

1 MR SMITH: Good evening and welcome, everybody, to today's open-floor
2 hearing 1 for the Lower Thames Crossing. This is the first open-floor
3 hearing, indeed the first hearing of any kind in this examination. Now,
4 before we introduce ourselves, I will deal with a few preliminary matters.
5 Can I check with the case team and audio-visual staff that we can be
6 heard online and that the recording and the live stream have started?

7 MS CHURCH: Yes, that's all fine, thank you.

8 MR SMITH: Thank you very much, Ms Church. So to introductions: my name is
9 Rynd Smith. I am lead member of a panel, which is the Examining
10 Authority for the Lower Thames Crossing application, and I am in the
11 chair for the opening part of this hearing. I'll draw your attention to the
12 frequently asked questions linked to our rule 6 letter and available on our
13 website, and there you'll find a brief biography of myself and my fellow
14 panel members and an explanation of the purpose of this Examining
15 Authority's appointment. My fellow panel members will introduce
16 themselves and you will be able to find all the additional detail that you
17 need about them in the FAQs that I've just referred to. So I'm going to
18 start by introducing Janine Laver and she will be taking the chair once
19 these introductions have concluded. So Ms Laver.

20 MS LAVER: Hello, I'm Janine Laver and I'll be leading on the main elements of
21 this hearing tonight once the introductions are over. I will now hand you
22 on to my colleague, Mr Ken Taylor.

23 MR TAYLOR: Hello, everyone. My name is Ken Taylor. I'm a member of this
24 panel and I will be mainly observing and taking notes today, but I may
25 ask questions if the need arises, and I'll hand you over to my colleague,
26 Mr Pratt.

27 MR PRATT: Good evening, everybody. I'm Ken Pratt and I'm a member of this
28 panel. As with Mr Taylor, I will be mainly observing and taking notes this
29 evening, and will also ask questions if they arise. I will switch off my
30 camera once the event is underway to allow you to focus on those
31 speaking and leading the event, but be assured I'm going to be sitting
32 here and listening carefully to everything that is said. I'll now pass over
33 to Mr Young.

1 MR YOUNG: Good evening, everybody. My name is Dominic Young and, like
2 my colleagues, I will be mainly observing, taking note this evening. For
3 the same reasons that have been explained, I may also switch off my
4 camera once the event is underway, but I will be listening in the
5 background. I'll also flag that in case we have any tech failures tonight,
6 we have arranged deputies for each of the other roles, so, if we do
7 change roles, do not be too disconcerted; that's all part of our backup
8 plan. I will now hand back to Mr Smith.

9 MR SMITH: Thank you very much, Mr Young, and I will introduce as well our
10 Planning Inspectorate colleagues working with us on this examination,
11 some of whom you've spoken to already. Eleanor Church and Ted
12 Blackmore jointly are the case managers leading the Planning
13 Inspectorate's case team for the Lower Thames Crossing, and the team
14 delivering this hearing tonight was led by Eleanor, with operations
15 manager Martin Almond and case officers Ryan Sedgman, leading
16 registration, Katy O'Loan and Alice Humphries, a planning officer in
17 support of the Examining Authority.

18 So moving on, we'll just speak briefly about the purpose of this as
19 an open-floor hearing. Hopefully, the agenda papers that you've
20 received for this hearing provide a reasonably clear explanation of our
21 and your reasons for being here this evening, which is to provide you with
22 an opportunity to raise anything that is important and relevant and that
23 you think that we should know about and consider before we make any
24 findings or recommendations to the Secretary of State on the application
25 for development consent that is before us. Any interested party in this
26 examination can ask to be heard at a hearing such as this – an open-
27 floor hearing – and if such a hearing is requested, then we must offer the
28 interested party the opportunity to be heard.

29 When we were making our arrangements for this examination, we
30 planned for the possibility that there may be many, many people
31 requesting to be heard at open-floor hearings, and we designed an
32 examination timetable that aims to provide enough opportunities for all
33 interested parties who might wish to speak, and I think it's probably fair
34 to say that, whilst experience of examinations for other large projects led

1 us to offer this evening's virtual hearing at the very start of the
2 examination and also to offer early in-person open-floor hearings to be
3 held north of the River Thames at Orsett Hall from 10.00 a.m. on 28 June
4 and south of the river at Dartford Bridge Hilton Hotel from 10.00 a.m. on
5 5 July.

6 We had certainly understood that there would probably be quite
7 substantial demand for these. However, there has not yet been the level
8 of interest in participating in open-floor hearings that we had planned for,
9 and so this first virtual hearing will be very brief because we have had
10 very few requests to be heard and we have had a number of parties also
11 notifying us since that they can no longer attend. So for those attending
12 today, I will be clear that we do use speaking limits for these types of
13 hearings and we will be retaining these limits this evening.

14 Even though there are very few of you wishing to speak, it's
15 important that we are fair to everybody involved in this examination, and
16 for that reason, I'm sure you'll understand that fairness requires that we
17 don't extend the speaking time available for individual speakers at one
18 event alone, even if there are very few of you wishing to speak.

19 For those not attending today, watching online or watching a
20 recording after the event and maybe wondering how to get involved, then
21 I will remind you that there are opportunities to speak in person or virtually
22 at the Orsett Hall open-floor hearing next week on 28 June, that you must
23 register to speak at that event on the Planning Inspectorate's website by
24 the end of 22 June. The online link closes just before midnight.

25 Similarly, if you would like to speak in person or virtually at the
26 Dartford Bridge Hilton event on 5 July, then you must register on our
27 website by 29 June. If you would like us to hold a later open-floor
28 hearing, then you must request to be heard at deadline 1 or procedural
29 deadline D on Tuesday 18 July, and I think it's very important to make
30 clear this is the last point at which people wishing to be heard at an open-
31 floor hearing can request to be heard. After that deadline, we will finalise
32 all of the remaining arrangements for any further open-floor hearings in
33 this examination. If any of this has been unclear and you have any
34 questions about how to register for an open-floor hearing, then please

1 contact the Planning Inspectorate's Lower Thames Crossing case team
2 and you can contact them using the email link on our website, and I'll say
3 a little bit more about that shortly.

4 It's important to be clear that open-floor hearings are only held if
5 they are requested to be held, and I will be clear, if you're an interested
6 party, you don't have to speak at one. Examinations are primarily a
7 written process, and you can make written representations to us at
8 deadline 1, or you can choose not to do that and rely on your relevant
9 representation that you've already provided to us in writing. We take all
10 relevant representations, written representations and oral
11 representations made at hearings such as this carefully into account, and
12 they have equal status in the examination, but if you do think you want to
13 speak at an open-floor hearing, then it is important to make your final
14 request to do so before 18 July.

15 Now, I have referred to our website, and I will flag that you can find
16 information about the application and documents produced for the
17 examination process on the Planning Inspectorate's National
18 Infrastructure website, which has a landing page for the Lower Thames
19 Crossing and tabs that set out examination procedure, the timetable, the
20 relevant representations and examination documents for the full
21 examination, and this is where you will find an email link to contact the
22 case team.

23 The rule 6 letter that we sent to all participants in this examination
24 on 25 April includes the web address for this, but you can Google, 'Lower
25 Thames Crossing Planning Inspectorate', and you will find your way
26 there. Please do look at the website regularly because we will use it to
27 communicate with you and to provide access to documents throughout
28 the examination.

29 So you know who we are and why we're here, and I'm now going
30 to hand you over to Ms Janine Laver, who will then chair the remainder
31 of this hearing, so Ms Laver.

32 MS LAVER: Thank you, Mr Smith. This is Janine Laver, panel member,
33 speaking again. Shortly, I will be asking attendees for session 1 to speak
34 in the following order. I understand we have Debbie Wright and David

1 Martin from Higham Parish Council. You will receive 10 minutes between
2 you to speak. I'll then have Mr Trevor Thacker as an interested party; Mr
3 Thacker, you will have five minutes to speak. I understand several other
4 registered parties to speak tonight have not been able to make
5 themselves available. Could I check the name of the speaker that we
6 have for the applicant today, please?

7 MR HENDERSON: Good evening, madam. Can I just check that you can hear
8 me?

9 MS LAVER: I can. It's a little bit muted, but yes, I can.

10 MR HENDERSON: I'll try and speak up. My name is Tom Henderson. I'm a
11 partner and solicitor at the law firm BDB Pitmans, instructed by National
12 Highways on the Lower Thames Crossing project. I'm supported this
13 evening by a small number of the Lower Thames Crossing project
14 team...

15 MS LAVER: I think I've lost Mr Henderson.

16 MR SMITH: Yes. Mr Henderson, we didn't just receive any audio for the last
17 part of your introduction there, so if you could just repeat that if at all
18 possible.

19 MR HENDERSON: Tom Henderson for the applicant. Can you hear me now?

20 MS LAVER: Yes.

21 MR HENDERSON: Sorry about that. I'll just go through the whole thing again.
22 So my name is Tom Henderson, solicitor and partner at BDB Pitmans,
23 instructed by National Highways on the Lower Thames Crossing project,
24 and I'm representing the project this evening. The bit that I think you
25 missed was that there's a small number of the project team supporting
26 me this evening, but I wouldn't propose to introduce them at this stage,
27 and only if and when they're called upon to speak, which I don't anticipate
28 being needed.

29 MS LAVER: Okay, that's great. Thank you, Mr Henderson. Because the main
30 purpose of this hearing this evening is to hear from interested parties –
31 obviously, you are here to listen in the main – before I close the hearing,
32 I will give you a brief opportunity to make responding remarks on matters
33 that you feel should be drawn to our attention. I know that you
34 understand that.

1 Before I move to the registered speakers, just a few things to
2 remember: we advised you in the agenda that we are being live-
3 streamed and recorded. The recordings that we make are retained and
4 published and form a public record that can contain your personal
5 information and to which the UK General Data Protection Regulation
6 applies. Does anybody have any questions about the terms on which
7 our digital recordings are made? Not seeing any raised hands or hearing
8 anybody, so we'll move forward.

9 As my colleague Mr Smith mentioned, the topic of your
10 representations about the proposals is up to you. I will flag, though, that
11 there will be separate hearings during the examination to hear anybody
12 whose interest in land are affected by compulsory acquisition or
13 temporary possession requests that the applicants have made. So if
14 you're an affected person who wants to speak about either of these topics
15 – and if you're wanting to speak about them this evening, we're not going
16 to stop you, but please do bear in mind that a compulsory acquisition
17 hearing might be the best place to make your points. You will need to
18 register to be heard at a compulsory acquisition hearing by procedural
19 deadline D, which is on 18 July.

20 Can I also add that once an issue has been identified, it does not
21 need to be repeated? It is sufficient to say that you agree with something
22 a previous speaker has raised.

23 Now, turning to this evening's hearing, you know the order that I
24 intend to take the speakers in, and the agenda sets out the speaking
25 times that apply. Mr Smith did refer that we will keep to those times. I
26 advise you not to leave the Teams meeting until you have had your turn,
27 but once you have spoken, you can leave Teams if you wish. You will
28 still be able to watch the remainder of the hearing on the live stream
29 online. Anyone who is speaking today but wishes to leave before the
30 applicant has spoken at the end can watch the applicant's response on
31 the live stream, and if there is anything that you disagree with, again, you
32 can set that out in writing by deadline 1 on 18 July.

33 I will remind everybody of the importance of respecting all
34 participants and allowing everyone to have their say. In fairness, just as

1 you don't want to be interrupted when you speak, please do not interrupt
2 the other speakers.

3 If anyone does interrupt in a way that is unnecessary or disrupts the
4 hearing, I will issue a warning. If they continue to interrupt, then I may
5 ask the case manager to exclude that individual or individuals from the
6 hearing. Interruptions that lead to disruption can be viewed as
7 unreasonable behaviour for which awards of costs can be sought by
8 other interested parties.

9 Finally, if anything goes wrong with the technology for you tonight
10 and you struggle to participate, please contact the case team by email or
11 phone and they will try to get back to you and get you back into the
12 hearing. If that fails, they will ask you to attend a later hearing or make
13 your submission in writing.

14 If anything goes wrong with technology at our end and we cannot
15 continue, we will announce the next steps on the Lower Thames
16 Crossing landing page. We have some contingency time set aside this
17 Friday 23 June if needs be.

18 The introductions are now complete, and before I move on to the
19 main business of this hearing, does anyone have a burning question of
20 an introductory or preliminary nature that needs to be resolved and will
21 not arise under the remaining agenda items? I understand my camera
22 is probably catching only half of my face and I will try to adjust shortly.

23 MR SMITH: Thank you very much, Ms Laver. Whilst you're adjusting your
24 camera, I will just briefly remark that we are conscious that the applicant
25 is joining on a video channel that is marked as being from the Planning
26 Inspectorate; to be clear, that is because the system itself has assigned
27 that name to their channel, but clearly they are not speaking for or on
28 behalf of the Planning Inspectorate. The Planning Inspectorate here is
29 represented by the members of the panel.

30 So moving on, we can now, I think, go to speaker contributions. Ms
31 Laver.

32 MS LAVER: Thank you. Can everybody see me now? I've had to readjust my
33 camera because it's about to fall off the top of the screen. Mr Smith, am
34 I okay on camera?

1 MR SMITH: Yes, indeed, you are on camera, and I think the panel, with the
2 exception of Ms Laver in the chair, will now switch off our cameras so
3 that we can focus on the public speakers.

4 MS LAVER: Okay. The first speaker I have then is Ms Debbie Wright and Mr
5 Martin from Higham Parish Council. Good evening and welcome to you.

6 MS WRIGHT: Good evening.

7 MS LAVER: As a representative body, you have 10 minutes in which to make
8 your points. You can choose to share those 10 minutes as you wish. My
9 colleague in the case team will give you a slide on the screen when you
10 have one minute left. When you begin your contribution, if you could
11 introduce yourself, please, for the purpose of the audio recording. We
12 are ready when you are. We will ask questions at the end, but we won't
13 interrupt. Thank you.

14 MS WRIGHT: Thank you very much. Good evening, panel. I am Debbie Wright,
15 a councillor for Higham Parish Council, and this is my colleague, David
16 Martin. So we have a number of points today. So initially, the proposed
17 route: Higham Parish Council, which we will refer to as HPC, are opposed
18 to the proposed route and believe that a tunnel from Dartford to Thurrock
19 bypassing junctions 1 and 2 on the south side of the river, as suggested
20 during the debate on this crossing in the House of Commons in 2022, is
21 the best option, as it would reduce congestion, maximise use of existing
22 infrastructure, reduce the agricultural land take, protect ancient
23 woodland.

24 HPC, or Higham Parish Council, wish to ask why the proposal for
25 the long tunnel option at Dartford was dismissed and not consulted on.
26 It would remove the need to upgrade M2 and M20 junctions in Kent,
27 continuing to provide a more direct route for traffic from Dover. In the
28 event that the current proposals are cheaper, is this due to the omission
29 of the Blue Bell Hill A229/M2/M20 junction works required to enable
30 appropriate flow?

31 Moving now to the direct impact on Higham Village, construction
32 traffic using the A2, A289 and A226 – it is currently proposed that
33 construction traffic for plant, machinery, materials including concrete and
34 staff, access the construction compounds and site via the A289/A226, a

1 one-way journey of an additional eight miles. HPC propose that this
2 should be banned and construction traffic should access the site via the
3 A2 and the proposed haul roads.

4 Unsuitability of the A226 at Higham: the A226 is generally suitable
5 for HGV and increased traffic levels, but not at the Forge Lane/Gad's Hill
6 School junction. The A226 at this junction for Higham Village is narrow,
7 dangerous for cars turning out of Forge Lane and out of Crutches Lane,
8 both onto the A226. It is dangerous for cyclists as the cycle path ceases,
9 as well as for schoolchildren from Gad's Hill School crossing the A226.
10 There are no pedestrian traffic lights there.

11 Gad's Hill School – Gad's Hill is the former home of Charles
12 Dickens. It is a Grade I listed house, as are the front wall and the path
13 that was dug by Charles Dickens under the A226. The A226 cannot be
14 widened at this point due to this Grade I listing of Gad's Hill. It is unclear
15 at this time whether the path and steps dug by Charles Dickens under
16 the A226 would support the weight of a significant number of additional
17 HGVs passing overhead. Gad's Hill is not referenced under 'Built
18 heritage' in the community impact report and NH advised yesterday, or a
19 few days ago, that they were not aware of it.

20 Traffic blockages in Higham: any delay in traffic egressing and
21 entering Higham Village via Forge Lane and Gad's Hill School or
22 Crutches Lane will cause significant disruption in Higham Village, which
23 is a single lane or very narrow village roads. The village will become
24 gridlocked. There are actually no suitable alternative exits from the
25 village. There is one exit onto the A226, but which is even more narrow,
26 and our alternative routes are a six-mile journey round via the B2000.

27 The Proposal: so HPC – Higham Parish Council – propose that the
28 construction traffic is banned from utilising the A289/A226, and that
29 construction traffic access the construction compounds and south portal
30 site area via the proposed haul roads. Currently, National Highways
31 have stated that the haul roads will only be utilised for earth movements
32 and not for movements of construction, plant, machinery, materials,
33 including all the concrete and staff. Utilising haul roads would reduce
34 climate impact, noise vibration, fuel economy, nitrogen deposition and

1 effects on ancient woodland, as well as improving the impact for Higham
2 Village and the Forge Lane/Gad's Hill junction.

3 The alternative proposal by Higham Parish Council is that, in the
4 event that the above proposal is not implemented, Higham Parish
5 Council requests that examination requires the layout of the Forge
6 Lane/Gad's Hill School junction to be reviewed and revised. HPC
7 requests that data is sought now to rectify[?] the concerns, the data then
8 to be used to consider alternative layouts i.e. the inclusion of traffic lights
9 or roundabouts at the Higham Village Forge Lane junction and that these
10 also be trialled and reviewed in advance of the LTC construction traffic
11 commencing. This is a primary concern for Higham Village.

12 On another subject, the A2 is currently four lanes, and the LTC
13 layout is proposing to reduce it to two lanes. So the A2 is currently four
14 lanes between M2 junction 1 and the Gravesend East/Marling Cross
15 junction. The LTC plans show that it will become two lanes in both
16 directions. The A2 has only recently been widened to four lanes in this
17 facility and up to the Swanscombe/Pepperhill junctions further London-
18 bound, to cope with the capacity requirements during a commuting
19 period, and we believe this is still needed. HPC are concerned as to how
20 the A2 to A289 sections of road will be affected, particularly during the
21 construction phase, but also after opening. We believe that it will
22 significantly impact commuter traffic both for Medway and Gravesham
23 Council residents as well as Higham Village residents.

24 The A2/A289 junctions are heavily used and delays to commuter
25 and freight traffic need to be minimised both during construction, which
26 we believe will be very problematic, and during operational phases.
27 Currently, when the A2 and A289 become blocked, particularly, for
28 instance, in the morning, London-bound, traffic from Medway, the Hoo
29 Peninsula, Higham and Shorne traffic all utilise the A226
30 London/Gravesend-bound past this Forge Lane/Gad's Hill junction to
31 avoid the congestion and it basically becomes gridlocked, and therefore
32 we would ask that you consider continuing to maintain the four lanes for
33 the A2, both London-bound and coast-bound, and therefore revise the

1 layouts for the junctions. I'll now hand over to my colleague, David
2 Martin.

3 MR MARTIN: Good evening. David Martin. Looking at the impact on wider Kent
4 roads, obviously this will affect our residents. Blue Bell Hill, which is the
5 A229, is already quite congested at various parts of the day at the top of
6 the hill where it joins the M2. When the M2 was widened to four lanes,
7 this junction was proposed to have dedicated slip roads, etc. These were
8 dropped on cost grounds. They need to be reinstated. Improvements to
9 this junction were part of the 2016 public consultation on what was then
10 known as option C.

11 These have been dropped from the scheme. The M20 junction with
12 the A229 is also insufficient capacity to carry the additional traffic that
13 one must assume would be coming up the M20, but choosing to use the
14 new road. The alternative to using the M20 in Blue Bell Hill is the A2,
15 and the A2 south of Canterbury isn't even a dual carriageway. At the
16 southern side of Shorne is a junction currently with the A2, known as
17 Brewers Road. This currently has a slip road which takes direct access
18 to the M2 approach. This is going to be closed off and the –

19 MS WRIGHT: For 18 months.

20 MR MARTIN: Yeah, but permanently, and that is going to cause traffic to come
21 down through Shorne and along the A226. There's a proposed increase
22 in traffic in the operational phase on the A226 in excess of 10%. We are
23 concerned about this, and we'd ask that the DCO includes an obligation
24 for roads in Kent to be improved prior to opening of the LTC. The
25 construction works themselves... Sorry.

26 MS WRIGHT: Are we able just to say we're concerned about the operational
27 phase – that the hill up to Cobham is likely to be affected by sun and the
28 high ascent and therefore that's likely to affect people's ability to read
29 signs and to therefore flow onto the right elements of the lanes, and we're
30 very concerned that that will have operational impacts.

31 MS LAVER: Thank you.

32 [Crosstalk]

33 MS WRIGHT: That's very kind of you.

1 MS LAVER: Thank you. We will later in the examination be holding an issue-
2 specific hearing on traffic and transportation where obviously the points
3 that you made about the issues in your area will be covered in much more
4 detail. So it's much appreciated that we're alert to them tonight. I do
5 note that you mentioned Gad's Hill. I do understand from your
6 submission prior to this hearing tonight that you suggested an
7 accompanied site inspection to Gad's Hill was necessary around the
8 issue of safety and schoolchildren. Is that correct?

9 MS WRIGHT: Yes, and unfortunately the slightly incorrect document got loaded
10 up. So if we have permission to load up the revised document that would
11 be incredibly helpful, but yes, we would particularly like the panel to
12 attend the Forge Lane/Gad's Hill junction, just to understand how much
13 of a pinch point it is and how much the impact for danger for pedestrians
14 and cyclists will be, but also the potential to very rapidly gridlock Higham
15 Village because there are very – limited ability for us to exit the village,
16 and that is our primary exit for the village.

17 MS LAVER: Okay, we will obviously take that into consideration as part of the
18 accompanied site inspection deliberations that we will have. So thank
19 you very much for your time.

20 MS WRIGHT: Thank you.

21 MS LAVER: I'll just turn to my panel members to see if they have any questions
22 to ask of you. Panel members, anybody else have any questions for our
23 speakers?

24 MR SMITH: No, thank you very much. I'm content, Ms Laver. Just checking
25 whether anybody else does, and thank you, Councillor Wright, for those
26 submissions. All duly noted.

27 MS WRIGHT: Thank you so much, and David has taken up the baton for many
28 years and I'm a newcomer, but thank you for listening to us.

29 MS LAVER: Thank you very much, both of you, tonight. Please, you are
30 welcome to stay on the call. There aren't very many speakers, so rather
31 than dial off and try to dial onto the live stream, it might be in your interest
32 to stay. I will turn to the applicant towards the end, but thank you for your
33 time tonight. So I'll now move on to my next speaker which is Mr Trevor
34 Thacker. Mr Thacker, are you there?

1 MR THACKER: I am indeed. Just in time.

2 MS LAVER: Hello. Good evening.

3 MR THACKER: Hello. I'm actually at work, but I think I've just finished and I'm
4 in the middle of a thunderstorm, so please bear with me, and if I get cut
5 off, then you know the reason.

6 MS LAVER: No problem. As an interested party, Mr Thacker, you have five
7 minutes to speak. We've lost your video, so have we lost you?

8 MR THACKER: No, I'm still here, but I'm on my phone because I'm at work and
9 I've got my script in front of me. So if you don't mind not seeing me then
10 I can carry on and read out what I can in the five minutes.

11 MS LAVER: No problem. Over to you. Thank you.

12 MR THACKER: Okay, thank you. I'm strongly opposed to the proposed Lower
13 Thames Crossing. The original aim of a new crossing was to reduce the
14 congestion at and around the Dartford Crossing. National Highways
15 state that the LTC will only reduce traffic by 21% at the Dartford Crossing
16 at opening and by even less as time goes on. Therefore, once the new
17 crossing is completed, probably in about 10 years' time, most of the
18 reduction will be negated by an actual increase in traffic levels at the
19 Dartford Crossing, and traffic levels at the Dartford Crossing will still be
20 as congested as it is now, if not more so, and the problem unsolved.

21 The discarded option A and A14 – which is expanding the Dartford
22 Crossing – is the only option that actually increases capacity at the
23 Dartford Crossing, and this option should be reconsidered and consulted
24 upon. Since the Dartford Crossing will still be over-capacity if the LTC
25 opens, there will be no improvement in the traffic situation on the local
26 roads. In fact, due to the increase in traffic the LTC will bring, if there are
27 incidents on the M25 and the LTC at the same time, the effect on local
28 roads will be even worse. Excuse me, I'm just going to go inside because
29 the storm has come. Let me just get back to my place.

30 The LTC will not solve the problems of the Dartford Crossing now
31 or in the future. It will instead bring a massive amount of new traffic into
32 the area and will increase pollution levels and lead to destruction of local
33 environment and wildlife that negatively impact communities and homes.
34 All of these negative impacts are unnecessary and simply unacceptable

1 when other less destructive solutions such as option A and A14 –
2 expanding the Dartford Crossing – are available. This really does not
3 seem a good way to spend at least £8.2 billion of taxpayers' money –
4 and obviously this is going to be more because these projects always
5 overrun and go over budget – and it doesn't seem a good way to spend
6 the money if we're not going to solve the actual problem, which is
7 congestion at the Dartford Tunnel. In short, the LTC is not fit for purpose
8 as it does not decrease congestion at the Dartford Crossing.

9 The A13/A1089 junction – placing a junction of this size so close to
10 residential areas is a ridiculous idea. Thurrock already has terrible air
11 pollution ratings, the fourth worst in the UK. Air quality standards will
12 most surely not be met in residential areas around this junction. National
13 Highways and the government are simply opening themselves to a
14 prospect of legal action from citizens in Thurrock in the future. The
15 changes proposed to the A13/A1089 junction do not solve the problems
16 of this junction and will actually even worsen its effect on the residents of
17 Orsett.

18 Consultation [inaudible] have stated that this change would see
19 traffic increase of more than 40% along Conway's Road and Rectory
20 Road in Orsett. Orsett needs a reduction in traffic, not a 40% increase.
21 Rectory Road is close to schools, doctors and hospital, church and [two
22 pubs?]. How is this 40% increase in traffic through a residential area
23 justified by National Highways? It is certainly not made clear in the
24 consultation documents.

25 Conway's Road is a very narrow, old country road. I quite often
26 cycle down this road and I certainly won't feel comfortable using it
27 anymore if traffic increases by 40%. It will be far too dangerous. It's tight
28 enough with two cars going in opposite directions. It's going to be a
29 disaster waiting to happen when trucks, vans and HGVs start using it
30 along with village traffic, farm vehicles, horses, cyclists. Pedestrians are
31 going to be in real trouble as there is no pavement. I dread to think what
32 this is going to happen when it's icy or foggy. At least Orsett Hospital is
33 close by.

1 Okay, onto construction: The Stifford Clays Road compound east.
2 I've been unable to find information about the construction compound in
3 the A13 junction area. They've simply just disappeared from consultation
4 materials and since no mention has been made – I'm especially
5 concerned about the Stifford Clays compound east for reasons I'm going
6 to list below, and it would be a great relief if National Highways have
7 finally seen sense and removed this compound, but I don't think they
8 have.

