

21 May 2026

By email: cllr.peter.harris@essex.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Harris,

Congratulations on your election as Leader of the Reform UK Group on Essex County Council and your forthcoming appointment as Council Leader at the AGM on 28 May.

I'm writing to ask that one of your earliest priorities is a fresh review of the Fairglen Interchange scheme, which affects tens of thousands of residents and commuters in West Rayleigh and across south Essex.

Planning consent was granted in December 2019 and the CPO was confirmed in July 2023. DfT confirmed a £15m funding contribution in February 2025, alongside £38m from ECC and £6.2m from SELEP. At that point, the previous Conservative administration publicly announced that construction would begin shortly and take around two years.

That promise was broken. The scheme has now been pushed back to 2030 at the earliest, with construction funding beyond that date unconfirmed and dependent on a fresh DfT application by a new unitary authority that doesn't yet exist. The stated reason is a conflict with A130 PFI maintenance works — a contractual constraint that ECC has been aware of for years.

The Fairglen Interchange is one of the busiest junctions in south Essex. Congestion is a daily reality, the safety record is poor, and the delay has real consequences for Rochford's Local Plan and the area's growth. Infrastructure that was supposed to support tens of thousands of new homes across south Essex has been indefinitely deferred.

I'd ask you to consider three things specifically:

1. Whether the A130 PFI conflict has genuinely been exhausted — including whether early hand back negotiations with County Route could be revisited with a stronger political mandate and fresh legal advice.
2. Whether ECC's £9m capital provision (approved February 2026 for land acquisition and preparatory works) is being actively deployed, and on what timeline.
3. Whether a formal re-engagement with DfT on construction funding is possible as a priority. The 2025 Spending Review has now concluded, with capital investment in transport infrastructure outside London and the South East identified as a priority area. A fresh DfT application will be needed to fund construction — and if that application isn't made promptly, Fairglen risks missing this funding cycle entirely and waiting until the next Spending Review, likely mid-Parliament at the earliest.



South Essex has returned a clear verdict at the polls. Residents want delivery, not further deferral. I'd welcome a meeting with you or your incoming Cabinet Member for Highways at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Newport". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cllr James Newport
Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Downhall & Rawreth Ward
Rochford District Council