

APPENDIX A: RESPONSE TO THE LOWER THAMES CROSSING CONSULTATION, DECEMBER 2018

1. The need for the Lower Thames Crossing

The case for the Lower Thames Crossing, including the reasons why we consider it is needed, is set out in Section 4 of **Your guide to consultation** and in the **Case for the Project**.

Q1a. Do you agree or disagree that the Lower Thames Crossing is needed?

Strongly agree X

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q1b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q1a and any other views you have on the case for the Lower Thames Crossing.

The need for a Lower Thames Crossing is very clearly documented in the consultation documents and is evident from everyday experience in and around the Dartford Crossing. The Dartford Crossing suffers from a severe lack of capacity, with demand exceeding road capacity by over 30% on a regular basis. It carries in excess of 180,000 vehicles on some days, as compared to a design capacity of 135,000. This will only get worse as development and growth comes forward over the wider network.

The lack of capacity is exacerbated by the age of the tunnels and their physical constraints, including maximum height limits and bends in the tunnels restricting width of HGV's. This results in slow and unreliable journeys and a high level of incidents at the Dartford Crossing and its approach which in turn leads to traffic diverting to local roads. This leads to junction blocking and road congestion on the local network. The impact on the local road network is particularly severe when long-running incidents occur at the Crossing. This has severe impacts on local businesses as well as on the daily life of local residents.

The regular instances of congestion and lack of predictability of road conditions places a significant constraint on economic growth in the local area. Investment decisions to locate or expand in the area are deterred on account of traffic conditions with development being constrained by the lack of capacity at Junctions 1a, 1b and the A2 junction. Access and egress from the Strategic Road network is constrained and east west movement across the junctions is impeded. Employers find it difficult to recruit and retain staff because of the difficult journeys, whether by private vehicle or bus. It is becoming increasingly difficult in planning determinations to reconcile the government's objectives for housing and employment growth in the area with the objective of keeping the Strategic Road Network performing adequately, or at 'nil detriment' as HE expects.

In addition to providing additional capacity, an independent crossing built to modern standards and suitable for all users will increase the resilience of the road network. An independent crossing will provide an alternative route in the event of an incident at the Dartford Crossing. Moreover, studies show that when there is congestion at the Dartford Crossing, traffic diverts to other crossings (notably the Blackwall Tunnel) or goes the long way round the M25. The provision of a new crossing will release capacity at the Dartford Crossing, thereby also releasing capacity on the wider transport network. It will provide for added resilience in the event of an incident. An alternative crossing will not only radically improve the resilience of crossing the Lower Thames when there is congestion or an incident occurs at the existing Crossing but also the resilience of the strategic road network between Kent, the Midlands/North and mainland Europe.

2. Our preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing

For a description of how, in 2017, we selected a preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing, and how that route has been refined since then, please refer to Section 3 of **Your guide to consultation**, and also to **Approach to Design, Construction and Operation**.

Q2a. Do you support or oppose our selection of the preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing?

Strongly support

Support

Neutral

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q2b. Do you support or oppose the changes we have made to the route since our preferred route announcement in 2017?

Strongly support

Support

Neutral

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q2c. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q2a-Q2b and any other views you have on our selection of a preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing.

Q 2a The selection of the preferred route for the lower Thames Crossing east of Gravesend is strongly supported.

An additional crossing a good distance from the existing one will help alleviate the problems of lack and reliability and resilience that regularly occur at the Dartford Crossing. In order to provide any genuine improvement in the resilience of the strategic and local road network and its ability to respond to incidents and congestion, it is essential that that the additional capacity is located some distance from the existing crossing, providing an alternative route when incidents occur and be sufficiently distant from the source of the network problems to not be affected by them. The preferred route meets this requirement.

A new crossing at the preferred location will provide more choice of routes over the wider Strategic Road Network, rather than concentrating travel to one single crossing location to the east of London. This will result in shorter journeys where the new crossing is better located in relation to origin and destination of the journey, providing journey time savings for drivers and a reduction of travel miles on the network.

Unlike the existing crossing, the route will attract mainly traffic travelling between Kent/the Channel Ports and the M25/East Anglia. The provision of a faster, more reliable route to the Midlands and North from the Kent ports will be particularly attractive to long-distance freight traffic and will have the benefit of diverting many of these journeys away from Dartford. The preferred route provides a strategic network solution providing connectivity both from Kent into neighbouring Essex and, most significantly, from Europe to the distribution centres in the Midlands and the North.

