



## Application by National Highways for the Lower Thames Crossing

Case reference: TR010032

### Examining Authority's Note of an Unaccompanied Site Inspection (USI) undertaken on 5 and 6 July 2023 (USI-05)

#### Background to Site Inspections

Information about the background to and purposes of unaccompanied inspections by the Examining Authority (ExA) is provided in its note for USI-01 [\[SI-001\]](#). That note and the note for USIs-02 to 04 [\[SI-002\]](#)[\[SI-003\]](#)[\[SI-004\]](#) taken together describe the inspections undertaken so far. A summary key plan showing the routes of all unaccompanied inspections carried out to date is in **Annex A** to this note.

#### Particulars of the Inspection

The ExA undertook its fifth unaccompanied site inspection (USI-05) on 5 and 6 July 2023, to support examination of an application for development consent for the proposed Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) (the application).

The inspection was carried out over two days, with the first afternoon, 5 July 2023 (**Day 1**) held following the closure of Open Floor Hearing 3 (OFH3) in the local authority area of Dartford Council (Kent). It continued to inspect land in the Gravesham Council area (Kent). The inspections on Day 1 were undertaken by three members of the ExA: Rynd Smith (Panel Lead), with Janine Laver and Ken Pratt. The second day, 6 July 2023 (**Day 2**) was held in the local authority areas of Dartford Council, Gravesham Council, Tonbridge and Malling Council (Kent) and Medway in the morning, and then the Thurrock Council area in the afternoon. The inspections on Day 2 were undertaken by two members of the ExA: Rynd Smith with Ken Pratt in the morning south of the River Thames and then by Ken Pratt alone in the afternoon north of the River Thames, inspecting locations that Rynd Smith had previously inspected during USI-01 which Ken Pratt did not attend.

The purposes of the inspection south of the River Thames on Days 1 and 2 were to continue developing the Panel's understanding of the site and setting for the proposed A2/ M2/ LTC intersection in Kent. Elements of the local road network affected by the LTC proposals and the sites for proposed locations for mitigation actions in Kent were also inspected, in part to consider those mitigations that are still proposed to be delivered as applied for, and those where changes to delivery are now proposed.

The purpose of the inspection north of the River Thames on Day 2 was to enable Ken Pratt to view locations that he had not previously inspected.

It should be noted that main routes including the M2, A2, M25, A282 Dartford Crossing and A13 were also driven on this occasion, but these are not formally recorded in this note on the basis that inspections of them have previously been undertaken.

The route numbers recorded here are new and commence numbered in sequence from Route 25 (the final route in USI-04). Detailed mapping for individual routes and groups of routes within a common locality can be found in **Annex B** to this note.

## Day 1

Day 1 inspections were undertaken by car and on foot, commencing at 11-30am and concluding at 5pm. The following routes were taken:

### Afternoon

- Route 26: A2 east to Henhurst Road intersection by car;
- Route 26.1: Jeskyns Community Woodland on foot;
- Route 26.2: Henhurst Road overbridge, A2 offramp and footway on foot;
- Route 27: Jeskyns Road and Sole Street by car;
- Route 28: Valley Drive to Michael Gardens by car;
- Route 28.1: LVIA locations between Riverview Park and Thong on foot.
- Route 29: Valley Drive, Thong Lane and Darnley Lodge Lane by car; and
- Route 29.1: environs of Inn on the Lake, proposed Thong Lane bridge and Darnley Lodge Lane on foot.

The weather at the start of the inspection was sunny with some high cloud, but with good long-range visibility. Inspections at Henhurst Road (Route 26.2) were briefly halted by an intense rain shower, but after it passed, sunny conditions with broken cloud and good long-range visibility returned and the inspection was completed at 5pm with all relevant features and views being able to be seen at long-range.

## Day 2

Day 2 inspections were undertaken by car and on foot, commencing at 9am. Rynd Smith left the inspection at 2-30pm. Ken Pratt concluded the inspection at 5pm.

