

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

LOCAL IMPACT REPORT

Lower Thames Crossing Project

PINS SCHEME REFERENCE: TR010032

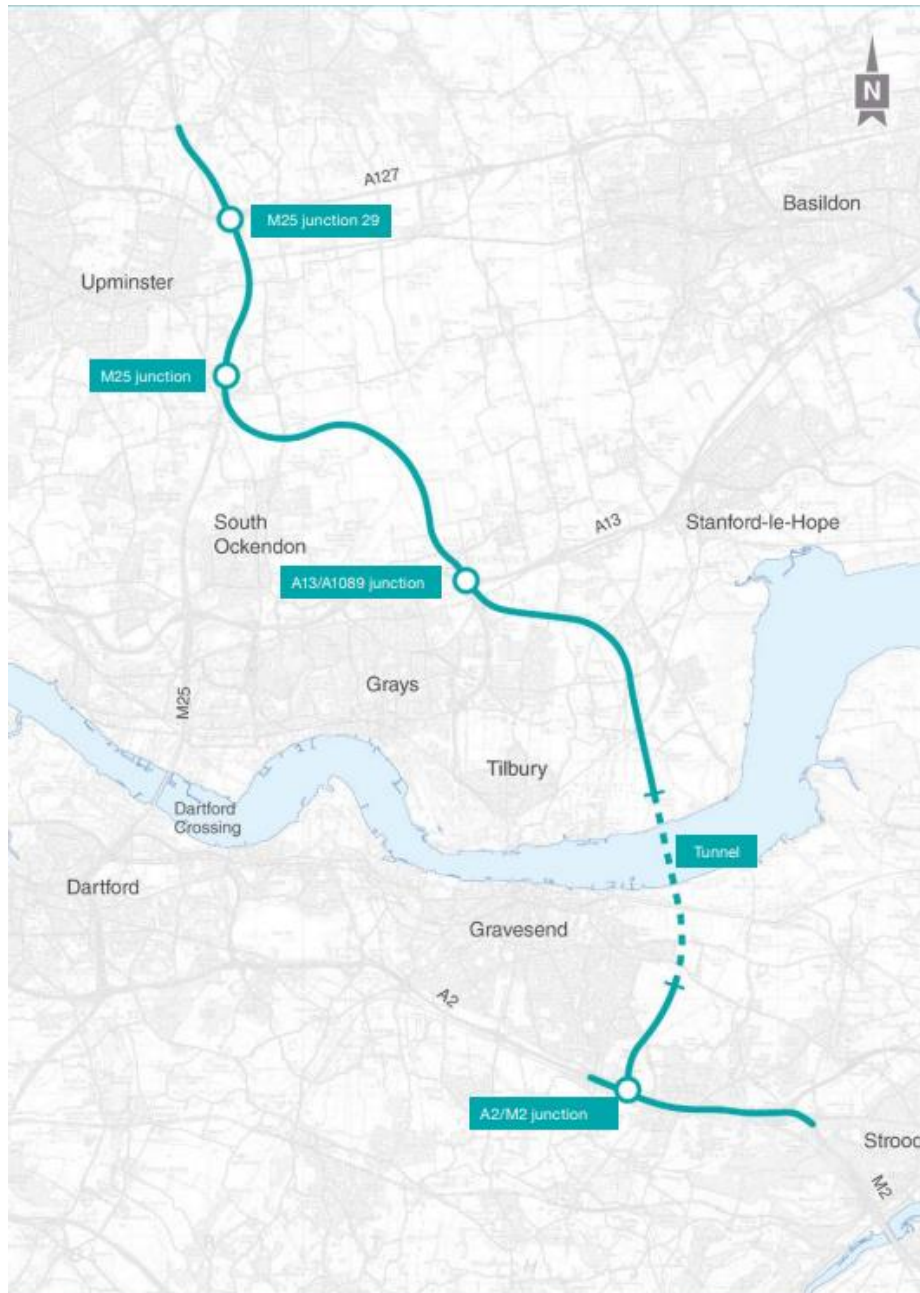
DBC REFERENCE: 22/01207/NSIP

Planning Services
Civic Centre
Home Gardens
Dartford DA1 1DR

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Local Impact Report (LIR) has been prepared by Dartford Borough Council (DBC) in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008 ('the 2008 Act') as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The LIR also takes into account the advice set out in the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) Advice Note One: Local Impact Reports republished in April 2012 (Version 2).
- 1.2 The LIR supports the Council's response to an application submitted by National Highways (NH) on 31 October 2022 for a Development Consent Order (DCO) seeking Secretary of State's (SoS) approval to construct and operate the A122 Lower Thames Crossing (the Project).
- 1.3 The Project is a new road and tunnel to be called the A122 Lower Thames Crossing that will be located east of Dartford Borough. The purpose of the Project is to relieve pressure on the existing Dartford Crossing, which is operating significantly over-capacity exacerbated by the lack of alternatives for road crossing of the River Thames east of London. It will connect the strategic roads in Kent to those in Essex, via a tunnel under the River Thames. The new crossing will be approximately 23km (14.5 miles) with 4.25km of this forming part of two tunnels underneath the Thames. The tunnels will be 16m in diameter and will be located to the east of the village of Chalk on the south side of the Thames, and to the west of East Tilbury on the north side.
- 1.4 The Project will include free-flowing connections to the M2/A2 and A13 where the Lower Thames Crossing connects these roads and improvements to the M25 between junctions 29 and 30. Notably, the project will be the longest road tunnel in the country and will be one of the largest bored tunnels in the world. Figure 1 on the following page reproduces the overview map of the Lower Thames Crossing submitted by the applicant.
- 1.5 The Project is considered to be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the 2008 Act in relation to the construction of a highway, the installation of an electric line above ground and the diversion of gas pipeline. The Application was accepted for Examination by PINS on 28 November 2022 and the Examination commenced on 20 June 2023.

Figure 1 – Overview map of the Lower Thames Crossing
(Application Document Ref: TR010032/APP/1.3, Ver 1.0, October 2022)



2. **PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE LIR**

- 2.1 This LIR outlines the Council's existing body of local knowledge and related importance in terms of the Project's impact within the local and wider context having regard to the guidance provided in PINS's Advice Note One in order to present a robust response on the Council's assessment and position to the Examination Authority. As Kent County Council (KCC) are the highway authority for all public highway in Dartford Borough, DBC is also guided by traffic modelling assessment undertaken by KCC particularly in relation to impact on the strategic road network in Dartford and across Kent.
- 2.2 The content of this LIR is structured as follows: Chapter 3 identifies the terms of reference; Chapter 4 provides assessment and local impact of the Proposal including with regard to the Borough's Planning Policies; Chapter 5 sets out the Proposal impacts and implications; Chapter 6 details the social, economic and environmental impacts of the Project and contributions to sustainable developments; and Chapter 7 touches on consideration of articles and requirements in the draft DCO.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

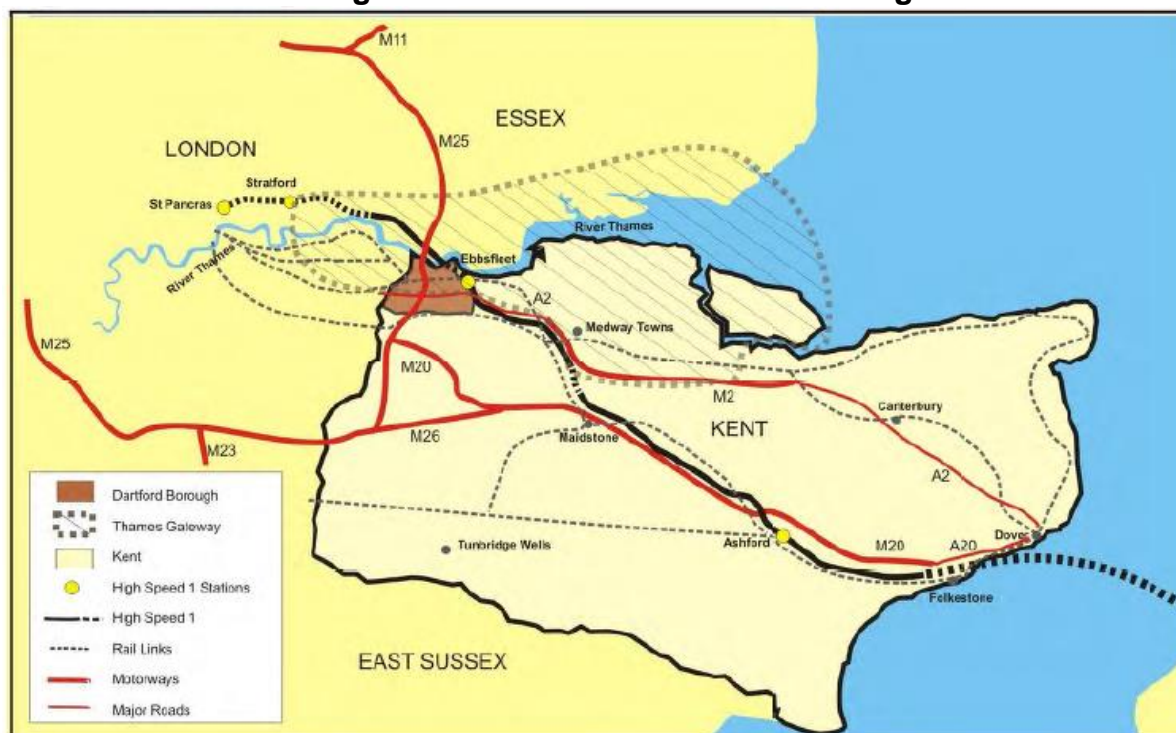
- 3.1 A LIR is defined in the 2008 Act as ‘a report in writing giving details of the likely impact of the proposed development on the authority’s area (or any part of that area)’. In this case, the Examining Authority invited relevant local authorities to submit LIRs under S60(3) of the Act by the Examination Deadline 1 on the 18th July 2023 as per the Examination time table of the Rule 8 letter published by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on 27 June 2023 as amended on 3 July 2023. The SoS, in coming to a decision on whether or not to grant the DCO application, must have regard to any LIRs submitted.
- 3.2 Guidance for producing a LIR is provided by PINS as per the Advice Note One referred to in paragraph 1.1 to this report. The Advice note states that ‘local authorities should prioritise preparation of their LIR irrespective of whether the local authority considers the development would have a positive or negative impact on their area.’ Local authorities are advised to cover any topics they consider relevant to the impact of the proposed development on their area.

4. ASSESSMENT AND LOCAL IMPACT OF PROPOSAL

Description of Dartford Borough and the Transportation Context

- 4.1 The Borough of Dartford is located at a pivotal point between Greater London, Kent and Essex in the heart of the Thames Estuary growth area, as shown in Figure 2 below. Highway connections in the Borough link Kent, London, the South East and the rest of the UK. The Borough's strategic road network is an essential part of the principal route from the Midlands and the North to the continent via Dover Port and EuroTunnel.

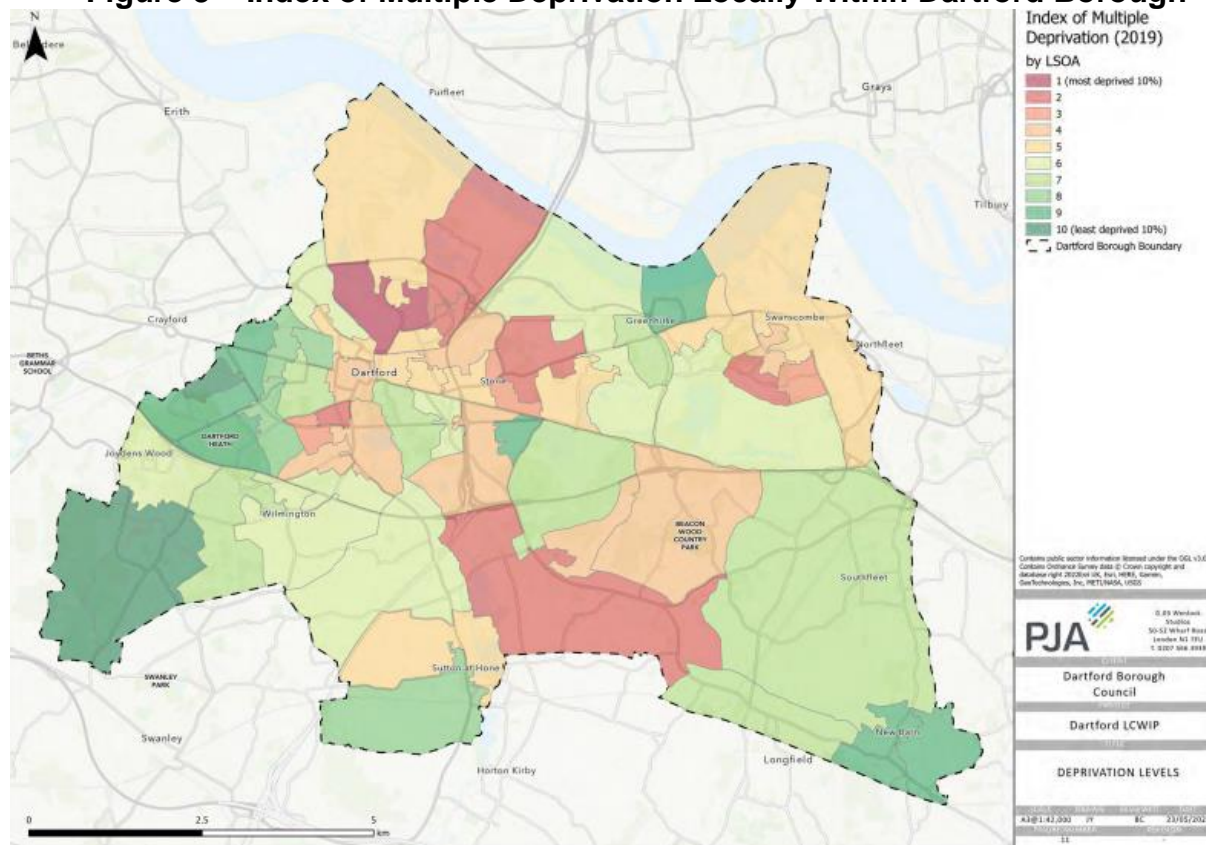
Figure 2 – Location of Dartford Borough



Based on Ordnance Survey Map © Crown Copyright Dartford Borough Council 100025870 2010

- 4.2 Dartford Borough has been successful in delivering commercial and residential growth plans as set out in adopted Local Plans. Latest 2021 Census data confirms that Dartford had the fastest growing population proportionately in England (20.0% increase 2011 -2021). However there are environmental and socio-economic challenges, in particular due to infrastructure investment not always occurring in parallel with the growth.
- 4.3 Figure 3 below shows the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019: several pockets of deprivation exist in the Borough, especially in the north and centre, and often found adjacent to main highways. Dartford as a whole is the 154th least deprived out of 317 Boroughs in the country.

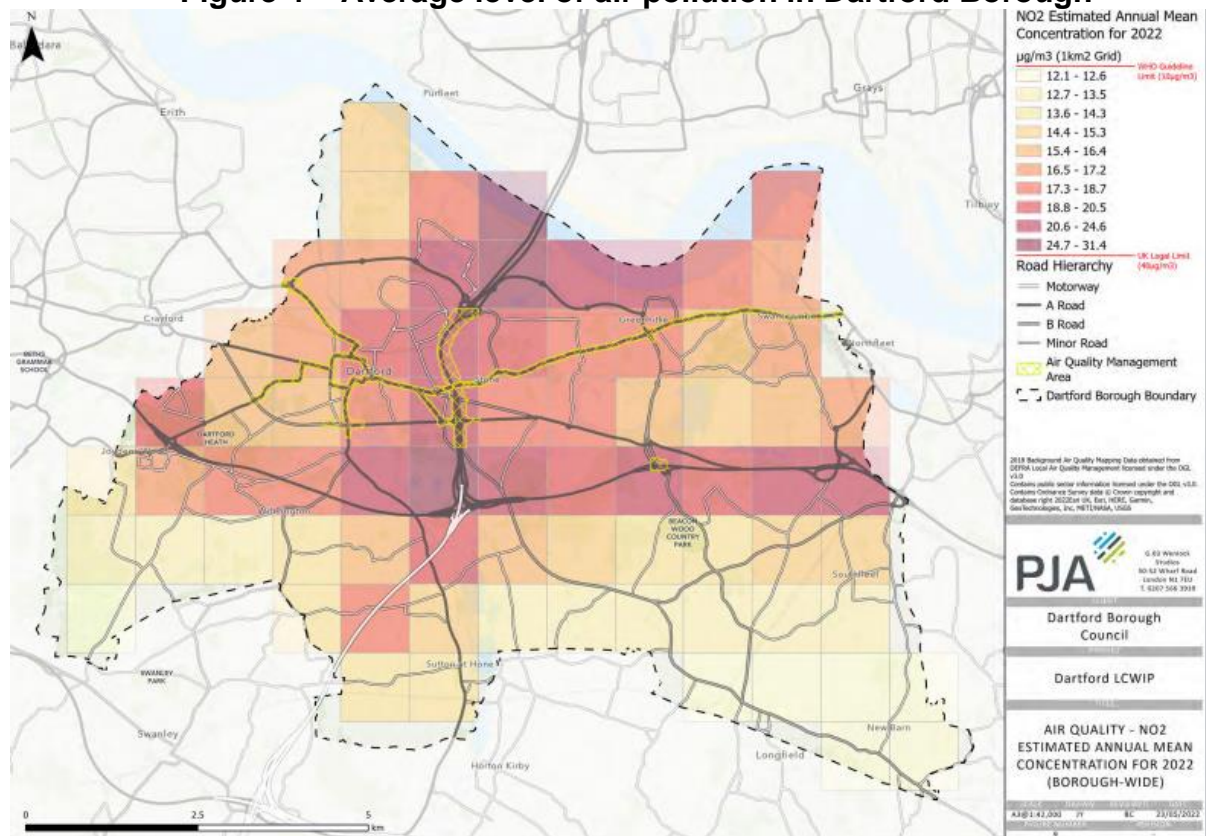
Figure 3 – Index of Multiple Deprivation Locally Within Dartford Borough



- 4.4 The economy of the Borough is directly linked to and significantly depends on its transport connections. For example, Transport and Storage is now the second largest (of sixteen) employment sectors in Dartford, after a 73% increase in local jobs (2015 to 2021). It accounts for 14.5% of local employment, substantially higher than the England average of 5.2%¹.
- 4.5 The A282 / M25 Dartford Crossing and the arterial A2 London-Dover routes generate high volumes of traffic flow through the Borough. This can be attributed to the principal cause of the Borough’s higher carbon emissions per capita than the regional average, given that the majority of emissions are from transport sources.
- 4.6 It is demonstrable in Figure 4 shown on the following page that parts of the Borough traversed by these strategic routes, and main feeder roads, suffer very high levels of air pollution (when measured in terms of NO₂ estimated annual mean 2022).

