

Lower Thames Crossing

6.1 Environmental Statement

Chapter 1 – Introduction

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)

Infrastructure Planning (Applications:
Prescribed Forms and Procedure)
Regulations 2009

Volume 6

DATE: October 2022

Planning Inspectorate Scheme Ref: TR010032
Application Document Ref: TR010032/APP/6.1

VERSION: 1.0

Lower Thames Crossing

6.1 Environmental Statement

Chapter 1 – Introduction

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1 Introduction

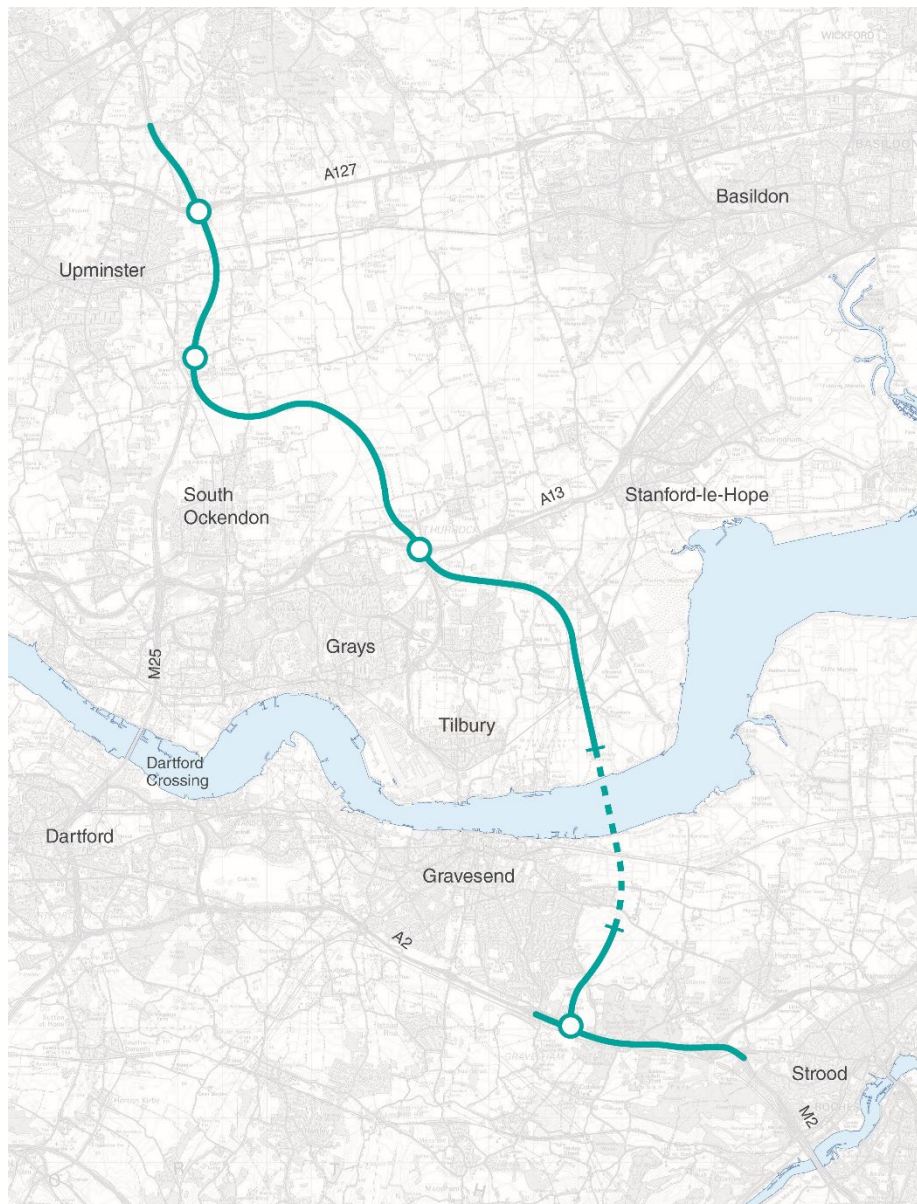
1.1 Purpose of this document

- 1.1.1 National Highways (the Applicant) has submitted an application under section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the A122 Lower Thames Crossing (the Project).
- 1.1.2 The Project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008, and an application for development consent has therefore been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. The application is accompanied by this Environmental Statement (ES), prepared in accordance with the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (Statutory Instrument 2017/572) (the EIA Regulations).
- 1.1.3 This ES is part of a suite of documents which accompany the application. A full description of the DCO Application Documents is provided within the Introduction to the Application (Application Document 1.3).
- 1.1.4 The ES sets out a description of the Project, its likely significant effects on the environment, the measures which are proposed to reduce or offset those effects and all other information required to be included in an ES by Regulation 14(2) of the EIA Regulations. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process has iteratively informed the design development of the Project.

