

THAMES CROSSING ACTION GROUP

Lower Thames Crossing TR10032

Unique Reference 20035660

Please accept this submission in response to the Secretary of State letter Deadline 12th December 2024

Thames Crossing Action Group are a community action group which represents thousands of people from all areas opposed to the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC).

During the ExA process we were honored and accepted a seat by the planning inspectorate to sit and participate through the DCO process, which gave us the opportunity to make comments and observations along with stakeholders and relevant parties to the applicant National Highways.

Since the examination process is so fast paced and full on, and time is so limited we are unable to read, process and comment on everything we would like to, we are simply doing our best to comment on what we can. Failure to comment on certain aspects or examination documents does not mean we agree/disagree with other things simply that we do not have time and people power to comment on everything we would like to.

TCAG have been very consistent, submitting questions/observations at every deadline in the effort to hold the applicant accountable.

These can be found under **unique reference 20035660**

The LTC is an out of date, not fit for purpose scheme and if given the go ahead will cause detrimental health issues, stress, anxiety, not only through the construction period but when it is up and running, residents not only living along the 14-mile proposed road, but further afield will suffer on a day to day basis due to junctions and connections which were once part of the scheme being removed by the applicant due to the spiraling costs, and are now suggested to be stand-alone projects, which strapped for cash councils are expected to help fund. At some point during the design process the applicant must have thought they were important to the success of the proposed LTC to warrant being included?

TCAG are well aware that there needs to be a solution to help relieve the existing traffic issues at the Dartford Crossing, as when there is an incident/accident, roads on both sides of the existing crossing are brought to a complete standstill. The proposed LTC will be connected at Junction 29 on the M25 if you stand in North Ockendon where the proposed new lanes will be filtered in you can see very clearly the existing crossing.

At present Junction 29 is at a standstill, on a regular basis, due to the congestion at the existing crossing, which is what the applicant is supposedly trying to fix. With the estimated cost being above 10 billion and rising surely this project is counterproductive and is a very expensive sticking plaster. Residents of Essex, Kent and Havering deserve better.

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We would just like say, that we agree with the comments that Active Travel have suggested to the applicant and recognize that the applicant's response is still adamant that this out-of-date not fit for purpose proposed new road should only be for vehicle travel and due to design principles being inaccessible in its present form to any other forms of transport.

We were very interested to read that the applicant is prepared to give effected councils £1 million in funding to help with active travel around the proposed LTC effected area, and to improve connectivity as some local villages e.g. North /South Ockendon will be cut off from each other if not addressed. The applicant has not taken into account or planned how the traffic would migrate between the two crossings in the event of their being an incident/accident. This would put an extra strain on local roads causing chaos to the local public transport network, so looking at the bigger picture would this extra money be well spent? This would only add to the air pollution issues, due to Thurrock already being in a toxic triangle, due to being sandwiched between the A13, M25 and the proposed LTC.

We would like to bring to the attention of the Soss that with climate change becoming more apparent and only a few days ago the Queen Elizabeth Bridge having to close due to wind issues, the applicant has been very vague on what the height elevations would be on the new Mardyke Valley viaduct, as from the applicants own technical drawings, though very sketchy the elevations seem to be on par with the existing bridge

We have asked the applicant at community events whether they will be erecting wind barriers to protect HGVs on the viaduct. This area is known for high winds and the viaduct follows the line where the existing Orsett Windmill and the Ockendon windmill, which ironically collapsed due to high winds some time ago. The applicant is adamant that they have under taken desk top surveys and have spoken to the met office, on the subject and wind barriers are not needed.

The Mardyke is a natural flood plain and already floods on a regular basis, the applicants measure to mitigate this once, tons of concrete are added to accommodate the viaduct is the bare minimum, adding to the prospect of residential properties further afield being flooded.

The applicant has abided with the safety regulations on these matters but they are so out of date and written at a time when flooding and adverse weather conditions weren't taken into consideration, surely as a government body they have a moral obligation to go above and beyond as we have been told that the new crossing has a life expectancy of 100 years.

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At a time where there is economic uncertainty due to wars and global warming, we should be supporting our farmers in producing food to support local supermarkets so that we are less reliant on other countries.

This proposed road cuts through 14 miles of greenbelt, which includes grade 1 agricultural land, which there is only 5 % left in the country.

We would also like to point out that due to the scheme being a design and build project it is subject to change by the contractors, where and when they feel it necessary, this is an added concern for the residents living through the construction phase.

Conclusion

TCAG would sincerely hope that with the recent announcement from the Chancellor stating to her cabinet ministers that every pound will be scrutinised by an iron fist/grip against waste. The proposed Lower Thames Crossing should be flagged up to the Chancellor as it fails on all the above. It is not value for money and costs are only rising and it needs to be shelved making way for constructive dialogue on how do we alleviate the congestion at the Dartford Crossing and meet scheme objectives. As the Chancellor says every pound counts and the proposed LTC costs more per mile than HS2.

Please find below what we feel are the applicants' key weaknesses and alternative options that could be considered to alleviate the Dartford Crossing.

Lower Thames Crossing Key Weaknesses

- 1, Benefit-Cost-Ratio (BCR) is just 0.48, inflated to only 1.22 if wider economic benefits are included. This represents poor value of the DfT's value for money framework.
- 2, No Public Transport Provision included within the LTC
- 3, The LTC fails basic objectives set by National Highways / DfT taking as little as 4% traffic away from the existing crossing²
- 4, Dartford Crossing returns to current congestion levels within five years of opening²
- 5, The LTC increases congestion on local roads and degrades air quality (PM2.5 / PM10 and 7 million tCO₂e) for local residents⁴
- 6, The LTC would cost £10+ billion making it more expensive per mile than HS2³
- 7, A Smart Motorway-by-stealth, being designed to motorway standards with no hard shoulders⁶

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Proposed alternatives to the LTC include these rail-based opportunities

- GB Rail Freight London Gateway intermodal trains – 129 HGVs removed from our roads per train.
 - Thames Gateway Tramlink - Public transport connection between Kent & Essex. A £900m project that promotes employment and sustainable growth.
 - Network Rail details £10M plan to allow more freight through Channel Tunnel, removing a considerable number of HGVs from all UK roads, including the Dartford Crossing.
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Thank you for your time.
Kind Regards

Thames Crossing Action Group (TCAG)