¹ KCC (2022) Employee Jobs in Kent 2021

Figure 4 – Average level of air pollution in Dartford Borough



- 4.7 It also worth noting that due to the strategic road network operating above capacity, even small incidences on this strategic network can result in extensive congestion on local roads. It is this queuing of vehicles that has an impact on air quality on the local roads and is demonstrated by the fact that Dartford town centre has been designated as an Air Quality Management Area. Queueing in this area only arises to severe levels when there is an incident on the wider strategic network, largely resulting from diverting traffic.
- 4.8 The M25/A282 is a high capacity strategic road, which bisects the Borough. Unusually it also bisects directly the urban hinterland of Dartford Town Centre causing barriers to movement between the local communities within the Borough; and critically funnelling these local movements onto a limited number of east west routes, two of these routes traversing junctions 1A and 1B on the M25/A282. The congestion that results on the local road network and these junctions also impacts therefore on local movements, not only commercial and private vehicles but also buses serving the local area, (including the Fastrack bus rapid transit service). The diversion of vehicles from the strategic network and the consequent queuing on local roads also creates a poor quality environment for cycling and walking - as demonstrated through Dartford's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2023² findings - discouraging take up of these modes

² <http://committeedmz.dartford.gov.uk/documents/s75830/Appendix%20A%20-%20Local%20Cycling%20and%20Walking%20Infrastructure%20Plan.pdf> Page 41 onwards.

in the Borough. The Council through its Local Plan and Infrastructure Deliver Plan is working hard to promote active travel in order to reduce private car use in the urban area however, the quality of such routes is impacted on directly by the use of junctions 1A and 1B being over-capacity. As well as the congestion on the local road network resulting from the lack of resilience of the Dartford Crossing. The challenges faced at these two key junctions are demonstrated in Figures 5 to 8 with below.

Figure 5 – Capacity issues at A282 Junction 1a and 1b

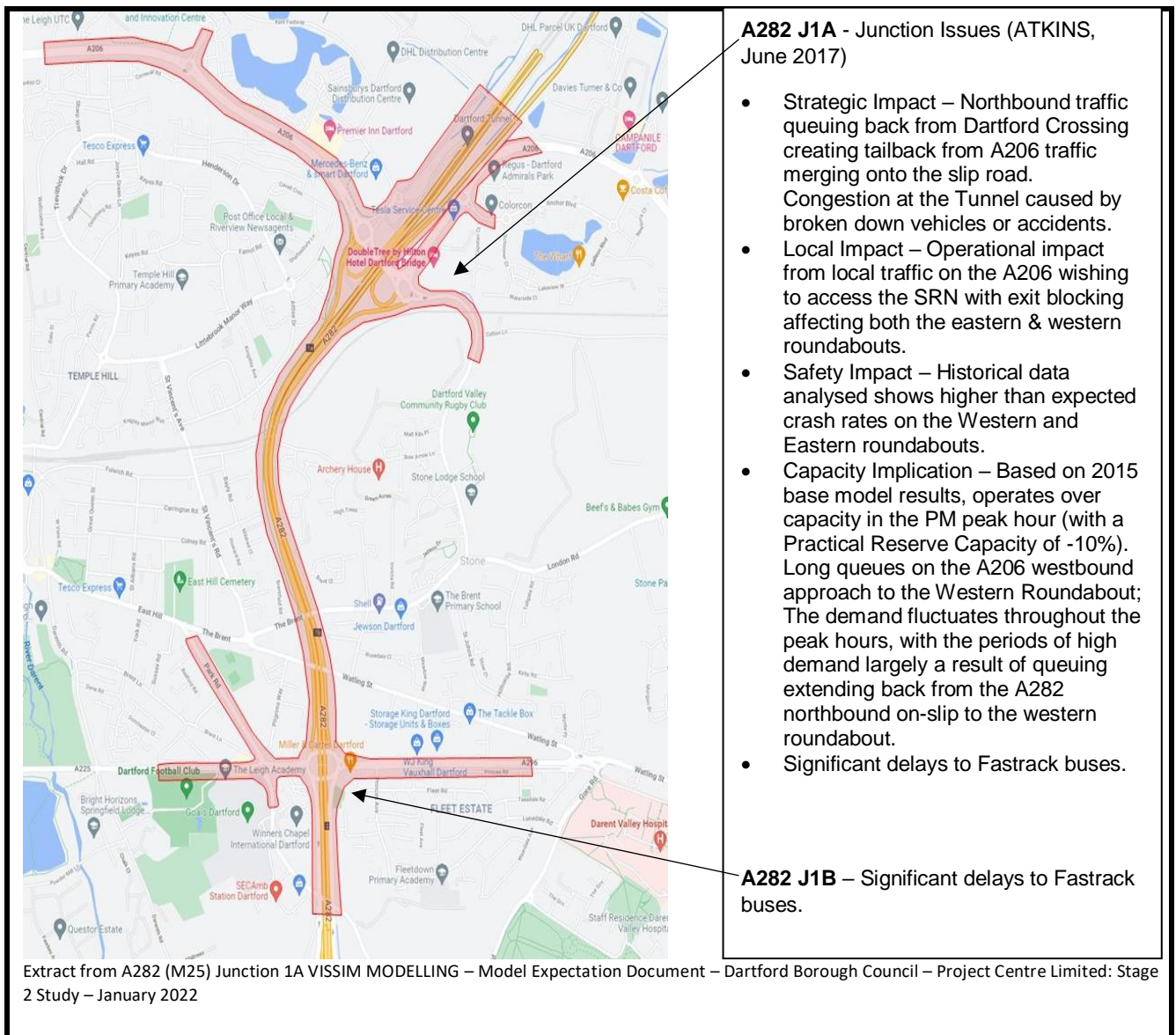


Figure 6 – Fastrack Network

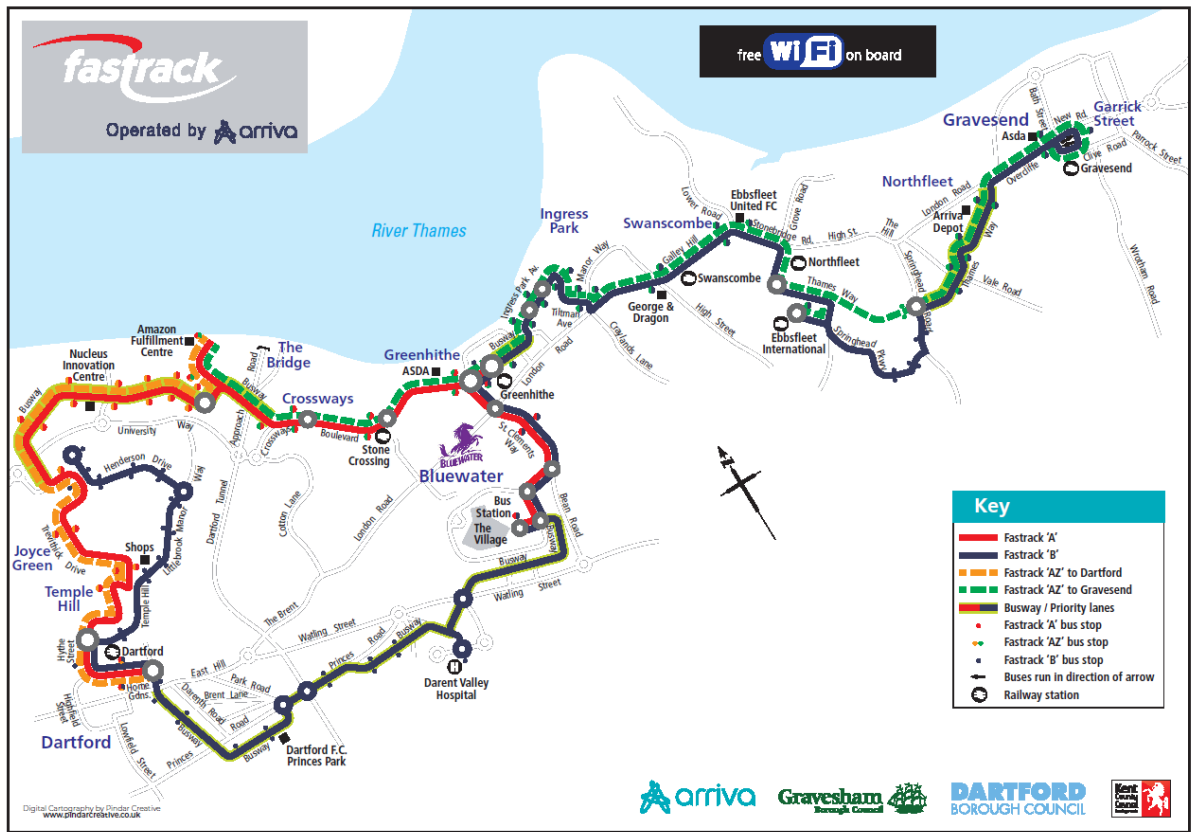
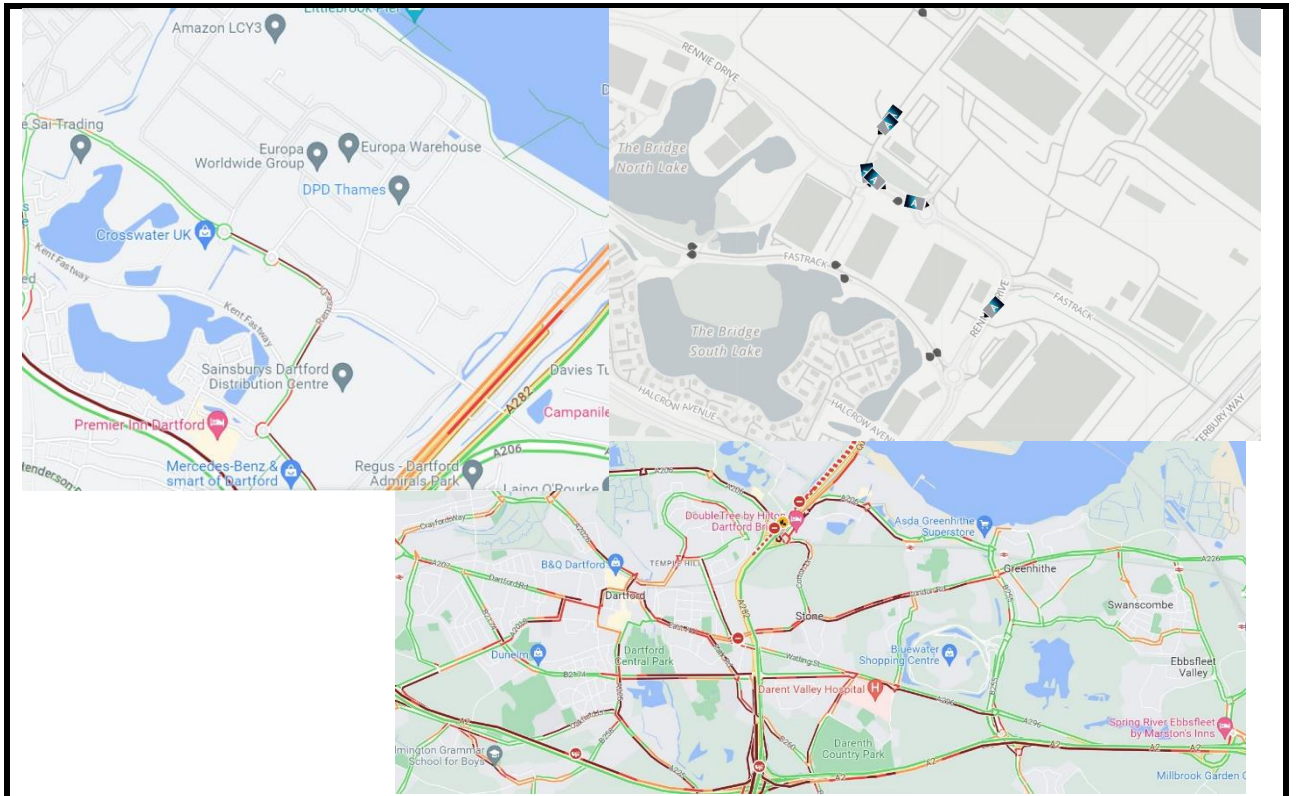


Figure 7 – Fastrack A
Impact of traffic delays associated with Junction 1A and queuing onto Rennie Drive



**Table 1 – Fastrack
Percentage of Scheduled Mileage Lost Due to Traffic Delays at J1A & J1B**

		Percentage of Scheduled Mileage Lost Due To Traffic Delays					
		Fastrack A	Fastrack B			Scheduled Mileage A	38,945.68
						Scheduled Mileage B	60050.74
2021	July	0.90%	0.50%				
	August	2.20%	2.20%				
	September	3.80%	2.20%				
	October	2.50%	1.90%				
	November	3.20%	1.40%				
	December	2.20%	1.20%				
2022	January	1.60%	1.30%				
	February	1.40%	0.70%				
	March	1.30%	0.40%				
	April	0.90%	1.10%				
	May	0.80%	0.30%				
	June	0.90%	0.50%				
	July	0.60%	0.80%				
	August	1.00%	1.10%				
	September	0.60%	0.50%				
	October	2.50%	1.80%				
	November	2.50%	1.40%				
	December	1.70%	1.30%				
2023	January	1.70%	1.30%				
	February	3.30%	1.70%				
	March	1.40%	0.70%				
	April	3.70%	3.20%				
	May	3.00%	2.50%				
	June	5.40%	5.10%				

Planning Policy Assessment

- 4.9 Dartford’s new Local Plan is expected to be adopted later this year (2023). Submitted in December 2021, Examination hearing sessions have been completed at Stage 1 (Legal/ Duty to Cooperate compliance - June 2022), Stage 2 (Soundness – November 2022) and Gypsy/ Travellers (May 2023).
- 4.10 The submitted Plan states (paragraph 1.34): “In summary, the Local Plan needs to respond to a range of key Borough social and economic factors including:
- A rapidly growing population needing new local infrastructure, particularly for health and education.
 - A sizeable labour workforce with high employment rates but a limited choice of local high order/ professional local job opportunities.

- High levels of mobility that puts pressure on public transport and creates traffic/ congestion in the Borough contributing to pollution levels.
- Requirements to support healthy living with the potential for greater walking and cycling, promoting clean air and access to the countryside and greenspace.

4.11 The Plan continues at paragraphs (2.31 to 2.32):

“The very large volumes of traffic on both the M25 and A2 and the frequent occurrence of incidents leads to many drivers (including HGVs) being either forced or choosing to use local roads to complete their journeys. The lack of resilience of the Dartford Crossing generates much of the Borough’s endemic congestion issues, with serious impacts on the local road network throughout all of Dartford town and beyond.

A range of transport planning interventions are necessary, including reducing reliance on private vehicles in new developments and improving public transport and active travel provision. As part of this, the Council will advocate the implementation of proposed highway schemes, particularly the Lower Thames Crossing (outside Dartford) and the upgrade of the A2 Bean and Ebbsfleet junctions, in a timely manner.”

4.12 The Plan’s Policy S2: Infrastructure Planning Strategy (part 4) states:

“4. Opportunities to achieve transport upgrades will be maximised. This includes promoting:

- a) New and improved rail services and replacement or enhanced train stations.
- b) New and improved Fastrack and other bus services/ routes, including addressing non-dedicated sections of Fastrack routes which are vulnerable to general traffic congestion and bus priority at junctions where possible.
- c) Further highway and junction upgrades. Additional investment will be supported, dependent on further assessment by Highways England, Kent County Council, Dartford Borough Council and partners.
- d) Use of rivers for the sustainable transport of goods and passengers as part of proposals for strategic scale development.”

POLICY ASSESSMENT: THE LOWER THAMES CROSSING: PROPOSAL COMPLIES WITH POLICY S2.

4.13 The current adopted Development Plan for Dartford Borough, including covering constituent parts of the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation’s area, is made up of:

- The Dartford Development Policies Plan 2017
- The Dartford Core Strategy 2011
- Kent County Councils minerals and waste Local Plans

- The Stone Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022

- 4.14 The Core Strategy 2011 states at paragraph 3.56 “At Junction 1a of the M25, adjacent to the Dartford Crossing, the strategic nature of the route results in Highway Agency concerns that new development will exacerbate the existing high levels of congestion. In the short term, the Council is working with its partners to explore low cost traffic management schemes to ease congestion. A longer term solution is not addressed through the strategic transport programme, since this is outside the Borough’s remit. The Department of Transport and Kent County Council are currently conducting studies on making better use of the Dartford Crossing and are evaluating alternative sites for a potential Lower Thames Crossing to relieve the congestion on the existing crossing and promote the regeneration of Kent Thameside. The Council supports a Lower Thames Crossing downstream of the existing Dartford Crossing in a location which will divert strategic traffic away from routes and communities in the Borough. The Council will work with its partners, including the Local Enterprise partnership, to secure a funding proposal capable of delivering a Lower Thames Crossing at the earliest opportunity.”
- 4.15 The Core Strategy includes a range of policies to promote transport and infrastructure growth to support the levels housing and commercial regeneration planned to achieve significant regeneration, including CS26 part a:
- “In order to ensure that adequate and appropriate infrastructure is provided in a timely way, the Council will: a) Work in partnership with public sector providers, utility companies and developers to facilitate the delivery of high quality infrastructure that is commensurate with the scale and needs of the Borough’s communities.”
- 4.16 The Development Policies Plan 2017 provides policies to address the impact of developments, and recognises the growing importance tackling environmental and health consequences of pollution, for example policy DP5 (part 1a): “*Development will only be permitted where it does not result in unacceptable material impacts, individually or cumulatively, on neighbouring uses, the Borough’s environment or public health. Particular consideration must be given to areas and subjects of potential sensitivity in the built and natural environment (including as highlighted on the Policies Map) and other policies, and other potential amenity/ safety factors such as: a) air and water quality, including groundwater source protection zones. ...*”

POLICY ASSESSMENT: THE LOWER THAMES CROSSING: PROPOSAL COMPLIES WITH POLICIES CS26 & DP4

5. CURRENT TRAFFIC IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

- 5.1 The Dartford River Crossing and its approaches is a critical part of the national transport network. It funnels all traffic through a single point, causing stress on the strategic network junctions as well as the surrounding local road network. This single point essentially performs many functions. It provides for London orbital movement on the M25; it is the only available route between the Channel Ports and the east of England; it is the only crossing point between Kent and East Anglia; and it also carries local movements between Essex and Kent – for example work trips between the employment centres on either side of the estuary, and shopping trips to Lakeside and Bluewater. In addition, it provides an alternative when the Blackwall Tunnel is closed.
- 5.2 It is one of the busiest sections of the M25 – the orbital motorway designed to divert through-traffic away from London. It forms part of the Trans-European Transport network and, with the M20 and A2/M2, forms part of the Dover/Channel Tunnel road freight route to the majority of the UK.
- 5.3 This important route has the third highest level of strategic road delay nationwide. Used by approximately 150,000 vehicles a day, the crossing exceeds its effective capacity on 257 days of the year. More than half of users experience significant delays, with queues on the crossing experienced for 4 hours per day, on average.
- 5.4 The rate of incidents and accidents at or in the vicinity of the crossing is twice the national average for a route of this type. The high levels of demand and limited alternative opportunities for crossing the Thames mean that the crossing has very poor resilience to incidents when they do occur. Strategic traffic often diverts and backs up on the surrounding local road network, having nowhere else to go and local traffic using the strategic road network also diverts putting additional pressure on the limited alternative options for east-west movement through the Borough. This congestion and unreliability affects not only the strategic network itself but also the surrounding local road area. It is made worse by the close proximity of junctions on the A282/M25 and the A2 (T). An accident/breakdown can close off a lane or indeed a whole carriageway for several hours, with the local area gridlocked and the impacts felt across a wider area, including into London. Even when there is capacity available at the crossing itself, the overstressed surrounding network remains vulnerable to incidents. When these happen, drivers find it impossible to get to the crossing even if the crossing itself has capacity available, and have no alternative routes to divert to.
- 5.5 This causes serious problems for existing businesses and communities in Dartford, and is a significant risk factor for new investors. This last point is particularly important since the area is one of the growth points in the Thames Estuary, and is expected to contribute net growth to the national economy. Productivity would be increased by reduced journey times. However additional significant economic growth would be unlocked by the project by providing relief for the many logistics companies, businesses in general and commuters that

suffer unproductive travel efforts and wasted time from delays and unpredictable journey times.

