

From the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP

OBS/778



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA



29 May 2018

Secretary of State for Transport
c/o Transport and Works Act Orders Unit
General Counsel's Office
Department for Transport
Zone 1/18
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Dear Secretary of State

Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

I write in response to the above application by Rother Valley Railway Limited which, if approved, would see the construction of a level crossing across the A21 near Robertsbridge.

The A21 is the main road between the M25 and the South Coast, providing a key strategic route linking Hastings, Bexhill, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks and has been recognised as vital to coastal regeneration around Hastings.

Ten years ago the A21 Reference Group was formed to bring together all the business, economic and political representatives down the route. The Group's principal ambition was and remains to see this part of the Strategic Road Network dualled in its entirety, therefore befitting the main link between London and the South Coast.

As you are aware, the dualling of the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury is complete. It is for tens of thousands of people a daily reminder of how a relatively simple change can significantly improve one's life: reducing congestion, improving safety and increasing capacity. The campaign to bring, through further dualling, these and associated economic benefits to the communities down the rest of the route continues, with the Group seeing the stretch between Kippings Cross and Lamberhurst as the next step if the remainder is not to be upgraded in one go.

Whilst I admire the Rother Valley Railway's ambition, I am extremely concerned about the proposed installation of a crossing across the A21 as it would not only risk further congesting an already busy road (particularly during the peak tourist periods, such as public holidays, when motorists are driving to the South Coast and the railway would presumably run most frequently) but also jeopardise the potential for dualling the road in the future, thus putting at risk the economic development of the South East. Therefore, whilst I admire the Rother Valley Railway's ambition, I object to this application.

Yours sincerely
Greg Clark

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