



LAURA FARRIS MP

Member of Parliament for Newbury

The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

14 May 2024

Dear Mark

I am sending you a proposal for the construction of a new bridge over the level-crossing in Thatcham. It has been prepared with input from Network Rail, West Berkshire Council and the Greenham Trust and I hope that it is something that the Department for Transport will consider.

This is a matter which I have discussed with you previously.

As you will recall, this level-crossing is extremely problematic. The barriers are currently down for more than 35 minutes out of every hour throughout the day, owing to the number and frequency of trains.

There are specific issues with the positions of signals and the proximity of the preceding stations (Newbury, Newbury Racecourse and Midgham) that make it impossible for Network Rail to raise the barrier between trains for any significant period. This leads to lengthy delays which are particularly acute during the morning and evening rush hours.

You will see from the results of a constituency survey I conducted that 97% of those using the crossing experience delays, with approximately 60% reporting waits of between 10 and 45 minutes.

Of the 2,660 local residents who responded to the survey, an overwhelming 96% of respondents supported the construction of a bridge.

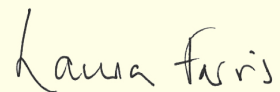
Network Rail say that this level crossing has amongst the longest waiting times of any in the South East and it is a source of inconvenience and frustration for many of my constituents.

An infrastructure project of this nature is obviously substantial, however I believe that it is also imperative. We have found a potential partner to assist with funding (The Greenham Trust) however their contribution is likely to be small and we would need to receive the backing of the Department for Transport and Treasury to proceed.

We know of course that a formal feasibility study will be required. However, given that this comes at a very substantial cost at a time when Council Budgets are constrained you will understand why my starting point is this submission prepared in conjunction with stakeholders for your consideration.

I look forward to discussing its contents with you at our forthcoming meeting.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Farris". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Laura Farris MP