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The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Great Minster House
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Your ref
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Date 08 July 2010

Dear Mr Hammond

A21 PEMBURY TO TONBRIDGE DUALLING SCHEME

We are writing to you as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Tonbridge and Malling Joint Transportation Board which is a partnership between the Borough Council and the County Council responsible for a wide range of transport matters in the locality.

We are sure you will understand that the Joint Transportation Board at its recent meeting was very disturbed to learn of the postponement of the Public Inquiry due to take place this month and the delay in implementing the scheme itself which has been a long standing commitment to properly improve the vital strategic and local role of the A21.

The Board recognises that there are considerable pressures on public spending that need to be responsibly tackled and that the current transport investment plan needs to be part of this review. However, there are very important reasons why the A21 Pembury to Tonbridge dualling scheme stands apart from other projects and should be allocated the highest priority.

The A21 is, of course, part of the strategic highway network. As well as performing its conventional transportation role as part of the trunk road system it serves to provide a strategic link between the regeneration areas on the south coast, in particular Hastings, and other parts of the south east region, most particularly London, the wider motorway network and international airports. It is quite clearly therefore of regional and national importance in terms of economic development and regeneration.

In terms of traffic flow this stretch of the A21 is regularly and severely congested at peak hours. Not only is this a wholly unacceptable position on a major strategic trunk road, but these conditions also have a harmful effect upon the local road network in the surrounding area notably the towns of Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells, a regional hub, greatly hindering accessibility. Moreover, the conditions on this single carriageway stretch of the A21 have lead to a significant accident record including, sadly, a track record of fatalities.



Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure Services: Steve Humphrey (MRTPI)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Most importantly, we are sure that you will appreciate that by far and away the most obvious advantage of the timely implementation of this scheme is that it is required to ensure the proper functioning of the new regional hospital being constructed at Pembury. The new hospital is now well under construction and due for first occupation in early 2011 with completion by Autumn 2012. This project represents a major public investment in health care services for the area. Without the A21 improvements, and bearing in mind the very poor state of other major routes in the area such as the A228, the links to the hospital from towns and communities in the region are poor and will severely damage the effective operation of the new hospital.

There are a variety of other reasons that this road scheme is important to the locality but the matters highlighted in this letter are of strategic significance, and of a highly practical nature that should attract the corresponding priority in any review of pending road schemes. Consequently, the Board is most anxious that the matters be given very serious consideration and that the programme to secure early implementation of the road scheme be placed back on track at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



Kent County Councillor Peter Homewood
Chairman
Joint Transportation Board



Councillor Matthew Balfour
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Cabinet Member for Planning and
Transportation
Vice-Chairman
Joint Transportation Board

cc The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP
Colin Byrne, Director, GOSE
Greg Clark MP
The Rt Hon Sir John Stanley MP
David Hughes, Chief Executive TMBC
Councillor Mark Worrall, Leader TMBC

Department for
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Our Ref: 08/016048/10

12 July 2010

Dear Councillors Homewood and Balfour,


A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Scheme

Thank you for your letter dated 08 July 2010 to the Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Transport, about the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Scheme. I have been asked to reply as the Project Sponsor for the scheme.

The Government has identified deficit reduction as its primary objective for this Parliament and the Chancellor announced on 24 May £6.25 billion of savings from the current fiscal year, which included delaying a number of roads schemes. A Spending Review of public finances for the next few years will be undertaken shortly and its outcome will be reported in the autumn. The government will consider all planned highways expenditure as part of this review and expect to make some difficult decisions about future priorities. It would consequently be inappropriate to pre-empt the outcome of the Spending Review by making future commitments now about individual schemes which have not gone into construction.

The need for the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury scheme will be reviewed alongside other competing demands for funds once the outcome of the Spending Review and its implications for Transport schemes are known.

Yours sincerely



Paul Williams

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15 JUL 2010