The following routes were taken:

### Morning

- Route 30: a return to USI-4 Routes 23.2 (Bluebell Hill) and 23.3 (Burham) by car and on foot (the first inspection of these locations by Ken Pratt);
- Route 31: Bowesden Lane to Park Pale Farm on foot; and
- Route 32: Bowesden Lane to Starmore Wood on foot.

### Afternoon

- Route 33: parts of USI-01 Route 1.2 (Coalhouse Fort and the Thames northern Foreshore) inspected by Ken Pratt who was not present at USI-01.

The weather was sunny and clear. There was good long-range visibility throughout.

All routes are itemised in the following tables and maps can be found in **Annex B**.

## Day 1

**Route 26:** A2 east to Henhurst Road intersection viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ① (Dartford Crossing A282/ A206 intersection) on the Day 1 Consolidated Routes Map Annex B	Drove eastwards on A2 from Dartford exiting at Gravesend (East) onto Henhurst Road roundabout observing the flow and pace of traffic on the A2.
② Henhurst Road overbridge	Passed over the A2 on Henhurst Road bridge in a southerly direction towards Cobham observing the A2 below.

**Route 26.1:** Jeskyns Community Woodland viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ③ (Jeskyns Community Woodland carpark) on Day 1 Consolidated Routes Map Annex B	Stopped and parked at Jeskyns Community Woodland and undertook walk of footpaths towards the northern side of the woodland and the interface with HS1. The purpose was to ascertain the extent of tree and hedge cover of the HS1 line and the A2 beyond and to understand the aural context.
L VIA Viewpoints S-20 & S-20a ④	The ExA walked to the representative viewpoints S-20 and S-20a shown in Figure 7.16 [APP-234] and shown in Figure 7.17 Existing Photomontages [APP-236]; the ExA also walked along a short length of more concealed footpath adjacent to the alignment of HS1.
	The ExA were able to obtain narrow field of view of proposed A2/LTC junction from the more concealed footpath.

**Route 26.2:** Henhurst Road overbridge, A2 offramp and footway viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ③ (Jeskyns Community Woodland carpark) on Day 1 Consolidated Routes Map Annex B	Leaving Jeskyns Community Woodland on foot, the ExA walked north on Henhurst Road and followed footpath to the west of the property known as The Retreat, Henhurst Road (identified in Book of Reference and Land Plans as Plot 06-118 (APP-062 and AS-008) down to slip road on the south side of the A2.
A2 footway ⑤	The ExA observed east and westwards views on operational A2, specifically noting the location of the proposed A2/ LTC junction alignment to the northeast. The ExA also observed the location of the existing Service Station on the south side of the A2 (Cobham Services) and noted the undulation in the road in this location.
Footpath to Henhurst Road overbridge ②	The ExA returned to Henhurst Road by footpath on the southern side of Plot 06-118 (see [APP-062] and [AS-008]) and walked west to the Henhurst Road overbridge. The ExA had good long-range views to the east and west along the A2.
L VIA Viewpoint S-22	The ExA evaluated representative viewpoint S-22 towards proposed LTC overbridge shown in Figure 7.16 [APP-234], and shown in Figure 7.17 Existing Photomontages [APP-236] and Figure 7.19 Years 1 and

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
	15 Photomontages [APP-244] before returning to Jeskyns Community Woodland car park on foot.

**Route 27:** Jeskyns Road and Sole Street viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at at point ③ (Jeskyns Community Woodland carpark) on Day 1 Consolidated Routes Map Annex B	The ExA drove from Jeskyns Community Woodland to Sole Street.
Sole Street village and station ⑥.	The ExA observed the road arrangement, limited footpath provision, the National Trust property known as Owletts and village of Sole Street and Sole Street Station, before retracing route back to Henhurst Road and Valley Drive on the north side of the A2.

**Route 28:** Valley Drive to Michael Gardens viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ② (Henhurst Road overbridge) on Day 1 Consolidated Routes Map Annex B	The ExA observed the residential settlement and arrangement of Riverview Park and the road access from the A2.
Michael Gardens ⑦	The ExA followed Valley Drive northwards onto Marlin Way, then turned east into Astra Drive, then south onto Michael Gardens, stopping at the Junction with Fairfields and Michael Gardens Play area.

**Route 28.1:** LVIA locations between Riverview Park and Thong viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ⑦ (Michael Gardens Play Area) on Day 1 Consolidated Routes Map Annex B	The ExA walked through the play area into the open field on the south side of Riverview Park onto footpath NS169.
LVIA Viewpoint S-28	The ExA evaluated view from footpath NS169 adjacent to Gravesend urban edge, looking towards Shorne Woods within the Kent Downs AONB, as depicted in representative viewpoint S-28 / S(CH)-01 shown in Figure 7.16 [APP-234], and shown in Figure 7.17 Existing Photomontages [APP-237], Figure 7.19 Years 1 and 15 Photomontages [APP-245] and Figure 7.18 Existing Night-time Views (APP-243).
LVIA Viewpoint S-25	The ExA then walked from footpath NS169 to footpath NS167 (which connects to Thong Lane) to evaluate views from footpath NS167 at the western edge of Thong village and Thong Conservation Area, as depicted in representative viewpoint S-25 shown in Figure 7.16 [APP-234], and shown in Figure 7.17 Existing Photomontages [APP-236], Figure 7.19 Years 1 and 15 Photomontages [APP-245] and Figure 7.18 Existing Night-time Views [APP-243].
	Observations of the relationship between the proposed alignment and existing residential properties in Riverview

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
	Park and the hamlet of Thong were made. The ExA returned to the vehicle.

**Route 29:** Astra Drive, Thong Lane and Darnley Lodge Lane viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ⑦ (Michael Gardens Play Area) on Day 1 Consolidated Routes Map Annex B	The ExA passed through Riverview Park to Thong Lane, observed the National Highways works at the Southern Valley Golf Course before passing through the hamlet of Thong in a southerly direction.
Gravelhill Wood/ Inn on the Lake ⑧	The ExA parked at the entrance to Gravelhill Wood close to the Inn on The Lake Hotel, at Darnley Lodge Lane on the north side of the A2, observing existing Thong Bridge over the A2. The Hotel car park was well used.

**Route 29.1:** environs of Inn on the Lake, proposed Thong Lane bridge and Darnley Lodge Lane viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ⑧ (Gravelhill Wood) on Day 1 Consolidated Routes Map Annex B	Walking onto Thong Lane bridge the ExA had good long-range views to the east and west along the A2, including the Cobham Service Station and Henhurst Road overbridge further to the west. The proposed location of the LTC alignment over the A2 was also visible from this location.
L VIA Viewpoint S-18	The ExA evaluated representative viewpoint S-18 towards proposed realigned Thong Lane bridge and proposed realigned Darnley Lodge Lane shown in Figure 7.16 [APP-234], and shown in Figure 7.17 Existing Photomontages [APP-236] and Figure 7.19 Years 1 and 15 Photomontages [APP-244]. The dense treebelt on the A2 perimeter particularly between the A2 and HS1 alignment was noted and the undulation in the A2 in this location was observed.
	Traffic along Darnley Lodge Lane going north to Thong and Riverview Park was noted as frequent from the east at Brewers Road.

**Route 29.2:** Darnley Lodge Lane, Brewers Road/Halfpence Lane Roundabout, Halfpence Lane to Cobham Village viewed the following:

Inspections commenced at point ⑧ (Gravelhill Wood) on Day 1 Consolidated Routes Map Annex B	The ExA drove from Darnley Lodge Lane to Cobham traveling along Halfpence Lane. Observed the rural environment, two way single lane road with no footpaths and enclosure by trees on either side of the highway.
	Passed the car park to Ashenbank Wood on the way into Cobham village. Drove through Cobham village via The Street observing the narrowness of the road and single carriageway width for much of its length. Crossed over the junction of Soul Street onto Jeskyns Road and back onto Henhurst Road to join the A2 westbound to complete the USI.

**Day 2**

**Route 30:** a return to USI-4 Routes 23.2 (Bluebell Hill) and 23.3 (Burham) by car viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ❶ (Bluebell Hill) and point ❷ (Burham) on Map 30, Annex B	Observations were made as recorded on <a href="#">[SI-004]</a>

**Route 31:** Bowesden Lane to Park Pale Farm viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ❸ (the See Ho public house) on Map 31 & 32, Annex B	The ExA joined the PROW at the edge of the 'urbanised' length of Bowesden Lane and followed the PROW to the south and entered the northern point of the agricultural land. Views were available across the farmland towards the south and east to the view the locations that would contain Work references E3, 1O, 1I, 1C. The gradient of the hill was noted as the ExA walked towards the existing M2 and how to the eastern side there was a low point some distance north of a line parallel to the east of the existing property at Park Pale, before rising again towards the M2.
Pale Park/Works ❹	On reaching Pale Park Lane, immediately north of the M2, the ExA observed the relative levels between the Lane and the M2, noting that there was no appreciable difference, and that the lane and adjacent land rose steeply to the bridge over the motorway. The ExA took the opportunity to use the bridge over the M2 as a viewpoint.
Route 31 ended at its starting point ❸	The ExA returned to Bowesden Lane by the reverse of the route they had previously followed.

**Route 32:** Bowesden Lane to Starmore Wood viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at point ❹ (the See Ho public house) on Map 31 & 32, Annex B	From the junction between Bowesden Lane and The Ridgeway/Peartree Lane, the ExA followed the PROW to the north through a field with cattle grazing and along the western boundary of Starmore Wood and along the boundary of the fields that are proposed to contain work reference E13.
Work No E13 ❺	It was noted that Starmore Wood itself appeared to be relatively mature and the undergrowth immediately north of the wood, on both sides of the footpath, was reasonably dense. Further to the west the field had been sown and was awaiting harvest. The ExA viewed the proposed mitigation land to the east and noted both the field margin and the more general views of the landscape surrounding the site and the ground levels of the field itself.
Route 32 ended at its starting point.	The ExA returned to the junction between Bowesden Lane and The Ridgeway/Peartree Lane returning by the same route.

Location(s)	Relevant Observations





**Route 33:** parts of USI-01 Route 1.2 (Coalhouse Fort and the Thames northern Foreshore) viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at Coalhouse Fort car park on Map 33 at point ⑥	Observed western elevations of Coalhouse Fort. Proceeded south on the England Coast Path towards Coalhouse Point on the River Thames foreshore.
Coalhouse Point	Observed views along and across the River Thames, towards Tilbury Docks (west) and London Gateway Port (northeast) and towards works site in Kent (south).
Bowaters Sluice ⑦	Followed public footpath to west towards Bowaters Sluice including a small length on new footpath at point ⑧ Continued to Bowaters Sluice.
Route 33 ended at Coalhouse Fort car park	Returned to vehicle.

