

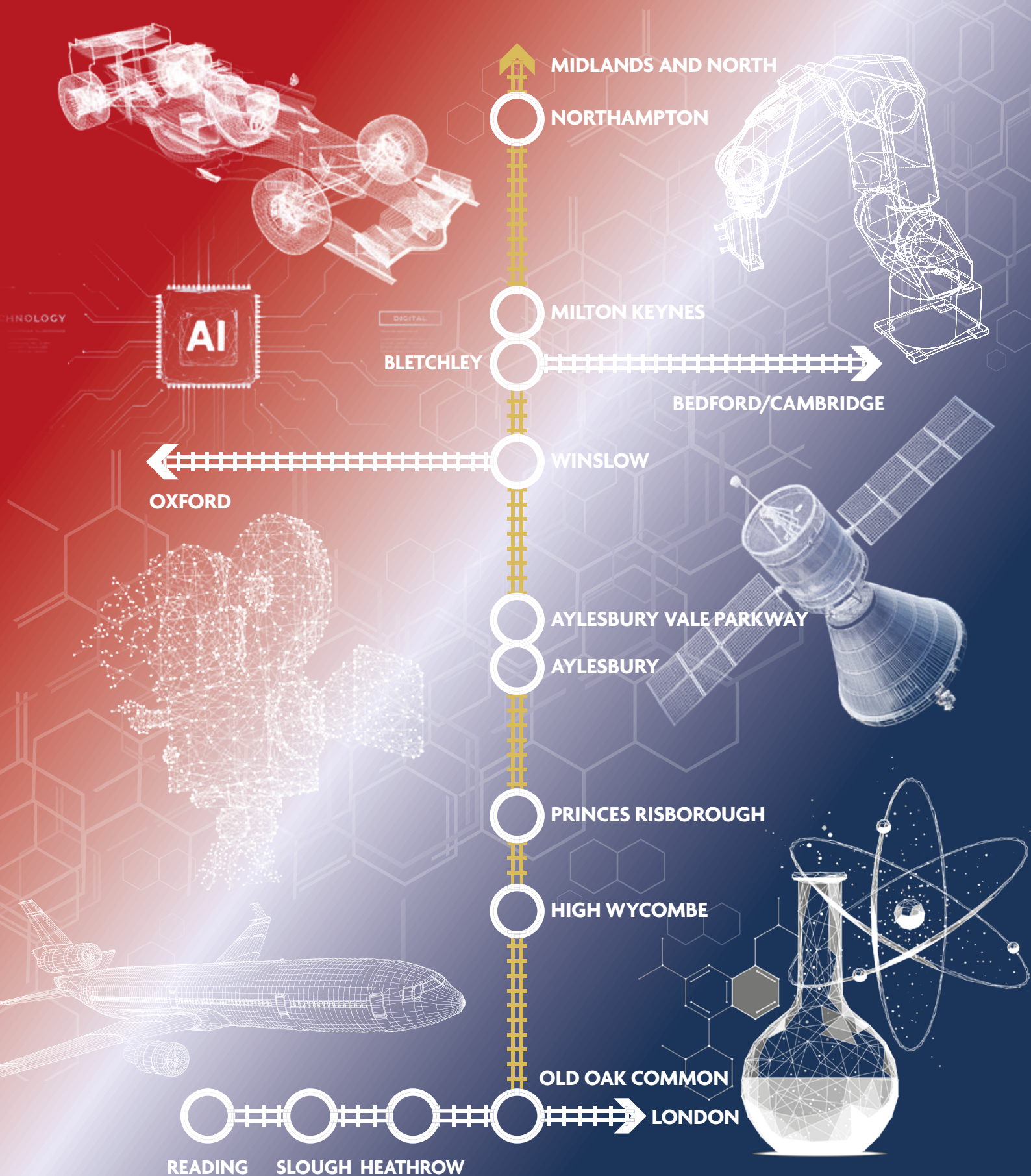


ENGLAND'S  
ECONOMIC  
HEARTLAND

**EastWestMainLine**  
Partnership

# The case for Northampton- Milton Keynes-Aylesbury-High Wycombe- Old Oak Common rail corridor

Global Britain: Rail





## INTRODUCTION

By harnessing delivery of East West Rail between Oxford and Milton Keynes, a once-in-a-generation opportunity could be unlocked to deliver a new rail corridor between Northampton, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Old Oak Common that better connects some of the jewels in the crown of the UK's economic and cultural offering, and maximises the investment in the Elizabeth Line to Heathrow, Slough and Reading.

This is the Global Britain Railway, connecting some of country's greatest international economic and cultural assets. It is the line of the globally-leading **Motorsport Valley** tech cluster, fuelled by nearby **Silverstone**, one of the most iconic sporting venues in the world; of **Milton Keynes**, one of the most successful new cities in Europe; of **Bletchley Park** and its Codebreakers; of Aylesbury, the birthplace of the international **Paralympic movement** and near the out of this world **space cluster** at Wescott; of High Wycombe and south Bucks, the headquarters of some of the biggest **life science** companies in the world, and **Pinewood Studios**, where countless box office hits have been produced, including British icon, **James Bond**, and (via a rapid interchange at Old Oak Common), **Heathrow**, one of the world's busiest international airports, and onto **Reading**, one of the South East's most vibrant economies.

**This opportunity will be lost if the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link is not, at a minimum, safeguarded, and ultimately, must be delivered.**

It has been estimated that within catchments of stations along the route between Northampton and south Bucks there is currently a population of 1.3 million, 78,000 businesses generating 678,000 jobs, and an economy worth £50bn.

This is only expected to grow further given the dynamic nature of the economy in the corridor and plans for new homes. There is currently an unequal balance in supply and demand for key labour market sectors along the corridor, limiting business's access to key skills. There are also complementary clusters of businesses across that corridor that could benefit from improved connectivity provided by rail.

Realising this exciting new corridor requires upgrades to existing infrastructure and track paths, rather than wholesale new infrastructure.

These are (in order of north to south):

- West Coast Main Line improvements, taking advantage of capacity released by HS2
- Improvements to capacity between Bletchley and Milton Keynes
- The Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link, which already has planning consent (via the TWA0 of 2020) and where there is an existing rail path (currently used for freight) and stations.
- Upgrades to the existing passenger route between Aylesbury and Princes Risborough
- Making use of passive provision to restore the Chiltern Main Line connection between South Ruislip and Old Oak Common

It is important to note that these interventions each bring significant individual value in their own right. However, when taken together, they unlock a transformational opportunity for the region. If the Aylesbury link is not safeguarded, this opportunity will be lost.

### AT A GLANCE

**Delivery of the Northampton-Old Oak Common rail corridor is about:**

- 1** Enabling economic growth by linking world class knowledge-intensive sectors
- 2** Transforming the regional and UK transport system, including links to Heathrow Airport
- 3** Unlocking Aylesbury's potential for its communities, businesses and wider regional economy

For these reasons the rail corridor enjoys widespread political and business support.

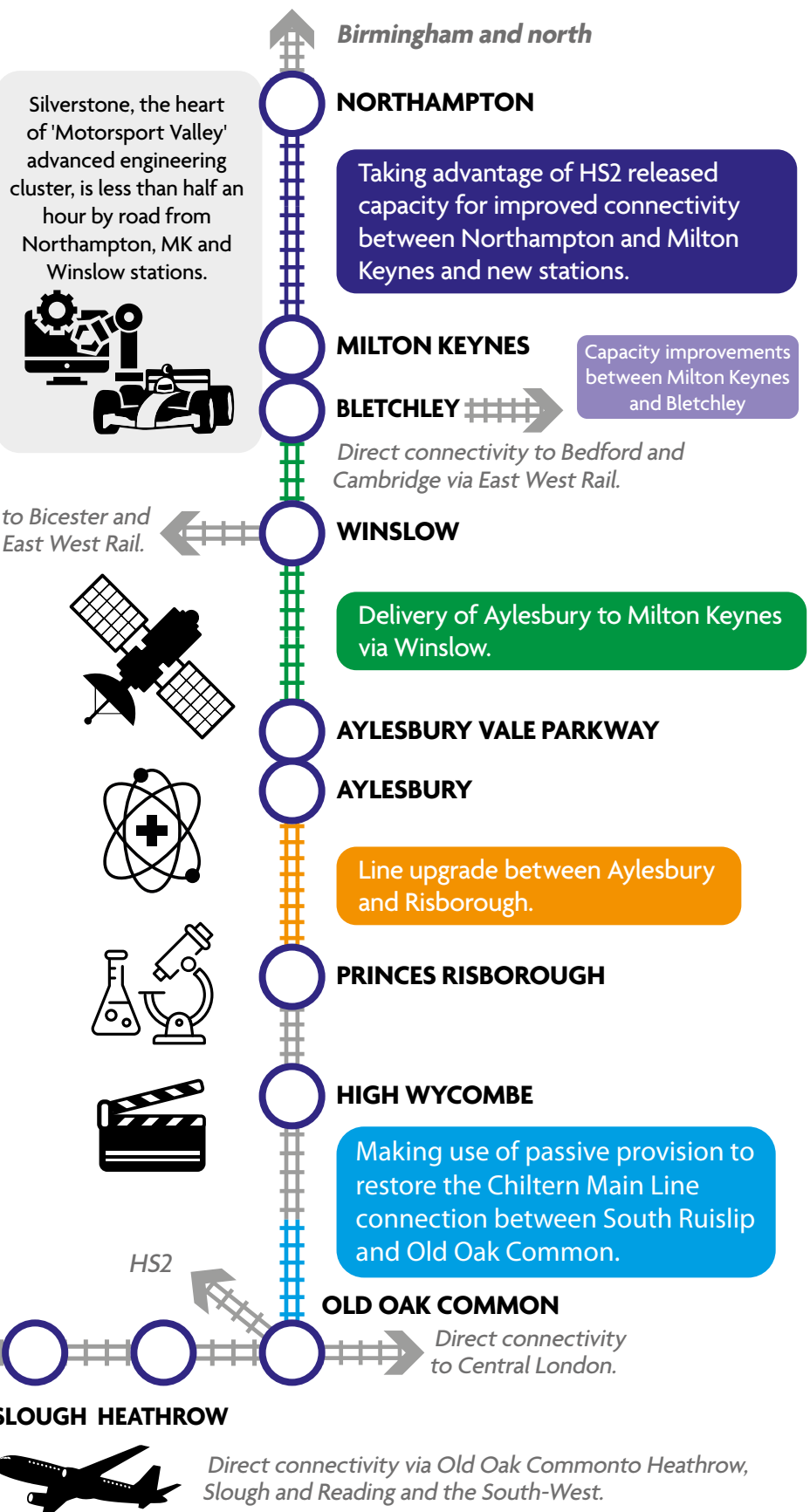
**Northampton**, the single most populated built-up area in EEH, with nearly 250,000 residents, and significant levels of planned housing growth.

**Milton Keynes**, an economic powerhouse and the third most populous built-up area in EEH, with plans for its population to grow to more than 400,000 people by 2050.

**Aylesbury**, birthplace of the Paralympics, with a growing medtech sector around Stoke Mandeville Hospital. Aylesbury Vale Parkway is only 10 minutes by road to the space cluster at Westcott. Aylesbury has a population of 90,000 and is undergoing significant growth, with 16,000 homes allocated in the local plan. Its road network is one of the most congested in the region.

**High Wycombe (population 90,000) and south Bucks**, home to a burgeoning life science and creative cluster, with Gerrards Cross station only 10 minutes by road to Pinewood Studios.

**Old Oak Common**, the new HS2 hub, which will offer high frequency services via the Elizabeth Line to the UK's international gateway of Heathrow Airport, Slough and the economic powerhouse of Reading.



# ENABLING ECONOMIC GROWTH BY LINKING WORLD CLASS KNOWLEDGE-INTENSIVE SECTORS

Analysis by Cambridge Econometrics for England's Economic Heartland of the Northampton-Milton Keynes-Buckinghamshire-Thames Valley corridor, identified synergies between the economic centres on the proposed line, which would be significantly boosted by direct rail connectivity.



## Innovation and skills:

Nationally important 'prime' sectors and economic assets can be found throughout the corridor, including advanced physics and engineering (particularly around Milton Keynes, north Bucks and Northampton, related to Silverstone); life sciences (particularly around High Wycombe, south Bucks, Slough and Reading); space (particularly in Aylesbury, related to Westcott Venture Park) and digital and creative (particularly in Reading, Milton Keynes and Wycombe/ South Bucks with the latter related to Pinewood Studios).

**Greater intra-corridor transport connectivity has the potential to spread R&D capacity and agglomeration benefits and provide greater access to skilled labour.**

For example, Aylesbury and High Wycombe have highly skilled populations, equating to a surplus of skilled labour, which is available both to serve nearby centres (rather than London), while equally – with the right connectivity – helping their own places become attractive for businesses to locate to.



## Raising productivity:

Both Milton Keynes and the south of the corridor are productive regional economic hubs. These dynamics are absent from the other areas in the corridor which exhibit productivity gaps to the national average. Agglomeration effects, emerging from increased interactions and collaboration/competition between businesses, are an important potential driver of productivity growth.

**Greater transport connectivity would enable the expertise and capital of established industries in Milton Keynes (and Reading) to radiate throughout the corridor.**



## Access to affordable floorspace:

Commercial floorspace costs in the south of the corridor (ie around High Wycombe, south Bucks and Reading) are high. While firms in these areas are productive, they may be constrained in their ability to expand by the elevated costs of floorspace.

