



Department
for Transport

Baroness Vere of Norbiton
Minister for Roads, Buses and Places

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: grant.shapps@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

Councillor Emily Smith
Chair, Oxfordshire Growth Board

18 March 2021

Dear Councillor Smith,

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a unique place, home to cutting-edge research, globally renowned science and technology clusters, and some of the most productive towns and cities in the country. The Arc is a key economic priority for this Government, as demonstrated through our commitments for East West Rail. This letter is to inform you of the Government's new approach to the consideration of road investment that could be required alongside other transport investment to support sustainable growth in the Arc.

Having paused work on the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway project in March 2020, the Government is today announcing that the project has now been formally cancelled. As you will be aware, the Government announced in 2014 as part of the first Road Investment Strategy that it would undertake a strategic study to examine the case for such an Expressway. Work has focussed on the development of potential options for a high-quality road link between Oxford and Milton Keynes. Extensive analysis and local engagement has not identified any options that would be cost-effective for the taxpayer.

Highways England worked closely with local partners in exploring potential options, and I am very grateful for the valuable insight that stakeholders have contributed to that process. The substantial body of evidence this produced will now inform newly commenced work to consider where more targeted, localised road improvements to connectivity may be needed within the Oxford to Cambridge corridor. We will do so in close co-operation with Highways England and England's Economic Heartland, as the Sub-national Transport Body for the region.

More broadly, the Government has committed to the development of a long-term Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework in partnership with local people, institutions and businesses. This will set a long-term framework, including transport policy, for local and national planning and inform

investment decisions so that together, the Government, local authorities and communities can plan for a more sustainable, prosperous future for the area.

The East West Rail scheme also remains central to providing critical infrastructure within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. This will not only improve connectivity but bring new jobs and opportunities to people and communities in the area. In January, the Government announced a £760 million funding commitment to deliver the next phase of East West Rail, which will create 1,500 skilled jobs, and reinstate direct rail services between Bicester and Bletchley for the first time since 1968.

I hope you share the Government's ambitions for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and that we can work closely in the future, alongside local partners and communities, to realise the potential of the region.

Yours ever,

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON