

TRO10032 LOWER THAMES CROSSING

SUBMISSION AFTER ASI1 (12th September 2023) For Deadline 4 (19th September 2023)

SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL (IP ref 20035603)

A Parish Council representative attended the Accompanied Site Inspection on 12th September 2023. This document provides Shorne Parish Council's comments subsequent to the inspection. We have tried to follow the itineraries travelled but apologise for any incorrect order.

(Apologies also for the strong smell from ? muck spreading detectable on the day, allegedly there was also a contribution from a chemical leak in northern France.)

(Please also see the notes at the end).

Thank you very much for considering our submitted comments.

Table of roads and sites visited, and comments:

Road	Comments
Park Pale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Present parking situation</u>: Vehicles parked illegally on Park Pale, these vehicles are people avoiding Country Park parking charges, there was plenty of spare space at the time. This is much worse at weekends, Bank Holidays and in school holidays – sometimes there is spare space in the car park, sometimes not, over 100 vehicles have been counted parked on Park Pale on some occasions.• Brewers Wood on left, screening vegetation to A2 on right.• Cyclists seen using route.
Park Pale yard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Old barn used as Harlex offices .• Barn is all that remains of historic farmhouse demolished for previous A2 widening/A289 Wainscott bypass construction.• Rearrangement of Harlex entrance and footpath/cycleway route needed due to A2/M2 re-widening.• This area is close to M2J1/the start of the A289.
Park Pale Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two-way but narrow, noisy, bridge over A2 also carries a WCH route and is low ambience.• Leads to Rochester and Cobham golf club (private and restricted membership)• Observed volume of traffic on A2 mid-morning and being added to by traffic coming from Medway on A289 and Strood on old A2/Watling Street. This will all be concentrated into two lanes on the A2/M2 line through Gravesend East.• If go fully over bridge (or look on Google Streetview) can see the underpass under the HS1 line.• This was described as a “<u>box jack</u>” at ISH6 but as far as we are aware it is a fairly standard, purpose-built bridge over an underpass that was constructed for HS1.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unknown if there are wildlife connectivity tunnels under HS1 but if not here ought to be. • This area could also be greened up to provide more habitat connectivity and user ambience. • Observed wooded central reservation and other screening vegetation on both sides, impression is busy and noisy but green.
<p>Mitigation Land north of Park Pale</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation land north of Park Pale and Harlex yard, drainage pond location. • Applicant agreed with Harlex to move pond from originally suggested location • Pond now appears to be above level of roadway on rise of land.
<p>Brewers Road bridge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brewers Road bridge over A2 • Busy road, can also see all the A2 on and off slip-roads • Wide green wooded central reservation strip on the A2, HS1 is barely visible due to bunding and mature vegetation, to be lost due to project. • Cyclists, joggers, walkers (and motorbike!) seen using the paths outside the Country Park. • <u>Green bridges:</u> Discussion about location of the (presently narrow) green strip (needs to be much wider greening), which side or both sides? SWCP favour west side with connectivity tunnels from HS1 land to Cobham Hall Park, we support that but ideally the bridge should be at least grassy on the east side too for WCH connectivity (after crossing Brewers Road near SWCP). The wide green verge by Boughurst Cottage (The Nook pet hotel) could be continued over bridge to the same (narrower now) by Cobham Hall Park. • On aerial view note green wooded strip between A2 and CP boundary, and that the bridge over HS1 has a good width so could accommodate a wider, more perpendicular Brewers Road bridge structure and roadway design including wider green zones.
<p>North side A2 former Esso garage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parked at the Inn on the Lake hotel • <u>Difficulty crossing Thong Lane due to poor driver visibility:</u> This will also apply to vehicles leaving the proposed car park here (see below) • <u>Location of proposed new crossing point:</u> We did not hear all the discussion but the Country Park representative expressed concerns about the proposals. • Walking down previous Thong Lane off slip from A2 then NC177 etc. • Electricity substation is to be removed, relocated to A226. • <u>New car park and facilities proposed at southern end of Thong Lane:</u> The location proposed for an extra parking area will be the remains of a works compound, offered so that the Applicant doesn't have to restore the land. However, it introduces urbanisation. We are not convinced that the proposal will make any difference to the parking problems at Park Pale, we believe the location and facilities will attract extra visitors to the area/Country Park plus others just using the facilities in passing. • Mature vegetation around drainage ponds and on bunds by A2 installed for the last widening (2009?), now to be removed again, this has taken the entire elapsed time to get really going and it is not good that it is being removed again. • Local residents consider that the noise protection to Shorne West is currently inadequate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Lorries parked on hard shoulder again</u>: National Highways are again allowing lorries to park on the wide hard shoulder (remains of former garage slip-roads) and without providing any facilities, therefore the ambience of the path is low and unsanitary presently (and may be a hazardous environment for lone walkers). NH do cleanups occasionally but clearly not recently. • <u>Former Esso northside compound</u>: We had expected that the compound would be unlocked so that the view to residential areas of Shorne West, the edge of Riverview Park, and Thong could be seen. The reverse direction view can be taken from for example the Michael Gardens play area in Shorne West and Footpath NS169. • Visual intrusiveness and noise propagation from the proposed flyovers: We were told these have a deck level 18m above the (low) ground level at the Esso Station but have 12m lighting poles on top, and possibly gantry signs. • Claylane Wood by A2 on west side. • 40m rise from here to highest point of A2 eastbound. • South side Esso station opposite, busy, some lorries parked (limited space)
