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Project No: _____

EWR/1708

18th December 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: East West Railway Company Limited Representation on the Oxford Local Plan 2040 Proposed Submission Draft (Regulation 19) Consultation November 2023

This response to the Oxford Local Plan 2040 Proposed Submission Draft (Regulation 19) Consultation is submitted on behalf of the East West Railway Company Limited (EWR Co). EWR Co are the organisation responsible for delivering East West Rail (EWR), a major rail project aiming to deliver both new and enhanced rail infrastructure to provide frequent, fast, and reliable rail links for communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford, and Cambridge. The section of the railway between Oxford and Bicester falls within the Oxford Local Plan Area.

In May 2023 EWR Co issued a [Route Update Announcement](#) (RUA) on the proposals for the railway. This followed a review of the Strategic Case for EWR and all feedback it had received following the non-statutory consultation on route alignment options undertaken in 2021. EWR Co's proposals for the railway are explained in an accompanying [Route Update Report](#) (RUR) which includes an update on its proposals at Oxford Station.

EWR Co briefed Oxford City Council following the RUA and a follow up series of stakeholder engagement meetings is due to be arranged to discuss progress on the EWR project. Having reviewed the policies and proposals in the Regulation 19 Consultation Submission Draft Local Plan ("Submission Draft Local Plan"), EWR Co wishes to draw the following matters to the Council's attention in the interests of ensuring that its proposals and those of the Council are aligned as the Submission Draft Local Plan is progressed.

EWR Co welcomes the recognition in the Submission Draft Local Plan of the transformational role that EWR will bring to the city of Oxford through reducing travel time and improving rail accessibility. Significant improvements to Oxford Railway Station, including improvements to the western station entrance and Platform 5, are already being delivered as part of Network Rail's Oxford Corridor Phase 2 scheme which would improve capacity, accessibility and passenger experience for all those using the station, and help to accommodate the increase in passengers generated by EWR. EWR Co is working with Network Rail and the wider industry to identify the best timetable solution for Oxford Station having regard to these improvements.

In association with the works being undertaken by Network Rail to create further track and platform capacity to the eastern side of Oxford Station, the Submission Draft Local Plan identifies a requirement for a replacement main station entrance to the east. The Plan indicates that work is on-going between partners to develop a scheme which enables a transformed station building and interchange. For clarity,



provision for any replacement to the existing eastern station entrance do not currently form part of EWR Co's proposals.

Network Rail is also currently considering proposals to reopen the Cowley Branch Line to passenger services as part of the Cowley Plus scheme. This scheme may enable additional capacity for trains to change direction (turn back) south of Oxford station and could also facilitate EWR services. If Cowley Plus goes ahead, it may be sufficient to enable the required platform capacity at Oxford Station without an EWR intervention. However, as this is not yet a committed project, a potential option to address the need in the absence of Cowley Plus would be for EWR Co to develop an alternative proposal, known as the South Oxford Turnback. EWR Co are currently exploring options for a turnback and continues to work with Network Rail.

EWR Co are also considering whether further trackwork within the railway corridor may be required between Oxford station and Oxford North Junction to help increase the capacity on this section of line.

The draft allocation for mixed use development at the Oxpens site, south of Oxford Station is immediately adjacent to the railway (Policy SPCWS: OXPENS). Should further trackwork be required south of Oxford Station, then some land may be temporarily and/or permanently required. At this stage, it is envisaged that any further trackwork can be accommodated within the existing railway corridor and any land required temporarily to facilitate trackwork construction can be accommodated within the land ownership boundary of Network Rail. However, EWR Co cannot rule out the potential need for land to meet other rail operational requirements within the Oxpens site such as the provision of accommodation for train crew, given the site's proximity to the station. EWR Co will therefore raise this matter with the Council through future engagement and reserves its position in respect of the Submission Draft Local Plan until those discussions have taken place.

Oxford Station is situated within the West End area of the City. The West End and Botley Area of Focus contains a number of site allocations including the Oxpens site which are identified for development to deliver a vibrant city quarter. EWR Co supports the policy requirements set out for the West End and Botley Road Area of Focus in Policy WEAOF. This recognises the need for new development to make the best use of urban design and place making opportunities to deliver a strong sense of arrival to Oxford and an improved environment for passengers arriving at Oxford station. The policy requirement to deliver pedestrian and cycling improvements to optimise connectivity to Oxford station and other parts of the city is also supported. EWR Co welcomes the intention of the Council to retain 'The West End and Osney Mead SPD' to supplement and facilitate delivery of the site allocations in the Local Plan 2040 further to its preparation following the adoption of the Local Plan 2036.

To the north of Oxford Station, further trackwork may also be required to enable EWR within the railway corridor between the Station and Oxford North Junction to help increase the capacity on this section of the line. Similar to the Oxpens site, the Northern Gateway allocation is immediately adjacent to the west of the railway line. Development at the Northern Gateway has been a long-standing development commitment which is included in the adopted Local Plan 2036. The site already benefits from outline planning consent (18/02065/OUTFUL) and development is understood to have commenced on the first phases of the development to the southwest of the A44 Woodstock Road. Policy SPN1 makes provision for the remaining area of the Northern Gateway area to come forward which includes land to the northeast of the A44 Woodstock Road alongside the railway. As set out above in relation to the Oxpens allocation, it is not envisaged that there will be any interface between the track works proposed for EWR and future development proposals coming forward in this area as these works are intended to be contained within the railway corridor. EWR Co will however also wish to raise this matter with the Council through future engagement and therefore reserves its position in respect of the Submission Draft Local Plan until those discussions have taken place.

EWR Co would be happy to provide further information or clarity on any of the information set out in this response, or on any of its proposals should it be required.

Yours faithfully



Jane Parker
Associate