

Lower Thames Crossing

9.9 Post-event submissions, including written submission of oral comments, for OFH1

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1 9.9 Post-event submissions, including written submission of oral comments, for OFH1

1.1 Item 1: Introduction

- 1.1.1 *Please note: this document contains the Applicant's written summary of oral submissions made by others at the Open Floor Hearing held on 20 June 2023. Where the comment is a post-hearing comment submitted by the Applicant, this is indicated.*
- 1.1.2 National Highways (the Applicant), which is promoting the A122 Lower Thames Crossing (the Project), was represented at the Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) by Tom Henderson, BDB Pitmans LLP, Partner (TH).
- 1.1.3 The Interested Parties in attendance were:
- 1.1.4 Cllr Debbie Wright and David Martin of Higham Parish Council
- 1.1.5 Trevor Thacker.

1.2 Submissions from Higham Parish Council (HPC)

- 1.2.1 **Post-hearing note:** The Applicant has fully considered HPC's oral submission and compared the matters raised within it against those already in the HPC Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) [APP-134]. The Applicant identified three additional matters which have now been added to the SoCG as 'Matters Under Discussion' whilst the Applicant engages further on them.
- 1.2.2 The three new matters are:
- a. Under Route Selection, SoCG Item no 2.1.45 – 'Higham Parish Council wish to ask why the proposal for the long tunnel option at Dartford was dismissed and not consulted on'.
 - b. Under Design, SoCG Item no 2.1.46 – 'Higham Parish Council are concerned that the hill up to Cobham is likely to be affected by sun and the high ascent and therefore that's likely to affect people's ability to read signs'.
 - c. Under Wider Network Impacts, SoCG Item no 2.1.47 – 'Higham Parish Council request that the DCO includes an obligation for roads in Kent to be improved prior to opening of the LTC'.
- 1.2.3 During further engagement with HPC following OFH1, HPC identified four further matters for inclusion in the SoCG, over and above that which was in their oral submissions. There wasn't time to add these to v2 of the SoCG being submitted at Deadline 1 so they will be included in v3 which will be submitted at Deadline 2.
- 1.2.4 For information, the four new matters that will be included in v3 of the HPC SoCG are:

- a. Under Traffic and Economics, SoCG item no 2.1.48 – ‘A request for detailed traffic modelling for the A226 and surrounding roads.’
- b. Under Construction, SoCG item no 2.1.49 – ‘HPC are concerned by the lengthy 18 month closure of Brewers Road Bridge. HPC query whether this bridge could remain open in parts and the proposed new Green Bridge be built prior to the closure for the existing Brewers Road Bridge. HPC also require clarity on what the alternative route is for, in particular, cycling and bus, but also car traffic.’
- c. Under Noise and Vibration, SoCG item no 2.1.50 – ‘Having reviewed ES Chapter 12, HPC can see no review in the referenced documents as to Noise and Vibration impact either at the M2 Jn 1 approaching Strood for the Three Crutches area or the A226 along any of its length, but particularly at Forge Lane/Gads Hill School Junction. Nor for Pear Tree Lane, approaching A226. The referenced full traffic noise assessment cannot be found by HPC.’
- d. Under Noise and Vibration, SoCG item no 2.1.51 – ‘Having reviewed ES Chapter 12 [APP-150], p193 “Percussive Piling activities within 65m of receptors secured through the CoCP”, HPC are concerned that any percussive piling can be heard much further than 65m due to the shape of the landscape. Current piling at DP World on the north side of River is intermittently affecting Higham Village up to the A226. p193 also references 3 sites that will be impacted by more than 10 days of vibration. The sites are not detailed. Further information required’

1.2.5 On 10 July 2023 the Applicant attended a site visit to the Forge Lane / Crutches Lane junction with HPC representatives to visit areas of concerns raised by HPC at OFH1. The Applicant explained where works in this area, including assessment and controls, were set out in the Application.

1.2.6 One of the concerns HPC raised was in relation to the construction traffic route along the A226 Gravesend Road in the vicinity of Gads Hill School. Specifically, the Applicant understands HPC are concerned about the potential impacts of the increased heavy traffic passing over a tunnel beneath the A226 which is reported to have been constructed by/for Charles Dickens whilst he was living at Gadshill Place, a Grade I listed property adjacent to the school. HPC expressed concerns that the tunnel is not referenced in relevant parts of the DCO Application. In response, the Applicant would highlight that the tunnel was described and assessed in the ES within the DCO Application and mitigation has been proposed: in particular, Gadshill Place is described in paragraph 6.4.111 of Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 6 [APP-144] and is more fully described, including the associated tunnel, in ES Appendix 6.1: Cultural Heritage Desk-Based Assessment [APP-351] on pages 67-68 and page 488. The tunnel also has its own entry in the Kent Historic Environment Record as a WWII Air Raid Warden’s Post (Project ID 2461) and the ES therefore includes further assessment and mitigation details specific to the tunnel in ES Appendix

6.9: Draft Archaeological Mitigation Strategy and Outline Written Scheme of Investigation [APP-367] on page 131 and ES Appendix 6.10: Assessment Tables [APP-368] on page 160. The latter references makes clear that the impact of *'the weight of construction traffic passing overhead could potentially cause harm to this structure'* has been assessed. (For completeness, HPC suggested that *'the Project team were unaware of the existence of the tunnel'*. This is not the case, as indicated by the aforementioned assessments; the Applicant's historic environment specialists are fully aware of the tunnel under the A226 and its connection with Charles Dickens and Gadshill Place.)

2 Submissions from Mr Trevor Thacker

2.1.1 **Post-hearing note:** The table below contains the written responses the Applicant wishes to submit in response to comments made by Mr Thacker during OFH1.

Comments made by Mr Thacker at OFH1	Applicant’s response
<p>The discarded Option A14 – which involves expanding the Dartford Crossing – is the only option that actually increases capacity at the Dartford Crossing, and this option should be reconsidered and consulted upon.</p>	<p>The Applicant’s assessment showed that a new crossing at Location A (Dartford Crossing), and specifically Option A14 would not solve the traffic problem at Dartford, would do little for the economy locally, regionally or nationally and would offer low value for money. Option A14 specifically would attract a limited amount of traffic and would have poor economic benefits. It would not, therefore, meet the Scheme Objectives.</p> <p>The consideration of Option A14 is summarized in Table 5.12 of the Planning Statement [APP-495]</p> <p>Potential Route option A14 was not taken forward because it did not provide connectivity with the A2 or the A13 and as a result only attracted limited volumes of traffic. It would therefore not meet the Scheme Objective of relieving the congested Dartford Crossing.</p> <p>Following comments received during the non-statutory consultation this option was reappraised, prior to the selection of the preferred route, validating the decision not to take it forward to the shortlist stage. In 2018 this option was remodelled following development of the 2016 traffic baseline. The lack of connectivity with the A2 and A13 continues to limit the relief this solution would provide for the congested Dartford Crossing. As such, the decision not to take potential Route option A14 forward remains valid.</p>
<p>National Highways state that the LTC will only reduce traffic by 21% at the Dartford Crossing at opening and by even less as time goes on. Therefore, once the new crossing is completed most of the reduction will be negated by an actual increase in traffic levels at the Dartford Crossing, and traffic levels at the Dartford Crossing will still be as congested as it is now, if not more so, and the problem unsolved.</p>	<p>Traffic modelling presented as part of the application for development consent predicts that, compared with the situation without the Project, the overall level of traffic using the Dartford Crossing is forecast to reduce by an average of 19% in the peak hours in the year the road opens and remain below current levels for the foreseeable future. Average speeds on that part of the network would rise and journey times would become more reliable, reducing journey times at the Dartford Crossing in line with the Scheme Objectives agreed with the Department for Transport (DfT).</p>

Comments made by Mr Thacker at OFH1	Applicant’s response
	<p>More information on the transport benefits of the Project are provided in the Need for the Project [APP-494]</p>
<p>The Project will only bring an increase in traffic, not solving the effect on local roads, increasing pollution, destroying the local environment, and negatively impacting communities and homes, while most likely running over in terms of timeframes and budget.</p>	<p>The Lower Thames Crossing would provide much needed additional capacity and reliability that would not only improve journeys, but drive growth across the region, as well create new jobs and green spaces for the local community and wildlife. It would give millions of people more flexibility and choice regarding where they choose to work, where they live and where they get their education, through quicker and more reliable journeys, as discussed in the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report Appendix D: Economic Appraisal Package: Level 3 Wider Economic Impacts Report [APP-527].</p> <p>The Lower Thames Crossing is also green by design – over 80% of the road will be in a tunnel, cutting or behind an embankment to reduce its visual impact on the landscape, as stated in the Project Design Report Part C: Design Rationale [APP-508] on page 9. Two new public parks will be created, Chalk Park on the south bank of the River Thames and Tilbury Fields on the north bank, as detailed in ES Chapter 2: Project Description [APP-140] and shown in the General Arrangement Plans [APP-015, APP-016, APP-017]. The start of construction work on the project is now expected to begin two years later than previously planned. The Applicant will continue to progress through the DCO planning process and expect the government to make a decision on consent in 2024. The Applicant remains focussed on opening the new road as soon as possible, and is working with government and its Delivery Partners to ensure there is an effective and deliverable plan that offers the best value for money to the UK.</p> <p>In response to comments about cost overruns, whilst the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) is primarily a tool for investment decisions, the Applicant would note that using a standard 60-year appraisal period, the Economic Appraisal Report [APP-526] shows that the Project has an Adjusted BCR of 1.22 indicating that the Project will provide positive value for money, because its substantial net benefits outweigh the costs. However, the life expectancy of the civil engineering works for the tunnels far exceeds 60 years. Therefore, as described in</p>

Comments made by Mr Thacker at OFH1	Applicant's response
	<p>the Economic Appraisal Report, 100-year appraisal period sensitivity tests have been undertaken which show that the Adjusted BCR increases to between 1.66 and 1.72 depending on the assumptions relating to the implementation of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.</p>
<p>A junction at the A13 and A1089 junction is inappropriate. The changes proposed do not solve the problems of this junction and will actually even worsen its effect on the residents of Orsett. Air quality standards will not be met around this junction and lead to a risk of legal action from citizens of Thurrock in the future.</p>	<p>The connectivity between the A122 Lower Thames Crossing and both the A13 and the A1089 are required to ensure the proposals meet the Scheme Objectives.</p> <p>The connectivity between the A122 and the A13 provides an essential link for traffic connecting Kent and east Thurrock and Essex, including London Gateway Port. This traffic currently uses the A13 between the proposed Lower Thames Crossing alignment and M25 junction 30. Table 8.8 of the Transport Forecasting Package, Appendix C of the Combined Modelling & Appraisal Report [APP-522] shows that there is a 26% reduction in traffic routing to and from the A13 and Essex via the Dartford Crossing and that this connection makes up 41% of the flow across the Lower Thames Crossing.</p> <p>As well as the connections between the A13 and the A122, further connectivity is provided at this junction to deliver better connections for other sources of pressure on the A13 and junction 30 of the M25. Connectivity direct from the A1089 onto the A122 northbound provides a route for traffic from the Port of Tilbury onto the M25 that avoids having to make a right hand turn on junction 30, which has beneficial consequences on traffic flows through that junction.</p> <p>The air quality assessment has been undertaken in accordance with DMRB LA 105 Air Quality (Highways England, 2019), as explained in the ES Chapter 5: Air Quality [APP-143]. Upon road opening, there are no predicted exceedances of Air Quality Strategy Objectives for nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter where particles are less than 10 micrometres in diameter (PM10) and less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter (PM2.5) at human receptors around the A13/A1089/A122 Lower Thames Crossing junction as detailed in Section 5.6 of the ES Chapter 5 Air Quality [APP-143].</p>

Comments made by Mr Thacker at OFH1	Applicant's response
<p>There would be a traffic increase of more than 40% along Conway's Road and Rectory Road in Orsett. The increase in traffic is not justified given that it is a residential area with public facilities (e.g. schools, a hospital, a church). Conway's Road is too narrow for the proposed increase of traffic and it would be dangerous to use it for trucks and HGVs alongside village traffic.</p>	<p>Overall, the Lower Thames Crossing is not forecast to increase traffic through the village of Orsett (see Plates 7.11, 7.13 and 7.15 of the Transport Assessment [APP-529]).</p> <p>As a result of more traffic being predicted to use the Orsett Cock junction, the transport model predicts that some additional traffic is forecast to route through Orsett village as this would be a quicker route for their journey. As a result of the Lower Thames Crossing, flows along Rectory Road are predicted increase southbound in the AM peak (by between 50 and 250 PCUs). At all other modelled time periods (and in the northbound direction in the AM peak) the forecast change in flow is forecast as between -49 and +50 PCUs.</p> <p>The Applicant has noted that there is a minor error within Plates 5.1, 5.2, 5.7, 5.8 as shown in the Traffic Forecasts Non-Technical Summary [APP-528], where the change in flow on Rectory Road (between its junction with High Road and the A13) is shown as switching direction at the junction with School Lane. All of the changes shown should be on the southbound carriageway for the entire length of Rectory Road. This will be included in the next submission of the Errata Report [Document Reference 1.6 (2)].</p> <p>On Conway's Road the transport model forecasts that there would be a decrease northbound in the AM peak of between 50 and 249 PCUs. At all other modelled time periods (and in the southbound direction in the AM peak) the forecast change in flow is forecast as between -49 and +50 PCUs.</p>
<p>The Stifford Clays Road Compound East is proposed to be very close to a residential area and should be moved.</p>	<p>Stifford Clays Road compound East would be located north of Stifford Clays Road, east of the A122. It would be approximately 6.7ha in size, with space for car parking, offices, welfare facilities and storage. Around half of the site would be set aside for earthworks stockpiling. Fencing would be put in place to provide noise and visual screening to nearby sensitive receptors. The compound is shown in the Works Plans [APP-018, AS-024, AS-026] and in the Temporary Works Plans [APP-050, AS-034, AS-036] as Work No. CA10 (defined in Schedule 1 of the draft DCO [AS-038]) and described in ES Chapter 2: Project Description [APP-140] on page 180.</p>

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	<p>The compound is located adjacent to the eastern side of permanent works corridor to support the construction works for the A13/A1089/A122 Lower Thames Crossing junction slip roads and highways works north of the A13 towards the Mardyke, as well as the construction of the eastern underpass bridge below the A13. Therefore, it is necessary for the compound to be situated in close proximity to facilitate these works. It would be in place throughout the construction period.</p> <p>Construction compound facilities greater than 6m in height would be located as westerly as reasonably practicable, to maximise distance from residential properties on Stifford Clays Road and Fen Lane. This commitment is LV019 in the Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments, within ES Appendix 2.2: Code of Construction Practice [APP-336].</p> <p>Access would be via Stifford Clays Road, until a temporary haul road for construction traffic is in place. The works to construct the temporary haul road are expected to complete within the first six months of the construction programme as described in ES Chapter 2: Project Description [APP-140] on page 180. Further information on illustrative construction compounds access routes is shown in Table 4.1 of the outline Traffic Management Plan for Construction [APP-547].</p> <p>The compound is located over 150m from the residential properties to the east on Fen Lane and approximately 50m from the closest residential properties to be retained to the south.</p> <p>In recognition of these residential properties the compound has been slightly repositioned from its initial location and changed shape to move away from local residents at Fen Lane, Green Lane and Baker Street. Taking into account the requirement of being in close proximity to the works, constraints imposed by surrounding utility works, and the safety need to limit overlapping working areas and compounds, there are no reasonable alternatives for relocating the compound further away from residents. In addition, the commitment set out above to locate facilities greater than 6m in height as westerly as reasonably practicable would also seek to reduce any impacts upon these sensitive receptors during construction.</p>

Comments made by Mr Thacker at OFH1	Applicant’s response
<p>Not enough means made for alternative use of the [Project] crossing, if it does go ahead, such as non-motorised traffic – walkers, cyclists, horse riders, etc.</p>	<p>The Applicant has considered options during the development of the Project to provide improved river crossings for walkers and cyclists. The options investigated include using the tunnel, upgrading the existing ferry, relocating the ferry, building a separate bridge or cable car, and providing a shuttle service through the tunnel. All these options have been rejected for reasons including technical feasibility, operational issues, lack of commercial viability, cost, environmental impacts, and poor safety. Latent demand for walking and cycling across the River Thames at the Project crossing point is low and therefore unlikely to unlock enough trips to make the required infrastructure for a shuttle service economically viable. Please refer to Project Design Report Part G: Design Evolution [APP-514] and in particular page 48 for further information. The Applicant highlights Chapter 5 of the Planning Statement [APP-495] which provides an overview of the assessment undertaken on alternative modes of transport.</p>

3 Applicant comments in light of Interested Party submissions

- 3.1.1 TH thanked the Interested Parties for their submissions which the Applicant had listened carefully to.
- 3.1.2 TH noted that the ExA had said the OFH1 was not a forum for the merits of points raised to be discussed and that the Applicant would be responding to Relevant Representations at Deadline 1, and where appropriate would respond to points raised in OFH1 [**Post-hearing note:** these responses have been provided above].

4 Next steps and closing

4.1.1 The Applicant did not make any comments under this Agenda Item.

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