1.2 Overview of the Project

- 1.2.1 The Project would provide a connection between the A2 and M2 in Kent, east of Gravesend, crossing under the River Thames through two bored tunnels, before joining the M25 south of junction 29. The Project route is presented in Plate 1.1.
- 1.2.2 The Project would be approximately 23km long, 4.25km of which would be in tunnel. On the south side of the River Thames, the Project route would link the tunnel to the A2 and M2. On the north side, it would link to the A13, M25 junction 29 and the M25 south of junction 29. The tunnel portals would be located to the east of the village of Chalk on the south of the River Thames and to the west of East Tilbury on the north side.
- 1.2.3 Junctions are proposed at the following locations:
- New junction with the A2 to the south-east of Gravesend
 - Modified junction with the A13/A1089 in Thurrock
 - New junction with the M25 between junctions 29 and 30

Plate 1.1 Lower Thames Crossing route



- 1.2.4 The Project route would be three lanes in both directions, except for:
- link roads
 - stretches of the carriageway through junctions
 - the southbound carriageway from the M25 to the junction with the A13/A1089, which would be two lanes

1.2.5 In common with other A-roads, the A122 would operate with no hard shoulder but would feature a 1m hard strip on either side of the carriageway. It would also feature technology including stopped vehicle and incident detection, lane control, variable speed limits and electronic signage and signalling. The A122 design outside of the tunnel would include emergency areas. The tunnel would include a range of enhanced systems and response measures instead of emergency areas.

- 1.2.6 The A122 would be classified as an ‘all-purpose trunk road’ with green signs. For safety reasons, walkers, cyclists, horse riders and slow-moving vehicles would be prohibited from using it.
- 1.2.7 The Project would include adjustment to a number of local roads. There would also be changes to a number of Public Rights of Way, used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Construction of the Project would also require the installation and diversion of a number of utilities, including gas pipelines, overhead electricity powerlines and underground electricity cables, as well as water supplies and telecommunications assets and associated infrastructure.
- 1.2.8 The Project has been developed to avoid or minimise significant effects on the environment. The proposed measures include landscaping, noise mitigation, green bridges, floodplain compensation, new areas of ecological habitat and two new parks.

1.3 Legislative and policy framework

Planning Act 2008

- 1.3.1 The Project meets the criteria of an NSIP under the Planning Act 2008 (as amended).
- 1.3.2 The Project is an NSIP within sections 14(1)(h) and 22 of the Planning Act 2008. The Project involves the ‘construction’ of a highway within the meaning of section 22(1)(a). The Project satisfies section 22(2) in that the highway will (when constructed) be wholly in England, the Applicant as a strategic highways company will be the highway authority for the highway, and the area of development is greater than the relevant limit set out in subsection (4), which in this case is 12.5 hectares, as speed limits for any class of vehicle will be in excess of 50mph.
- 1.3.3 This Project also involves the installation of an electric line above ground near the A13 (Work Number OH7 as described in Schedule 1 to the draft DCO (Application Document 3.1)). This element of the Project is also an NSIP under sections 14(1)(b) and 16(1)(a) of the Planning Act 2008, since the electric line will (when installed) be wholly in England. None of the exceptions set out in section 16(3) apply to exclude the installation of the electric line above ground as an NSIP: the nominal voltage is above 132kV, the length of the line (when installed) will be greater than 2km, the distance between the existing line and a new support will be greater than 60m and it does not fall under a category of work which would not require a consent under section 37(1) of the Electricity Act 1989 or under the Overhead Lines (Exemption) (England and Wales) Regulations 2009. Annex 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum (Application Document 3.2) provides further information on the assessment of proposed above ground electricity line works for the purposes of section 16 of the Planning Act 2008.
- 1.3.4 The Project also includes three gas diversions which constitute NSIPs pursuant to sections 14(1)(f) and 20 of the Planning Act 2008. The diversion of the National Grid Feeder 5 (Phase 1 and 2) and National Grid Feeder 18 high pressure gas pipelines (Work Numbers G2, G3 and G4) constitute NSIPs under section 20 of the Planning Act 2008. This is because the pipelines are to be wholly in England; the construction of those pipelines is likely to have a

significant effect on the environment; each will have a design operating pressure of more than 7 bar gauge; and, when constructed, will convey gas for the supply (directly or indirectly) to at least 50,000 customers, or potential customers, of one or more gas suppliers. Accordingly, for each of these works, each of the conditions in sections 20(2) to (5) of the Planning Act 2008 is satisfied. ES Appendix 1.3: Assessment of proposed gas pipeline works for the purposes of section 20 of the Planning Act 2008 (Application Document 6.3) presents the environmental assessment of the gas pipeline works required as part of the Project for the purposes of determining whether section 20 of the Planning Act 2008 is engaged.

- 1.3.5 Since the Project comprises NSIPs, National Highways is required to make an application for a DCO to the Planning Inspectorate, and this must be accompanied by an ES. The application for a DCO will be decided by the Secretary of State, and if granted, the DCO would provide the necessary authorisation to allow the Project to be constructed and operated, including powers to acquire land compulsorily.

