

Anthony Browne

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE MP



A new link road into Huntingdon from the A14 has been opened by Highways England

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND

CAMBRIDGE remains at the heart of some of the most significant infrastructure projects of this generation. Already we have seen one of Britain's largest road-building projects, the regeneration of the A14, which recently opened eight months ahead of schedule.

There are ambitious plans to deliver Cambridge Autonomous Metro, a new Cambridge South station and a major new cross-country rail link, East West Rail (EWR). It's critical that these projects form a successful and sustainable public transport network for South Cambridge and the wider region.

Whilst there is broad consensus that EWR will be a welcome addition to our regional transport network, I do understand why some residents are concerned about how it will impact our villages and countryside. Having already succeeded in ensuring EWR release their blight policy, and continuing to push for more clarity on freight movements on the line, I have been pressing EWR and the Department for Transport for information on some of two key concerns - route alignment and Cambourne station.

EWR has already confirmed that a new station will be built at Cambourne. Both the residents and town council have told me that they would prefer the station to be located to the north of the town, not to the south as EWR has initially suggested. In my view, there is a very powerful case for the station to be located north of the town, avoiding disruption to many much-loved areas of natural beauty and providing better interconnectivity with other transport links, such as the A428.

It was not only something I pushed for strongly during the general election, but also the subject of my first letter to the Transport Secretary in January last year. I therefore welcomed EWR's confirmation that they are

actively considering this option and I very much hope to see it presented to the public as part of the consultation process.

The most fundamental matter that all affected communities are most concerned about is route alignment. Exactly where might this new line go? Currently EWR is focussed on a southern approach into Cambridge, that will enter the city via the new station at Cambridge South.

There a growing call from residents and prominent campaign groups for EWR to consult upon an alternative approach that would enter via the north. This was dismissed by EWR at an early stage, but I have heard the arguments for the northern approach and find them persuasive, not least that it could potentially serve Northstowe, the UK's largest new town in the last 50 years. We need to understand the basis for EWR's early dismissal of the northern approach.

I am calling for parity of assessment, so that both northern and southern approach options can be considered by the public. This will not only provide comparable evidence of which is really the better route but will also give residents more faith that the process itself has been open and fair.

I am expecting further information to be forthcoming on both these issues in the next few weeks, but it is imperative that as many people as possible take part in the upcoming consultation to ensure that the views of residents are front and centre when decisions about this important project are being made.

I am also glad to confirm that the Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, has agreed to discuss these issues with me and leading campaign groups before the start of the next consultation period. Working together, we can deliver a new rail line that works for everyone, with the minimum of disruption and the maximum benefit to our quality of life.

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