

Everyone living and working in the wider Cambridge region knows we need a transport and congestion solution. If we don't rise to this challenge, we are in danger of bursting the bubble that is our economic miracle.

The City Deal has offered us the first real opportunity to get to grips with the challenge and I believe we can grasp it. But I'm afraid the current Cambourne to Cambridge proposals are piecemeal, short term and in my, residents and business opinion, way off the mark; driven by spending deadlines rather than strategic vision. Today I am asking the Executive to pause and think again. Let's get this right.

We have some of the brightest minds living and working in Greater Cambridge. And although, and I hope they will forgive me for saying this, they can make our work as public servants harder at times (!) they want to help. There ARE more imaginative, sustainable and effective alternatives being proposed and we must work together to seek out the right solution. That solution must work for commuters and residents, it must support our economy today and tomorrow, be forward looking with inbuilt capacity and absolutely must complement other infrastructure projects.

Looking specifically at the current recommendations, I am struggling to comprehend how they are still on the table. For months now, I have made it clear to the City Deal team that I would not support the route known as "Area 1 South." or latterly 3/3a. While the value in connecting Cambourne and Madingley Mulch is clear, and those routes are not so contentious, it is the remaining section of the journey, from Madingley to Cambridge that concerns me.

The consultation responses alone overwhelmingly reject this route. At a ballpark cost of £140million, the benefit cost ratio of 0.21 represents unacceptably poor value for tax payers' money, well below the usual threshold for public spending on infrastructure of 2. The City Deal have already rejected other projects, for example the Haverhill rail initiative on these grounds, so why a different set of standards now? This route also has the worst environmental impact and doesn't even connect into the City centre.

We are a powerful team in Cambridgeshire and I believe some of the suggested alternatives are well worth exploring further; light rail and a park and ride at the Girton interchange. For my part, I spoke yesterday to the Secretary of State for Local Government, Sajid Javid and he has promised me he will look into extending our spending deadline. We are on the verge of a Devolution Deal which will give us greater control over our infrastructure funding and allow us to look holistically at transport solutions. The City Deal money must of course be ringfenced purely for the use in the City Deal area, but we would be fools to press ahead with this scheme when access to greater funds and control are just a few months away. An email from Councillor Lewis Herbert to me this morning suggests the board too see the benefit in joining up these funding and governing initiatives. Please know, I would support you every step of the way.

So today I implore the Board to stop wasting further public money by pursuing option 3/3a. We must get this right for our residents, our environment, and our economy, and that means having the guts to go back to the drawing board.