Thong Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note narrowness and winding nature of road in rural part, there were several problems experienced with vehicles passing each other, unsuitability for additional traffic (please see note below). • Note Conservation Area and historic buildings including the “Homes for Heroes” smallholdings. • At the A226 urban end there are speed cushions near Thamesview School and nursery, parents collecting children cause parking problems.
Field north of Shorne Ifield road near Footpath NS170	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tranquility, (could only just hear A2) and lovely view (currently) at the field. In future it will look at the LTC chasm, the “Grand Designs” style control facilities (we were told these would be “underground”), electricity substation, emergency assembly areas, lighting and gantries etc, and the access road – all will have significant landscape impact and also generate averse noise problems. • In the proposals, all the above are poorly screened in the view at present, more trees would be beneficial as they would also reduce noise and other pollution.. • Provision of a WCH path along the field edge was discussed, this has been previously requested. and is requested.
Shorne Ifield Road, becomes Mill Hill Lane at top of Shorne Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorne Ifield Road is single track with very few passing places, high banks difficult for pedestrians to get out of way. Often used by walkers, cyclists, horseriders. • The edge of the roadway is unstable at the western end of the route and has recently been repaired after the latest edge collapse. • We are very concerned that any/all traffic to the proposed Utility hub should <u>not</u> use the route. • Continues into Shorne via 90 degree bend and Shorne Hill, Shorne Common and playground on left (and access to highest land point, the view from here looks dramatically at the south portal area so will be adversely affected). • Note narrowness and winding nature of road, several problems with vehicles passing each other, unsuitability for additional traffic (please see note below).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Randall Woods mitigation land is behind the historic Baynards Cottage and with Ifield Place stream on its east side (footpath/bridleway needed here.
Shorne Village centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Area, historic buildings some opening directly onto roadway, narrowness of road, parked cars, worst at primary School pick up time (School is on Cob Drive off Forge Lane, Shorne) • No footway in parts, horses, pedestrians and cyclists frequently encountered, narrow 90 degree bend near pub
Tanyard Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 2 cars wide in places, no footway, horses, pedestrians and cyclists frequently encountered.
Woodlands Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turned right into this from Tanyard Hill, then right again on Brewers Road, no visibility • A lot of vehicles take this route but we are unsure why as it is more hazardous than continuing on Tanyard Hill and turning right at Chestnut Green. When there are traffic increases during Construction and Operation a one-way system may be needed. • Narrow, less than two cars wide, 2 sections where cannot see if another vehicle is coming. • In the middle there is access to Nitrogen deposition land via field gate on north side. • At far end Shorne Common Rough (Parish Council Land) is on left, Shorne Woods Country Park on right.
A2/Watling Street into Strood via Three Crutches roundabout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very busy, need to know where going for split between A289 and Strood. • Past Strood Academy (very large secondary school) through traffic lights to turn right at Elaine Avenue, very quiet road except at School pick-up times for primary school near end.
A2/Watling Street out of Strood to join A289 merge then A2 merge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers on this route do not expect traffic apparently heading into Strood to U-turn at Three Crutches roundabout but that will be an LTC diversion route. • The sequential merges are hazardous, if on A289 already it is best to keep in outside lane as that presently has a lane gain onto the M2, and immediately move out one lane to avoid the A289 merge lane traffic and the same out of Strood.
Halfpence Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow, winding, blind summit and bend, sharp right turn into The Street, Cobham • Cobham Hall park on east, Ashenbank Woods on west with small car park, at end Darnley Mausoleum to east at a distance.
The Street, Cobham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow, historic buildings open onto roadway, excessive traffic calming causes additional problems (narrowings and chicanes but no forward visibility to see vehicles entering from other end)
Henhurst Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very narrow, winding, takes a lot more traffic than it is suitable for. • Includes Jeskyns park nearer A2 • Contractors Depot and Network Rail facility near the existing roundabout to Gravesend East.
Church Road, Cobham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site of mitigation land south of the Network Rail depot. • Ratrun route through to A227.
Gravesend East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very busy • Roundabouts are already constrained by dominant traffic flow, particularly from Gravesend to the A2 westbound. This will be much worse in future with the LTC.

Valley Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very steep and busy so queuing uphill to Gravesend East is difficult, LTC will lengthen these queues.
Marling Way, Astra Drive and Vigilant Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning right into Marling Way blocks traffic on Valley Drive, this road is also narrow and steep. • Relatively narrow and many parked cars. • Together the above are a common inter-connecting ratrun route to and from Thong Lane • Houses at far end near Thong Lane, and on Thong Lane at Riverview Park, will be badly affected by the LTC noise and pollution.
Brewers Road/The Ridgeway/Pear Tree Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brewers Road is a reasonable width but leads into The Ridgeway, which is not, and always has parked cars. • Shorne Common Rough is on the north side as approach The Ridgeway, there is a big drop close to the roadway due to former sand excavations. • Chestnut Green is a Conservation Area with historic buildings, some opening directly onto the roadway. • Pear Tree Lane is narrow (less than 2 cars wide), winding with blind corners and bends and has a steep downhill section. From the last driveway there is about 100m to the traffic lights on the A226 so traffic queues block driveways and the road itself. • Similarly to what was said at one of the ISH's regarding a location north of the river, local residents can tell when there is a problem on the A2 due to the increase in traffic and queue lengths. • At the traffic lights, wider than average vehicles prevent other vehicles from entering Pear Tree Lane from the A226, which in turn compromises their function.
A226 in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several problem areas needing roundabouts or traffic lights plus facilitated pedestrian crossing points. • Northern junction of Thong Lane, right turn is difficult and hazardous. • Shorne Crossroads (vehicle and pedestrian safety when crossing wide 50mph road, and making turning movements) • Crutches Lane and Forge Lane, Higham staggered crossroads close to Gads Hill School
A226 over A289, roundabouts each side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are increasingly busy and will be made more so by the proposals, they need traffic light facilitation as some movements become difficult.
Green Farm Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow, winding, less than two car widths wide, problems experienced on tour
Lower Higham Road, joins Chalk Road to reach Lion Roundabout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow, winding, less than two car widths wide, problems experienced on tour • Unsuitable for extra/construction traffic • Filborough farm on south side, listed barn on staddle stones on north side. • Residential area of Chalk is always narrowed by parked cars, has historic buildings associated with Dickens. • Great Clane Marsh behind houses on north side, area is at risk of flooding (new houses on Dering Way are affected). This area is something to do with construction water drainage outflow but the requested details are not being provided by the Applicant. • Road continues past North Kent College after joining Chalk Road, there are often students milling about.

Notes:

1. Additional crossings included in the project:

Elaine Avenue, Strood:

- We are still having difficulty understanding why this road, so far from the Order Limits, would experience particular severance due to the LTC, or why it needs a crossing point in addition to the central refuges already in existence. It would be helpful to have more information and plans.
- The Applicant said that it will experience 500 extra vehicle movements but we did not pick up what time of day this referred to and why it would be happening.
- There are several other connecting routes between A2/Watling Street and Darnley Road.
- The roundabout at the end of Darnley Road where it meets the A228 is very busy and could do with traffic light facilitation.
- Improvements seem to be a side agreement between the Applicant and Medway Council
- Our question is as to why this intervention is part of the LTC project.
- We just want to understand why this road is being singled out for improvements when other roads have problems due to or likely to be made worse by the project but improvements at these locations are not being addressed.

Valley Drive, Gravesend:

- The Applicant said that this will experience a 15% increase in traffic (timeframe not clear), we consider the figure could be higher than this.
- A crossing point is proposed to assist with severance.
- We have no objections to this proposal but still consider that other roads also have problems due to or likely to be made worse by the project but improvements at these locations are not being addressed.

2. Shorne Village, 20mph zone

- A 20mph zone is currently being installed in Shorne Village area, including Mill Hill Lane near Shorne Common (playground).

3. Roads adversely affected by Schools, particularly at collection time:

- Several local roads within the red line boundary become compromised to through traffic due to parental parking at collection time:
 - Forge Lane, Shorne (School is at far end of Cob Drive, also accessible from Swillers Lane)
 - Thong Lane near Riverview School and nursery
 - A226 at Gads Hill for Gads Hill School.

4. Roads which are unsuitable for existing/extra traffic; traffic increase predictions:

- Several local roads are rural in nature, already pose problems for existing traffic and are inherently unsuitable for extra traffic. These are:
 - The Ridgeway/Pear Tree Lane
 - Woodlands Lane/Tanyard Hill, The Street and Forge Lane Shorne
 - Shorne Ifield Road, Mill Hill Lane, Crown Lane

- Thong Lane
- Crutches Lane, Higham
- Green Farm Lane
- Lower Higham Road
- These roads are narrow (some/sometimes less than two cars wide or even single carriageway), winding, have blind corners and summits, houses opening directly onto the roadways, permanently parked cars etc
- Even though it was a quieter time of day, the minibuses experienced problems due to conflict with other vehicles in several locations while on the tour.
- These roads are inherently unsuitable to carry extra traffic
- However, the Applicant is predicting extra traffic on some of these roads, at different times of the project and day, due to additional traffic.
- The predictions are presumably based on AADT figures so do not factor in variations for day of the week and background use variations.
- The predictions give “volume/capacity” predictions for these roads, but we are unaware of there being standard capacity figures that can be applied to narrow rural roads, so the question arises as to how volume/capacity has been assessed.
- The baseline figures upon which volume increases have been predicted are also unclear.

5. Location of fuel garages in the area:

- There was discussion about location of fuel garages, these are:
 - Existing - Esso south side of A2 at Cobham.
 - Previously lost - Esso north side at Cobham; BP on south side of former A2 line at Gravesend Central.
 - Existing nearest but off A2 line - Sainsburys near Gravesend West/Pepper Hill; Morrisons near Gravesend Central, also Shell garage on old line of A2 but complicated to get to; Co-op at Watling Street, Strood (at traffic lights after Three Crutches roundabout); Esso on A228 heading out of Strood, Esso A226 between A289 and Strood). A228 between M20 and M2 there are two, at Sandhole and Snodland. One on A227 south of Meopham.
- There have been proposals from the Applicant for a garage and McDonalds at the old Tollgate Hotel site (derelict since A2 widening and relocation) plus possibly Lorry parking. It will still be off-line, accessed using Gravesend Central.
- There are garages on both sides of Blue Bell Hill A229. Otherwise on the A2 there is only Farthing Corner Services at M2J4 (Apologies, the garage that we mentioned on A2 at Bexley appears to have closed). M25 either west to Clacket Lane or north across Dartford Crossing to Thurrock. On the A20/M20 there is a southbound garage at Ruxley A20 (north of the M25), M20 south of the M25 ? the nearest appears to be at Eyhorne Street south of Maidstone.
- The point is that lack of fuel garages and rest areas on the route to the LTC are likely to cause HGV's to take different routes or use unsuitable routes to find garages, swamp local garages for local resident use, and lorries will park up for rest breaks in unsuitable locations without facilities.