**Investments in transport infrastructure would connect these businesses to the abundance of affordable commercial floorspace across the rest of the corridor** with all other areas exhibiting costs below the national average and stocks in excess of 1.6bn square metres (m<sup>2</sup>). The corridor has the space, at low costs, for new and growing businesses to expand into.



## Supporting housing:

**Over the decade of 2012-22, housing delivery rates across the Thames Valley to Northampton corridor have been higher on average than the national delivery rate.**

Only in the High Wycombe area – surrounded by the Chiltern Hills – have housing delivery rates been less than the national average. In general, housing gets more expensive as one travels south along the corridor.

The Northampton-Old Oak Common link would alleviate housing pressures in resource constrained areas by providing a wider set of residential location choice.

**Cambridge Econometrics concluded that, 'given the strength of their economic synergies, the ability to travel along the central spine of the corridor' between Northampton, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Slough, Heathrow and Reading 'is notably challenging, limiting opportunities for agglomeration benefits and access to skilled labour'.**

**It said the proposed rail corridor would 'better connect two of the greater South East's fastest-growing centres in Milton Keynes and Reading (while improving access to Heathrow)' and added: "However, there are also numerous other sector-specific opportunities for collaboration and integration between different areas of the corridor, including around the corridor's life science and engineering specialisms. Economies of scale could be realised by better connecting all of these capabilities."**



## Prime Sectors

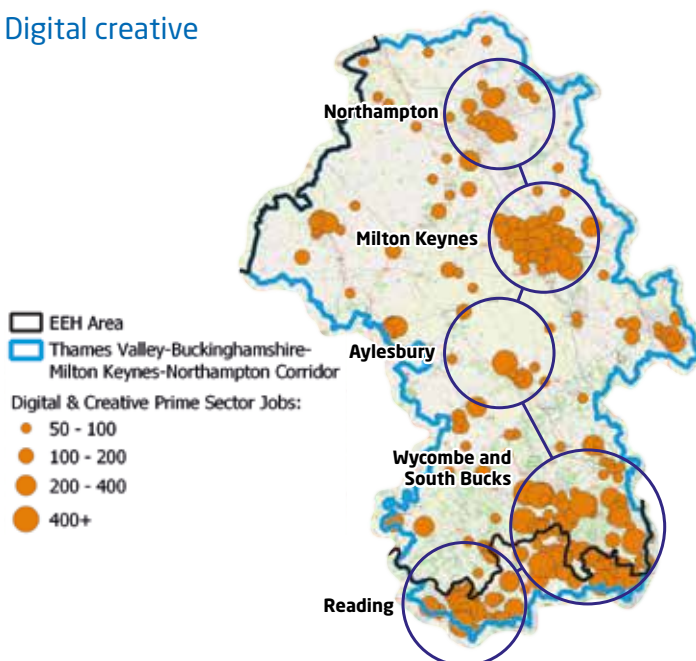
The corridor is home to many sectors of national importance, many producing knowledge, ideas and innovations that then flow across the entire national innovation ecosystem, benefiting firms across a far wider geography than the corridor itself. This cannot be overstated in the context of national strategic economic priorities.

Cambridge Econometric's analysis for EEH's 'Connecting Economies' project identified several 'prime' capabilities across EEH: highly-concentrated sectors that typically exhibit above average

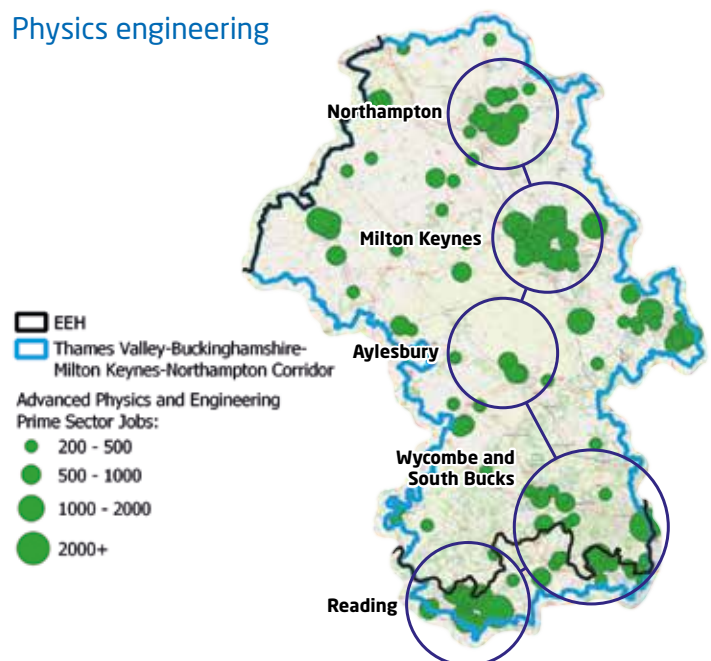
productivity, export and R&D/ innovation intensity, and pan-regional representation.

The scale of these 'prime sectors' are shown below for Northampton-Thames Valley. The mapping, clearly demonstrates the economic synergies between the destinations on the Northampton-Old Oak Common rail corridor.