9 MS LAVER: Mr Thacker, are you aware of your – Mr Thacker, sorry to interrupt
10 you. Are you aware that your time is almost up?

11 MR THACKER: No, how much longer do I have left?

12 MS LAVER: I'll give you 30 more seconds. Thank you.

13 MR THACKER: Okay. I really strongly feel that this construction compound is
14 very close to residential areas. It's going to cause massive disruption for
15 a very long time, and I feel that the compound should be at least moved
16 – tried to be moved – somewhere else. I'm very concerned about the
17 amount of land that's been taken. I'm very concerned about the pollution
18 and carbon emissions that are caused by this road and the nitrogen
19 impact and compensation, and I don't feel there's been enough means
20 made for alternative use of the crossing, if it does go ahead, such as non-
21 motorised traffic – walkers, cyclists, horse riders, etc. Consultations have
22 been terrible and the letters we've received – my family – have caused
23 massive distress and been very confusing, and National Highways have
24 admitted themselves that the information contained in the letters have
25 been completely wrong, have caused us massive distress. Thank you
26 very much for the time.

27 MS LAVER: Mr Thacker, thank you for wrapping up. I was conscious that you
28 may not have seen our one-minute slide remaining –

29 MR THACKER: No, I hadn't. Thank you very much.

30 MS LAVER: No, that's fine, so to give you that grace. I don't have any questions
31 for you. My colleagues appear to have appeared on my screen, so
32 maybe they have some questions for you.

33 MR THACKER: Okay, I'll switch back over to Teams then.

34 MS LAVER: Great, thank you.

1 MR YOUNG: May I ask a question?

2 MS LAVER: Yes, please.

3 MR THACKER: Yeah, sure. I'm trying to switch myself back to Teams, but
4 please go ahead.

5 MR YOUNG: Good evening, Mr Thacker. It's Mr Young here. I just picked up
6 on one point you've said, which is something that's been raised quite a lot.
7 You said that the project would not reduce congestion at the existing
8 Dartford Crossing. I'm just interested in where you are getting that from.
9 Because when I read the transport assessment, as I'm sure you have, that's
10 not correct, is it? Because what we're looking at is a 19% drop in traffic in
11 2030 and a 13% drop in traffic in 2045. So to say, 'It's not going to reduce
12 congestion' – are you looking at something or do you have access to any
13 other evidence that the panel doesn't?

14 MR THACKER: Well, my main point would be – if you would require accurate
15 qualification of those statements, I would direct you to Laura Blake from the
16 Thames Crossing Action Group. She is very knowledgeable on this
17 situation and I'm sure could point you in the right direction to the current
18 facts and figures. I'm only going from what I've read from the LTC
19 themselves and from the Thames Crossing Action Group.

20 MR YOUNG: No, but you don't have any evidence yourself.

21 MR THACKER: No, I would you refer you, as I said, to Laura Blake from the
22 Thames Crossing Action Group, and she will be able to provide you – I'm
23 sure, very happily – with all the necessary information about that.

24 MR YOUNG: Thank you, Mr Thacker.

25 MR SMITH: If I might briefly just come in, Mr Thacker, and this is merely to
26 observe, amongst other things, in this examination, we will be running
27 hearings into the compulsory acquisition requests that have been made by
28 the applicant. Now, if – and it appears possible that those requests are
29 relevant to you and your family – then this is by no means the only place
30 that you will have the opportunity to speak. You can register to be heard at
31 a compulsory acquisition hearing and we will obviously give more detailed
32 consideration to effects on your land or rights at such a hearing, so do bear
33 that in mind. As Ms Laver emphasised earlier on in this hearing, there's a
34 deadline to register, so be alive to that, deadline 1. Thank you very much.

1 MR THACKER: Thank you very much for that. I appreciate it.

2 MS LAVER: Thank you, Mr Thacker, for your time this evening and for being so
3 succinct with your comments. Please, by all means, you can dial off the
4 Teams, but you're also welcome to stay on. I'm going to turn now to the
5 applicant to see if they have any comments in light of what you have said
6 and in light of the Higham Parish Council, but if you could switch your video
7 off for me now, that would be great.

8 MR THACKER: Okay, will do. Thank you for your time.

9 MS LAVER: Thank you very much. So at this point in the proceedings, I just
10 want to check in with Mr Henderson for the applicant, if the applicant wishes
11 to make any comments on matters they've heard. May I remind you to
12 confine any responses to five minutes? Mr Henderson, you appear to have
13 frozen, so we'll just hang fire.

