



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

4 March 2014

Graham Wynn OBE
Chairman
Marches Local Enterprise Partnership
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Note (8 April 2014): This is Mr Norman's response to the Draft Strategic Plan. He was not given an opportunity to comment on the final version of the plan, which was submitted to Government.

Dear Graham

Accelerating Growth through Opportunity: Draft Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2020

Thank you for forwarding me a copy of the Marches LEP's Draft Strategic Economic Plan, which I have read with interest.

I would like to congratulate you and the team at the Marches LEP for this careful piece of work, which has much to commend itself. This letter should be treated as my formal response to the Draft Strategic Economic Plan, and principally focuses on issues that affect my parliamentary constituency of Hereford and South Herefordshire.

The Draft Strategic Economic Plan rightly pays significant attention to the need to improve infrastructure throughout the Marches. But it omits what is almost certainly the most cost-effective single piece of road infrastructure: an Eastern Link Road for Hereford. This road would link Rotherwas to the Ledbury Road via a second river crossing. This could be complemented by a short connecting road between the A49 North of the city to the Worcester Road.

Herefordshire Council's unpublished analysis from 2012 underlines that in economic terms, the ELR is hugely attractive:

- The whole project, including the road and the bridge, would cost less than £20 million, based on the Council's own figures. By comparison, the proposed Western by-pass is expected to cost £120 million-£140 million.
- The new road and bridge would open up the eastern half of Hereford city, including the hospital, the railway and coach stations, the Technology, Arts and Sixth Form colleges, and Hereford Cathedral School.
- An Eastern Link Road could according to the Council's own estimates lead to a reduction of traffic on Edgar Street of as much as 20%-30%.

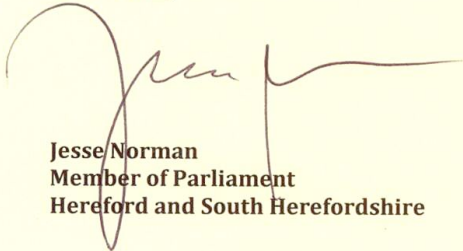


By reducing congestion in Hereford city and providing crucial improvements to access at the Hereford Enterprise Zone, an Eastern Link Road for Hereford would enhance the Strengths and Opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis at page 98 of the Draft Strategic Economic Plan. And the new river crossing included in the proposal would help to mitigate the Weaknesses and Threats identified in the SWOT analysis.

An Eastern Link Road has been publicly supported by well over 50 established businesses in and around Hereford. The Hereford Enterprise Zone Board's official view is that the road is "essential" for business to thrive at the Zone and in the county. Resident's concerns if any are more than offset by support for the ELR, and can in any case be mitigated and other improvements made, given the low cost of the project. And there is a great deal of political support for the road, including both the county's MPs.

In the light of these considerations, there is an overwhelming case for including an Eastern Link Road for Hereford in the Draft Strategic Economic Plan.

Best wishes,



Jesse Norman
Member of Parliament
Hereford and South Herefordshire

cc. Austin Neill } Herefordshire Council
Tony Johnson }

PS. I should emphasize that this is not
an either/or decision — as the
Council recognizes. J.