Construction of a new Crossing at the preferred route will provide an alternative to the existing Crossing, will boost British business and the national economy, and enhance transport connectivity and resilience between Kent and Essex, as well as nationally and internationally.

Q2b The changes made to the route since the preferred route announcement are supported. In particular, the increase in the number of lanes through the proposed tunnel to 3 in each direction, the redesign of the A2 junction, the removal of the A226 junction and moving of the tunnel entrance 600m further south are all welcomed.

However, Dartford Council would have liked to see wider network improvements as part of the scheme which would fully realise its benefits and achieve resilience for the strategic road network in Kent, particularly for long-distance freight traffic from the Channel ports. This primarily relates to the link between the M20 and the M2 at the A229. It is hoped that planning for the improvement of this link, as well as the related links and junctions between the M20 and M2 which are likely to see increased traffic as a result of the proposal, will be taken forward as a separate exercise by HE and partners. The Council urges that planning and design work for these improvements commences immediately so that it is well advanced and able to progress by the time the Lower Thames Crossing opens in 9 years. Such schemes should be prioritised for future rounds of the Road Investment Strategy (RIS).

The Council defers to Essex County Council with respect to the route changes north of the Thames, since Essex CC is best placed to assess the impacts of the changes.

3. Sections of the route

For the purposes of this consultation question, we have divided our proposed route for the Lower Thames Crossing into three sections, starting with the section south of the river in Kent, then the crossing under the Thames, and finally the section to the north of the river in Thurrock, Essex and Havering.

A detailed description of our proposed route for the Lower Thames Crossing is in Section 5 of **Your guide to consultation**, also **Approach to Design, Construction and Operation**, the **Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)** and our **Map Books**.

South of the river in Kent

This refers to the section of the proposed route starting at the M2/A2 and ending to the south of the southern tunnel entrance. It also includes the proposed improvements to sections of the M2/A2 around the junction with the Lower Thames Crossing.

Included in the scope of question 3a and 3b are the route, structures such as bridges, embankments, viaducts and any other aspect that you wish to comment on. Please note, question 4 provides an opportunity to comment on connections between the Lower Thames Crossing and the surrounding road network.

Lower Thames Crossing consultation 2018 – Response form 7

Q3a. Do you support or oppose the proposed route south of the river?

Strongly support

Support X

Neutral

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q3b. Please give us your comments or any other views you have on the

proposed route south of the river, including structures such as bridges, embankments and viaducts.

With the improvements introduced, the proposed route south of the river is broadly supported, including the selection of the Western Southern Link, in preference to the Eastern Southern Link.

Dartford Council defers to Gravesham Council and Kent County Council in respect of detailed aspects of the southern route.

The crossing

This refers to two bored tunnels beneath the Thames, the southern tunnel entrance and the northern tunnel entrance.

Included in the scope of question 3c is the route, structures such as bridges, embankments, viaducts and any other aspect that you wish to comment on.

Please note, question 4 provides an opportunity to comment on connections between the Lower Thames Crossing and the surrounding road network.

Q3c. Please give us your comments on the tunnel, the north and the south tunnel entrances and any other feedback you have on this part of the proposed route.

The provision of three lanes both ways through the tunnel is greatly welcomed as this will future-proof the scheme and provide the capacity required to support future development and growth. This will assist in maintaining resilience in the longer term.

The extension of the tunnel 600m further back at the southern tunnel entrance is welcomed as this will reduce the impact on the environment and communities.

North of the river in Thurrock, Essex and Havering

This refers to the section of the proposed route starting immediately north of the northern tunnel entrance and ending at the connection with the M25 at junction 29, and the related improvement works at the M25.

Included in the scope of question 3d and 3e are the route, structures such as bridges, embankments, viaducts and any other aspect that you wish to comment on.

Please note, question 4 provides an opportunity to comment on connections between the Lower Thames Crossing and the surrounding road network.

Q3d. Do you support or oppose the proposed route north of the crossing?

Strongly support

Support

Neutral X

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q3e. Please give us your comments or any other views you have on the proposed route north of the river, including structures such as bridges, embankments and viaducts.

The Council defers to Essex County Council with respect to the proposed route north of the river, since Essex CC is best placed to assess this.

4. Connections

For the purposes of this consultation question, we have divided our proposed route for the Lower Thames Crossing into two sections, starting with the section to the south of the Thames, and then the section to the north of the Thames. We have described the proposed connections between the Lower Thames Crossing and the surrounding road network in Section 5 of **Your guide to consultation**, and in **Approach to Design, Construction and Operation** and our **Map Books**.

