

# Oliver Dowden CBE MP

## End of Term Report



As you will have seen, it has been an extraordinary month in Westminster.

It began with the decision of the British people and the people of Hertsmere to vote to leave the EU. The result was close but clear. The country chose a new direction. This offers great opportunities for our country but will also come with significant challenges, particularly in the short term. As your MP, I will apply myself to implementing this decision, to making it work and getting the very best outcome for everyone in Hertsmere, regardless of how they voted.

The outcome of the vote also prompted the resignation of David Cameron. I once again pay tribute to David Cameron, with whom I had the privilege of working for many years. He was an excellent Prime Minister and I know that history will recognise his many significant contributions to our country.



Theresa May is our new Prime Minister and I am very confident that with her values, skills and strength of character, she has what it takes to lead our country. I was very impressed to hear Theresa May recognise the need to build a country that works not just for a privileged few but for everyone, regardless of who they are or where they are from. These are my values too, and are exactly why I stood for election to Parliament.

**In the last term, I have continued to focus on my three priorities:**

**On transport:** In April, I hosted a public meeting in Borehamwood so that rail users could raise their concerns about the Thameslink service directly with representatives from Govia. I plan to hold another meeting soon to follow up on progress and the commitments made by Govia at the April meeting.



If Govia are to retain the Thameslink service, they need to make significant improvements to the reliability of their trains. Recent research shows that the UK's five least reliable services are all run by Govia Thameslink Railways. Over 27 per cent of trains on the London-Bedford Thameslink route (which Borehamwood and Radlett lie on) are delayed by at least five minutes. This is completely unacceptable. Campaigning for a much improved service remains a top priority for me and I will not rest until there are drastic improvements.



At the time of the April meeting, proposals from Govia indicated that they were seeking to close the ticket offices at Borehamwood and Radlett stations. I lobbied Govia to drop their proposals. I know that many passengers need to buy from the ticket office rather than from a ticket machine and there are certain services that only a staffed ticket office can provide. I was therefore delighted that Govia confirmed that Borehamwood and Radlett ticket offices will remain open at peak hours.

I continue to press for Oyster to be extended to both Radlett and Potters Bar. This month, I held a meeting with the Rail Minister and TfL representatives. For the first time the Rail Minister confirmed that Oyster will be extended to Potters Bar and that the software technology that is needed to facilitate the extension of Oyster to both Potters Bar and Radlett will be installed in 2018. Once this software is introduced progress is expected to be swift. I have since received a signed letter confirming the commitments that were made at the meeting. Rest assured that I will be monitoring developments closely.

**On Education:**

Having worked closely with Yavneh and with parents since the beginning of their bid, I was absolutely delighted to receive a letter from Lord Nash in late April, confirming that Yavneh Primary School will open in September 2016. This is great news for the community, providing much needed additional primary school places.



I been working closely with Dame Alice Owen's School, to help with their application to the Educational Funding Authority for a much needed new school building. I lobbied the Department for Education and the Educational Funding Authority on how to ensure that their new bid is successful. An official from the EFA has now visited Dame Alice Owen's to discuss their application directly. I am hopeful that this will now be successful.

**On Protecting our green spaces:** I have continued to do everything I can to frustrate the proposed Rail Freight Terminal. Earlier this year, I established through Parliamentary Questions that planning permission for alternative uses for the site of the proposed Rail Freight Terminal can be granted and that changes to the St Albans local plan can be made to facilitate this. I have since written to the Leader of St Albans Council encouraging him to make changes to the St Albans local plan to open up the possibility of alternatives to the rail terminal being considered.

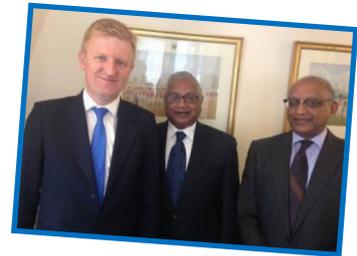


To be clear, I do not want anything built on this land. However, as planning permission for the rail terminal has already been granted, the danger is that if St Albans Council do not change their plan to allow alternatives to come forward then the rail terminal will be forced upon us. I will continue to do what I can to oppose it.