EIA Regulations

- 1.3.6 The originating legal basis for EIA was set out in the European Community Directive 85/337/EEC which identifies the requirements for the carrying out of an EIA for certain types of projects where they are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The original 1985 Directive has been amended three times and those amendments were codified in Directive 2011/92/EU, which was then amended by Directive 2014/52/EU. This forms the EIA regime in Europe and is transposed into UK law for NSIPs by the EIA Regulations, which continue to have effect under s.21(1) of the EU Withdrawal Act 2018).
- 1.3.7 The Project is a Schedule 1 development under the EIA Regulations by virtue of it comprising:
- a. *‘Construction of a new road of four or more lanes, or realignment and/or widening of an existing road of two lanes or less so as to provide four or more lanes, where such new road, or realigned and/or widened section of road, would be 10 kilometres or more in a continuous length.’* (Schedule 1, paragraph 7(3))
- 1.3.8 In accordance with the EIA Regulations, the Project is therefore subject to an EIA. The EIA process requires the applicant to prepare an ES which identifies, describes and assesses the direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed development on population and human health; biodiversity; land, soil, water, air and climate; and material assets, cultural heritage and landscape, including any interaction between those factors as well as any significant effects arising from the vulnerability of the proposed development to major accidents and disasters. This ES provides that assessment.

Planning policy overview

- 1.3.9 A summary of the key national and local policy documents relevant to the environmental assessment of the Project are set out below.

National Policy Statements (NPSs)

- 1.3.10 The National Policy Statements (NPSs) set out the policies which will be used by the Secretary of State to make a decision on the application in accordance with the Planning Act 2008. Pursuant to section 104 of the Planning Act 2008, where a NPS has effect, the Secretary of State must decide the application in accordance with any relevant NPS except in certain prescribed circumstances set out in subsections (4)–(8).
- 1.3.11 The National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) was published in December 2014 (Department for Transport, 2014) and designated by the Secretary of State in January 2015. This sets out the policies relevant to highways NSIPs.
- 1.3.12 As the Project includes one overhead line diversion NSIP and three gas pipeline diversion NSIPs, it will also be assessed against the following energy policy statements, in accordance with section 104 of the Planning Act 2008:
- a. Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (Department of Energy and Climate Change, 2011a)
 - b. National Policy Statement for Gas Supply Infrastructure and Gas and Oil Pipelines (EN-4) (Department of Energy and Climate Change, 2011b)
 - c. National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (Department of Energy and Climate Change, 2011c)
- 1.3.13 These energy policy statements predominantly reflect the environmental assessment criteria set out in the NPSNN. The NPSNN forms the ‘case-making’ basis for the Project, and the need for nationally significant utilities diversions arises solely from the need for the road element of the Project.
- 1.3.14 National Highways has taken these policy requirements into account during the development and design of the Project and the preparation of this ES. NPS requirements are set out under each environmental topic, with a number of further requirements in relation to EIA and the assessment of reasonable alternatives.
- 1.3.15 The NPS requirements and their application to the environmental assessment of the Project are covered further in Chapter 3: Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives, Chapter 4: EIA Methodology, the environmental topic chapters 5 to 16 and the associated legislation and policy appendices (Application Document 6.3). Compliance of the Project with the NPSs is set out within the Planning Statement (Application Document 7.2, Appendices A and B) submitted as part of the DCO application.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 1.3.16 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021) sets out the Government’s planning policies. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

- 1.3.17 The NPPF does not contain specific policies for NSIPs. However, the NPPF advises that local authorities' planning policies should take into account NSIPs which are located within their local areas. Paragraph 1.17 of the NPSNN states that the NPS and NPPF are consistent, and paragraph 1.18 explains that the NPPF is an important and relevant consideration, '*but only to the extent relevant to [the] project*'.

Local planning policy

- 1.3.18 Although the NPSs provide the primary planning policy for determining development consent applications, adopted local plans and minerals/waste plans may also be relevant and, as part of the assessment, the relevant policy framework for each of the 'host' local authorities is considered. Local planning authorities have a statutory duty to prepare a development plan for their area. Approved local transport plans are also capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 1.3.19 The local planning policy which is important and relevant to the Project includes the following local plans, minerals plans and transport plans:
- a. Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (Maidstone Borough Council, 2017)
 - b. Tonbridge and Malling Core Strategy (Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, 2007)
 - c. Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (Gravesham Borough Council, 2014)
 - d. Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013–30 (Kent County Council, 2020)
 - e. Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2031 (Kent County Council, 2016)
 - f. Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development (Thurrock Council, 2015)
 - g. Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033 (Brentwood Borough Council, 2022)
 - h. Essex Minerals Local Plan (Essex County Council, 2014)
 - i. The Local Transport Plan for Essex (Essex County Council, 2011)
 - j. Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan (Essex County Council, 2017)
 - k. Havering Local Plan 2016-2031 (London Borough of Havering, 2021)
 - l. Mayor's Transport Strategy (Greater London Authority, 2018)
 - m. The London Plan (Greater London Authority, 2021)
 - n. The Joint Waste Development Plan for the East London Waste Authority Boroughs (Greater London Authority, 2012)

- 1.3.20 The relevant policies within these plans are further discussed within the Planning Statement (Application Document 7.2, Chapter 6 and Appendix C) and identified in the relevant legislation and policy appendix (Application Document 6.3) for each of the environmental topic chapters of this ES.

1.4 The EIA process and this Environmental Statement

- 1.4.1 The ES forms part of the DCO application, submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) in accordance with the Planning Act 2008.

EIA scoping

- 1.4.2 In October 2017, Highways England (now known as National Highways) notified the Secretary of State for Transport under Regulation 8(1) (part b) of the EIA Regulations that an ES would be prepared and submitted alongside the application for development consent.
- 1.4.3 A Scoping Report (Highways England, 2017) for the Project was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in November 2017. In response, a Scoping Opinion (Planning Inspectorate, 2017) was issued to Highways England in December 2017. The Scoping Report and Scoping Opinion are both available on the Planning Inspectorate website for the Project, and links are provided in the references section of this ES chapter.
- 1.4.4 The Planning Inspectorate's Scoping Opinion was informed by input from prescribed consultees (those required to be consulted by the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009) on the required scope of the EIA. Prescribed consultees include Statutory Environmental Bodies.
- 1.4.5 The Project response to the Planning Inspectorate's comments and those from prescribed consultees is provided within Appendix 4.1: The Inspectorate's Scoping Opinion and Responses (Application Document 6.3).

Environmental Statement structure

- 1.4.6 The structure of the ES is based on the requirements of the EIA Regulations and Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) LA 104 Environmental Assessment and Monitoring (Highways England, 2020a).
- 1.4.7 The ES comprises four DCO application documents¹:
- a. Application Document 6.1 – ES chapters
 - b. Application Document 6.2 – ES figures
 - c. Application Document 6.3 – ES appendices
 - d. Application Document 6.4 – Non-Technical Summary (NTS)
- 1.4.8 Chapter 4: EIA Methodology provides further detail on the content of the ES.

¹ The order of volumes in the ES differs slightly to that of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), as Volume 2 of the PEIR contained appendices and Volume 3 contained figures.

Other assessments and documents

- 1.4.9 Additional assessments have been produced to support the DCO application and are relevant to the assessments presented in this ES. The ES makes cross-references or summarises these documents to avoid duplication. Key documents that are included in the ES are as follows:
- Environmental Masterplan (Application Document 6.2, Figure 2.4)
 - Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) (Application Document 6.3, Appendix 2.2), which incorporates the Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC)
 - Flood Risk Assessment (Application Document 6.3, Appendix 14.6)
 - Water Framework Directive Assessment (Application Document 6.3, Appendix 14.7)
- 1.4.10 The CoCP provides a framework to manage the onsite construction and operation phase activities, including those that may affect the environment. The key aims are to ensure environmental mitigation, requirements of the DCO, and any necessary consents and licences are implemented and complied with in order to minimise and manage the risk of adverse environmental impacts. This will be a 'certified document' under article 2 of the draft DCO (Application Document 3.1).
- 1.4.11 The REAC consolidates the mitigation commitments arising from the environmental impact assessment process, for convenient reference. The REAC identifies the good practice and essential mitigation commitments that underpin the environmental assessments. These commitments are legally secured through Requirement 4 of Schedule 2 to the DCO.
- 1.4.12 The CoCP also includes the Outline Site Waste Management Plan (oSWMP) and the Outline Materials Handling Plan (oMHP) as Appendices A and B respectively. The oSWMP sets out the overarching principles and procedures that would be applied for the management of waste during the construction phase of the Project. The oMHP sets out the approach and high-level principles for handling construction materials and waste for the Project.
- 1.4.13 The CoCP, REAC, oSWMP and oMHP all form part of the Project control plan. The control plan is the framework for mitigating, monitoring and controlling effects of the Project. It is made up of a series of 'control documents' which present the mitigation measures identified in the application that must be implemented during design, construction and operation to reduce the adverse effects of the Project. Further explanation of the control plan and the documents which it comprises is provided in the Introduction to the Application (Application Document 1.3).
- 1.4.14 Other documents which form part of the DCO application and supplement the ES are as set out in Table 1.1. Assessments have been cross-referenced or summarised in the ES, to avoid duplication.

Table 1.1 Documents which supplement the Environmental Statement

Document	Purpose
Habitats Regulations Assessment – Information to Inform Stage 1 Screening and Statement to Inform the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (Application Document 6.5)	Provides an assessment of the likely significant effects (Stage 1) and adverse effects on integrity (Stage 2) of the Project on European Sites to inform the Secretary of State’s assessment pursuant to Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (Application Document 6.7)	Sets out the proposed management of the landscape and ecological elements of the Project. It focuses on the management requirements for the land parcels within the Order Limits acquired permanently that perform specific landscape and ecological mitigation functions.
Planning Statement and National Policy Statement (NPS) Accordance Tables (Application Document 7.2)	Presents the planning narrative of the Project including its design evolution through the consideration of alternatives and its interrelationships with other major developments. Moreover, it reviews the Project’s compliance with relevant planning policies and government policy in the NPSNN and Energy National Policy Statements, and National Policy Statement for Ports, and exercises a planning balance judgement to conclude on the overall acceptability of the Project.
Project Design Report (Application Document 7.4)	Describes the preliminary design and integration of the Project into its surrounding landscape and context. The report sets out the background to the Project and the Project’s approach to and development of good design on a Project-wide, regional and local basis. It also describes the main alternatives to the design which were considered, how the design evolved in response to public and stakeholder consultation, and the reasons for selecting the proposed design.
Design Principles (Application Document 7.5)	Sets out principles that underpin the design measures that integrate the Project into its context. It captures embedded mitigation measures and establishes parameters which must be met in the final design of the Project.
Transport Assessment (Application Document 7.9)	Assesses the impact of the Project during both construction and operation on the strategic and local highway network, and local sustainable modes of transport (including walkers, cyclists and horse riders).
Health and Equalities Impact Assessment (Application Document 7.10)	Provides an assessment of compliance with legislation set out under the Equality Act 2010 and associated Public Sector Equality Act and provides an assessment of the Project’s impact on human health.
Sustainability Statement (Application Document 7.11)	Provides a summary of where the preliminary design for the Project has met the aims of National Highways’ Design Manual for Roads and Bridges chapter GG 103 - Introduction and general requirements for sustainable development and design.

Document	Purpose
Framework Construction Travel Plan (Application Document 7.13)	Sets out a framework with regard to the implementation of travel planning to reduce the impact of the Project's construction workforce on the road network as a result of travel to and from construction worksites, compounds and Utility Logistic Hubs (ULH). The FCTP sets out proposed measures, including reducing single occupancy vehicle trips and encouraging sustainable and active travel.
Outline Traffic Management Plan for Construction (Application Document 7.14)	Sets out the approach to carrying out temporary traffic management for the safe construction of the Project. It also explains management measures available to the Contractor to reduce the impact on the local community (including journey time reliability, access, severance and safety).
Preliminary Navigational Risk Assessment (Application Document 7.15)	Assesses and quantifies the navigation risk posed by the Project during its construction and operational phases.
Community Impact Report (Application Document 7.16)	Provides information on impacts at a ward level based on the ES and the Transport Assessment, together with mitigation and monitoring information documented in the REAC and CoCP.
Interrelationships with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and Major Development Schemes (Application Document 7.17)	Describes how National Highways have worked with third-party project promoters and stakeholders to design out and control project interfaces, where necessary, to avoid prejudicing the successful delivery of other projects. It documents the work undertaken to ensure proposals are designed, consented, and delivered in a coordinated way to support Government's vision for the Lower Thames area.
Carbon and Energy Management Plan (Application Document 7.19)	Sets out how the Project will minimise its carbon impact during construction and operation.
Benefits and Outcomes Document (Application Document 7.20)	Captures some of the many benefits that will result from the Project but that currently sit outside of the DCO application and control documents. The document considers proposals and associated funding that has been secured or is under agreement, both within and outside of the Order Limits that will provide substantial benefits to the local community, the general public, the environment and the national economy.
Stakeholder Actions and Commitments Register (Application Document 7.21)	Provides a list of construction and/or design and/or operational related commitments given to stakeholders that are secured within the DCO and are not included in other documents or agreements such as side agreements (agreed with specific stakeholders outside of the DCO), environmental mitigation (as secured in the REAC) or measures required within the outline management plans.

1.5 The Applicant

National Highways

- 1.5.1 National Highways is the Applicant for the DCO application. National Highways is the strategic highways company charged with operating, maintaining and improving England's motorways and major A-roads. National Highways changed its name from Highways England in August 2021. Highways England became a government-owned company in April 2015 and was formerly known as the Highways Agency.
- 1.5.2 National Highways is responsible for the planning, design, building, operating and maintenance of the motorways and major (trunk) roads in England.

The Project Team

- 1.5.3 The Project is managed by National Highways, which would be responsible for delivery in accordance with the Project's DCO Requirements.
- 1.5.4 The Jacobs, Arcadis and COWI consortium (Cascade) has been appointed by National Highways as Technical Partner to prepare the DCO design and application for development consent, and to support National Highways through the Examination process. Together, National Highways and Cascade, with BDB Pitmans providing legal advice, make up the Project Team.

1.6 Competent expert evidence

- 1.6.1 In accordance with Regulation 14(4)(a) of the EIA Regulations and National Highways requirements, this ES has been prepared by a team of competent and qualified topic experts. Professional qualifications and memberships to relevant professional bodies for the EIA coordinators and discipline leads are set out in Appendix 1.1: Competent Expert Evidence (Application Document 6.3).

1.7 Consultation and engagement

Context

- 1.7.1 This section outlines the consultation and engagement that has been carried out for the Project.
- 1.7.2 Consultation refers to a formal process where information is disseminated to the public and stakeholders for a specified period of time. Responses are gathered and analysed in a structured way, with outcomes typically reported back to consultees. Consultations are often required to be carried out according to defined legal requirements, as discussed in the sections below.
- 1.7.3 Engagement refers to an ongoing and less formal process of sharing information, often with key stakeholders, and with the Applicant considering the feedback. Examples of engagement include meetings between local authorities and Project staff to discuss issues such as environmental mitigation, special category land use, or traffic impacts.

- 1.7.4 Consultation and engagement has been carried out as part of the identification and appraisal of route options, the selection of the preferred route option, and as part of the ongoing development of the Project design and preparation of this ES.
- 1.7.5 A detailed account of the consultation undertaken and how this has informed the Project is reported in the Consultation Report (Application Document 5.1) submitted as part of the DCO application. Information about the engagement activities undertaken as part of the development of the project is included in the Consultation Report and the Statement of Engagement (Application Document 5.2).
- 1.7.6 Consultation activities relevant to each environmental topic are also reported in the respective chapters of the ES.

Pre-application consultation

- 1.7.7 Non-statutory consultation was undertaken as part of the consideration of options and the selection of the preferred route for the Project. This was followed by statutory pre-application consultation.
- 1.7.8 The Planning Act 2008 places a legal requirement for pre-application consultation for DCO applications. It allows potential issues and concerns to be raised and considered when a proposed development is still at a formative stage and, where appropriate, addressed before the DCO application is submitted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 1.7.9 The Planning Act 2008 requires three separate strands of pre-application consultation:
- a. Section 42 consultation with prescribed consultees (e.g. Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England), local authorities, landowners and others with interests in land
 - b. Section 47 consultation with the local community in accordance with the Statement of Community Consultation
 - c. Section 48 publicity
- 1.7.10 The Consultation Report (Application Document 5.1) provides a full description of the consultation activities undertaken and the Applicant's response to the feedback received.
- 1.7.11 A summary of public consultation undertaken is provided below. Detail of specific consultation related to environmental topics and assessments is contained within the relevant environmental topic chapters of this ES.

Options selection stage consultation

- 1.7.12 The Department for Transport held a non-statutory public consultation in 2013, which considered the need for a new Lower Thames Crossing and invited views on three potential locations and one variant:
- a. Option A: at the site of the existing A282 Dartford crossing
 - b. Option B: connecting the A2 and Swanscombe Peninsula with the A1089

- c. Option C: connecting the M2 with the A13 and the M25 between junctions 29 and 30
 - d. Option C Variant: connecting the M2 with the A13 and M25 between junctions 29 and 30, and additionally widening the A229 between the M2 and the M20
- 1.7.13 Three engineering solutions were considered at crossing locations A and C: a bridge, an immersed tunnel and a bored tunnel. The options selections stage of the development of the Project is discussed in the Planning Statement (Application Document 7.2) and is included within Chapter 3: Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives of the ES.
- 1.7.14 The 2013 non-statutory consultation period ran for eight weeks from 21 May to 16 July 2013.
- 1.7.15 The Department for Transport published its response to the consultation in July 2014, confirming that there was a need for an additional crossing between Essex and Kent, but that there was no consensus about where it should be. Option B was shown as having the weakest case and discounted from further consideration. The Government commissioned a more detailed assessment of Options A and C, with or without the Option C Variant. The assessment concluded that the bored tunnel option for the Option C Variant was preferred. Options A and C and the bridge and immersed tunnel solutions at the Option C Variant were not progressed. This assessment was carried out by the Highways Agency.
- 1.7.16 As part of this assessment, the Highways Agency undertook a programme of engagement starting in September 2014 to determine constraints and priorities which would affect the identification and development of feasible options for a new Lower Thames Crossing. This allowed complex and technical information to be shared and helped build relationships with opportunities for further engagement.
- 1.7.17 Key stakeholders for this purpose included local authorities, statutory and environmental bodies, statutory undertakers (utilities) and businesses which might be affected. The Project also sought to engage council leaders and Members of Parliament in directly affected and neighbouring areas.
- 1.7.18 Highways England held a non-statutory consultation from 26 January to 24 March 2016. The consultation presented the shortlisted routes that performed satisfactorily against the Scheme Objectives (refer to Chapter 2: Project Description) and were considered viable. The consultation also included information on routes that were not considered viable and the reasons for those conclusions, together with the opportunity to comment on issues and to propose other solutions. The consultation aimed to inform people about the proposals and obtain feedback on them, and to identify any new and relevant information that should be taken into account in the decision-making process. Highways England then further assessed the route options, taking account of consultation responses, to inform the preferred route recommendation that was made to the Department for Transport.

- 1.7.19 The 2016 consultation was widely publicised and a variety of material was made available, digitally and in hardcopy form, to ensure the public had access to the information needed to consider the options presented and respond to the consultation accordingly. Highways England also held a total of 24 public information events in 20 locations in the Lower Thames area during the consultation period. The consultation generated more than 47,034 responses. Responses were received from across the UK, with the largest proportion from south Essex, north Kent and the London boroughs.
- 1.7.20 Following consideration of the consultation responses, a recommendation was made to the Department for Transport about the choice of a preferred route to be taken forward to the next stage of development.
- 1.7.21 The Government announced the preferred route for the Project on 12 April 2017. The preferred route was announced as location C with a bored tunnel crossing under the River Thames east of Gravesend and Tilbury and connecting to the M25 south of junction 29, and the A2 east of Gravesend. Following the Preferred Route Announcement, the Project was subject to further design development and refinement, resulting in further changes to the proposals presented in the Preferred Route Announcement.

Statutory Consultation

- 1.7.22 Statutory Consultation on the preferred route took place between 10 October 2018 and 20 December 2018 in accordance with the Planning Act 2008. This consultation gave members of the public and prescribed consultees, including local authorities, businesses, organisations and people with an interest in land, the opportunity to comment on the proposals. Highways England held 60 public consultation events, which were attended by nearly 15,000 people.
- 1.7.23 A Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and NTS were published in 2018 to support the preferred route consultation (Highways England, 2018). The PEIR provided preliminary information on the likely significant environmental effects of the Project, based on the assessments that had been undertaken to that point. The PEIR was made available to the prescribed consultees, local authorities and landowners, as well as members of the public and the community.
- 1.7.24 The purpose of the PEIR was to enable consultees to understand the potential likely significant effects that could arise as a result of the Project to support their consultation responses. Feedback from the consultation was used to inform the assessments reported in this ES.
- 1.7.25 The Statutory Consultation received 28,493 responses.

Supplementary Consultation

- 1.7.26 A non-statutory Supplementary Consultation event took place from 29 January 2020. This consultation was due to close on 25 March 2020 but was extended until 2 April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirement to close deposit locations and information points. This consultation provided information on the proposed changes to the design since the Statutory Consultation in 2018 and provided stakeholders with the opportunity to view and comment on these changes.

1.7.27 The information produced for Supplementary Consultation included an Environmental Impacts Update (Highways England, 2020b), which presented the likely significant effects on the environment of the proposed changes, during both construction and operation, compared to those which had been reported in the PEIR. It also outlined the mitigation measures proposed to reduce adverse effects associated with the changes.

1.7.28 The Supplementary Consultation received over 6,000 responses, including responses from five Statutory Environmental Bodies and other non-statutory environmental groups.

Design Refinement Consultation

1.7.29 The non-statutory Design Refinement Consultation took place from 14 July 2020 to 12 August 2020 to seek feedback from stakeholders, including prescribed consultees, on further design refinements to the Project since the Supplementary Consultation. The consultation documents included a further Environmental Impacts Update (Highways England, 2020c), As for the Supplementary Consultation, this reported how the design refinements would alter the likely significant effects on the environment, as reported in the PEIR.

1.7.30 The Design Refinement Consultation received over 1,206 responses, including responses from five Statutory Environmental Bodies and other non-statutory environmental groups.

Community Impacts Consultation

1.7.31 The Community Impacts Consultation took place from 14 July 2021 to 8 September 2021. The consultation presented information on the additional work that was undertaken in response to feedback received from the Planning Inspectorate, stakeholders and the public. It sought further feedback on the following topics from stakeholders, including prescribed consultees, persons with an interest in land and the public.

- a. Refinements to the Project proposals, informed by consideration of the issues raised by the Planning Inspectorate, during stakeholder engagement, consultation, ongoing design development and assessments and investigations
- b. How the project would be built and operated
- c. Potential effects on local communities and the environment, including a detailed summary for each electoral ward
- d. Proposals for how these effects would be mitigated

1.7.32 The Community Impacts Consultation received over 3,218 responses, including responses from Statutory Environmental Bodies and other non-statutory environmental groups.

Local Refinement Consultation

- 1.7.33 Prior to the submission of this DCO application, a further round of public consultation was held between 12 May 2022 and 20 June 2022. This provided local communities with the opportunity to comment on refinements to the Project. These refinements were identified through design development, feedback from consultation in 2021, ongoing stakeholder engagement and technical surveys. These refinements included the amendments required to avoid conflict with the proposed Thames Freeport at Tilbury and additional environmental compensation and mitigation in response to likely significant effects from nitrogen deposition.
- 1.7.34 The Local Refinement Consultation received over 2,000 responses, including responses from Statutory Environmental Bodies and other non-statutory environmental groups.

Consulted organisations

Statutory Environmental Bodies

- 1.7.35 The Statutory Environmental Bodies are advisory bodies and key stakeholders. These include the Environment Agency, Historic England (including the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service), the Marine Management Organisation, Natural England, the Forestry Commission (including Forestry Enterprise) and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit.
- 1.7.36 The Project has also engaged with the Port of London Authority in some of the discussions, specifically in relation to marine consents.
- 1.7.37 The Project has engaged with the Statutory Environmental Bodies on the matters shown in Table 1.2. The engagement has related to the areas or factors for which they are directly responsible and areas of interest.

Table 1.2 Engagement with Statutory Environmental Bodies

Statutory Environmental Body	Areas of engagement
Environment Agency	Biodiversity, flood risk, road drainage and the water environment, groundwater, contaminated land, geology and soils, and cumulative effects
Historic England	Cultural heritage and building conservation, landscape and visual effects, geology and soils, noise and vibration, road drainage and the water environment, and cumulative effects
Marine Management Organisation	Licensing, planning of marine activities and marine biodiversity
Natural England	Marine and terrestrial biodiversity, Habitats Regulations Assessment, designated sites, air quality, noise and vibration, landscape and visual effects, road drainage and the water environment, and cumulative effects
Forestry Commission (including Forestry Enterprise)	Biodiversity, people and communities, and landscape
Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit	Terrestrial biodiversity, air quality, noise and vibration, landscape and visual effects, walking, cycling and horse riding routes

Environmental organisations

- 1.7.38 Engagement to date has been undertaken on key topic areas such as biodiversity, air quality, noise and landscape with the following organisations. Further information is provided in the relevant environmental topic chapters.
- a. Buglife
 - b. Essex Wildlife Trust
 - c. Kent Wildlife Trust
 - d. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
 - e. The Woodland Trust
 - f. Canal and River Trust
 - g. Relevant County archaeologists
 - h. Seventyholds, Enover and Rural Arisings (in relation to habitat creation for protected species)
 - i. Bumblebee Conservation Trust
 - j. Land of the Fanns Partnership
 - k. Thames Chase Trust
 - l. CPRE, the Countryside Charity

Local authorities

- 1.7.39 The Project has consulted with the ten host local authorities, whose administrative areas are those which the Project passes through, and also with relevant neighbouring local authorities. The host local authorities are as follows:
- a. South of the River Thames
 - i. Kent County Council (upper tier)
 - ii. Maidstone Borough Council (lower tier)
 - iii. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (lower tier)
 - iv. Gravesham Borough Council (lower tier)
 - b. North of the River Thames
 - i. Thurrock Council (Unitary/Metropolitan)
 - ii. London Borough of Havering (Unitary/Metropolitan)
 - iii. The Greater London Authority (upper tier)
 - iv. Essex County Council (upper tier)
 - v. Brentwood Borough Council (lower tier)

- 1.7.40 Relevant local authorities have been engaged in relation to all of the environmental topics reported in this ES. Engagement has included technical officers and specialists, including Environmental Health Officers and planning officers, as well as councillors and environmental consultants. Further detail on the consultation and engagement is provided within the relevant environmental topic chapter and the Consultation Report (Application Document 5.1).

Third-party asset owners and operators

- 1.7.41 Regular engagement with key asset owners and operators has taken place throughout the development phase to discuss the need to protect and/or divert current asset infrastructure affected by the Project. The Project Team has worked closely with utility stakeholders, such as National Grid and Southern Gas Networks, to assess diversion options and environmental constraints against proposed options and potential diversion construction methods.
- 1.7.42 Wider engagement with key stakeholders such as the Environment Agency has also been carried out to understand existing environmental conditions and datasets available.
- 1.7.43 Further information regarding engagement with stakeholders is provided within the relevant Statements of Common Ground (Application Document 5.4).

Other NSIPs and major developments

- 1.7.44 There has been ongoing engagement and liaison with the promoters of other nearby NSIPs and major developments during the development of the Project. These developments include the redevelopment of the Tilbury Power Station, the development of Tilbury2 and the Thames Freeport, Thurrock Flexible Generation Plant and the London Resort. These discussions have provided opportunities to share data and sought to ensure that the developments are designed, consented and delivered in a coordinated manner, managing and mitigating interfaces, where necessary. Cumulative effects of the Project in combination with these developments are included in Chapter 16: Cumulative Effects Assessment. Further information is also provided within the Interrelationships with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and Major Development Schemes (Application Document 7.17) and the relevant Statements of Common Ground (Application Document 5.4).

1.8 Availability of the Environmental Statement

- 1.8.1 All DCO Application Documents, including the ES, are published via the Planning Inspectorate's website and are available at the following link:
<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/lower-thames-crossing/>

1.8.2 In addition, electronic copies are available on USB provided free of charge. For those requiring hard copies, there may be a reasonable charge for printing and distribution. Requests should be made via the Applicant using the details below:

Email: ltc@highwaysengland.co.uk

Phone: 0844 693 1448

Post: Lower Thames Crossing

Project Team

National Highways

Bridge House

1 Walnut Tree Close

Guildford

Surrey

GU1 4LZ

1.8.3 Any requests for further information about the Project should be made in writing to the Lower Thames Crossing Project Team at the address provided above.

Next steps

1.8.4 This ES forms part of the application for development consent. In the first instance, the Planning Inspectorate considers, on behalf of the Secretary of State, whether the application should be accepted for examination. The Planning Inspectorate has 28 days to decide whether or not to accept the application for examination.

1.8.5 If the application is accepted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate, the pre-examination period starts. The DCO application is then made publicly available on the Planning Inspectorate's website. Interested parties are invited to make representations about the Project and its potential impacts. Representations received by the Planning Inspectorate are then considered as part of the examination of the DCO application.

Project Delivery Programme

1.8.6 The main milestones to implement the Project are summarised below:

- a. Submission of the DCO application, including the ES, to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2022
- b. DCO examination and decision stages are expected to take place in 2023–2024
- c. Construction phase is expected to start in 2025
- d. Project opening 2030

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Registered office Bridge House, 1 Walnut Tree Close, Guildford GU1 4LZ

National Highways Company Limited registered in England and Wales number 09346363