



Meeting note

File reference	Lower Thames Crossing
Status	Final
Author	Louise Evans
Date	12 May 2017
Meeting with	Highways England
Venue	Temple Quay House
Attendees	Highways England - Philippa Lewis, Nick Coombes, Rob Audsley, Andrew Saunders, Nicky Hartley, Tim Wright The Planning Inspectorate – Tom Carpen, David Price, Gail Boyle, Richard Price, Louise Evans
Meeting objectives	Project Inception Meeting
Circulation	All

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised on its openness policy, explaining that any advice given would be recorded and placed on the Inspectorate's website under section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (the PA2008), and that any advice issued under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which Applicants (or others) could rely. The Inspectorate gave an overview of its role during the Pre-Application stage.

Highways England (HE) provided an overview of the Proposed Development with a slideshow presentation which can be viewed as an attachment to this note.

Non-statutory public consultation about the Proposed Development was held in Q1 2016, and consisted of 24 information events. with events specifically targeting hard to reach groups. These non-statutory events were attended by approximately 13,000 people and 47,000 responses were received. The decision on the preferred route option (Route 3) was announced on 12 April 2017.

HE confirmed that it had been progressing with obtaining access to land in connection with the Proposed Development, and had been regularly liaising with the relevant landowners. The Inspectorate advised HE to keep it informed in respect of land access, particularly with regard to any potential need to seek authorisation under s53 of the PA2008.

HE explained that whilst it has not yet been decided how user-charging would function, it would be included as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO).

HE confirmed that the site was in proximity to various local, national, and internationally designated sites and features, including European Sites (notably the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar and Special Protection Area). The DCO would require a Deemed Marine Licence as the Proposed Development includes tunnelling under the River Thames.

The Inspectorate advised that there would be changes to the Advice Notes to take account of the new Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The Inspectorate also advised that a new Advice Note on the Water Framework Directive was being prepared and would be published shortly. HE stated that it would finalise work on the Scoping Report after the updated Regulations were in force and that relevant updated Advice Notes would be incorporated.

HE summarised the consultation undertaken to date with Natural England regarding the specifics of ecological surveys. The Inspectorate advised that although it was not a mandatory part of the Pre-Application process, the production of a Habitat Regulations Assessment Evidence Plan could help to inform Statements of Common Ground with the statutory nature conservation bodies. The Inspectorate could provide support in accordance with the pre-application prospectus if HE decided to prepare an Evidence Plan.

HE confirmed that statutory consultation under section 42 and 47 of the PA2008 was planned to take place in May/ June 2018, and that formal submission of the application for development consent would be in Q3 2019.

Specific decisions/ follow up required?

It was decided that further contact would be made via face to face meetings or teleconferences as the application progressed, and that the frequency of these would increase leading up to the formal submission of the application. The submission of draft application documents for review and comment by the Inspectorate prior to formal submission was discussed. A timetable for this would be agreed in due course.

