



Mr Richard Holden MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Date: 5th October 2023

Dear Richard,

We are writing to request that the Roads Investment Strategy (RIS3) includes consideration of improvements to the A1 within Central Bedfordshire.

We can probably all agree that improvements to the flow of traffic on the A1 are long overdue and that the continuing existence of three roundabouts in such a short distance is not consistent with the standards of a modern dualled A road.

Many residents continue to be concerned that neither the Department nor National Highways have made sufficient progress over the past decades.

The recent closure of the RIS3 consultation now provides an opportunity to deliver practical changes which would benefit not only local users of the road but also ensure that the A1 adequately meets the requirements to be part of the strategic national road network. RIS3 must include measures to address these issues with the A1 in my constituency.

We submit that there are a number of strong reasons for the inclusion of plans for the A1 in Bedfordshire in RIS3:

- 1) The removal of the roundabouts would improve **national** connectivity and journey times.
- 2) The removal of the roundabouts would improve **local** connectivity and journey times.
- 3) There are frequent accidents on this stretch of road and National Highways is currently undertaking a safety study at the New Road, Sandy junction, given the number of accidents which have occurred there.
- 4) A recent decision by National Highways to close an intersection of the A1 to southbound traffic at Tingey's Corner will increase pressure on the roundabouts from additional local traffic.
- 5) The quality of air along the A1 is worsened by the existence of the roundabouts which serve increase emissions from stationary vehicles. The area adjacent to Sandy has for the last eight years been an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) monitored by Central Beds Council.
- 6) The changes to the Black Cat roundabout which are due to commence later this year will place further pressure on the roundabout at Sandy and should be the catalyst for the removal of the other remaining roundabouts.
- 7) Between 2011 and 2021, the number of households in the North East Bedfordshire constituency increased over 20%: nearly 3.5x the national average with similar growth in the adjacent Mid Beds constituency.
- 8) The A1 is a critical part of the infrastructure for Central Bedfordshire and the wider area but the Department has no current plan to enhance road connectivity. The recent route announcement for East West Rail simply elevates the need to address the current issues on the A1 in this area.

Those responsible for devising the strategic road network have long since decided that roundabouts are not optimal for this type of important national road and the reason that there are so few roundabouts on the A1 is that they restrict traffic movement and delay journey times.

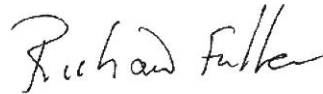
The roundabouts are “pinch points” and should be replaced with grade separated junctions or a similar type of road layout which can remove the roundabouts altogether at Sandy and Biggleswade and which would continue to ensure that traffic could travel east west.

We trust that the points herein confirm the common-sense decision to assess improvements to the A1 in RIS3 and are happy to meet to discuss further if necessary.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Adam Zerny
Leader, Central Bedfordshire Council



Richard Fuller MP
Member of Parliament (NE Bedfordshire)