from the new EWR services. One of the main considerations is how to improve access to both stations via more sustainable forms of transport as this would affect any need for the expansion of the existing parking at these stations.

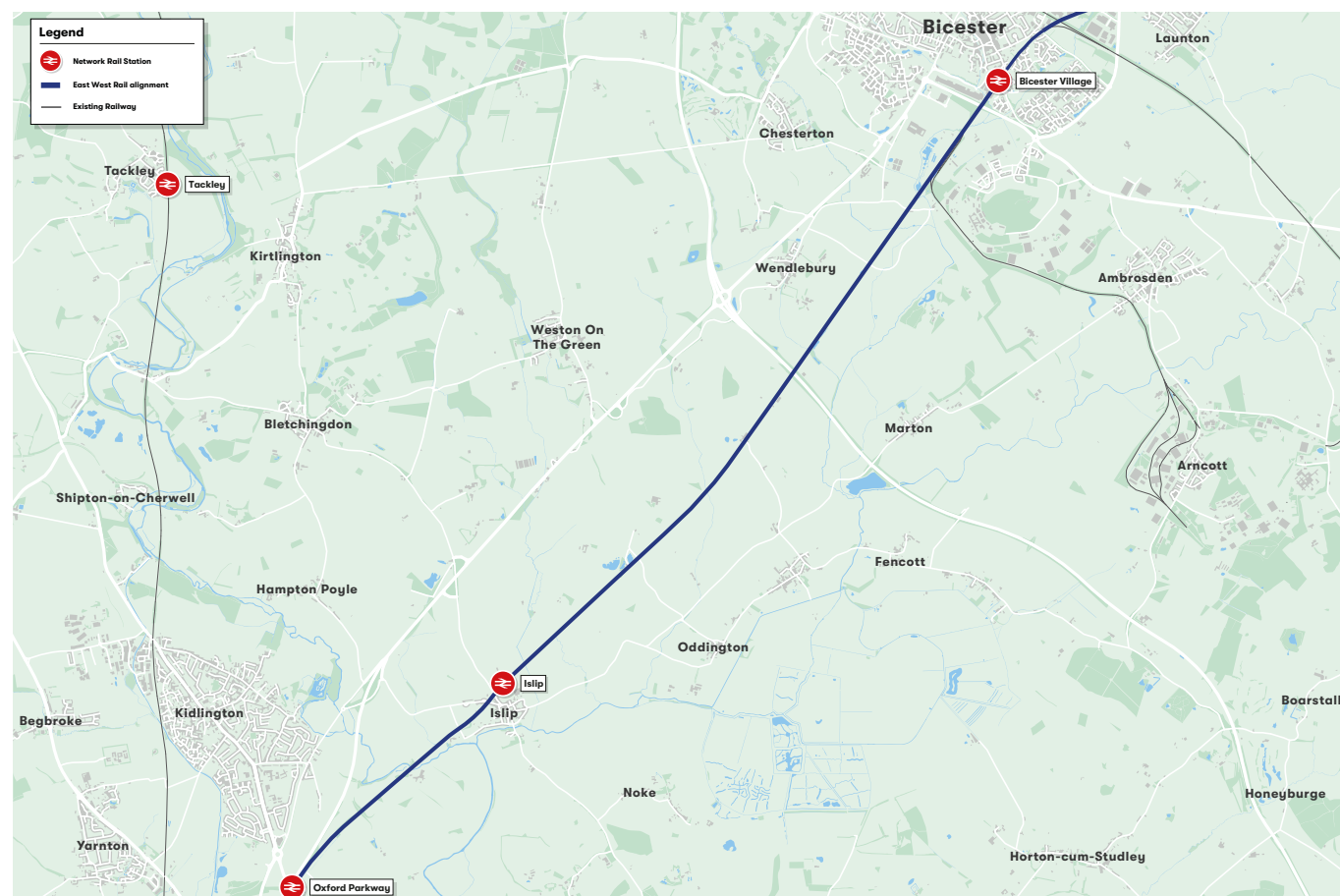


Figure 7 - Map of the existing route from Oxford Parkway to Bicester

We're also continuing work to identify the most suitable locations for passing loop between Oxford and Bletchley which would allow faster trains to overtake slower stopping services safely.

