

TRO10032 LOWER THAMES CROSSING
COMMENTS ON APPLICANT’S SUBMISSIONS AT D8
For Deadline 9 (11th December 2023)

SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL (IP ref 20035603)

Introduction:

We have sequentially reviewed all relevant documents submitted by the Applicant at D8, numbered REP8-001 to REP8-123 (excepting those based entirely north of the Thames).

The representations below only cover selected points that we consider to be of particular importance as in many cases they have already been covered in our previous submissions. Omission of mention of a particular topic does not indicate agreement with the content of the Applicant’s submissions. In some instances, we consider that expert IP’s will be able to provide better replies than we can.

Thank you very much for considering our representations.

Section 1: Lack of response to points raised by Shorne Parish Council at D7:

Further to our comments on page 1 of REP7-271 that matters raised at D6 had not been answered, there were again not any responses to these matters and others that we raised at D7.

Section 2: Comments on relevant submissions by the Applicant at D8:

REP8-091 7.21 Stakeholder Actions and Commitments Register v6.0 tracked changes:

- **Restoration of Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) land at Shorne Marshes:**
 - On page 17 is a new section, referenced as SACR-022.
 - This itemises changes to be made to the marshland after Milton Compound is removed, on behalf of the RSPB.
 - A detailed plan and schedule of proposed works needs to be produced and circulated for wider consultation.
 - We had previously informed in our Written Representations REP1-408, page 29-30 about the highly conserved historical ditch pattern on the marshes. While the ditches can and should have maintenance work done, they should not otherwise be altered without extremely good reasons.
 - In creating the Milton Compound there is one east-west ditch being partially diverted. Other ditches exist in the area to be used by this Compound but it is unclear how they will be managed during the period of time that the compound is active.
 - Any/all such works must be first agreed with the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Board as it is they who are in control of water levels in the marsh. We have made them aware of this new section of text.

- We consider that Gravesham Borough Council, and possibly others not currently mentioned, should also be consulted as the changes amount to engineering works so might require planning permission.
- There could be historical/archaeological implications, so Kent Archaeology also need to be involved.
- From tunnelling discussions it is apparent that direct drilling is a potentially less damaging methodology than the currently proposed Ground Preparation Tunnel, in which case less land will be damaged and need remediation.
- It has also been said that the Ground Preparation Tunnel might not be needed at all, in which case no remediation will be needed.
- WCH construction monitoring and support for engagement in Kent:
 - On page 19 is SACR-023. In the continuation on Page 20 it should additionally mention Marling Cross, Shorne West and Thong, as also being electoral wards/communities adversely impacted (possibly more than those mentioned) by the WCH routes severance.
- Affected Wards:
 - On page 47, as informed to the Applicant both in advance and several other times, (for example see page 7 of our Written Representations REP1-408), the warding arrangements were changed from May 2023.
 - “Shorne, Cobham and Luddesdown” no longer exists, the respective wards are now “Higham and Shorne”, and “Istead Rise, Cobham and Luddesdown”.
 - Typo noted, it is “Istead” not Instead.
 - On page 53, under section 5.1 future ward/ boundary changes are discussed, but the point is that they have already changed and the wording is not up to date as it describes wards that no longer exist.
- Annual Instalment etc:
 - On page 47 it is detailed that there will be £90,000 per annum of Kent Community Funds provided. That sum is not large given the extent of the geographical area impacted, and will not pay for much, the amount should be increased.
 - Application of funds should be concentrated on the wards and communities that are most directly and severely impacted by the proposals.
 - This topic is also discussed by the Applicant on page 7 of REP8-111, point 3.2, please see below.

REP8-093 9.8 ES Addendum v8.0 tracked changes:

- Change of assessment up to “Very large adverse”:
 - Page 81, referring to 6.1 Environmental Statement - Chapter 16 - Cumulative Effects Assessment [APP-154] Tables 16.8, 16.9 and 16.11 details changes to the assessment of impacts on properties in Westcourt ward, moving up to “very large adverse” particularly for visual effects but also significant effects for dust and emissions, noise, vibration, visual effects and effects on human health.
 - It was always obvious that this would be the case, so it is surprising (and disappointing for impacted residents and properties) that this is only being admitted now, at this very late stage of the Inquiry.

REP8-109 9.186 Post-event submissions, including written submission of oral comments, for CAH5:

- Use of cut-and-cover:
 - On page 15, point 3.9.8, the Applicant states that “.....the suggestion that it should be considered was **not brought up during consultation** by Natural England **or other interested parties.**”
 - We were not clear from the discussion at CAH5 whether St Johns (and the Applicant’s response) were referring only to along the A2 corridor or to the project in general.
 - We raised cut-and-cover in connection with extending the tunnel portal further south and for the Thong Lane north overbridge as mitigation for noise and air pollution to the closest properties and to enable widening of green bridges.
 - Please see for example page 19 of our Written Representations REP1-408, and Item 2.1.25 of our SoCG, page 26 in the final version being submitted at D9A.
 - The Applicant states that cut-and-cover “... is not recognised as a mitigation option in the relevant guidance”. However, we would expect design to be innovative and guidance to be evolving, plus that the project would not be designed and built only to minimum standards.
 - However, on page 39, in point B.13.6 the Applicant admits that cut-and-cover would be useful in reducing pollution.
 - The Applicant also says (referring to the A2 corridor) that “.....it would have **significantly greater adverse effects** on both the SSSI, associated ancient woodland habitat and the Kent Downs AONB than the current design.” We would be grateful for explanation and justification of this comment as such an evaluation seems unlikely.
- Possibility of further widening of green bridge design:
 - In point 3.1.24 on page 8 (and also A.7.5, page 43 of REP8-110) the Applicant states again their opinion about constraints on further widening – we have said several times that we do not agree with this statement or that there are barriers to further widening that are insuperable.
 - The usual phrase applied in these circumstances is “Where there’s a will there’s a way.....”. It appears that obvious difficulties with the project that have been raised can always be overcome through good design and engineering, but obvious enhancements somehow cannot.
 - If the two A2 green bridges genuinely cannot be made usefully wide for greening, then perhaps the pretence that they are green bridges should be abandoned (excepting for the edge trays). The main green bridge elements on the deck could then be provided separately as a dedicated green bridge with WCH route between SWCP and Shorne Ashenbank Woods, together with a bridge (green if possible) re-providing the severed part of NS167.
- Present and future severance:
 - On page 8, point 3.1.25 onwards discusses this, we consider that most people are able to understand that there will be a very large increase in completely unscreened tarmac width, with new associated structures clearly visible, and with existing valued screening having been removed.
 - Some of the points the Applicant makes in these paragraphs derive from poor design of previous screening that National Highways had installed in connection with road widening projects.

- Park Pale Bridge:
 - 3.1.32 on page 10 states that this is a key access for Harlex Haulage, that is not so presently as the Harlex entrance currently does not use the approach or bridge but passes underneath, and in future would only use the approach, but the new design could always be further modified.
 - It is correct that there is still severance by there being roadway at both ends of Park Pale bridge however it is unlit of itself and carries much less traffic, especially during the night, so is subject to much less disturbance.
- Nocturnal light pollution:
 - 3.2.3 on page 11 discusses this, the A122:A2/M2 junction and the line of the A122 will cause considerable nocturnal light pollution due respectively to elevation in the landscape and there not being any pre-existing roadway.
 - Lights on/from vehicles will also have considerable impact.
- Halfpence Lane nitrogen deposition levels:
 - At the hearing, Figure 2 on page 33 of APP-404 was shown, which has pink shading indicating an increase in nitrogen deposition of greater than 0.4kg N/ha/yr during Operation.
 - On page 40 of the Applicant’s response, in section B.13.9 the Applicant tries to explain why the pink shading extends southwards down Halfpence Lane (and partway northwards on Thong Lane) despite prediction of a large decrease in traffic volumes there.
 - The pink shading also extends part way up the eastern side of Thong Lane. The pollution must actually be adversely affecting both sides of these roads but the Applicant only considers half of the problem.
 - We are having trouble understanding the response so would be grateful for a simpler or clearer explanation.
 - We note as previously (please see page 7 of REP2-118) that the Parish Council owned “Crabbles Bottom” community open space appears to also be adversely impacted by this level of nitrogen deposition as pink shading reaches Great Crabbles Wood. However, no consideration has been given by the Applicant to any mitigation or compensation for this damage to our land.

REP8-110 9.187 Post-event submissions, including written submission of oral comments, for ISH11:

- Green bridges again:
 - In point A.7.6 on page 43 the applicant states that ““No examples in the literature were found with respect to specific approaches or designs for retrofitting existing grey bridges’ where, by necessity, construction is constrained by the ‘live’ transport networks beneath the existing structures that are either requiring replacement or modification.”
 - As we commented previously and the Applicant goes on to say (so their point is redundant), that is not the situation here as for both Brewers Road bridge and Thong Lane south bridge, the spans over the widened A2/M2 are being completely replaced.
 - We also said that in our experience (including the last time that these bridges were replaced), except when the spans that were built off-site are brought in for installation (usually with overnight/weekend single carriageway closures), there may

- not need to be any total or prolonged road closures required to install such new bridges.
- We are also not convinced that Brewers Road bridge will need to be (as opposed to it perhaps being in some way convenient) closed for as long as predicted.
- All that is required to widen the green bridges are extra parallel spans set on wider foundations. These of course increase the cost, which is the likely dominant actual constraint.
- Nitrogen deposition compensation – spatial relationship between impact and compensation:
 - Page 49, C.2 Hearing Action Point 16 discusses this.
 - In section C.2.2, it seems clear that the second point (landscape scale thinking) is being allowed to dominate over the first (location of significantly adversely affected designated sites), which latter is therefore given very little weight in the Applicants decisions.
 - In point C.2.6 on page 50 the Applicant quotes themselves, the repetition does not increase the veracity.
 - Plate C.1 on page 51 seems to prove the point made by IP’s that there is a quantitative disconnect.
 - South of the Thames we are effectively being penalised due to having existing ecological connectivity despite that having resulted not from chance but from strategic effort over many decades by a variety of organisations buying, conserving and enhancing suitable land areas (and which the Applicant now seeks to deliberately damage).
 - It is clear that there is a consensus view among IP’s south of the Thames that the Applicant’s approach needs revisiting and revising.

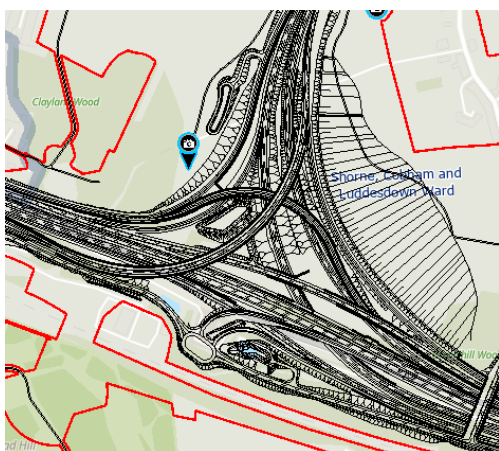
REP8-111 9.188 Post-event submissions, including written submission of oral comments, for ISH12:

- Chalk Park replacing Southern Valley Golf Club:
 - We discussed this in detail in our representation REP8-186, pages 4-5 so generally are not repeating the same discussion here.
 - Regarding points 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 on page 3, prior to the hearing we had (perhaps mis-) understood the name “Chalk Park” to apply only to the mounded area west of the southern tunnel portal and from there up to the A226 but it is now apparent that the Applicant refers to a much wider area by this name even though the bulk of the “Park” is some distance from Chalk, and the name becomes progressively less relevant the further one moves away from Chalk itself.
 - All that is happening is that the existing (albeit some routes are having to be highly modified) WCH/footpath network will be surrounded by landscaped confiscated land rather than by Southern Valley Golf Course and productive arable farmland.
 - Having been given Chalk Park, part of it has then been taken away again to accommodate a very large electricity substation, widened emergency access roadway and now also explicitly understood helicopter landing and emergency mustering areas.
 - The ambience of new paths around the tunnel portal area is low (much lower than the existing routes), the substitute routes for NC177 are poor and the missing link on NS167 really rankles in comparison with the Thames Chase bridge being provided north of the Thames.

- LTC Community Fund – Awards:
 - The Table on page 43 is noted but it is incomplete as only 5 items are listed.
 - The grant to the Thames and Medway Canal Association for a replacement headquarters cabin is noted with thanks from the community as a whole.
 - The Canal Association is primarily Gravesham based rather than in Medway – the new cabin is at the Mark Lane (western) end of the remaining canal. There are pictures of the new cabin in the latest edition of the T&MCA magazine.

REP8-112 9.189 Post-event submissions, including written submission of oral comments, for OFH5:

- Response to Mr Brace:
 - If Mr Brace lives 360m from the “alignment of the road” it is understandable that he is upset by the proposals.
 - We understand alignment to mean the centre line of the road, in which case distance to the edge of the carriageway or the edge of the cutting is a lower figure.
 - Regarding the Interactive Map, persons who are not very computer literate might have difficulty using the measurement tool although it is good once understood.
 - Using the tool shows that some properties in Shorne West are located less than 100m from the centre of the carriageway.
 - We were however interested in the photomontage viewpoint shown below, which is the only one looking at the A122:A2/M2 junction in Operation. This does not seem to be a very good representation of reality, and would have been actively misleading, as proved by the third extract, which is from REP7-189 albeit looking from a greater height, the other direction and not showing the proximity of residential properties.



Applicant’s referenced Interactive Map



Image obtained by clicking on the blue arrow



REP8-115 9.192 Responses to the Examining Authority's Third Written Questions (ExQ3)

- ExQ3 Q10.1.1 - Flood Risk Assessment - locationally specific provisions:
 - On page 23 the Applicant self-judges their work to date as satisfactory.
 - We suggest however that the Great Clane Marsh area, north of Lower Higham Road, merits detailed study as the Applicant will be creating “non-standard flood risk” there.
 - As an area already prone to flooding, and with outflow being tidal, we remain very concerned about the Applicant’s proposals to discharge additional water there given the close proximity of properties.
- ExQ3 Q10.1.4 - Landscape earthworks
 - This is discussed on page 24.
 - There are two aspects – during Construction and during Operation.
 - Exceedance/storm run-off from the Construction sites/Compounds, and the drainage ponds during Operation, is supposed to be guided to safe discharge areas. We would be grateful for more detail on how this will be achieved and safety assured. Downhill flow is risky here as it potentially impacts on the SPA and Ramsar Site as well as housing.
- ExQ3 Q12.2.1 – Cultural heritage/Archaeological investigations (within AONB only):
 - Land at Park Pale is discussed on page 70. Given that the A2 was a roman road and that roman remains are known on its south side, we consider that further roman finds are a possibility.
 - The “Fenn Wood” nitrogen deposition site is discussed on page 74. It has existing WW2 usage evidence from the remains of several buildings (Please see topographical survey in Planning Application ref 20100732 on the Gravesham Borough Council website).
 - For completeness, we mention that there is another and larger nitrogen deposition site in Shorne (at Court Wood/Swillers Lane) which also needs archaeological investigations but would not be mentioned in this section as it is outside of the AONB boundary. The site has just been heavily ploughed and sowed so investigation does not seem to be imminent.

Shorne Parish Council,
11th December 2023