

**Statement of Common Ground between Oxford City Council,
and the East West Railway Company Limited (EWR Co)**

Submission Draft (Regulation 19) Oxford Local Plan 2045

May 2026

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared between Oxford City Council and the EWR Co. The SoCG reflects and confirms the current position as agreed by the two parties with regards to the “submission draft” version of the Oxford Local Plan 2045.

1.2 The EWR Co was created by the Department for Transport in 2017 to design, develop and deliver the section of East West Rail between Bletchley and Cambridge, while overseeing the remaining works required between Oxford and Bletchley.

1.3 East West Rail is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), which means that it is governed by a consenting regime outside administrative jurisdiction of local government. The Planning Inspectorate deals with the NSIP process on behalf of the Secretary of State and examines applications for development consent. The EWR Co has undertaken a number of non-statutory consultations between 2019 and 2024. In November 2024 a Safeguarding Direction was issued by the Secretary of State for Transport, which was updated in November 2025. At the time of writing, the EWR Co is undertaking what is intended to be, the final consultation before the submission of the Development Consent Order application.

1.4 The SoCG reflects the latest position agreed by the parties and is provided without prejudice to other matters that the parties may wish to raise later in the preparation of the Plan.

2.0 Background and Maintaining Effective Cooperation

2.1 The Local Plan 2045 has been prepared within a changing strategic national context. The legal Duty to cooperate test was revoked on 25 March 2026 and has been replaced by a policy test whereby plan-making authorities now should demonstrate “effective cooperation”.

2.2 In early 2026, Oxford City Council undertook Regulation 19 consultation on its proposed Submission Draft Local Plan and supporting evidence base which it proposed to submit for examination to Central Government in June 2026. As per the relevant legislation/regulations, this version of the Local Plan was one that the City Council considered to be ‘sound’, meeting the specific requirements for soundness as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.23 In drafting the Oxford Local Plan 2045, the City Council has had continued engagement with Adams Hendry on behalf of EWR Co, both through the formal statutory consultation processes and through additional meetings outside of that process. The City Council has engaged with relevant personnel at EWR Co, i.e., those with responsibility for the East West Rail Project within Oxford city’s administrative boundary.

2.4 East West Rail is a National Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP). As such, it is governed by a separate consenting regime, determined by central, rather than local government. As set out above, there have been several non-statutory consultations, and a Safeguarding Direction was issued in November 2024 (and updated in November 2025). At the time of writing what is intended to be the final consultation on the East West Rail Project is ongoing.

2.5 Oxford City Council and Adams Hendry on behalf of the EWR Co have worked closely in developing the policy framework that relate to East West Rail's delivery. As part of the Reg. 19 consultation, Adams Hendry on behalf of the EWR Co made comments on two policies:

- Policy I2 – Safeguarding Land for Infrastructure
- Policy SPN5 – Pear Tree Farm.

2.6 Comments were also received from Adams Hendry on behalf on the EWR Co in relation to the Policies Map.

3.0 Summary of position in relation to Adams Hendry's comments on behalf of The East West Railway Company

3.1 The following paragraph provides a summary of the response received by the Oxford City Council to the Oxford Local Plan 2045 Reg. 19 consultation.

Policy I2: Safeguarding Land for Infrastructure/ Policies Map

- The EWR Co is pleased to see that Oxford City Council has identified the route and extent of the East West Rail Safeguarding on the Policies Map and the inclusion of Policy I2 is welcomed.
- There are likely to be further changes to the Safeguarding boundary in due course. The City Council should continue to update the Policies Map to reflect any future safeguarding directions, or revisions to the safeguarding directions prior to the adoption of the Oxford Local Plan 2045.

3.2 The City Council acknowledges the support for Policy I2 and the identification of the route and extent of the East West Rail Project on the Policies Map.

3.3 The City Council acknowledges that, as the East West Rail Project moves forward, there are likely to be further changes to the boundary of the land safeguarded associated with it. The City Council will seek to ensure that the Policies Map is kept up to date to reflect future safeguarding directions, or revisions to the safeguarding directions that take place in a reasonable timeframe prior to the adoption of the Oxford Local Plan 2045.

Policy SPN5: Pear Tree Farm

3.4 The other issues which was discussed by Adams Hendry on behalf of the EWR Co in their representations to Oxford Local Plan 2045 Reg. 19 consultation, related to a point of clarification in Policy SPN5: Pear Tree Farm. This point of clarification was in relation to the delivery of wider walking, cycling and wheeling links from the Pear Tree Farm site, *"over the footbridge across the railway line to Oxford Parkway Station"*.

Adams Hendry on behalf of the East West Railway Company sets out that *“the provision of walking, wheeling and cycling access through and beyond the site to Oxford Parkway is not within the remit of the East West Rail Project.... There should be no reliance on the East West Rail Company to deliver this link”*.

3.5 Adams Hendry on behalf of the EWR Co also set out that, (as set out in criterion q) of Policy SPN5) if *“walking, cycling and wheeling access... over the footbridge across the railway line to Oxford Parkway Station”* is to be delivered, *“it must be in conjunction with the development of this site”*.

3.6 The Oxford City Council acknowledges that the wider site links are not within the remit of the East West Rail Project and as such the EWR Co should not be relied upon to deliver this link. However, the City Council does not agree with the statement by Adams Hendry on behalf of the EWR Co that if the link is delivered *“it must be in conjunction with the development of this site”*.

3.7 Criterion q) of Policy SPN5 relates to how the layout and design of the site should facilitate, and not compromise the delivery of walking, cycling and wheeling access through the site, over the footbridge across the railway line to Oxford Parkway Station. Rather than specifically linking the delivery of an identified infrastructure scheme within our Infrastructure Delivery Plan to one single development, the City Council would prefer to simply acknowledge through this statement, that this link is not within the remit of the East West Rail Project.

4.0 Concluding remarks and areas of agreement

4.1 Oxford City Council and Adams Hendry on behalf of the EWR Co have worked together throughout the preparation of the Oxford Local Plan 2045 and subsequently during the meeting in April 2026. The discussions have been productive, and the City Council is appreciative of the feedback provided by Adams Hendry on behalf of the EWR Co.

4.2 The two parties agree that there are no changes required to the plan and that the comments from Adams Hendry on behalf of the EWR Co are broadly supportive or of a clarificatory nature.

4.3 The parties agree to continue to work together to deliver a sound plan within the timescales available.

Signed on behalf of the EWR Co

Carolyn Francis

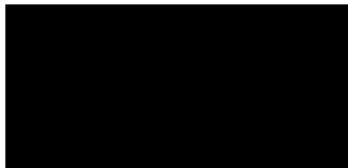


Title – Head of DCO Strategy

Date: 21 May 2026

Signed on behalf of Oxford City Council

David Butler



Title - Director of Planning and Regulation

Date: 21/05/26