Presentation to the Planning Inspectorate Lower Thames Crossing

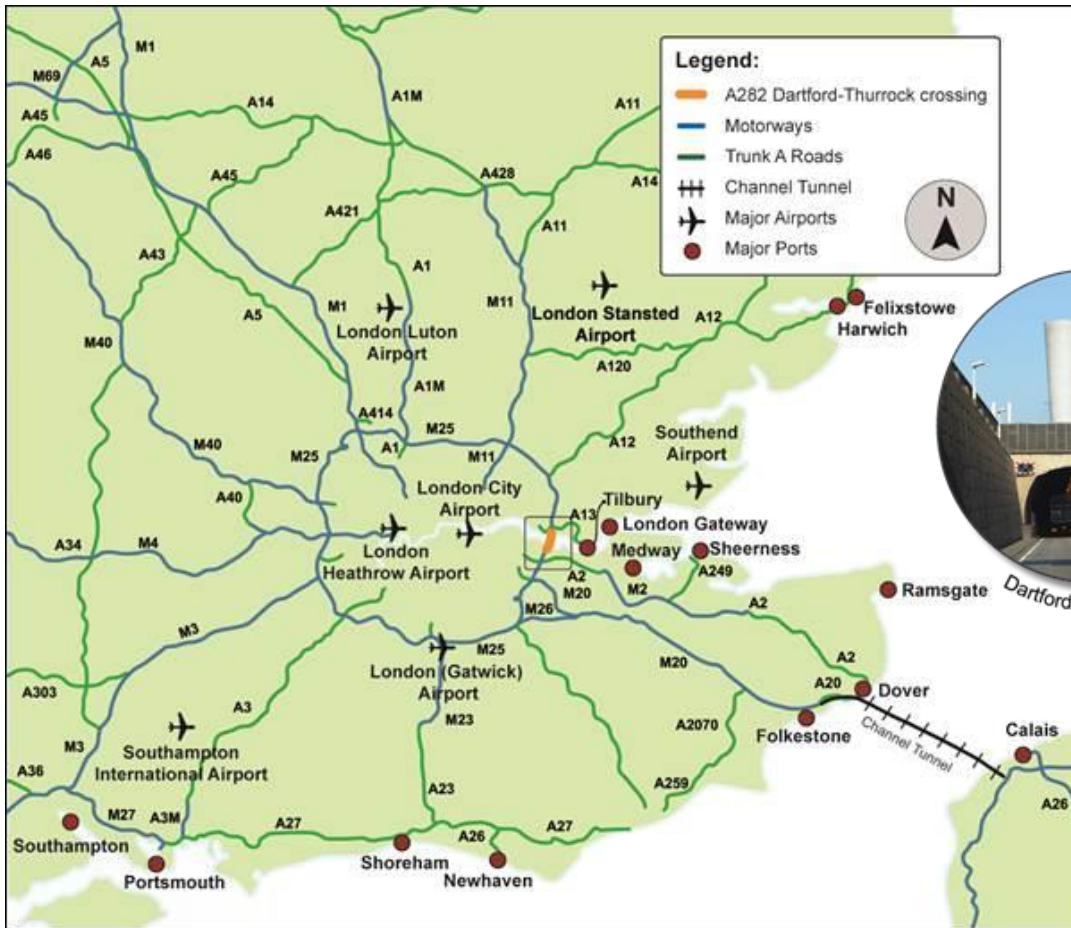
**Date 12 May 2017
Meeting 1**

Agenda

- Introductions
- Scheme Overview
- Scheme Details
- Environment including the EIA Scoping Report
- Land
- Funding
- Stakeholders
- Any Other Business

Introductions

Scheme Overview - need for improvement



Dartford West Tunnel



Dartford East Tunnel



QEII Bridge

Scheme Overview - need for improvement

- Congestion at Dartford Crossing due to high traffic volumes, high levels of incidents and lack of resilience affecting journey times and reliability on the strategic and local road networks
- Congestion and delays adversely affect economic growth
- Poor connectivity between north and south of the river impedes movement of labour, goods and services
- People living close to the crossing exposed to high levels of vehicle emissions
- Poor road safety record along existing M25/A282 corridor
- Opportunities to improve situation at the existing crossing limited because of physical constraints and the layout of the local road network.
- The existing problems will get worse with increasing traffic levels.

Scheme Overview

Scheme Objectives

Transport

- To relieve the congested Dartford Crossing and approach roads and improve performance by providing free flowing north-south capacity
- To improve resilience of the Thames crossings and major road network
- To improve safety

Economic

- To support sustainable local development and regional economic growth in the medium to long-term
- To be affordable to Government and users
- To achieve value for money

Environment & Community

- To minimise adverse impacts on health and the environment

Scheme Details – Preferred Route



Confirmed by
Secretary of State for
Transport
on 12 April 2017

Route 3
Bored Tunnel
Western Southern
Link

Scheme Details

- The preferred route would provide a new 70 mph route between the M25 in Essex and the A2 in Kent. Proposed junctions include:
 - A new free-flow junction with north-facing slip roads on the M25 between Junctions 29 and 30.
 - A modified junction with the A13/ A1089 in Essex, including a spur to the Orsett Cock junction, incorporating an improvement to the A128.
 - A new free-flow junction with the A2 to the east of Gravesend.
- Twin bored tunnels large enough to accommodate a dual three lane carriageway, in order to provide a future-proofed solution. The new tunnels would accommodate all vehicles and would not be restricted by size or load type, unlike the northbound tunnels at the existing Dartford crossing.