14 MR HENDERSON: Can you hear me now?

15 MS LAVER: Oh yeah, you're back.

16 MR HENDERSON: Apologies, madam, we seem to have some technical issues
17 at our end, but it's Tom Henderson for the applicant again. I was saying I
18 just have some brief submissions to make. Firstly, to say thank you to
19 Councillor Wright, Mr Martin and Mr Thacker for their submissions, which
20 we've listened carefully to. We're conscious of the direction that the
21 Examining Authority gave in their agenda: that this isn't a forum for us to
22 make detailed responses on the merits of the points that we've heard – the
23 range of points – and so we wouldn't propose to do that now, but we would
24 highlight that we'll be responding to relevant representations at deadline 1,
25 which I envisage will capture responses to all of the points we've heard.

26 To the extent there's anything new to add, then we also obviously
27 have the ability to respond in writing to the points we've heard at this
28 hearing, also by deadline 1, and of course in due course we'll be responding
29 to written representations later in the process.

30 The other point that I just wanted to highlight, particularly for the
31 benefit of Mr Thacker, is that tomorrow's issue-specific hearing on the
32 project definition addresses the issue of relief the project generates at the
33 Dartford Crossing. So I'll be making more detailed submissions on that
34 matter tomorrow, but that was all I intended to say at this stage. Thank you.

1 MS LAVER: Great, thank you. So on to next steps – thank you, Mr Henderson.
2 If you could switch your video off, that would be great. Thank you for
3 everybody who came to speak this evening. It was a smaller turnout than
4 we had anticipated, but we do have in-person open-floor hearings coming
5 up and possibly we will have more people wishing to speak at those. Just
6 wanted to flag that we had provisionally set aside this Friday morning to
7 resume this hearing had we had any issues undertaking it this evening.
8 Obviously, we haven't had any issues – any technical issues – so we will
9 not be reopening the open-floor hearing 1 this Friday.

10 Just to quickly remind open-floor hearing 2 will proceed Wednesday
11 28 June 2023 and open-floor hearing 3 will proceed on Wednesday 5 July.
12 If you wish to be heard – for anybody listening to the live stream, if you wish
13 to be heard, please lodge your request by deadline 1 on Tuesday 18 July
14 for open-floor hearings later in the examination. As Mr Henderson quite
15 kindly reminded everybody, we have an issue-specific hearing 1 which will
16 proceed tomorrow morning at 10.00 a.m. It will examine the definition of
17 the Lower Thames Crossing project, where and who does the proposed
18 road serve, what options were considered in the design, and what are the
19 main effects of the applicant's preferred options, amongst other things, so
20 please do listen into that if you are interested in that.

21 Issue-specific hearing 2 will proceed on Thursday this week at
22 10.00 a.m., and that will start the process of examining the development
23 consent order itself. If you're registered to speak at issue-specific hearings,
24 we look forward to meeting you there. If you want to watch and comment,
25 the live stream will be available on the Lower Thames Crossing landing
26 page of the National Infrastructure Planning website. Recordings will also
27 be published there, and written comments on the business that we cover in
28 those hearings can be accepted up to deadline 1 on Tuesday 18 July 2023.
29 The amended examination timetable, including these and other hearing
30 arrangements, will be published on the website as soon as we can, and the
31 banner will also be updated when it is published, so please do keep an eye
32 on that.

33 It remains that I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the
34 speakers tonight for your contributions. Everything said will be considered

1 carefully and, if necessary, the Examining Authority may need to pursue
2 matters identified here in written questions or in other hearings, and of
3 course, in accompanying site inspections. I would also like to thank the
4 case team for supporting these hearings. So unless there is anything else
5 anyone wants to raise, and I will just look at the screen for any raised hands
6 – no – I will now ask my colleagues to come back onto camera to say their
7 goodbyes and we will see you at another event. Okay, Mr Young.

8 MR YOUNG: Thank you for participating, everybody. Goodbye. I'll hand over
9 to Mr Pratt.

10 MR PRATT: Thank you, everybody. Hope to see some of you tomorrow. Good
11 night. Mr Taylor.

12 MR TAYLOR: Yes. Thank you, everybody, and I will see some of you tomorrow
13 at the issue-specific hearing.

14 MR SMITH: And then finally, good night from myself, Rynd Smith, the panel lead.
15 Thank you very much for attending and providing your views this evening.
16 I'll now hand you back to Ms Laver, who will close this event.

17 MS LAVER: Thank you, all. Have a really pleasant evening and look forward to
18 meeting and hearing from you again. I'll now wish you all goodbye. Open-
19 floor hearing 1 is now closed.

20 MR SMITH: Goodbye.

21 MS WRIGHT: Goodbye.

22 MS LAVER: Thank you.

23

24 **(Meeting concluded)**