South of the crossing

This refers to the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M2/A2. It also refers to the relationship between the Lower Thames Crossing and the existing road network, including new bridges, underpasses and diversions.

Q4a. Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M2/A2?

Strongly support
Support X
Neutral
Oppose
Strongly oppose
Don't know

Q4b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q4a and any other views you have on the relationship between the Lower Thames Crossing and the existing road network south of the crossing, including new bridges, underpasses and diversions.

The proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M2/A2 is supported. The selection of the Western Southern Link has allowed the creation of a new dedicated and simpler junction on the M2/A2. This is in contrast to the previously proposed Eastern Southern Link which would have resulted in a complex junction at the M2 with a lower level of resilience.

North of the crossing

This refers to the proposed Tilbury junction, the A13/A1089 junction and the junction with the M25. It also refers to the relationship between the Lower Thames Crossing and the existing road network, including new bridges, underpasses and diversions.

Q4c. Do you support or oppose the proposed Tilbury junction?

Strongly support
Support
Neutral X
Oppose
Strongly oppose
Don't know

Q4d. Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the A13/A1089?

Strongly support
Support
Neutral
Oppose X

Strongly oppose
Don't know

Q4e. Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M25?

Strongly support
Support
Neutral X
Oppose
Strongly oppose
Don't know

Q4f. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q4c-Q4e, indicating which junction or junctions you are referring to, and any other comments you have on the proposed connections of the route north of the crossing.

Dartford Council is disappointed that it is not proposed to provide a link from the Lower Thames Crossing onto the A13 westbound and towards the Port of Tilbury. This reduces the connectivity between Kent and Essex with a consequent reduction in economic benefits, access to jobs for local residents and more difficult journeys for destinations along the A13 to the west of the Lower Thames Crossing.

5. Walkers, cyclists and horse riders

Our proposal for the Lower Thames Crossing aims to replace, where practicable, public rights of way affected by the project, and we will explore how we can improve and enhance these routes. During construction, we will keep disruption to public rights of way to a minimum. Please refer to Section 6 of **Your guide to consultation**, and see **Map Book 1** and also **Approach to Design, Construction and Operation**.

Q5a. Do you support or oppose our proposals in relation to public rights of way?

Strongly support
Support
Neutral X
Oppose
Strongly oppose
Don't know

Q5b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q5a and any other views you have on our plans in relation to public rights of way, including the new routes we have proposed.

Dartford Council is supportive of re-provision of high quality walking, cycling and horse-riding routes with minimal disruption during construction. It defers to Gravesham Council, Kent County Council and the relevant interest groups as to the acceptability of the proposals.

6. Environmental impacts and how we plan to reduce them

We have described in our consultation materials the potential environmental impacts of the Lower Thames Crossing and the measures we propose to reduce them. For example, this includes how we would protect habitats and species,

reduce noise impacts on local communities and manage effects on air quality. We have explained our approach to environmental assessment in **Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), Preliminary Environmental Information Summary** and Section 6 of **Your guide to consultation**.

Q6a. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed measures to reduce the impacts of the project?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral X

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q6b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q6a and any other views you have on the environmental impacts of the Lower Thames Crossing as set out in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report, including our approach to assessing and reducing the impacts of the project.

The proposed mitigations to address the environmental impacts of the proposal are broadly welcomed. However, Dartford Council defers to the appropriate bodies in respect of the detailed impacts and adequacy of mitigation.

Dartford Council appreciates that some impacts are difficult to fully address, such as changes to the landscape. However, it is considered that any impacts have to be considered in the round, alongside the benefits of the scheme and related environmental improvements which will occur elsewhere. The existing Crossing is in a heavily populated area, with the surrounding community suffering negative health and well-being effects as a result of heavy traffic and congestion in the surrounding area. The environmental impacts of the proposed project need to be balanced against the improvement in air quality and reduced traffic noise resulting from reduced congestion at the Dartford Crossing.

7. Development boundary

We have defined the area of land where the proposed Lower Thames Crossing would be situated, as well as land that may be required to enable construction and to provide mitigation for some of the impacts associated with construction. This is called the development boundary, and it can be seen in Section 6 of **Your guide to consultation** and our **Map Books**. It identifies land and property that may need to be acquired permanently or used temporarily for the Lower Thames Crossing to be built and maintained. We will continue to work closely with the owners and occupiers of this land and property as the project develops.