I continue to oppose proposals to build on green belt land around Potters Bar. Two months ago I raised my concerns about plans for 600 homes between Northaw and Cuffley and 150 homes outside Little Heath. I pointed out that despite these houses lying within Welwyn Hatfield Borough, most of the residents living in the new houses would look to Potters Bar for services and that demand for school places in Potters Bar is already set to outstrip supply. Plans for the 600 homes between Cuffley and Northaw have now been significantly scaled back, but I am concerned that last month Welwyn Hatfield Council approved a local plan that deems the Hawkshead Road/Little Heath site (currently green belt land) as suitable for development. I will raise my concerns with the new Planning Minister, Gavin Barwell MP, over the coming weeks.

I know that many of you are concerned for the future of Aldenham reservoir and Country Park. As Developers Liberty Aldenham have submitted a planning application to Hertsmere Borough Council for up to 150 houses on green belt land south of Aldenham Reservoir. It is intended that the proceeds of this development will be used to secure the future of the reservoir. This is a difficult decision that will have to be taken by Hertsmere Borough Council, balancing the protection of green open spaces with securing the reservoir's future. I have met Liberty Aldenham and I would urge all interested parties to engage directly with the company and the planning process.



#### **Working for Hertsmere in Westminster:**

I am delighted to have been elected Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Jews. This cross party group exists to promote understanding of the aspirations and challenges of the UK's Jewish community, covering topics including religious freedoms and religious practices. I am determined to be a strong voice for every community in Hertsmere and this role will help me to be a voice for our vibrant and significant Jewish community. I was also very pleased to have the opportunity to meet the new Israeli Ambassador to Britain, H.E. Ambassador Mark Regev.



I continue to support my constituent, Kamran Foughi, with his campaign to free his 76 year old father, Kamal Foughi, from the notorious Iranian prison, Evin Prison. Last month I led a debate in Parliament attended by over twenty of my Parliamentary colleagues, calling for Kamal Foughi's immediate release on compassionate grounds. Over 190,000 people have now signed Kamran's petition calling for his father's release. If you have not already done so, please sign Kamran's petition, please see my website for details.

You may remember the case of a young boy from Bushey, Jonathan Marshall, purchasing a laser pen from a Christmas fair. Jonathan suffered permanent damage to his eye after playing with the pen. It was discovered soon after the incident that the strength of the laser pen was well over the legal safety limit of 1mW. Earlier this year I met with the Business Minister, Anna Soubry. At the meeting I called for the Government to take action and ensure that firmer safeguards are in place.



Last week St Albans Magistrates Court sentenced Lynsey McClure, the owner of the company that imported these dangerous pens, to 24 weeks of community service. I am glad that

firm action has been taken but I remain concerned that up to 250 of these pens have been distributed across the UK. I will continue to work closely with Jonathan's mother, Angela Marshall, to ensure that these pens are tracked and that the Government takes firm action.

The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee are undertaking an inquiry into the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman report on unsafe discharge from hospital. I took the opportunity to raise concerns about elderly people being discharged from hospital without basic resources such as sufficient clothing. This was brought to my attention by local residents who visited me in Parliament.

It was also great to meet my constituent Kelvin Sheridan and his dog Mia in Westminster. They enlisted me to help with their campaign to ensure that people with guide dogs have full access to local shops and services. I've also said I'll do a trial walk on a local high street with a guide dog to get a sense of what it's like to navigate local facilities without the benefit of sight.



## And locally in the Constituency:

From celebrating Her Majesty's 90th birthday, to visiting schools and community centres, opening a new brewery to cutting the ribbon at festivals and fairs, welcoming the Prime Minister to Bhaktivedanta manor to chairing the great Hertsmere EU debate. I continue to be out and about, meeting constituents and understanding local issues better. See some photos below:



## In the news:

You may have seen or heard me recently on BBC news, BBC 5 Live or BBC 2's Victoria Derbyshire Programme discussing Brexit and our new Prime Minister.



Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Jo Cox MP. The whole nation came together in shock and grief at her appalling murder. She was a true public servant and will be greatly missed by colleagues from across the House of Commons.

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**Come to one of my surgeries:** In Borehamwood, Bushey, Potters Bar or Radlett. Please contact my office on 020 7219 3415 to make an appointment. I now also hold open drop in surgeries— see my facebook page for details.