Further information on any proposed changes at Oxford Parkway and Bicester Village stations, and the locations of the proposed passing loop, will be presented at the statutory consultation.

London Road level crossing, Bicester

At the 2021 consultation we presented six concepts for the London Road level crossing. Based on an anticipated service pattern for EWR trains, all involved closing the current crossing to motorised vehicles and providing alternative ways for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians to cross the railway. These concepts were designed to improve safety, enable a faster and more reliable train service, and reduce traffic disruption.



Figure 8 - Map of the area around the London Road level crossing

The six concepts presented at the 2021 consultation:

- 1. Accessible bridge for non-motorised users
- 2. Road underpass at London Road
- 3. Road bridge at London Road
- 4. Road underpass alongside London Road
- 5. Road bridge alongside London Road
- 6. Alternative road crossing locations

Through careful consideration of options, and engagement with local stakeholders, we’re aiming to present the best solution which would reduce local impacts and enable services which would deliver significant benefits for people across the region.

All concepts presented design, construction and affordability challenges. Construction of either a bridge or an underpass within the town, whether at or near the level crossing, would pose significant difficulties, for example access to nearby roads and properties would be affected and work would be disruptive to the town. This could require acquisition of land and property and would most likely require alterations to nearby roads, changing the routes available to local people. Also, the completed crossing would have the potential to be highly intrusive in terms of visual impact, especially if a vehicular bridge is provided, as it would need to be a significant structure in order to provide the necessary headroom for trains passing beneath. However, the feedback received during the 2021 consultation expressed the local community’s strong desire to maintain the link between the southeast of Bicester and the facilities in the town centre, keeping the level crossing open.

If the level crossing were to be retained in its current form when EWR services to Bletchley, Bedford and Cambridge begin, the barriers would be down for a significant period each hour. The exact barrier down time depends on the number of trains using the crossing. Our assessments to date suggest that with four additional EWR trains per hour, a likely barrier down time of between 25 and 40 minutes in each hour could be the result (with a worst-case scenario of 50 minutes). This would cause

increased waiting times and congestion in the area and the likelihood of greater misuse of the crossing, which is dangerous to users. This is explained further within the Economic and Technical Report.

Balancing the impact of the anticipated lengthy and frequent closures with the impacts of constructing a replacement road crossing of the railway, we’re seeking to develop an alternative solution and are not progressing with Concepts 1,2, 3, 4 or 5 as presented at the 2021 consultation.

Listening to your feedback, our work on an alternative solution is focussing on three aspects:

1. Identification of the most suitable location for an alternative road bridge

We’re working with local stakeholders to identify a suitable location for a new road bridge and are considering alternatives to the south and east of the current crossing using elements of Concept 6 presented during the 2021 consultation and subsequent design work. If a new road bridge is identified as the most suitable option, we’re exploring the feasibility of using a type of bridge that’s constructed off-site and then moved into position using a crane to minimise disruption. Proposals for the crossing of the railway will be presented at the statutory consultation.

2. Investigating the potential to maintain the existing crossing for local traffic

As we develop our proposals for operating EWR, we’re investigating service patterns on this section of the line, as well as possible enhancements at the level crossing. This may provide the potential to keep the existing London Road level crossing open for local traffic. This would most likely require highways works in the vicinity of the crossing to discourage use by non-local traffic.

3. Investigating ways to maintain connectivity for pedestrians and non-motorised traffic

Based on the feedback to the 2021 consultation, we know how important it is to maintain connections for pedestrians and cyclists.

We're considering the following options:

- An accessible overbridge for pedestrians and cyclists at or near the current London Road level crossing.
- An accessible underpass for pedestrians and cyclists at or near London Road level crossing.
- An accessible overbridge for pedestrians and cyclists at another location.



We're undertaking further feasibility studies and technical assessments of the three aspects described above to identify our preferred option for Bicester London Road level crossing and we'll present our findings for comment at the statutory consultation, which we expect to take place in the first half of 2024.



New platforms at Bletchley station