Q7a. Do you support or oppose the proposed area of land we require to build the Lower Thames Crossing?

Strongly support

Support

Neutral X

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q7b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q7a and any other views you have on the land we require to build the Lower Thames Crossing.
Lower Thames Crossing consultation 2018 – Response form 15

Dartford Council defers to the relevant host authorities in this respect.

8. Proposed rest and service area, and maintenance depot

Our proposal includes provision for a rest and service area, and maintenance depot north east of the Tilbury junction. Information on our plans can be found in Section 5 of **Your guide to consultation** and **Approach to Design, Construction and Operation**.

Q8a. Do you support or oppose our proposals for a rest and service area in this location?

Strongly support

Support X

Neutral

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q8b. Do you support or oppose our proposals for the maintenance depot in this location?

Strongly support

Support

Neutral X

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q8c. Please let us know the reasons for your responses to Q8a and Q8b, and any other views you have on our proposals for a rest and service area, and for the maintenance depot.

Dartford Council supports the provision of adequate rest and service facilities on the strategic network as this will improve the comfort and safety of those making long journeys and consequently result in fewer accidents.

The provision of electrical charging points is strongly supported. Improved charging infrastructure on the Strategic Road Network will encourage the potential use of electric vehicles for longer journeys and thereby increase their take-up. This will reduce vehicular air pollutants in particular nitrogen dioxide, help improve air quality and reduce green-house gases.

9. Traffic

We have modelled forecast changes in traffic flows and the impacts on congestion as a result of the Lower Thames Crossing. Further details of our analysis are set out in Section 8 of **Your guide to consultation**, and also **Traffic Forecasting Report** and **Traffic Forecasts Non-Technical Summary**.

Q9a. Do you agree or disagree with the view that the Lower Thames Crossing would improve traffic conditions on the surrounding road network?

Strongly agree X

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q9b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q9a and any other views you have on the Lower Thames Crossing's impact on traffic.

Figures 4.1-4.3 of the Traffic Forecast Non-Technical Summary show quite clearly that there will be large areas of the surrounding network experiencing reduced levels of traffic at 2026 as compared to current conditions, with the new crossing. This includes the M20 west of the A229, the M25 between Jct 3 and the new junction with the Lower Thames Crossing, as well as the A2 west of the southern junction with the Lower Thames Crossing. These reductions take account of development and growth in the ten year period 2016-2026. The improvements in traffic conditions, therefore, provide not only an improvement as compared to current circumstances but go beyond that to accommodate additional traffic arising from growth over that period.

It is also evident that some parts of the network experience a deterioration in traffic conditions. To the south of the river, this is particularly in the area to the west of the new A2 junction and the link roads between the M20 and M2.

Figures 4.4-4.9 of the Non-Technical Summary compare the network at 2026 with and without the proposed Crossing. This shows that there is little change in network capacity around Gravesend, the Medway Towns and Maidstone when the new Crossing is opened. In fact, there are some improvements around Gravesend. This suggests that the increased flows forecast and shown in Figs 4.1- 4.3 are the result of factors other than the Lower Thames Crossing and most likely the result of growth.

Over the period of the modelling to 2051, the likely levels of growth in the area have not been specifically taken into account, since they have not yet been confirmed through Local Plans. The model has applied Tempo growth 7.2 which addresses higher forecast growth levels in the south east. Whilst Tempo has been used to forecast trip growth, Dartford Council urges that Highways England continues to work with local authorities to define more accurately the extent of growth and the full impacts on the surrounding road network; and identify the locations where further improvements may be needed. Failure to address issues on the surrounding network will make it less attractive as an alternative to the existing Crossing, will mean that its capacity is not fully utilised and will reduce its effectiveness in making the Strategic Road Network more resilient.

10. Charges for using the crossing

Our proposal is to charge drivers to use the tunnel with a free-flow e-charging system, in line with the Dart Charge at the Dartford Crossing. We are also considering other aspects of our charging proposal, such as charging amounts, the application of peak charges and emission-based charging to manage traffic. We are proposing to seek flexibility over the charging scheme for the Lower Thames Crossing. For a description of our approach to charging users of the crossing, please refer to Section 8 of **Your guide to consultation**, and also **Case for the Project and Approach to Design, Construction and Operation**.

Please give us your views on our proposed approach to charging users of the crossing.

