



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr John Larkinson CEO
Office of Rail and Road
25 Cabot Square
London
E14 4QZ

Our Ref: SJ05769

4 September 2025

Dear John,

I am writing to you in regard to the upcoming Office of Rail and Road (ORR) decision into the use of space that can be accessed by potential new operators at the Temple Mill International (TMI) depot.

A recent report by the Good Growth Foundation, published on 27th August 2025, found that the return of international services to Ashford International could inject £534 million a year into the visitor economy – up to £2.7 billion over five years. As the report clearly states, supporting the return of these services to Ashford would demonstrate how targeted investment in transport can act as a catalyst for broader regeneration. It would help “to rebuild pride and prosperity in places that feel cut adrift”. Given the need for fast growth – both locally in East Kent and in the wider South East region – I believe it would be unfortunate for businesses to miss out on this opportunity to facilitate trade and strengthen connections with a variety of sectors in mainland Europe.

My constituency of Ashford, Hawkinge, and the Villages has grown over 25 years around European rail travel, and as a result, the local economy and businesses became heavily reliant on it as an industry. When Eurostar halted services in 2020, a survey conducted by Ashford Borough Council found that businesses which reported concerns about losing international rail services represented approximately 30,000 jobs, equivalent to approximately £750 million of GVA to the national economy.

There is a need to encourage and promote competition in the international rail market. Eurostar currently holds a monopoly and has chosen not to stop at Ashford International, which I believe is not in the best interests of British consumers—particularly those in my constituency and the South East region, who must undertake an expensive and time-consuming journey into London only to travel back out again.

Given Ashford’s strong connectivity with the rest of the South East as a transport hub—with direct trains from Hastings, Dover, Canterbury, and Eastbourne; strong links to the M20 and M2; and £80 million worth of taxpayer-funded infrastructure, currently unused but ready to be operational (requiring only a small update to border control facilities)—it would not only serve the region’s interests but also be profitable for any provider willing to reinstate international services to Ashford.

I would therefore like to request that any decision made ensures that the interests of users from Ashford and East Kent are protected and taken into account during the decision-making process.

Yours sincerely

Sojan Joseph
Member of Parliament for Ashford, Hawkinge and the Villages