

# MARIA CAULFIELD MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA



The Rt. Hon Chris Grayling MP  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

13<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Dear Secretary of State,

## **A27 East of Lewes – Offline Dual Carriageway Option**

The inefficiencies of the A27 present major operational challenges for residents and businesses in East Sussex on a daily basis, which signifies that it is not viable as a key part of the strategic transport network serving the County. Being fragmented from the safe and efficient strategic road network, the A27 is a major obstacle toward maximising both county and sub-national productivity, and consequently is stifling economic growth.

The inconsistent quality of the A27 affects the timings of journeys, which subsequently inhibits business confidence and growth. It is also insubstantial in its ability to accommodate the additional traffic growth generated by the recent planned housing developments, particularly in the south of Wealden. These problems are most glaringly obvious when one regards the journey time between Lewes and Hastings; a journey of less than 30 miles, which often takes up to 90 minutes. For East Sussex, these long term issues with the A27 between Lewes and Polegate are comparable to those experienced in West Sussex at Arundel.

We welcome the allocation of the £75m towards the smaller scale interventions currently being developed by Highways England for delivery through the 2015-2020 Roads Investment Strategy (RIS) period, and recognise that these will intrinsically benefit some of the issues on the network, particularly around Polegate. However, we believe that these proposals fail to address the wider issues which are only going to be compounded with the planned growth in East Sussex.

We view it necessary for there to be comprehensive investment in an offline dual carriageway between Lewes and Polegate, in order to improve journey time reliability and network resilience, which in turn will result in a safer network. These changes will catalyse productivity within East Sussex and would aid in meeting the demands of the Government's Industrial Strategy. It would also greatly improve the connectivity of our key areas of growth, such as Bexhill and Hastings; Eastbourne, South Wealden and Newhaven; as well as to Brighton; the coastal towns of West Sussex; Gatwick and the wider sub-national economy.





We have formed a Reference Group to advance the case for an offline dual carriageway option and, as co-signatories of this letter, we can demonstrate support from all of the MPs in East Sussex, cross-party political support amongst the Local Authority Leaders in East Sussex, as well as support from the two Local Enterprise Partnerships for such a scheme. We also have support from our business community through the Alliance of Chambers for East Sussex, which unites the Chambers of Commerce across the county.

During the evaluation of improvements to the strategic road network, the South Downs National Park was also consulted and has been engaged. In their 2014 position statement they declared: "in considering any proposals the South Downs National Park Authority will be mindful that the current state of congestion on sections of the A27 creates secondary impacts on routes within the National Park and its communities." A new offline solution for the A27 east of Lewes would require careful assessment to measure its positive and negative environmental and economic impacts, but would certainly deviate traffic away from the National Park, which would enable the existing road to be used to create a gateway to the Park and would provide enhanced facilities for vulnerable road users.

East Sussex County Council has offered to take the lead in developing options for an offline solution between Lewes and Polegate, while working bilaterally with Highways England. The County Council has recent and effective experience in developing and delivering major road projects in partnership with the Department of Transport - the Bexhill Hastings Link Road - and have an experienced project team who ensured the road design was sympathetic to the landscape in which it sits and that it protected the local wildlife and environmentally designated areas.

We recognise that the pace of delivery of road schemes is especially key to ensure that there is a pipeline of schemes for delivery in the second Roads Investment Strategy (RIS2) period from 2020-2025. To ensure that the offline dual carriageway solution for the A27 between Lewes and Polegate is in a good position to be in consideration for the potential RIS2 pipeline of schemes, we are seeking a commitment from the Department for an initial amount of funding to start developing such proposals.

Our ask is for £3m from the £75m allocation in RIS1 toward the A27 (East of Lewes) as development funding to take the offline solution to the Strategic Outline Business Case stage. Using this funding, the County Council - in partnership with Highways England - would undertake:

- A Feasibility Option Alignment study – mapping of the various constraints, developing potential alignment options and option appraisal including risks and costs.
- The development of a web-tag compliant transport model (including data collection) plus testing of potential options.
- Environmental Impact studies to assess air quality, noise, landscape and visual impacts, cultural heritage, flooding, ecological impacts etc.
- Development of a Strategic Outline Business Case.
- Public Consultation to identify a preferred option.



In conclusion, we believe that there is a compelling case for an offline dual carriageway for the A27 between Lewes and Polegate, which will deliver substantial transport improvements and vast economic and environmental benefits to both the local and national economies. We would welcome a discussion on the practicalities of securing this funding to develop proposals that will assist the Department for Transport and Highways England on tackling a key bottleneck on the strategic road network in East Sussex and the South East.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Caulfield MP  
**Chairman of A27 Reference Group**

**Co-Signatories:**

Caroline Ansell MP  
Nus Ghani MP  
Simon Kirby MP  
Huw Merriman MP  
Amber Rudd MP

Councillor Keith Glazier, Leader - *East Sussex County Council*  
Councillor David Tutt, Leader - *Eastbourne Borough Council*  
Councillor Peter Chowney, Leader - *Hastings Borough Council*  
Councillor Andy Smith, Leader - *Lewes District Council*  
Councillor Carl Maynard, Leader - *Rother District Council*  
Councillor Bob Standley, Leader - *Wealden District Council*

Chris Brodie, Chair - *South East Local Enterprise Partnership*  
Tim Wates, Chair - *Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership*