

TRO10032 LOWER THAMES CROSSING

SUBMISSION after OPEN FLOOR HEARINGS (OFH) 1, 2, and 3 (held on 20th June, 28th June and 5th July 2023 respectively) For Deadline 1 (18th July 2023)

SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL (IP ref 20035603)

A Parish Council representative either viewed the recordings of the hearings retrospectively (ISH's 1 and 2) or watched the livestream (ISH3).

Below please find our comments on some of the matters raised, we may cover these further in our Written Representations. We have generally omitted items that were covered at ISH's 1 and 2 and/or where the Inspectorate has already asked the Applicant to provide more information.

Thank you very much for considering the points made in this document.

OFH1 (20th June 2023):

Higham PC submission:

- We support in general the comments made by Higham PC although there are some aspects that require further discussion locally.
- With reference to construction and operational impacts from increased traffic on the A226, we agree with the point they raised about lack of zebra crossings as there are none on the A226 between Lion Roundabout in Gravesend and the A289. Also about the need to visit Gads Hill House and School, and the Dickens tunnel under the A226 at Higham during the ASI.

OFH2 (28th June 2023):

Bridleways and footpaths:

- We support the comments made by the British Horse Society over the desirability of increasing bridleway provision south of the A2 as a part of/a result of the project.
- Land ownership by Forestry England and the Woodland Trust were mentioned by the Applicant as impediments but we consider that NH should be leading/facilitating these organisations to provide, together with NH, what impacted local residents want particularly as regards the displaced NS177 route.
- The Applicant referred us to APP-320 but the scale of the maps makes them difficult to understand, as well as possibly incorrect. For example (on Fig. 13.4, page 1) to the east of the tunnel portal an existing path is labelled as new, and to the west a new bridleway is connected to the very urban area of Riverview.
- We agree with the representative from Essex Ramblers regarding the ongoing lack of information about the exact nature of paths being provided and how/whether they are to be shared by different categories of users. Residents want assurance about such matters now.

Cost-cutting by NH through omitting essential associated road and linkage provision/upgrades:

- Like TCAG we consider that matters such as the upgrading of Blue Bell Hill A229 and its junctions with the M20 and M2 (also known as option C-variant) are essential to the intended functioning of the LTC.

- If HGV's on the M20 heading west from Dover either see (by using Satnavs) or just think that the A229 will generally be difficult to use or blocked then they will continue west on the M20 and then the M25 north to still use the Dartford Crossing. As a result, the amount of putative traffic reduction etc at the Dartford Crossing will be lower than predicted.
- In our view migration in a south-to-north direction to reach the LTC could therefore be constrained by route availability, with consequent greater persistence of existing south-to-north traffic flows on the M20, M25 anticlockwise and the Dartford Crossing northbound.
- This links with the flawed Scheme Objectives, under which the LTC is not intended to provide free-flowing south to north travel
- It appears that the Tilbury Link to the LTC was taken out of the scheme for the same reasons, to reduce the scheme costs, and therefore to artificially increase the BCR of the LTC. If an Objective of the scheme is to provide employment opportunities and wider economic benefit then this should be maximised by the scheme through including the above two associated road projects.
- Similarly, southerly connections from the Ports should be provided as that would further reduce journey times as well as traffic congestion on the A13 westbound and the Dartford Crossing southbound. This would however increase southbound flow on the LTC and probably westbound flow on the A2 to the M25 in contradiction of NH's postulation that traffic levels in that direction will reduce.
- We are also concerned that if there are poorly functioning junctions north of the Thames, there could be tailbacks onto the LTC through lanes, and even back through the tunnel to the Kent side. As well as using the LTC, vehicles need to be enabled to get off and clear of it.

Option A interventions are needed rather than C as proposed:

- We support views expressed by various persons about implementing solutions to Dartford's problems at Dartford – these are probably Options A1 and A14 together.
- NH are not making any attempts, or apparently planning, to improve the A282 Dartford Crossing approach road and the crossing itself in a south to north direction, even though that is obviously a major problem.
- It is hard to understand how this has been omitted from the scheme Objectives.
- Option A1 is needed to improve flows across the river from south to north and to negate the impediments to free-flow caused by the now substandard original tunnel.
- Option A14, the long tunnel, is also needed as a bypass for strategic traffic that is already on the M25 so will not (we hope) need to use the LTC. The A14 Option is the only intervention that will truly remove HGV pressure from the Dartford Crossing (see also below under OFH3) as by bypassing the A282 it would provide a motorway to motorway, 70mph completion of the M25 ring around London.

Changes to communities already wrought by the Project:

- We empathise with the comments made by an Essex resident about changes in the community due to just the threat of the project, even though any actual building is still years away,
- In Shorne, especially in the settlement of Thong, we have had quite a few longstanding residents sell up to NH and leave the area. Others remain but are having difficulty selling their properties privately.
- We also have the situation whereby Southern Valley Golf Course, the only pay-and-play course in the area, has closed. While NH might say that was a choice by the owners, it seems unlikely that would have happened except for the project.
- NH are taking additional security measures for sites that they own but empty properties and land create additional worries for local residents over attracting burglaries, invasions and other antisocial behaviour.

OFH3 (5th July 2023):

Dartford Borough Council's aspirations:

- The situation we have at present is that too much local traffic is using, and being encouraged to use, the Dartford Crossing approach roads, having been attracted there by Dartford business development plus regional shopping centre destinations. This traffic is then polluting housing some of which is newly built right up to the A282 boundary fences.
- Dartford have also built, and are still building out, massive additional housing provision that is impacting on the A2 as well.
- Dartford BC apparently intend to continue all this behaviour so will clog up the Dartford Crossing approach again even faster than NH are predicting it will happen.
- Dartford BC expect to shift problems onto Gravesham with the LTC but should perhaps be tailoring their aspirations to the capacity that they actually have within their own borough rather than seeking the creation of new traffic problems and pollution elsewhere.
- We support their comments about post-opening monitoring, that it has to result in solutions. Perhaps funds should be set aside for such at the outset rather than vaguely hoping that someone else will pay for the solutions at some unspecified time. That approach would of course raise project costs and further decrease the BCR.

Manage existing roads better:

- We support as a matter of principle the comments made by CPRE that existing roads should be improved (see comments above about Options A1 and A14) before building new roads and inducing extra demand in an already highly congested area.
- We also support the aim of greater use of transcontinental freight on heavy rail transport. This would require facilitation of improvements to platforms and bridges by Network Rail, apparently though at a predicted cost of only £10m. However, we are unable to gauge how much beneficial HGV traffic volume reduction would result from this intervention.

Responsibility for predictable problems and solving project fallout for residents:

- This follows from the matters raised by a Sole Street resident however it has to be understood by residents that some measures could create problems for other parts of the community.
- We understand the point made by the Applicant that NH are not responsible for solving existing traffic problems, but where a problem, particularly rat-running, is obvious in advance or predicted to get much worse or predicted to newly occur due to the LTC then advance preventative measures by NH should be included in the scheme.
- NH should not be making traffic to increase on unsuitable, residential roads.
- Similarly, if problems are found to arise or existing problems are demonstrably made untenably worse by the project then there has to be a guarantee of a rapid solution being implemented.
- In our experience, interventions such as increased signage that roads are unsuitable for HGV's, and/or introducing weight limits, are not effective in preventing HGV's from using unsuitable roads because such drivers are confident about a lack of enforcement action.

Shorne Parish Council
18th July 2023