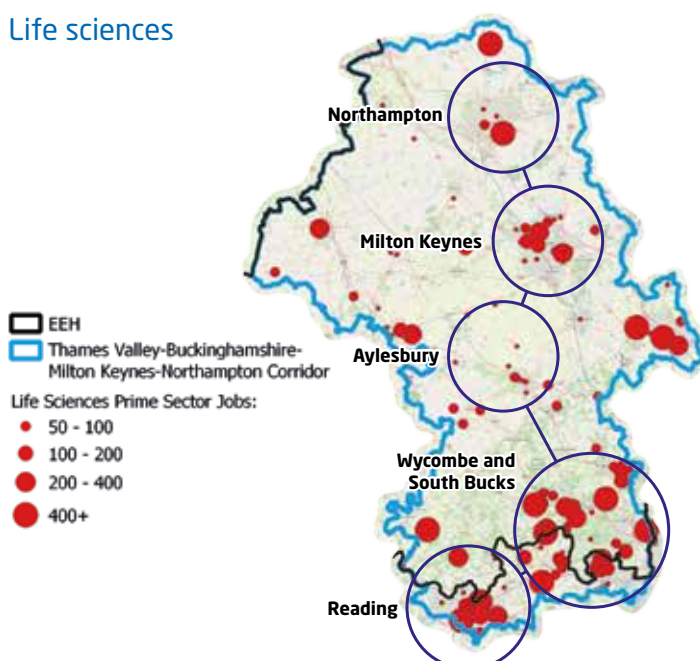
### Digital creative



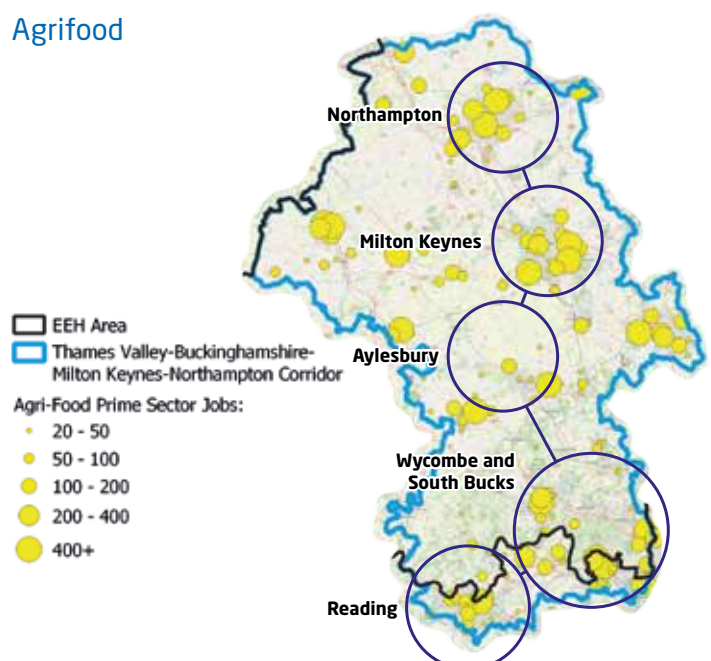
### Physics engineering



### Life sciences



### Agri-food





## TRANSFORMING THE REGIONAL AND UK TRANSPORT SYSTEM

The Northampton-Old Oak Common corridor would be transformational for the wider rail and transport network.

It would:

- Give a second London terminus for the Chiltern Main Line at Old Oak Common that will provide onward travel to the capital and Heathrow Airport via the Elizabeth Line, as well as unlocking capacity for additional services by reducing reliance on platform capacity at London's Marylebone Railway Station. In so doing, it maximises the value of investment in recent projects such as East West Rail, HS2 and the Elizabeth Line
- Improve rail system resilience through provision of alternative routes during periods of disruption and future changes in needs for passenger and freight journeys
- Link key settlements such as Northampton, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and High Wycombe with each other by a sustainable and reliable direct train service. Many of these journeys are also challenging by road – for example the most obvious route for a road journey between High Wycombe and Milton Keynes is via Aylesbury town centre (one of the most congested towns in the region), making journey times between the two slow and unreliable
- Enhance mode shift to rail and other sustainable moves by expanding the range of available routes and connections, and enabling greater use of more sustainable and space efficient modes for all or part of journeys

For these reasons it is clear why Network Rail featured the opportunity of connecting the Chiltern Line into Old Oak Common within its strategic documents:

### Chiltern Route Strategy (2017)

**//** Marylebone Station is approaching its maximum capacity, in terms of train numbers and passengers with any expansion of the station likely to be expensive and disruptive owing to its constrained location. With growing towns with major housing development planned at Aylesbury, Bicester and Princes Risborough, a link to Old Oak Common would provide more services and increased journey opportunities.

“The proposed development of Old Oak Common station and the wider regeneration of the area will make it a key strategic transport hub as well as a major new destination in its own right. **The opportunity to improve connectivity into HS2 and Crossrail [Elizabeth Line] from Aylesbury and**

**High Wycombe, as well as reducing the cost and impact of accommodating demand at Marylebone, make this a compelling strategic option.**



It added that during a public consultation, ‘there was a consistently high level of support for the proposal of a link from the Chilterns to Old Oak Common’.

The strategy includes the diagram opposite, clearly showing the ambition for a service which utilised the Aylesbury link to Milton Keynes to connect the city with Old Oak Common.

### East West Main Line Strategic Statement (2022)

The Chiltern Route Strategy may have been published in 2017, but Network Rail still referenced it in its post-Covid report into wider opportunities with East West Rail in 2022.

It said:



The addition of East West Rail services to Aylesbury will be the first step in offering better connectivity to the north and east; all links which are not present today.

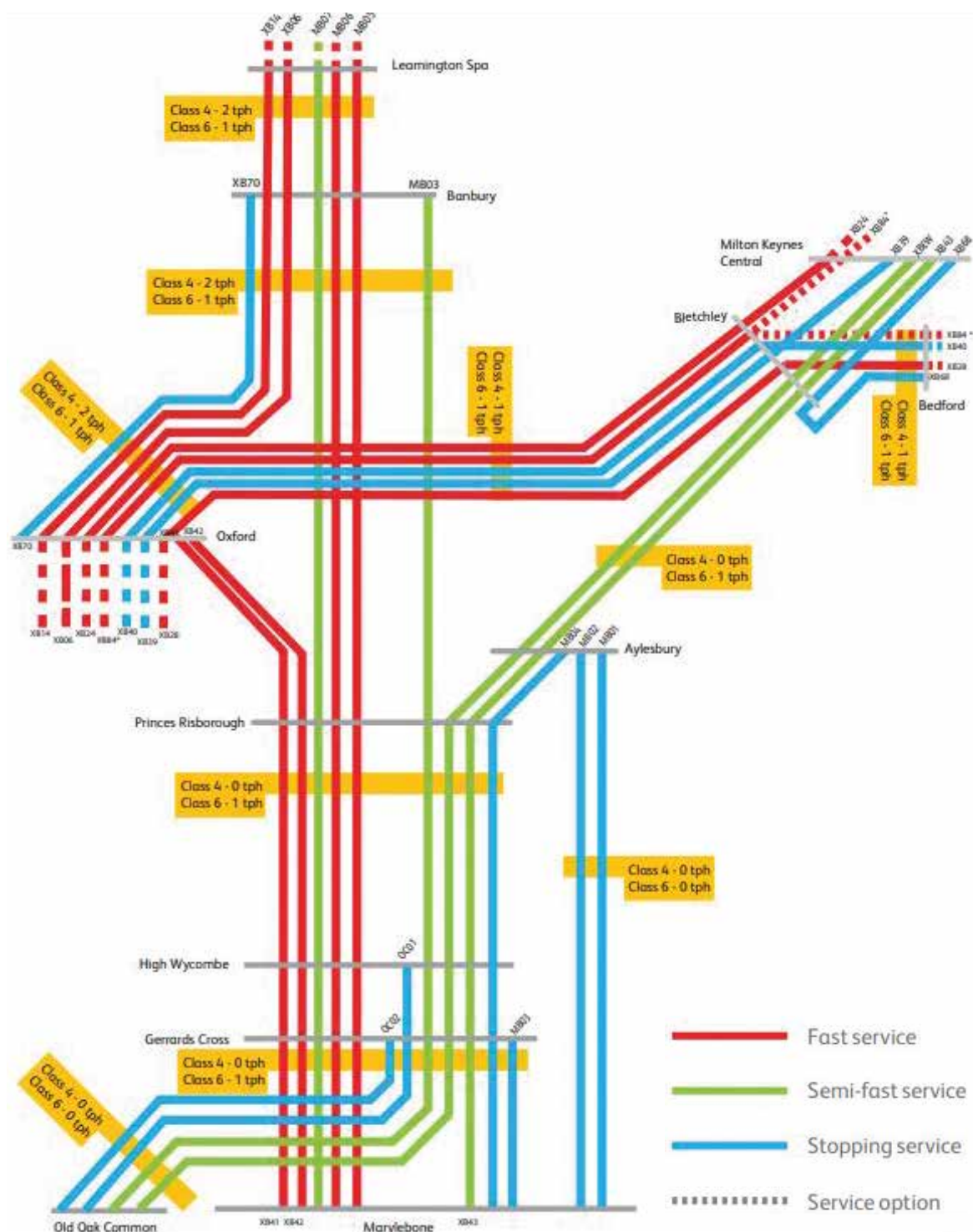
“The West Midlands and Chiltern (WM&C) Route Study has outlined aspirations for two trains per hour (TPH) operating between Milton Keynes and Old Oak Common (via Aylesbury and Princes Risborough), which could in part be formed for an extension of the proposed East West Rail service. This would improve the connectivity and economic opportunities to the people and businesses across Buckinghamshire to neighbouring counties and beyond.

