

THURROCK FLEXIBLE GENERATION PLANT - DEADLINE 2 - WRITTEN REPRESENTATION

As an interested party to the examination of the Thurrock Flexible Generation Plant DCO (EN010092) Highways England (20025438) make the following Written Representation (following our Relevant Representation ([RR-016](#))). In addition to this Written Representation, we have prepared a response to the Examining Authority's questions (Attachment B).

Background

Highways England submitted an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the proposed Lower Thames Crossing Project in October 2020. On 20 November 2020, we withdrew our application based on early feedback we received from the Planning Inspectorate. We continue to develop our proposals in response to that feedback with the aim of resubmitting our application later in 2021.

Highways England have provided Thurrock Power Ltd (the Applicant) with a copy of their October 2020 withdrawn application for reference. The separate figure(s) provided by the Applicant in response to EXQ1.17.4 shows the overlay of the two project's Order Limits.

Highways England and the Applicant have been engaging constructively for over three years regarding the interface between their two projects. Highways England has no in principle objection to the Thurrock Flexible Generation Plant proposals. The two projects are adjacent to each other and have several physical overlaps which are described further below. Engagement between Highways England and the Applicant has identified a number of scenarios for consideration including construction programmes. It is believed these issues can be resolved before the end of the Thurrock Flexible Generation Plant Examination.

1. Statement of Common Ground

We received an initial draft Statement of Common Ground from the Applicant on 18 September 2020. Our review of the Applicant's Statement of Common Ground and associated consultation is ongoing, and we will provide comments for resolution during Examination.

2. Protective Provisions

We note that the Applicant has not included Protective Provisions for Highways England within the draft DCO ([PDC-009](#)). The Applicant is potentially proposing an interface agreement to address the matters identified below. Given the nature of the outstanding matters discussed below Highways England considers Protective Provisions and / or associated amendments to the draft DCO may be required to protect our interests regarding the operation of the Strategic Road Network and the construction and operation of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing. Highways England will provide the Applicant with a proposal for consideration shortly.

Progress on outstanding matters between the applicant and Highways England

There are a small number of further matters that remain outstanding between Highways England and the Applicant.

We provide a commentary below to ensure the Examining Authority is informed of the latest position. The matters addressed below also provide commentary in relation to Written Question ExQ1.10.9.

3. Underground High-Pressure Gas Pipeline

We have reviewed the route alignment of the Applicant's proposed underground high-pressure gas pipeline route(s) identified as Works No.4 in the Works Plans ([PDC-056](#)).

We note that two options are identified for the western extent of the underground high-pressure gas pipeline within the Thurrock Power Works and General Arrangement Plans ([PDC-056](#) and [PDC-057](#) respectively). For the purposes of this Written Representation, they are referred to by us as the northern and southern route options.



Highways England and the Applicant have actively engaged in the review of the proposed underground high-pressure gas pipeline route over several months. We have presented the Applicant with a preferred route for the gas pipeline. Our preferred route encompasses the southern route option and a proposed diversion of the gas pipeline where it intersects the proposed Lower Thames Crossing main alignment (refer to Attachment A).

Lower Thames Crossing would require several other utilities diversions and utility works directly south of the Tilbury Rail Loop within the same footprint as the Applicant's proposed northern gas pipeline route. The construction of the gas pipeline along the southern route avoids these potentially significant interface issues.

The Highways England proposed diversion of the pipeline (shown in red in Attachment A) avoids a route that is incompatible with ground improvement works required for the proposed Lower Thames Crossing main alignment and provides a route that is compliant with relevant industry requirements where it crosses beneath the proposed Lower Thames Crossing main alignment.

To minimise the need for diversionary works, we have communicated a preference for both projects to incorporate relevant powers within their respective DCOs to deliver Highways England's proposed diversion route (shown in red in Attachment A), along with the relevant assessment and mitigation measures (where required). Highways England consider that this diversionary route could be presented as an option in the Applicant's DCO – with the effect that, if the proposed Lower Thames Crossing Project is not consented by the Secretary of State, the Applicant would have the necessary powers to construct their current proposal.

Highways England have provided Thurrock Power with revised design, environmental and land referencing information to support them making a non-material change to their application, if they so wish, to ensure the projects are compatible with each other.

We understand that the Applicant does not propose to make a change request to include Highway England's preferred route for the gas pipeline as an option in their DCO application. It is understood the Applicant proposes the installation of jointing blocks as an alternative, a "passive provision" to facilitate a diversion in the scenario that the Applicant commences construction prior to Lower Thames Crossing commencing. Lower Thames Crossing would then construct the diversion, utilising the jointing blocks.

The Lower Thames Crossing DCO will provide for the necessary land and works power to deliver the implementation of the diverted route shown in Attachment A. Whilst Highways England's position (as above) is that it would be best for both schemes to have a mutually compatible alignment secured through their respective Orders, Highways England recognise in these circumstances that submission of a change request is ultimately a matter for the Applicant. As such, Highways England is working with the Applicant to secure appropriate protections are in place with the current proposal, in order to ensure that the compatible alignment could be delivered as expeditiously as possible under the Lower Thames Crossing DCO.

4. Proposed easement

We acknowledge that the Applicant will require an easement where the underground high-pressure gas pipeline is located within the permanent footprint of the Lower Thames Crossing project. We will continue to work with the Applicant to secure the relevant agreement(s) to facilitate the easement.

5. Station Road Site Access

We note that the proposed underground high-pressure gas pipeline crossing at Station Road (the first of two crossing points) is located within the same footprint as a proposed major site access point for the Lower Thames Crossing tunnelling site. The Lower Thames Crossing access point has proposed access from both sides of Station Road – the eastern access is into a proposed tunnel segment facility and the western access is into the compound site. We will need to ensure relevant agreement is reached with the Applicant in relation to notice periods and alternate access arrangements to provide ongoing access to both Lower Thames Crossing sites if the Lower Thames Crossing segment facility is operational during the construction of the gas pipeline.

6. Substation Site Access

We understand the Applicant prefers the site access route identified as Work No. 12(a) in the Work Plans ([PDC-056](#)). We will continue to work with the Applicant to resolve and confirm site access requirements for both projects and will seek to secure an agreed route through relevant agreements.

7. Habitat Creation Area

We previously identified a potential interface associated with the Applicant's proposed habitat creation area (identified as Work No.2 on the Applicant's Works Plans ([PDC-056](#)) and utilities works required for Lower Thames Crossing. Lower Thames Crossing has been able to relocate the required utilities works outside of the main habitat footprint to avoid the physical interface between the works. We may still have a minor interface where a potable water pipe crosses a small portion of the proposed habitat land that runs parallel to the Tilbury Rail Link.

8. Conceptual Drainage Strategy

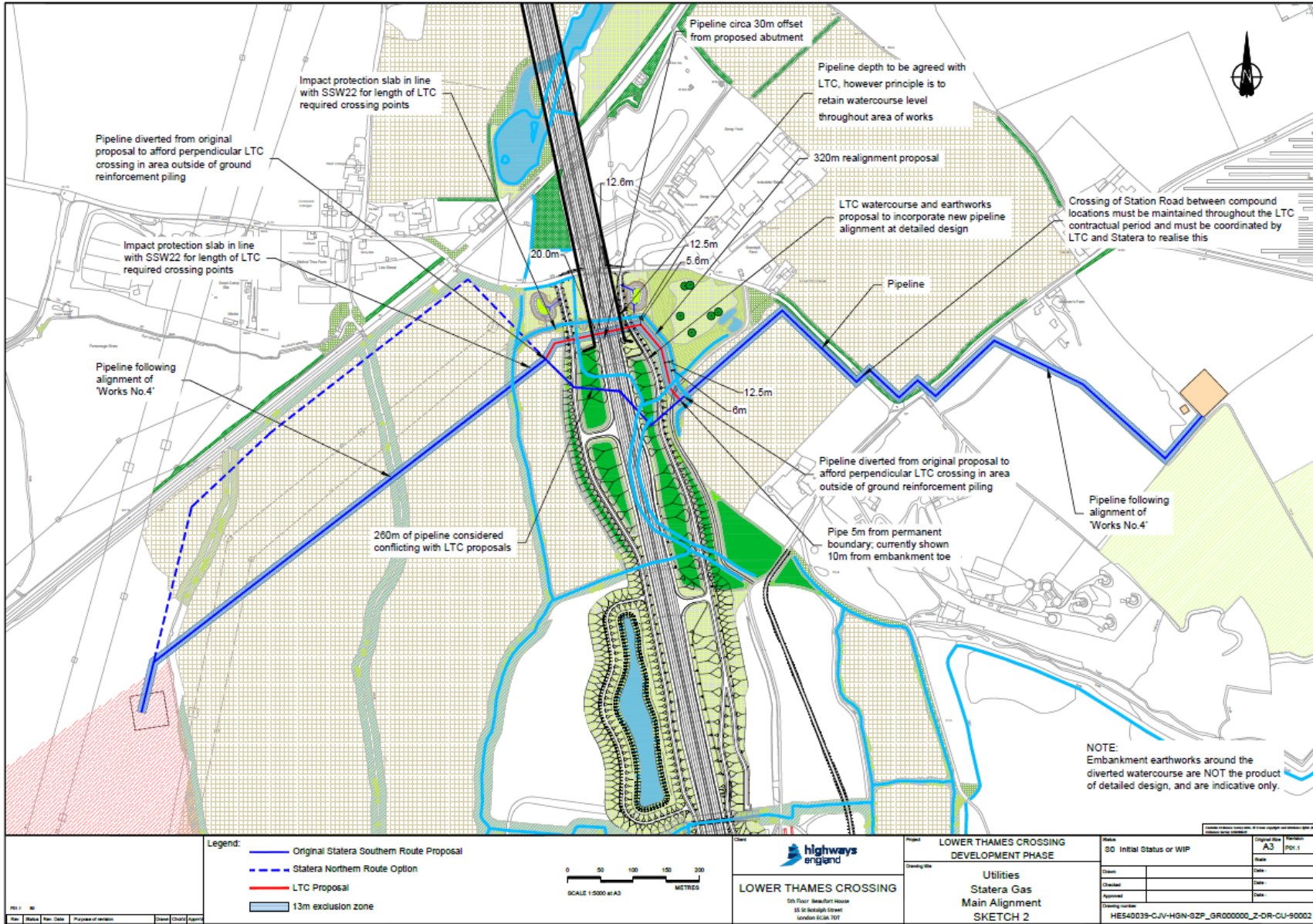
We have reviewed the Applicant's Conceptual Drainage Plan ([PDC-006](#)), particularly with reference to the proposed discharge to Bowaters Sluice through the 'existing' drainage network. We have expressed concerns to the Applicant in relation to the proposed discharge to the Bowaters Sluice as the existing drainage network runs through the proposed Lower Thames Crossing tunnel compound site and existing drainage ditches may be modified by the Lower Thames Crossing project.

Following discussions with the Applicant, we understand that the option for discharge to Bowaters Sluice is no longer being considered and alternative options are available. We will seek a formal commitment from the Applicant to this effect.

9. De-registration of Common Land at Walton and Parsonage Common

We understand the Applicant proposes to de-register common land within Walton and Parsonage Common ([APP-089](#)) which also sits within the proposed Lower Thames Crossing Order Limit boundary. We will work with the Applicant to understand the implications of their proposal to de-register this common land on the proposed Lower Thames Crossing project.

Attachment A – Highways England proposed underground high-pressure gas pipeline diversion



Attachment B – Highways England responses to Examining Authority Written Questions 1.17.4, 1.17.5 and 1.17.7**EXQ1.17.4**

The Applicant has submitted a plan in response to ExQ1.17.4 showing the overlay of the Thurrock Flexible Generation Plant and Lower Thames Crossing Project's Order Limits on behalf of both themselves and Highways England.

EXQ1.17.5

Expanding on the concerns we raised in our Relevant Representation ([RR-016](#)) it is the adverse camber of the Asda roundabout, the speed with which heavy goods vehicles (HGV) make the U-Turn movements and the number of HGVs that we have concerns with. Due to the adverse camber at the Asda roundabout, there is the risk that a heavily laden top heavy HGV making the U-Turn movement at speed could run the risk of overturning, potentially onto a vehicle/cyclist in the nearside lane.

In terms of the number of HGVs, we advise that we would not wish to see platoons of construction HGVs making the U-Turn movement due to the detrimental impact it could have on the operation of the other approaches to the Asda roundabout, particularly during peak periods. We also raise that HGVs travelling southbound on the A1089 from the A13 may not be expecting multiple HGVs to be undertaking the U-Turn movement from the south which could result in collisions.

However, mitigation measures such as signing, advising construction HGV drivers of the adverse camber and the risk of overturning and being aware of southbound HGV speeds on the approach to the roundabout could reduce the potential for collisions on the Asda roundabout. It is highlighted that some of these are already set out in the Statement of Common Ground between the Applicant and Highways England and further measures could be added subject to agreement with the Applicant.

We also query if a commercial agreement has been reached between the Applicant and Port of Tilbury London Limited on the use of Port of Tilbury so that we are confident that the vehicle numbers presented are robust and are not likely to be subject to any further changes.

EXQ1.17.7

Highways England has raised a concern with both the Examining Authority and the Applicant that the submitted Development Consent Order application does not appear to have included any assessment of the 200 construction worker trips prior to them reaching the temporary construction worker car park at the Raceway Tavern (subject to a separate planning application through Thurrock Council). Whilst Highways England acknowledges that the Applicant does not know where these workers will originate they could use an industry standard approach to estimate those movements. Highways England has commenced discussion with the Applicant on this matter.

Based on the information currently submitted, the remainder of the methodology used in the Transport Assessment appears reasonable at this time.