- 5.6 There are high levels of suppressed demand as a result of these conditions. Local journeys, in particular, are suppressed with evidence demonstrating a low level of interaction between the north and south of the river. The risks to businesses in seeking growth in markets, and in sourcing supplies and labour from across the river with existing traffic conditions are unnecessarily high. This restricted connectivity stifles local business growth and restricts residents in their employment opportunities, affecting the whole of the Kent and Essex Thames-side. Local businesses are further hit by the knock-on impacts of gridlock on the local network in the frequent instances of ‘extreme’ congestion on the strategic network. The congestion also impacts on local bus services and the Fastrack rapid bus transit system resulting in unreliable services which discourages use of buses.
- 5.7 The Project would not only relieve current conditions and make it easier to do business in Dartford, but also provide for the suppressed demand and open up new opportunities for growth and regeneration in the Thames Estuary. It will provide maximum economic benefit to the Borough but also several other locations in the southeast and London.
- 5.8 The Project would provide an alternative to the existing crossing, particularly for journeys which can be made more directly via a crossing further east, such as with the Port of Dover traffic. It would free up capacity on the existing Dartford Crossing, increase the resilience of the strategic and local road network in the area, and allow residents to plan their day to day movements with certainty and allow local businesses to function normally and plan for growth, unfettered by the costs imposed by a regularly malfunctioning road network.
- 5.9 Using evidence commissioned by Dartford Borough Council, and produced in conjunction with Kent County Council and National Highways, further information is available on the benefits of the proposal in the context of the planned further growth of the Borough. The Dartford Local Plan Strategic Transport Modelling was carried out in support of the Council’s Local Plan submitted for Examination in December 2021. The transport modelling was carried out for scenarios with and without the Lower Thames Crossing in place and is, therefore, the latest and most appropriate transport modelling available to the Council to determine the impact of the Lower Thames Crossing.
- 5.10 For the Dartford Local Plan Strategic Transport Modelling a Dartford Cordon of the Lower Thames Area Model (DCLTAM) was used. Specifically National Highways supplied the supplementary consultation version in April 2020. Whilst further versions of the Lower Thames Area model have been produced over the intervening years it was not possible to utilise these without causing a significant delay to the Local Plan Examination. It should be noted that the Local Plan Strategic Transport Modelling was only carried out for the AM and PM Peak periods.

- 5.11 In terms of assessing the impact of the Lower Thames Crossing the outputs produced in the Stage 3b Report have been used, specifically Appendices A & D which summarised the outputs for the A282/M25 and A2 Corridors. Results presented here focus on the demand flows (measured in PCU's) for both the Reference Case and Local Plan Preferred Option both with and without the Lower Thames Crossing. A summary of the quantitative outputs extracted from the Stage 3b Report is attached as Appendix 1, but headline results are noted here:
- In the majority of situations the presence of the Lower Thames Crossing is shown to have a beneficial impact on the junctions on the strategic road network within Dartford Borough.
 - This is shown by a reduction in the total demand flows through each of the junctions of between 7.9% and 10.7% across both the AM and PM Peak periods. The exception is the A2/A2018 Junction at Dartford Heath (inside the M25 London Orbital) near Bexley London Borough, where the transport modelling shows that the Lower Thames Crossing has minimal impact on the total demand flows through this junction.
 - When the demand flows on the mainline through each of the junctions is considered the results are more variable but generally there is a bigger reduction than the total demand flows. This is not unexpected as the demand flows on the mainline are less influenced by the traffic entering and exiting the strategic road network at each junction.
- 5.12 The Dartford Local Plan Strategic Transport Modelling and demonstrated reductions in the total demand flows (7.9% to 10.7%) across peak periods, confirms substantial net traffic benefits of the Project to Dartford Borough.

6 SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- 6.1 To assess the wider impact of the proposal on the Borough and its contribution to sustainable development, the following table documents local impacts against the three broad objectives for sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.2 To guide the evaluation and to provide a structured framework, under each category applicable Dartford Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal topics are listed (reflecting legislation and Strategic Environment Assessment factors).

Category	Impact Type Summary	Details of Impact
<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home. • Ready access to essential services and facilities for all residents • Strengthen community cohesion • Improve the population’s health and reduce inequalities. • Reduce the need to travel and encourage sustainable and active alternatives to motorised vehicles to reduce congestion. • Conserve and enhance the special qualities, accessibility, local character and distinctiveness of the Borough’s settlements, countryside and landscape 	<p>POSITIVE</p>	<p>The proposal will have a beneficial impact on the social wellbeing of the Borough. Current issues associated with the Dartford Crossing hinder the provision of general and affordable housing, with endemic congestion and harm to how Dartford is perceived directly constraining development viability and the delivery of regeneration. Existing problems contribute to the perception of a degraded environment. In particular with proposed new Crossing, alleviation of current traffic problems will be a significant step towards unlocking the potential for major residential development in Dartford Town Centre. The uplift in viability is essential to ensure this includes sufficient affordable housing provision. The current crossing and its southern junctions and approaches bisect the communities of Dartford town. Access to services and community cohesion are both hindered currently by extreme congestion events on the Borough’s strategic and local highways and constricted movement, particularly through the inherent unreliability that this produces on the operation of local bus services. The proposal will generate clear community benefits. At present, the implications of congestion and unreliability on buses and Fastrack, are allied with harm to the quality of the cycling and walking routes in the town and take up of these active modes. The new Crossing’s reduction of congestion in Dartford will produce health benefits through improved air quality, and increasing the attractiveness of cycling and walking.</p>

Category	Impact Type Summary	Details of Impact
		<p>Improved bus service operation offers a range of social benefits.</p> <p>The new Crossing will be positive towards some very important social attributes of the Borough, namely health, housing and cohesion.</p>
<p>Economic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sustainable and growing economy • A vital and viable town centre. 	<p>MAJOR POSITIVE</p>	<p>The proposal will be transformational in overcoming unproductive (delayed, aborted, diversionary) travel time spent and suppressed economic activity by the major employers, large Transport and Storage sector, and many commuters that characterise Dartford. It will also respond to the concerns of business over expanding within, or relocating to Dartford.</p> <p>Addressing the problems of the Dartford Crossing is an integral part of the Local Plan development strategy to deliver sustainable urban development and provide the conditions to tackle local pockets of severe multiple deprivation.</p> <p>There is empirical evidence of the adverse impact of current traffic and congestion on Dartford town centre. In surveys on the streets of the town, commissioned for the Local Plan³, visitors stated (without prompting) traffic and congestion was one of their main ‘dislikes’ of Dartford town centre - evidence which would exclude those already put off from visiting. Tackling congestion and traffic perceptions and attracting further shoppers and leisure visitors, would yield tangible investment and economic benefits.</p> <p>The new Crossing will be a major positive in all respects of Dartford’s economic development, with direct and indirect benefits.</p>
<p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve the Borough’s mineral resources, and soils. • Maintain and improve the quality of the Borough’s waters. • Reduce air pollution and ensure improvements in air quality. 	<p>MAJOR POSITIVE</p>	<p>The proposal will benefit the local environment of Dartford.</p> <p>Alleviation of current congestion and emissions from vehicles will occur, with vehicles operating at more efficient speeds and less idling. This will benefit air quality and human health, the local natural environment, but also carbon emissions, reducing the area’s contribution to climate change.</p> <p>Dartford town centre is one the principal locations impacted by congestion spilling over from incidents at the Dartford Crossing. The town centre is the site of many of the most significant heritage assets in northern Kent, reflecting its rich history as a</p>

³ <https://www.dartford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1388/dartford-and-ebbsfleet-retail-and-leisure-study-part-1-jan-2021> page 68.

Category	Impact Type Summary	Details of Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid and mitigate flood risk. • Minimise the Borough’s contribution to climate change. • Conserve, connect and enhance the Borough’s wildlife, habitats and species. • Conserve and/or enhance the significant qualities, fabric, setting and accessibility of the Borough’s historic environment 		<p>major market town and pioneering commercial centre. Located on the Watling Street Roman route from London to Rochester, Canterbury and Dover (former A2) the town centre contains many Listed Buildings such as coaching inns and early industrial premises. It is the largest Conservation Area in the Borough. These heritage assets are directly harmed by pollution and their setting impacted by the highways requirement arising from congestion levels in the town centre.</p> <p>Some of the Borough’s largest valuable natural environments are severed by the busy and polluting strategic highway network, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest such as Darenth Wood. The new Crossing will not impact on all aspects of Dartford’s environment but all implications arising are expected to be positive and major for the important issues including air quality, climate change and the historic environment.</p>

6.3 There is overwhelming evidence that the Proposal will have significant local and wider benefits for the residents of Dartford. This is substantiated by the output of the Applicant’s summary of potential impacts of the Project on local communities (PINS Ref: TR010032/APP/7.16 - Version 1.0 – October 2022) as well as evidence in Kent County Council’s Relevant Representation submission (PINS Application Ref TRO10032-001981).

6.4 In summary, in addition to widely recognised economic benefits, there are positive environmental and social impacts of the Project for residents of Dartford including:

- Air Quality – Will support targeted improvements to air quality at AQMA sites in Dartford currently experiencing exceedances of annual mean of nitrogen oxides and PM10s particularly at the Tunnel Approach to Dartford Crossing and Dartford Town Centre.
- Traffic Congestion – With the predicted reduction in traffic from the Project, there will be significant health benefits for Dartford residents including reductions in congestion, queuing of vehicles on local roads and noise with free flow traffic. There will also be reduction in journey time delays. Tackling congestion is an essential requirement before plans for increased bus use and active travel modes can be fully realised, given the strong disincentive and adverse conditions current congestion levels in Dartford generate.
- Better wellbeing and access to local amenities –Reduction in traffic congestion will improve the quality of life for the local communities with greater opportunity to access healthcare, shopping facilities, town centre, open space, education and

jobs, particularly in and around the town centre. Dartford is expected to benefit from improved connectivity and resilience across the wider road network with reduced congestion at Dartford Crossing supporting a healthier environment for residents and positive mental health outcomes.

- Road Safety – The Project will have an overall positive impact on road safety. Project will be designed to the latest safety standards, in contrast with the out of date and concerning conditions of the current crossing.

6.5 To maintain the successful sustainable growth and regeneration of Dartford, it is essential that the Project proceeds in order to alleviate Borough-wide problems associated with the crossing and to realise all the above benefits. This is necessary for (as indicated through the Dartford Local Plan Strategic Transport Modelling and other evidence) further development, economic growth and a sustainable transport network require a basis of enhanced conditions and reduced congestion arising from the Project, not only for essential private vehicles but also to allow more reliable bus services and an attractive environment for walking and cycling.

6.6 In conclusion, DBC growth plans need LTC to ensure an acceptable environment for Dartford in the future. Not only allowing use of private cars, but facilitating bus use and an improved environment for walking and cycling. The projected benefits of the Project aligns with this need in terms of addressing long term congestion issues, improving the quality of life and providing economic opportunities for new community infrastructure as referenced in Applicant's "Need for the Project" submission (Ref: TR010032-001291-7.1).

7 CONSIDERATION OF ARTICLES AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE DRAFT ORDER

- 7.1 The Examination Authority’s attention is brought to DBC’s Relevant Representation submitted on the 24th February 2023 and the Statement of Common Grounds (PINS Scheme Ref: TR010032/APP/5.4.4.3 – Agreed draft Version 2 to be submitted by Applicant at Examination Deadline 1 in July 2023). Specifically with reference to Requirement 14 in Schedule 2 of the draft DCO as identified in the Application’s transport assessment document (Scheme Ref: TR010032/APP/7.9 Transport Assessment Appendix F Wider Network Impacts Management and Monitoring Policy Compliance). DBC have highlighted the need for a more robust monitoring of the traffic flow and air quality at key locations along the A282 corridor during construction and before/after scheme operation. This aligns with similar comments in KCC’s Relevant Representation submission (PINS Application Ref TRO10032-001981).

APPENDIX 1: Dartford Local Plan Strategic Transport Modelling

The average impact of the Lower Thames Crossing on the demand flows for each of the junctions is:

Junction	Demand Flows	Ave Impact of LTC
A282(M25) Junction1A	Total	-10.7%
	Northbound mainline	-20.1%
	Southbound mainline	-19.5%
A282(M25) Junction 1B	Total demand flows	-10.4%
	Northbound mainline	-12.6%
	Southbound mainline	-13.5%
M25 Junction 2	Total	-7.9%
	Northbound mainline	-7.9%
	Eastbound mainline	+0.3%
	Southbound mainline	+1.2%
	Westbound mainline	+0.8%
A2/A2018	Total	+0.04%
	Eastbound mainline	+0.6%
	Westbound mainline	+0.03%
A2 Bean Junction	Total	-9.6%
	Eastbound mainline	-16.5%
	Westbound mainline	-11.6%
A2 Ebbsfleet Junction	Total	-10.3%
	Eastbound mainline	-18.6%
	Westbound mainline	-10.0%
A2 Pepperhill Junction	Total	-9.9%
	Eastbound mainline	-16.4%
	Westbound mainline	-12.0%

Stage 3b Report: <https://www.dartford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1385/strategic-transport-modelling-stage-3b-local-plan-option-testing-output-sept-2021>