**“A more frequent service to wider destinations, in addition to the improved connectivity to the Chiltern Main Line and Old Oak Common station, enables an opportunity to deliver significant benefits to a wide range of locations beyond Aylesbury.**

Additionally, these improvements in connectivity and frequency would promote a significant modal shift from private road transport, which currently dominates the county's travel, to rail.



It added: “Better rail connectivity between Northampton and other key locations which circumvents the need to interchange repeatedly at London termini will be essential in incorporating an area of significant growth within the wider region.”



Chiltern and East West Rail 2043 Unconstrained ITSS

## EEH Main Line Priorities Rail Study (2024)

In autumn 2024, EEH's Board approved the Main Line Priorities Rail Study. Containing expert advice from its consultants, Arup, the study provides a comprehensive view of the region's rail network.

Arup analysed the current performance of the rail network and evaluated the schemes and services which would perform regional strategic objectives: improved connectivity; sustainable growth; accessibility; and decarbonisation.

One of the key packages of work it recommends as a priority is 'Chiltern Transformation'. Integral to this is a new connection between Northampton and Old Oak Common via the link between Milton Keynes and Aylesbury.

The table below shows the key components of the 'Chiltern' package recommended within the study, to be delivered in stages. EEH is now progressing further technical work to make the strategic case for these interventions.

### Chiltern package key components

Component	Sub-Component	Proposal		Enables	Case for Investment	Likely cost
		Short Term	Medium/ Long Term			
Main line Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aylesbury - Milton Keynes</li> <li>Aylesbury-Princes Risborough line</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aylesbury to Milton connection via EWR and Aylesbury Station Upgrade</li> <li>Aylesbury - Princess Risborough line upgrade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through running services between Chiltern Main Line (CML) and Milton Keynes</li> <li>High frequency through running services between CML and Aylesbury</li> </ul>	A combination of upgrades to existing track open up new direct connections such as Milton Keynes (and potentially Northampton) to Buckinghamshire stations for new strategic services supporting modal shift, airport rail access (via Old Oak Common) and regional rail commuting	Tactical 0.5-£1bn
Old Oak Common Terminus	New Old Oak Common (OOC) Terminus Enabling track works	NA - Safeguarding for station site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated stations for CML at Old Common</li> <li>Enabling works to allow frequency uplift</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services to terminate at Old Oak Common enabling additional services to operate on Chiltern Main Line (CML)</li> </ul>	An Old Oak Common terminus would enable significant connectivity with proposed Hub at OOC to GWML, HS2, Elizabeth Line and to Heathrow in addition to serving new developments at OCC. The additional capacity will relieve Marylebone and enable higher overall service levels	<£500m
Electrification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electrification of Marylebone - Aylesbury</li> <li>Electrification of Chiltern Main line</li> </ul>	Tactical electrification of CML	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wider electrification on CML</li> <li>Electrification proposals on Aylesbury to Marylebone and new connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New high performing rolling stock and faster Journeys</li> <li>Low carbon railway operations</li> </ul>	Services on the Chiltern Line will need to be decarbonised to achieve a net zero rail network and given the high utilisation electrification will likely represent long term value for money and support passenger growth	Partial 0.5-£1bn Full £1-2£bn
Rolling stock replacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replacement of rolling stock classes 165; 168; 68</li> <li>Electrification of rolling stock</li> </ul>	Replacement of rolling stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aylesbury - Princess Risborough line upgrade</li> <li>Aylesbury to Milton connection via EWR and Aylesbury Station Upgrade</li> </ul>	All electric / electric/ hybrid fleet with standardised performance	Enables a higher quality, higher capacity and more frequent railways operating at lower cost. Would support key commuter routes whilst retaining key local connections	Long term replacement £1bn

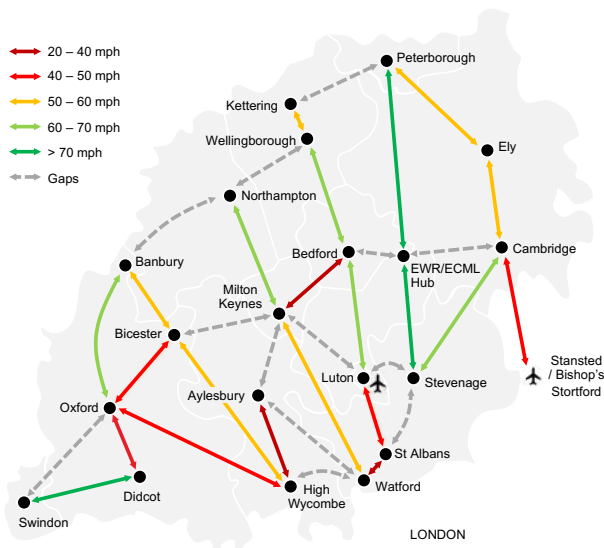




### Current journey times and frequencies by rail

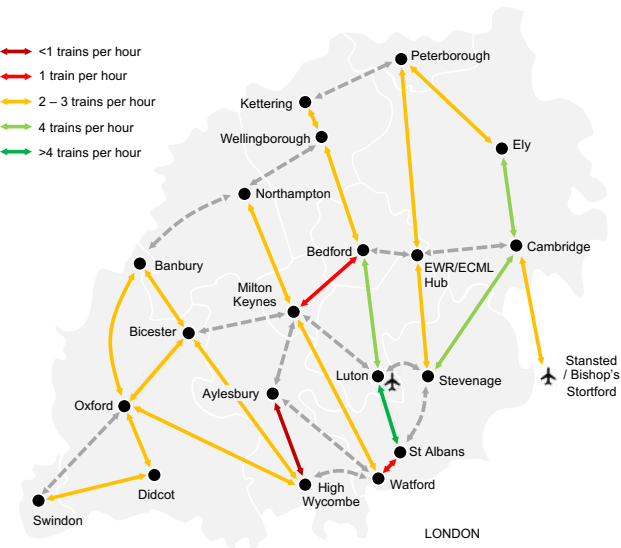
Analysis of the EEH rail network in the study demonstrates the current challenges and opportunities along the corridor, particularly in terms of connectivity to and from Aylesbury.

### Average rail speeds between hubs



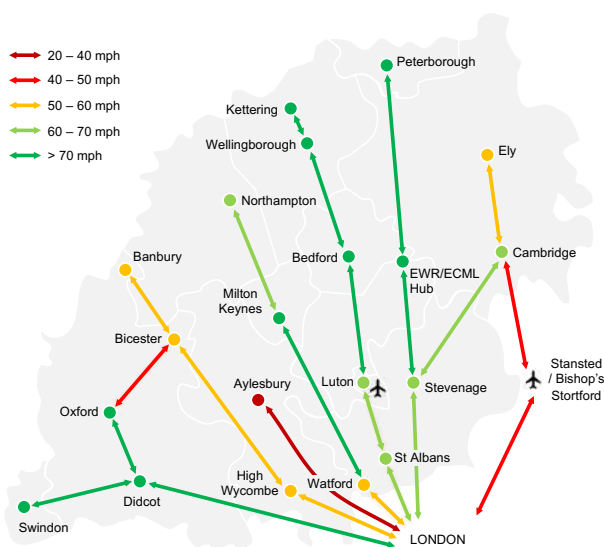
Average speeds are the typical journey time between hubs divided by the distance between them.

### Frequencies between hubs



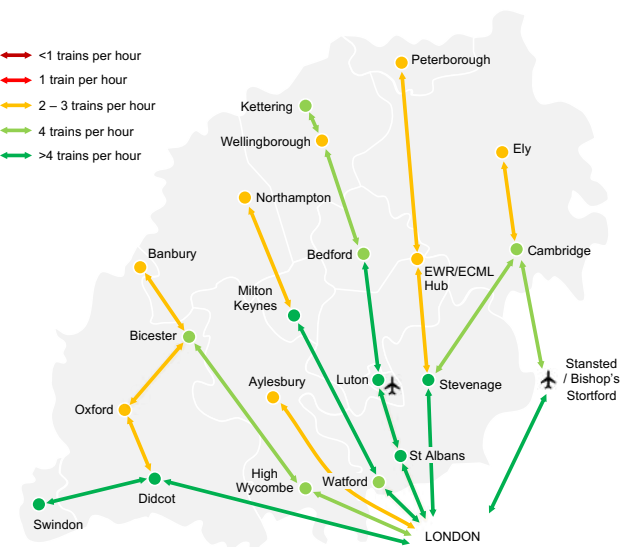
Frequency is the typical frequency between hubs per hour in the typical off-peak timetable (between 10:00 and 16:00).

### Average rail speeds to/from London



Average speeds are the typical journey time between hubs divided by the distance between them.

### Frequencies to and from London



Frequency is the typical frequency between hubs per hour in the typical off-peak timetable (between 10:00 and 16:00).

## UNLOCKING AYLESBURY'S POTENTIAL FOR ITS COMMUNITIES, BUSINESSES AND WIDER REGIONAL ECONOMY

**A key element of the Northampton-Old Oak Common corridor is the rail link between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes.**

The link has always been an integral part of East West Rail. Indeed, it was included within Network Rail's Transport and Works Act Order application, approved by the Secretary of State in 2020, granting permission for work to begin.

Alongside unlocking the opportunity for the Northampton-Old Oak Common corridor, the link is vital to Aylesbury's economic future. The growth of Aylesbury and north Buckinghamshire includes nearly 20,000 new homes planned for delivery by 2033 (including 16,207 new homes in Aylesbury). Site allocation in the local plan was shaped with the expectation that the link would be delivered: it was only in 2021, eight years into the local plan, that the link was removed from the first phase of construction work.

**For a town of its size, its connectivity by rail is notably poor - akin to a 'cul de sac' where the only option is to travel southwards into London, with no direct northern, western, or eastern connectivity. This is compounded by it having one of the poorest performing parts of the region's road networks, as highlighted in National Highway's Oxford-Cambridge roads study.**

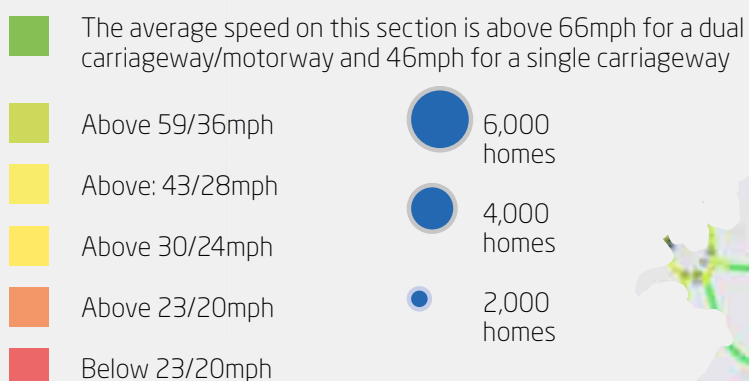
The link would be transformative for Aylesbury and surrounding communities, offering a realistic alternative to the car and closer links to other economic centres, not just Milton Keynes, but also (after completion of East West Rail and via no more than a single interchange) Oxford, Bicester, Bedford, Northampton, Birmingham and Cambridge (with Luton also being another potential journey dependent on quality of interchange).

It is our understanding that the benefit-cost-ratio for the 'Aylesbury link' is comparable to that of the rest of East West Rail. At a recent transport select committee on East West Rail, DfT Permanent Secretary Dame Bernadette Kelly, said, in our view correctly, that **a low BCR should not preclude schemes that are transformational, particularly where its benefits are difficult to capture using traditional appraisal methods. The same rule should apply to the Aylesbury link.**

This map shows road speeds and housing sites in local plan throughout the wider corridor. Northampton-Old Oak Common rail would ease pressure in congestion hotspots such as Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Princes Risborough and Northampton. The settlements along the line are all experiencing significant housing growth, which must be supported by sustainable travel options.

### Legend:

Congestion score morning peak hour





## Unlocking the town's potential...

**Aylesbury currently has poor rail connectivity for what is a large, growing and congested town:** For a town of its size and proximity to major urban areas, Aylesbury's connectivity by rail is notably poor – the only option is to travel southwards on a relatively slow line into London, with no direct northern, western, or eastern connectivity. Growth has been historically hampered by this lack of access to wider labour markets and skills of its neighbouring areas. Most people in the area work in Aylesbury itself – and this has resulted in car dependent growth which has contributed to it having one of the poorest performing parts of the region's road networks.

**Indeed, analysis by INRIX lists Aylesbury as being within the top 250 most congested places in the world, a remarkable ranking given the market town is being compared to some of the biggest cities and metropolitan areas on Earth.** Driving in Aylesbury during peak times costs motorists an additional 40 hours every year, compared to if they were travelling at other times of the day. The poor levels of service on Aylesbury's road network were also highlighted by National Highway's Oxford to Cambridge roads study – which identified it as one of the most important issues to be taken forwards in the region.

**The Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link is vital for the town's economic prosperity:** With increased access to professional opportunities for its residents, Aylesbury's prosperity will increase: with increased spending power encouraging retail vibrancy and regeneration of the town. Businesses will choose to locate in the town. Reflecting the already suppressed economy and slowing growth, **Aylesbury has some of the highest levels of deprivation in Buckinghamshire (as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, IMD).** In particular, **Aylesbury has several areas in the top 10% most-deprived areas nationally in terms of education, skills and training, particularly towards the north of the town.** Better connections will bring investment, drive regeneration and result in better conditions for all residents.

**The Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link is a key consideration for the new local plan:** East West Rail was pivotal in influencing the overall Spatial Vision for the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, and the subsequent location of the housing allocations, especially at Aylesbury and Winslow, with 20,000 new homes expected to be delivered by 2033. Failure to deliver East West Rail in full will result in the continued dominance of car trips across the region and particularly Aylesbury.

Aylesbury's capacity for further housing beyond that set out in the VALP is linked to the ability to connect those houses with employment opportunities. Improving Aylesbury's rail connections means we do not need to continue the cycle of car dependency: we are giving people choices and this makes Aylesbury an attractive place to be located, both to live but also to easily have access a range of job opportunities. **As Buckinghamshire Council develops the new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire, increased certainty in the delivery of a rail connection will be a key consideration in determining the location and scale of development to be provided not only around Aylesbury but across Buckinghamshire post 2033.**

## "We have waited long enough": A timeline of the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link

**November 2011:** After the East West Rail Consortium (now East West Main Line Partnership) makes the strategic case for East West Rail, its 'western section' (Oxford to Bedford and the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link) is included in the National Infrastructure Plan by Chancellor, George Osborne

**July 2012:** The Secretary of State for Transport, Justine Greening, announces that the western section of East West Rail will be part of the Government's strategy for rail transport, confirming government funding for the project. It is due to open in 2017.

**December 2015:** The East West Rail Alliance – which includes Network Rail – is formed to construct East West Rail between Bicester and Bedford, and from Milton Keynes to Aylesbury.

**December 2016:** Chiltern Railways opens its new route between Oxford and London Marylebone, effectively completing the first phase of East West Rail between Oxford and Bicester.

**August 2017:** Network Rail publishes its Chiltern Route Study, which promotes the concept of services from Milton Keynes to Old Oak Common using the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link.

**November 2017:** The Chancellor announces funding for Network Rail to deliver Bicester to Bedford, and Milton Keynes to Aylesbury.

**February 2020:** The Transport Secretary approves Network Rail's Transport and Works Act Order application, granting permission for work to begin on the next phase of East West Rail between Oxford and Bedford, and Milton Keynes and Aylesbury.

**January 2021:** Government confirms £760m to construct East West Rail between Bicester and Bletchley only – to be delivered by 2025. East West Railway Company announces that the scheme will now be delivered in three connection stages: Oxford to Bletchley and Milton Keynes; then to Bedford; then to Cambridge. There is very little reference to the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link and it is now shown as a 'dotted' rather than 'full' line on East West Rail materials.

**May 2021:** In an adjournment debate on the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link, then Aylesbury MP Rob Butler says the link 'has **support from residents, with a petition still collecting signatures.**

It is championed by Buckinghamshire Council, which has itself contributed millions of pounds to funding the scheme's development. It is backed by Buckinghamshire's local enterprise partnership and by Bucks Business First'.



Greg Smith, MP for Buckingham (now MP for Mid Buckinghamshire), adds that the 'Aylesbury spur is vital as it **adds a level of connectivity to Buckinghamshire that is truly game changing**'. "It will reduce congestion and pollution, create new job opportunities and allow for that **decisive step towards enhancing economic prosperity**, particularly for our rural communities. My constituents need to know that their patience will be worth it and that they will reap the full benefits of restoring this **vital link between some of the fastest-growing areas of the south-east**. We have waited long enough. We really need the Aylesbury spur to be delivered."



**March 2022:** Network Rail publishes its strategic statement on an East West Main Line, evidencing the benefits for a coast-to-coast service from Norfolk and Suffolk through to Bristol and South Wales, including connectivity south to Southampton. It says the 'addition of East West Rail services to Aylesbury will be the first step in offering better connectivity to the north and east; all links which are not present today'.



## IT ENJOYS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT

The Aylesbury link to Milton Keynes, and the wider Northampton-Old Oak Common corridor enjoys significant regional and national political and business support.

### Buckinghamshire Council

Cllr Steven Broadbent, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport, Buckinghamshire Council, said:

**// Aylesbury's significant economic potential is being severely limited by its poor transport infrastructure.** It suffers some of the highest levels of congestion in the country, exacerbated by substandard rail connectivity which in effect makes it a rail 'cul-de-sac' at the end of the line. The current local plan-led housing growth commits to major levels of new housing in the town – amounting to 16,000 new homes over the next decade. Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework propose going beyond this and would result in tens of thousands more homes in the near future. **It is critical to recognise that the rail link was expected to support current plan-led growth. Failure to deliver the link will only lead to further congestion, lost economic potential and increased anger amongst our businesses and communities.** Restoring railways helps sustain communities by unlocking access to jobs, education and housing. It's clear that the proposed Aylesbury section would deliver on all these elements in an efficient and cost-effective way. It would also **unlock the wider opportunity for the Northampton-Old Oak Common corridor, which would be transformational for the whole county and, indeed, the wider region.** //

### West Northamptonshire Council

West Northamptonshire Council's Portfolio Holder for Environment, Highways, Transport & Waste Services, Cllr Phil Larratt, said:

**// Delivery of Northampton-Old Oak Common rail corridor is an important rail priority for West Northamptonshire Council. It would unlock new economic opportunities for Northampton, which is undergoing significant levels of planned growth - better linking our economy with those in Buckinghamshire and beyond.** The greater connectivity that the link would provide would also open up employment and wider opportunities for our residents, providing an attractive route through Buckinghamshire, and from Old Oak Common, as opposed to Euston, to wider London locations, Heathrow and the Thames Valley. We believe this is an opportunity which would bring benefits to West Northamptonshire from the investment in HS2 and East West Rail and is one which should be protected. //

### Milton Keynes City Council

Cllr Akash Nayee, Cabinet Member for Public Realm at Milton Keynes City Council, said:

**// Milton Keynes is a growing, vibrant new city which plays a key role in supporting the government's mission to grow the UK economy. The link to Aylesbury will not only lead to sustainable connectivity to neighbouring towns, but it would also help open new opportunities for the city and Buckinghamshire.** //

### Laura Kyrke-Smith

MP for Aylesbury:

**// Aylesbury's significant economic potential is being held back by poor transport infrastructure and connectivity. It is an issue which came up time and again on the doorstep. My constituents are understandably concerned that significant housing growth in the town has not been met with the required improvements in infrastructure, demonstrated by high levels of congestion and a rail service which heads only in one direction. The Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link would be transformational, attracting new businesses and investment into the town, reducing reliance on the car and enabling residents to access opportunities and facilities in the wider area.** Furthermore, delivering Aylesbury-Milton Keynes is a crucial element of enabling improved strategic connectivity between the Midlands and Thames Valley, including enhanced access by public transport to Heathrow Airport. //



## Arc Universities Group

Alistair Lomax, Director, Arc Universities Group, said:

“East-West Rail is already a gamechanger in rail connectivity across the Oxford to Cambridge region. **The advent of a further rail corridor between Northampton and Old Oak Common should be welcomed by our university sector as it will provide a direct link from the whole region into Heathrow Airport.** The UK aspires to be seen as a global leader in science and technology. The collaboration, innovation and growth that this will entail has been held back by poor connectivity in our region. The new connection will greatly ease access to international researchers, innovators, financiers and students. Better physical connectivity will encourage greater collaboration which drives forward innovation in an area which contributes to significantly to the national economy. I can see many direct benefits to the nine members of the Arc Universities Group, in particular, the University of Northampton, Buckinghamshire New University the Open University, MK:U, Cranfield University. The link also brings the benefits of greater connectivity to institutions such as institutions the National Film and Television School, Brunel University, Thames Valley University, the Oxford Business College and the Universities of Buckingham and Reading, to name just a few. It will also encourage cross-regional working between our region and the great universities of the East Midlands.”

## Buckinghamshire Business First

Philippa Batting, Chief Executive Officer at Buckinghamshire Business First, said:

“Buckinghamshire is an entrepreneurial heartland, home to cutting-edge businesses and a well-educated workforce. Connectivity is the lifeblood of a strong economy and our workforce needs to be mobile but currently, in Aylesbury and the north of the county, congestion and poor rail connectivity are acting as a barrier to productivity and economic growth. **The Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link and the wider rail corridor is transformational, providing the route for businesses and talent within Buckinghamshire to connect to opportunities. It has strong support from the 15,000 businesses in Buckinghamshire which we represent.**”

## Oxford to Cambridge pan-Regional Partnership

Dr Richard Hutchins, managing director, Oxford to Cambridge pan-Regional Partnership, said:

“Global investors are attracted to our region’s world class economic assets, science and technology clusters, fantastic natural and built environments and great places to live. **From the tech cluster centred on Silverstone down to the film and TV cluster around Pinewood, the Northampton-Old Oak Common rail line would connect some of the best the region has to offer - and, crucially, better connect us to international markets via Heathrow Airport.**”

## Oxford to Cambridge Science Supercluster Board

Dr Andy Williams, Chair Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster Board, said:

“This is a project which would better connect an important part of the Oxford-Cambridge region’s science and technology ecosystem and improve access to international markets via Heathrow Airport. **Improved connectivity would be a catalyst for greater collaboration and innovation, expanding the growth potential of the region’s flourishing science and technology sector and driving economic growth for the UK.**”

## EastWestMainLine Partnership

Championing the ambition for East West Rail

The Aylesbury link and wider Northampton-Old Oak Common rail corridor is supported by the East West Main Line Partnership, the body of local authorities and sub-national transport bodies which formed in 1995 and originally made the case for East West Rail. The Partnership’s membership stretches all the way from Norfolk and Suffolk through to West Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire, and on to the Western Gateway sub-national transport body area.

In its 2021 prospectus, the Partnership said: “The link from Aylesbury to Milton Keynes is an **integral element of the East West Main Line**. It provides a key connection that will support future growth, improving connectivity in a way that reduces demand on the road network. It links the economic cluster centred on Milton Keynes with the planned growth centred on Aylesbury. The capacity released by HS2 could unlock new direct journeys on the West Coast and Midland Main Lines in conjunction with East West Rail, notably from Northampton to Old Oak Common via Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Wycombe.”

In 2022 the Partnership played a leading role in making the case for East West Rail with its ‘Building Better Connections’ report.



**Callum Anderson**  
MP for Buckingham and Bletchley

“ My constituents in Bletchley, Winslow, and the surrounding villages are looking forward to East West Rail serving their communities when the Oxford-Milton Keynes section opens next year, and the connections eastwards to Bedford and Cambridge being delivered as soon as possible thereafter. However, it is crucial that investment in East West Rail is maximised for the benefit of the region and the wider British economy. **Connecting Aylesbury to Milton Keynes via Winslow and Bletchley will transform public transport in north Buckinghamshire.** It will give people a realistic alternative to the car and will bring our rural and urban communities together, whilst improving air quality. **The link and the wider Northampton-Old Oak Common corridor it unlocks, will provide more opportunities for our knowledge-intensive clusters to collaborate, innovate and expand in a region which is pivotal to the UK’s economic growth mission.** ”



**Mike Reader**  
MP for Northampton South

“ Northampton is the largest town in the UK and a key regional economic hub with a long industrial history. With the right investment in infrastructure, it can fully contribute to the government’s ambitious plans for economic growth. **The Northampton-Old Oak Common rail corridor would better link our successful manufacturing, food, healthcare and logistics businesses, alongside our university, with Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire,** and also improve our connectivity with Heathrow Airport. It is a proposal which should be **seriously considered by the Department for Transport.** ”



**ENGLAND'S  
ECONOMIC  
HEARTLAND**

England's Economic Heartland is the sub-national transport body for the region stretching from Swindon and Oxfordshire through Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire to Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Its transport strategy for the region (2021), approved by EEH's Board of political leaders from each of its 13 local and combined authorities and subject to significant public consultation and engagement, says: We support the delivery of the East West Rail project... with the expectation that Oxford to Bletchley/Milton Keynes is open by 2025, with links to Bedford and Aylesbury to follow at the earliest possible opportunity thereafter, and Oxford-Cambridge delivered no later than 2030. It adds:

“ Northampton – Milton Keynes-Bletchley – Aylesbury – High Wycombe – Old Oak Common: the combination of delivery of East West Rail and HS2 creates opportunities to develop a new regional service **linking these regionally significant centres with key economic opportunities and allowing easier access to Heathrow Airport and HS2,** supported by the provision of a twin-track solution between Aylesbury and Princess Risborough. ”

## Get in touch

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