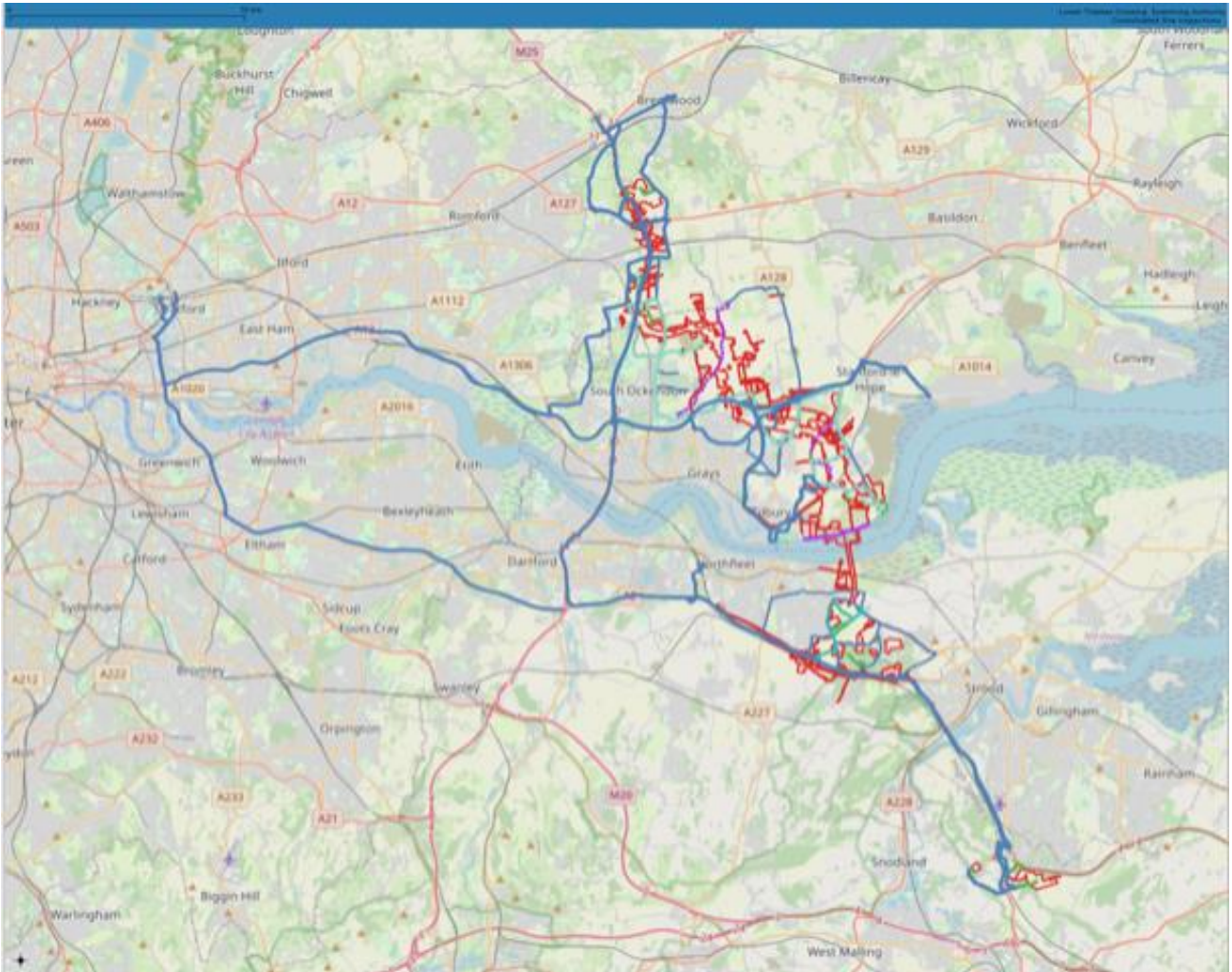


## Annex A

### Key

Draft DCO Boundary	
Car-based inspections	
Inspections on foot	
Inspections on bike	

### Consolidated Site Inspections Summary Plan



All maps - Base Map Source: © [Open Street Map](https://www.openstreetmap.org/) Contributors (EPSG: 3857 – WGS 84) via QGIS (July 2023)  
Do not scale.

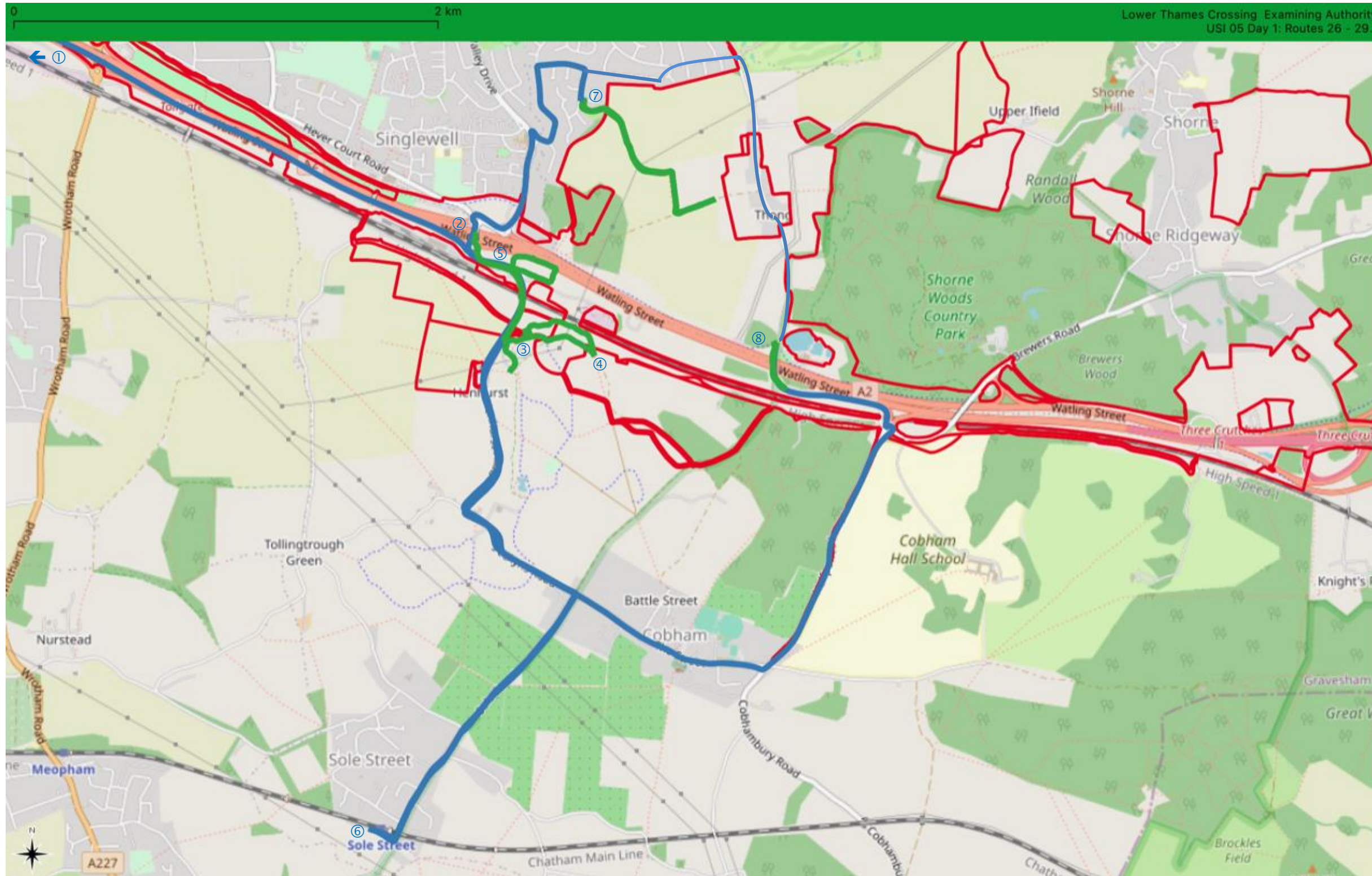


**Annex B**

**Key**

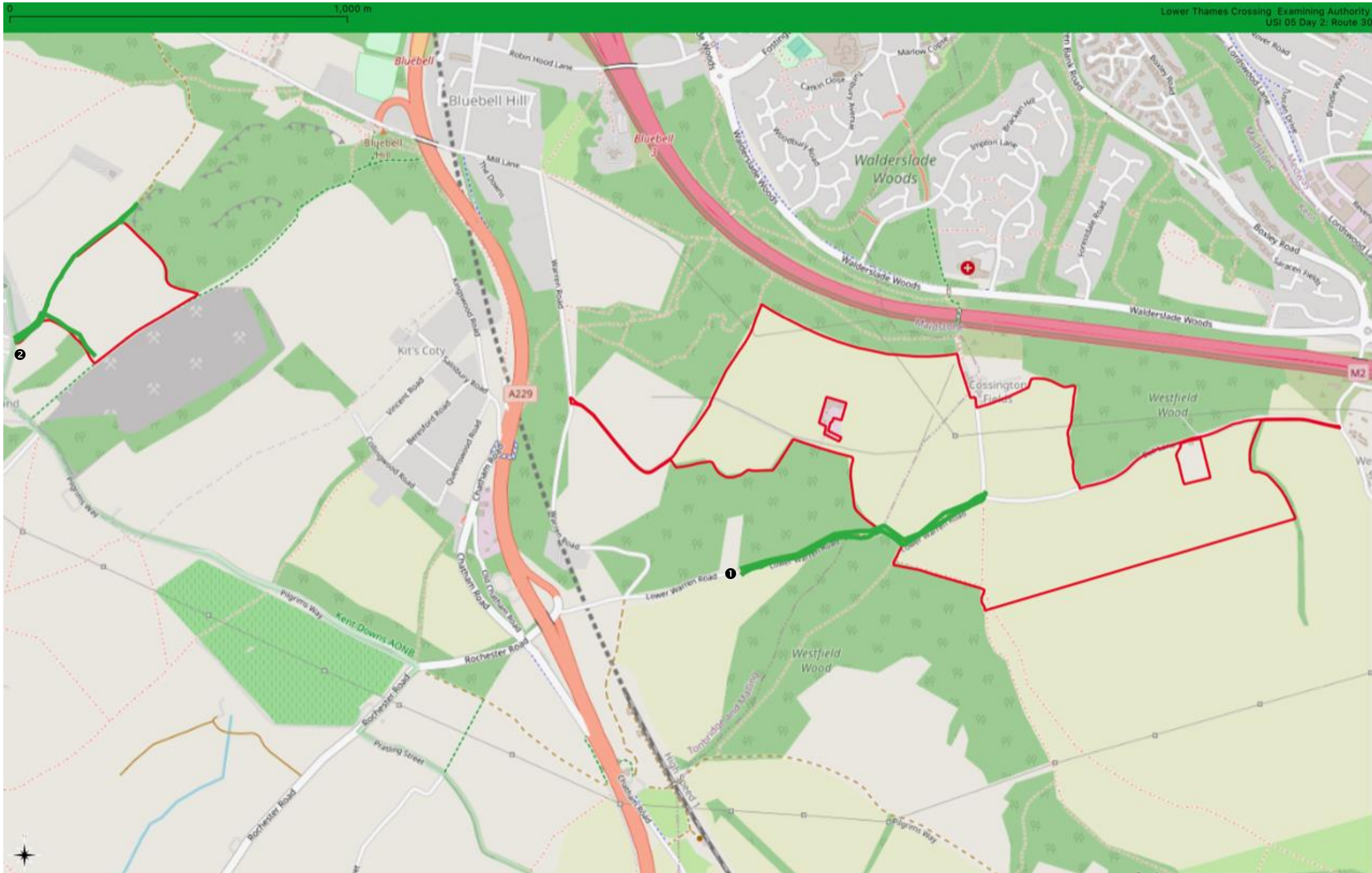
- Draft DCO Boundary ———
- Car-based inspections ———
- Inspections on foot ———

**Site Inspections (USI-05): Consolidated Routes 26 – 29.2 (Day 1)**





Site Inspections (USI-05): Route 30 (Day 2)





Site Inspections (USI-05): Routes 31 & 32 (Day 2)

