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Dear Sir,

I have recently met with colleagues from the Environment Agency, Natural England and Natural Cambridgeshire to discuss our joint aspirations for the East West Rail project, and on behalf of South Cambridgeshire District Council, I am seeking clarity regarding the environmental impact of the railway line, along with the assessments that have been completed to ensure its sustainability across the district. We would also like to know more about your policy on net biodiversity gain.

As you may be aware, one of the Council's key priorities is to be green to our core. At a full Council meeting in September 2018, Members backed a motion that said that the railway line "presents us with an unprecedented opportunity to make positive contributions to net biodiversity and natural capital gains". This council supports the routing of the rail line along the A428 creating a transport corridor that has minimal environmental impact, along with the creation of a Cambridge South railway station, to improve the infrastructure into the city and the wider villages; this is still our preferred route. We are pleased with the plan for improved rail access across the district, which will not only reduce the number of cars on the roads, but also bring economic expansion to our only town, Cambourne. However, with the proposed deadline of January 2020 for the route choice, we feel under pressure to offer our advice to this vital railway connection and to have full engagement on the plans.

As mentioned in previous correspondence, we already have plans for nearly 20,000 new homes in South Cambridgeshire and are eager to understand exactly how additional homes on top of this would be expected to come forward as part of East West Rail. Currently the uncertainty in this area makes it difficult to truly grasp the environmental and community impacts of the project and I'm keen to hear more from East West Rail on this.

We would like to be part of the planning process, so we can offer the best service to our residents. Our councillors are important representatives of their local communities, and are willing to assist in a project which, I am in no doubt, will influence their lives. We would be happy to host any engagement events here in our office if that would help.

What is clear though is that this project has the potential to bring significant change to South Cambridgeshire communities and I'm looking forward to working closely with East West Rail and ensuring the voices of these communities continue to be heard.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Bridget Smith'.

Cllr Bridget Smith  
Leader, South Cambridgeshire DC



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE