

1. Overview

This response raises significant concerns regarding the suitability of the proposed Train Maintenance Depot (TMD) 'Bletchley West' site and the freight passing loops, taking up an extensive area of agricultural land straddling the parishes of Newton Longville and Mursley. While acknowledging that technical solutions may exist for many of the issues identified, the cumulative impact in terms of cost, programme risk, environmental impact, and community disruption suggests that the site may not represent the most appropriate option.

2. Site Suitability and Engineering Constraints

2.1 Excavation

The site is located on elevated ground, with EWR estimating the excavation of approximately 188,000 m³ of material being required to achieve acceptable operating gradients. EWR have not provided the basis for this calculation, but the accuracy has to be challenged as use of Google Earth Pro cut and fill tool calculates the volume of spoil as significantly higher. By comparison, the calculation for the excavation requirements for the Cambridge depot has a similar volume estimate to the EWR calculation for 'Bletchley West', despite this being built on level Fenland.

While partial removal of the material by rail may be possible (this being suggested by EWR staff at the consultation sessions), this is dependent on prior construction of the eastbound passing loop and associated bridge modifications (OXD10 and OXD11).

These works are presumably feasible but would introduce significant additional cost, complexity, and delay. An extra compound would be required to facilitate transportation by rail, but even then a proportion of excavated material would still require road transportation, placing further pressure on already constrained local highways (principally the A421 as construction traffic would be expected to be prohibited from transiting through the local villages on unclassified roads).

Post-excavation access would involve an approximate 8-metre change in level between the depot and Whaddon Road, requiring substantial ramp infrastructure with further cost and programme implications.

2.2 Highways impact

Experience from the CS1 phase demonstrates that bridge and road closures can extend for several months. Given the greater scale of works required for this proposal, closures could reasonably exceed one year.

The affected north–south routes linking Newton Longville and Mursley to the A421 are strategically important. Their closure would result in significant disruption to local communities, businesses, and surrounding areas affected by diverted traffic.

2.3 Utilities

A high-pressure gas main runs adjacent to, and in some locations within, the engineering boundary of the proposed works. The westbound passing loop may directly conflict with this infrastructure.

Diversion or protection of the asset is achievable but would require specialist works, as previously experienced during the CS1 construction phase for EWR. This would result in further cost increases and potential delays.

3. Environmental Considerations

3.1 Flood Risk

The site lies within an area already subject to known drainage challenges. Surface water runoff has previously contributed to flooding at Park Manor Farm, particularly during the earlier EWR construction work phase when part of the site was used for EWRA’s Compound B5. It was found then that there was additional ground water flooding caused by drainage ditch excavation work.

The proposed development would reduce permeable land area and interfere with the existing water table (due to the significant excavation below the current surface level), compounded by the presence of natural aquifers and proximity to Flood Zone 3 (Bletchley Road to the east). While mitigation may be possible, it would add complexity, significant cost, and risk (with EWR apparently dismissing these risks).

3.2 Sewerage

There is no existing mains sewerage infrastructure serving the site, and regional capacity is already constrained. Providing new infrastructure would require significant additional works.

Alternative solutions involving on-site storage and off-site removal of the toilet waste (taken from trains and generated on the site itself) by road raise environmental and operational concerns. In addition, there is a recognised risk of odour impacts associated with TMD operations, particularly given the proximity of residential properties (approximately 250 metres, with the prevailing wind being in the direction of the new Salden Place housing development).

3.3 Noise

Noise emanating from the depot 24 x 7 ('live' stationary rolling stock, and depot operations) and from diesel locomotives on the freight passing loops is a concern. Although mitigation measures such as sound insulation and electronic horn testing are proposed, these will not eliminate all sources of noise.

Given the proximity of residential properties, even with mitigation measures (at cost), residual impacts are likely to remain significant.

3.4 Flora and Fauna

The site is located near areas of ecological importance, including ancient woodland and habitats supporting wildlife including deer and badgers. At night, the hedgerow along Weasel lane comes alive with caterpillars and other insects which will not feed during the day due to the presence of predators. While "smart lighting" is proposed, there is going to be disturbance for that wildlife along with owls and bats.

Previous biodiversity mitigation measures in the area have delivered limited success and would be impacted by the construction and operation of the TMD. Concerns have to be raised regarding the effectiveness of future provisions.

4. Socio-Economic Impacts

4.1 Salden Place housing development

The Salden Place development which is scheduled to deliver 1,855 dwellings over 10 years is already under construction and is already contributing to Buckinghamshire Council meeting its challenging housing targets. The depot would be located approximately 250 metres from its boundary, which will adversely affect the attractiveness and viability of the development. The houses will undoubtedly still be built, but over a longer period, exacerbating the disruption that this area is already experiencing (HGV traffic linked to the development incorrectly transiting the village, etc.).

4.2 Local businesses

Previous infrastructure works had a significant adverse impact on local businesses due to prolonged road closures and reduced accessibility.

Concerns have already been raised by a number of local businesses, including the Crooked Billet public house, Lower Salden Farm, and Park Manor Farm who had representatives who spoke up at the public meeting with EWR in Newton Longville on 6th March. These businesses provide important services and employment and could be adversely affected by further disruption.

5. Summary and Conclusion

While approval for this phase of the EWR project will be granted through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process, the principles of sustainable development set in the National Planning Policy Framework should still apply. Quoting from Section 2 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF, *"Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives..."*. That paragraph goes on to describe those economic, social and environmental objectives. We do not believe that the proposal for the TMD meets those objectives, and is therefore not in line with the NPPF.

The 'Bletchley West' site was selected following the consideration of multiple alternatives. However, a number of significant issues have since been identified, many of which are comparable to those that led to the rejection of other sites.

While it is acknowledged that mitigation measures may exist, these would require substantial additional cost, time, and complexity. There is a clear risk that proceeding without fully addressing these constraints could lead to programme overruns and budget escalation.

Newton Longville Parish Council
08/06/2026