Lower Thames Crossing DCO

Gravesham Borough Council

(IP ref: 20035747)

Appendix 5

Gravesham Borough Council response to Photomontages provided by the Applicant at D6 and D7

REP6-036 - Deadline 6 Submission - 6.2 Environmental Statement Figure 7.19 - Photomontages Winter Year 1 and Summer Year 15 (1 of 4) v4.0 – October 2023 - D6

Part One of Figure 7.19: South of the River Thames

a. S-03 - View from the Kent Downs AONB on footpath NS161, north of Park Pale, east of Shorne Woods Country Park

Winter Year 1 sheet 2 of 4 – the retaining wall along the southern side of the A2 is very prominent, large-scale and unsightly. The Harlex buildings are more prominent in the view, due to the removal of screening vegetation.

The photomontages have caused us to revise our opinion, such that the Magnitude of Effect should be **Moderate** at Design year 15, with a **Moderate Adverse** significance of effect.

b. S-05a - View from the Kent Downs AONB on Park Pale overbridge

The photomontages clearly show a wide, urbanised view of up to 13 lanes of traffic. The extensive loss of vegetation, and the dominance of built infrastructure, have a significant effect on this important view from the KDAONB.

The viewpoint is from a PROW, within the KDAONB, so we consider the Sensitivity should be Very High.

The photomontages support our opinion that the Magnitude of Effect should be **Major** at Design year 15, resulting in a **Very Large Adverse** significance of effect.

c. S-11 - View from the Kent Downs AONB on footpath NS179 within Cobham Hall Grade II* Registered Park and Garden

The centre of sheet 2 of 6 Winter Year 1 clearly shows the new earth bank and the HS1 tunnel with its security fence. This is a far more urbanised view, showing the impact on the view of the loss of trees and change to landscape character;

In Winter Year 1 sheet 3 of 6, the new gantries and other infrastructure can be seen . The view is framed by existing trees but is intrusive into the scene.

In Summer Year 15 sheet 5 of 6, the HS1 tunnel entrance is still prominent in the view, due to the absence of foreground planting.

In Summer Year 15 sheet 6 of 6 the road infrastructure remains partly visible.

The viewpoint is from a pROW, within the KDAONB and within a Registered Park and Garden, so we consider the Sensitivity should be Very High

The photomontages support our opinion that the Magnitude of Effect should be **Moderate** at Design year 15, and a **Large Adverse** significance of effect.

d. S-12 - View from the Kent Downs AONB on Brewers Road

Sheet 2 of 2 Summer Year 15 shows the loss of woodland on the horizon, and the change in character of the view. The screening effect of planting at 15 years may be overestimated.

The viewpoint is from a PROW and within the KDAONB, so we consider the Sensitivity should be Very High.

The photomontages support our opinion that the Magnitude of Effect should be **Moderate** at Design year 15, resulting in a **Large Adverse** significance of effect.

e. S-13 - View from the Kent Downs AONB on Brewers Road overbridge

Sheet 2 of 4 Winter Year 1 clearly demonstrates the impact of the loss of vegetation along the A2 corridor, and in particular the effect of the loss of the wooded central reservation in reducing the apparent scale of the road and providing more enclosure to the view.

The photomontages support our opinion that the Magnitude of Effect should be **Moderate** at Design year 15, resulting in a **Moderate Adverse** significance of effect.

f. S-17 - View from the Kent Downs AONB on Thong Lane

Sheets 1 of 4 and 2 of 4 Winter Year 1 show the extent of the change to the landscape from this viewpoint. The near view is more urbanised and is dominated by the retaining wall on the south side of the A2 and the raised bridge. The larger gantry is visible to the left. It is clear that at this stage of the project development, there is little between the viewer and (more than) 14 lanes of traffic. The noise of the traffic as it passes under the bridge can only be imagined.

The amount of growth of new vegetation shown on sheet 4 of 4 Summer Year 15 would appear optimistic. It is our view that the project is over-reliant on the effect of screen planting to mitigate adverse effects.

The photomontages at S-17 confirm our view, that the Magnitude of Visual Effect should be **Major** at construction, opening year and Design Year 15; and the Significance of effect should be **Very Large Adverse** at all three stages. This is, in our opinion, confirmed by the new images at REP7-189 (below)

REP7-189 – Document 9.179 Computer Generated Views from Thong Lane green bridge south

Three computer-generated views from Thong Lane green bridge south have been provided;

a. One from Thong Lane green bridge south (Winter Year 1) looking west towards the M2/A2/A122 LTC junction including planting on the western edge of the bridge.

b. One from Thong Lane green bridge south with no foreground planting (Summer Year 15) looking west towards the M2/A2/A122 Lower Thames Crossing junction in summer at design year (fifteen years after opening). View does not include proposed planting along the western edge of the bridge to provide visibility of the junction.

c. One from Thong Lane green bridge south with foreground planting (Summer Year 15) looking west towards the M2/A2/A122 Lower Thames Crossing junction in summer at design year

(fifteen years after opening). View includes proposed planting along the western edge of the bridge.

The use of terrain modelling, without woodland blocks or 3-D built structures beyond the junction image, makes the surrounding landscape appear flattened and unrealistic, and largely green. However, overall it is helpful, and the scale and extent of the junction are clear.

The imagery also provides longer views westwards to the remodelled road network that will be part of – and feed into – the A2 and A122. This extended view clearly illustrates the wider impact of the junction on the landscape.

The views appear to show up to 17 lanes of traffic flowing under the bridge, at differing levels.

The proposed woodland planting through and around the junction will, in time, help to reduce some of the visual impact, but the scale of the junction and its feeder roads and infrastructure will remain prominent. Also, the extent, height and screening properties of the planting by Year 15 in view b. seem unrealistic (for example, when compared with the growth of mitigation planting along HS1 which is now 20 years old). HS1 would be expected to be more prominent in the landscape.

The view at image c. is unhelpful, as it implies a homogeneous, dense wall of vegetation in front of the viewer, but no information about the depth of planting. Again, the height and density may be optimistic for 15 years growth, especially at the elevated height and exposure of the bridge. However, it does indicate the intention of the planting in providing a blocking screen to the view.

It is clear that the physical extent of the junction, combined with the noise and visual impact will make user experience on the bridge difficult and unpleasant. It is our view that the bridge would need to be much wider, and with extensive widths of woodland planting along the eastern and western sides of the bridge, well-connected to planted areas to the north and south of the bridge, providing real and perceived protection for WCH users and for wildlife using the bridge. The loss of landscaping between HS1 and A2 at Year 1 is very obvious.