

Mr Nick Timothy MP

Sent via email

08 May 2026

Dear Mr Timothy,

Reference: Greater Anglia services between Cambridge, Newmarket, Kennett and Bury St Edmunds

Thank you for your recent letter outlining further points that you would like to clarify following our meeting on 7 January. I am happy to respond to this and provide additional information.

To begin with, I do appreciate that the subject of line speeds has been a topic of conversation for a few years and I can assure you that we do understand the interest in increasing the speed on this route. However, any such change would require a comprehensive assessment - led in partnership with Network Rail given their overall responsibility for infrastructure.

Increasing speeds is not simply a matter of adjusting limits; it involves significant upgrades to track, signalling, and associated equipment. This can include modifications to track, renewal of older equipment – such as steel sleepers – and potential reconfiguration of junctions to allow for higher-speed operation. Signalling systems and layouts, which are currently designed around existing speeds and braking distances, would also need to be reviewed and potentially redesigned.

In addition, there are also significant safety considerations to be made, particularly at level crossings, where higher speeds or increased services may require further mitigation measures. As such, while discussions are an important first step, any progression would depend on a detailed feasibility and value assessment before commitments could be made.

This leads me on to your point surrounding additional stops at Kennett. You will be aware that the timetable on this route is quite tight but operates efficiently on a day-to-day basis. While we understand the desire to extend stopping services at Kennett, unfortunately this is not feasible at present. With that said, we recognise it is important to have a service that is both practical and can be delivered. We will remain vigilant and continue to explore any opportunities which may arise for Kennett as we continue to formulate Anglia Railway.

Further to the above, I was concerned to learn of your comments about train formations, and I fully appreciate the impact that short-formed services can have on passenger comfort. For context, we do monitor formations, and current data indicates that services operating as three-car formations instead of the planned four-car sets account for approximately 10% of total trains across the network. While this represents a relatively small proportion overall, I fully accept the impact it can have during peak periods.

Due to the operational realities of running a railway, unfortunately running all services as their booked formation is not always possible. At present, a number of our four-car bi-mode units are unavailable for service, mainly due to damage sustained from collisions with tree debris and animals on the line. While such instances remain relatively rare, it can obviously have a real impact on fleet availability.

In addition, we also have a small number of units currently out of service due to requiring essential engine maintenance. We are working closely with Stadler to expedite both repairs and the return to service of affected units, and I have made clear our expectation that these repairs are completed as a matter of urgency. Our engineering and operations teams are doing some careful evaluation and reallocation of fleet to prioritise the busiest trains, in order to minimise the impact on the customer. That said, I recognise that any change from the planned formation is frustrating for passengers, and I want to reassure you that making sure all trains are available again, so services run more reliably, is a key priority for us.



Of course, I also appreciate that the operation of shorter trains directly contributes to overcrowding on certain services, which in turn exacerbates the challenges associated with accommodating bicycles. On this note, I will confirm that we fully acknowledge the concerns raised regarding bicycles continuing to appear on Cambridge-bound peak services - such as the 07:56am from Newmarket.

For context and as you are aware, we currently permit up to six bikes on regional bi-mode trains, which can create understandable confusion when peak-time restrictions apply at Cambridge. As a result, this has proven difficult to manage consistently, even with staff present. Previous trials involving additional enforcement support were limited and not sustainable as a long-term solution, while also risking creating negative customer experiences. We have also found that the information we have displayed both at stations and on our website, is often ignored.

We are therefore continuing to explore a balanced approach, including ongoing collaboration with local rail user groups and a renewed focus on encouraging the use of secure cycle storage facilities at key stations such as Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds. We will also continue to review further preventative measures to try and improve compliance with the policy while also minimising disruption to customers.

Overall, I do hope this provides clarity on the points you have raised. We recognise the importance of the issues you have highlighted and remain committed to delivering a reliable and efficient service for all passengers. Of course, should you have any further questions regarding this, or indeed any other rail matter, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Beable
Chief Operating Officer – Anglia Railway

