



Department
for Transport

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Our Ref: 232302

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Mr Graeme Markland
Neighbourhood Plan Continuity
Officer
Thame Town Council
Town Hall
High Street
Thame
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Dear Mr Markland

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

Thank you for your letter of 4th July 2018 to the Transport Secretary regarding the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. As you will appreciate, Ministers receive large volumes of correspondence and are unable to answer each personally, therefore I have been asked to reply.

I can assure you that no decisions have yet been made. The corridor announcement for the missing link between the M40 at Oxford and the M1 at Milton Keynes and routes around Oxford will be made later in summer 2018 and, following this, further work including a public consultation will inform a decision on the route alignment within the selected corridor. It is therefore premature to be considering any potential interaction with Thame's ring road – it is only broad corridors that are currently under consideration – specific routes will only be developed once a corridor choice has been made. At that point more information will become available and this will be put into the public domain.

While there has been significant stakeholder engagement in preparing to make a corridor choice, I am afraid that it has not been possible to engage with parish and town councils within the potential corridors because of the wide areas covered and the large numbers of town and parish councils this would have involved. As mentioned above, I can assure you that there will be full consultation on possible routes once a corridor has been chosen. In due course there will also be the chance to comment on the preferred route once

it has been developed. These will be key opportunities for Thame and other parish and town councils to provide valuable stakeholder input.

In that context you can be confident that the final choice of corridor for the expressway will be informed by a robust evidence base proportionate to the scale of the decision being made. The evidence will fully cover environmental and heritage considerations and in due course a comprehensive Environmental Assessment will accompany any application for scheme planning consent.

Thank you for raising the point about the England's Economic Heartland (EEH) connectivity study. As you acknowledge, this work is about how corridors that end up not being on the expressway route can still benefit from it. I can assure you that EEH will be working closely with DfT to ensure their findings are robust – but the key point is that this work cannot be taken forward until a corridor choice has been made.

Your more general points about spatial planning have been noted and will be passed to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for further consideration.

As mentioned above, further details regarding stakeholder engagement plans will be made available as the project is progressed. Please be assured that you and others in your community will get the opportunity to express views on the scheme during the development process. Below I have provided a link to Highways England's Oxford to Cambridge Expressway webpage which includes the recent stakeholder conference presentation. I hope you find this useful:

Highways England Oxford to Cambridge Expressway webpage:
<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway/>

Yours sincerely



Andrew Robson
Strategic Roads, Economics & Statistics