Dartford Councils supports a free-flowing e-charging system which is designed to optimise traffic management. This may require that it is different from the one at the Dartford Crossing.

Differential charging according to vehicle type or hours of travel is fully supported, particularly where this helps make most effective use of the new Crossing.

To achieve maximum benefits, driver behaviour will need to be changed, particularly where there are entrenched route choices. Freight vehicle drivers from the continent may be the most resistant to change due to lack of information, language difficulties and a lack of willingness to change from long established route choices. Concerted efforts will need to be made to target these drivers. This can be achieved by easy payment for the new Crossing at the ports, publicity and information at the ports and clear signage for the new route starting at the ports.

11. Building the Lower Thames Crossing

We have described our initial plans on how to build the Lower Thames Crossing in Section 7 of **Your guide to consultation** and also **Approach to Design, Construction and Operation**. This includes our proposed working hours and tunnelling methods, our plans for temporary road closures and traffic management, and the proposed location of construction compounds.

Q11a. Do you support or oppose our initial plans for how to build the Lower Thames Crossing?

Strongly support

Support

Neutral X

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q11b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q11a and any other views you have on our initial plans on how to build the Lower Thames Crossing.

The traffic impacts during the construction phase will undoubtedly be significant. It is understood that it is difficult to provide accurate information about routeing of construction vehicles in advance of contracts being let and waste sites etc being identified.

Dartford Council urges that Highways England liaises with relevant local authorities and keeps them informed as the details become clearer, so that working together, the most appropriate routeing can be agreed and the impacts of the construction phase minimised.

The Council is aware of a number of SRN projects currently underway and planned in the future, in close proximity to the proposed crossing. In considering construction impacts, HE should also take into account the longer term impact on drivers of the combined effect of these schemes.

12. Utilities and pylons

Building the Lower Thames Crossing would require changes to existing utilities infrastructure, including electricity pylons and gas pipelines. More on this can be found in the Section 7 of **Your guide to consultation**, and also **Approach to Design, Construction and Operation, Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and Preliminary Environmental Information Summary**.

Please let us know any views you have on the proposed changes to utilities

infrastructure.

Dartford Council defers to the affected authorities and utility providers on this matter.

13. Other comments

We would like to know what is important to you. Please let us know if you have any other comments about the Lower Thames Crossing.

Lower Thames Crossing consultation 2018 – Response form 21

Dartford Council is highly supportive of a new Crossing at the preferred location. However, Dartford Crossing is already operating significantly beyond capacity, with consequent resilience issues and traffic levels will continue to increase before the new Crossing is open. The Council, therefore, urges Highways England to continuously explore ways to speed up the implementation of the new Crossing throughout the lifetime of the project, so that its opening date can be brought forward as far as possible.

The Council also urges Highway England to continue to work closely and proactively, in the meantime, with Dartford and Kent Highways to bring forward mitigations to improve the flow at the Crossing and its approach and to provide solutions to the congestion at junctions 1a, 1b and 2 of the M25/A282. The £10 million fund to support improvements in and around Dartford Crossing is very welcome as is the further assessment that is being carried out to identify wide-ranging solutions. Some of the interventions required will be of a large scale, as for example meaningful solutions to the congestion at junction 1a. The identified fund will be insufficient to fund these and a collaborative effort will be needed to identify further sources of funding. Continued resilience and improvement at the Dartford Crossing will be required even with the new crossing in place, as the Crossing will continue to provide for increasing demand from growth in East London, as well as traffic growth on the M25 to the south and west of the Crossing.

The charging regime to be implemented at the new Crossing will be critical in ensuring the most effective distribution and routing of vehicles. Dartford Council wishes to be fully involved in discussions on the matter as proposals are progressed.

14. The consultation

Please let us know what you think about the quality of our consultation materials, our events, the way in which we have notified people about our plans, and anything else related to this consultation.

Very Good Good Average Poor Very poor

Not

applicable

Q14a. Information – was the information clear and easy to understand? Very good

Q14b. Events – were the events of good quality? Very good

Q14c. Events – were the events suitably located? Average

Q14d. Promotion – was the consultation promoted well and to the right people? Good

Q14e. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q14a-Q14d and any other views you have on the delivery of this consultation.

The Bluewater event was in a good location with high footfall, hence it achieved a high level of interest. The promotional material, provided via a range of media, was extensive and very informative.

The Dartford Town Centre event was in a location well outside the centre, which has limited passing pedestrian traffic. It did not, therefore, attract a wide audience, with attendance being low.