



Department  
for Transport

From the Secretary of State  
**The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps**

Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000  
E-Mail: [grant.shapps@dft.gov.uk](mailto:grant.shapps@dft.gov.uk)

Web site: [www.gov.uk/dft](http://www.gov.uk/dft)

Greg Smith MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

18 March 2021

Dear Greg,

Thank you for your letter of 23 February setting out your concerns with the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. Baroness Vere replied on 1 March noting that we would write again with progress on the project which remained paused at the time.

I am therefore writing today to inform you of the announcement of the Government's decision to formally cancel the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway project. This is part 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 Oxford Cambridge Arc, which remains a key economic priority for the Government as demonstrated through our commitments for East West Rail.

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 Oxford to Cambridge 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. Having paused work on the Expressway project in March 2020, the Government is today announcing that the project has now been formally cancelled.

I know you have long held concerns over the Expressway, and I would like to thank you for the constructive way you have engaged with me and my ministerial team in representing the views of your constituents.

Highways England worked closely with local partners in exploring potential options, and I am very grateful for the valuable insight where you and your constituents 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**