Route protection and land

- Preferred Route was confirmed on 12 April 2017
- Notification of Development was issued to local planning and highways authorities
 - Request is in accordance with
The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 - Article 18(1) and Schedule 4, paragraph (h)
 - Each authority is required to identify development likely to prejudice the construction of this road and consult Highways England on such development
- Land owners and interested parties were notified by letter that they were within the indicative 'red-line' boundary
 - Highways England standard materials regarding blight, and both discretionary purchase and compulsory purchase have been published on the Lower Thames Crossing website

Development of the Preferred Route

Further detailed work will be undertaken including on the following aspects:

- If currently proposed dual two lanes need to be dual three lane for some of the route
- Provision of local junctions with the A226 south of the river and at Tilbury north of the river
- Extension of the tunnel to mitigate the impacts of the scheme
- Development of the junction arrangements with the A2, A13 and M25 to reduce their impacts on the community and the environment.
- Alternative alignments for the route where it passes through the landfill site north of South Ockendon.
- Charging
- Further assessment of the impacts of the preferred route on the wider road network. This work will form part of Highways England's ongoing route strategy planning.
- Construction logistics including in river structures and waste management / opportunities for reuse
- Third party infrastructure (e.g. modifications to overhead lines)
- Compensation/mitigation land requirements

Environment

- Environmental context
- Environmental Appraisal to inform Preferred Route Selection
- EIA Scoping Report
- Ecological Surveys
- Emerging Design
- Habitats Regulations Assessment

Environmental Context

- Large number of constraints from international to local level:
 - Southern Extent of the Scheme
 - Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - Greenbelt
 - Claylane Wood Ancient Woodland
 - Shorne and Ashenbank Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest
 - North Downs Woodland Special Area of Conservation
 - Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar Site, Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest
 - Potential functionally Linked Land
 - Canal and Grazing Marsh Higham Local Wildlife Site
 - Recommended Marine Conservation Zone
 - Cobham Hall Registered Park and Garden
 - Grade II* and Grade II Listed Buildings
 - Noise Important Areas along the A2
 - Flood Zones adjacent to the River Thames
 - Underlying chalk aquifer
 - Number of Public Rights of Way including National Trail
 - Number of recreational facilities including Southern Valley Golf Course
 - Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land
 - Air Quality Management Areas

Environmental Context

- Northern Extent of the Scheme
 - Local Wildlife Sites – Goshems Farm, Low Street Pit, Blackshots Nature Area
 - Conservation Areas – West and East Tilbury
 - Scheduled Monuments – Orsett Crop Mark Complex, Causewayed Enclosure and Anglo-Saxon cemetery 500m ENE of Heath Place
 - Grade II Listed Buildings
 - High potential for undiscovered archaeology
 - Open Access Land
 - Greenbelt
 - Flood Zones adjacent to the River Thames and associated with the Mar Dyke
 - Number of Public Rights of Way and recreational facilities
 - Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Environmental Appraisal for Options

- WebTAG Appraisal – Noise, Air, Greenhouse Gases, Landscape, Townscape, Historic Environment, Biodiversity, Water Environment
- Statutory Environmental Bodies agreement to appraisal approach
- Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening – critical to informing decision about the preferred crossing type
- No surveys undertaken – site reconnaissance only
- Engagement with statutory and non statutory environmental bodies
- Sought to minimise direct impacts on international and nationally important sites

EIA Scoping Report

- Comprises – main volume of text (300pp), volume of drawings (90) and appendices (likely to be 5 volumes of c50MB)
 - Utilised Advice Notes 7, 9 and 17
 - Outline the National Networks National Policy Statement requirements
 - No proposals to scope topics or impacts out at this stage – proposed further engagement with statutory bodies and other organisations
 - Methodologies draw upon Volume 11 of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and other best practice guidance
 - Recognise forthcoming EIA Regulations – will develop structure of PEIR in line with scoping advice
 - Will rely on prevailing best practice and standards
- Introduction
 - The Project
 - The Main Alternatives Considered
 - Consultation
 - EIA Method
 - Air Quality
 - Cultural Heritage
 - Landscape
 - Nature Conservation
 - Geology and Soils
 - Materials
 - Noise and Vibration
 - People and Communities
 - Road Drainage and the Water Environment
 - Cumulative Effects
 - Proposed Structure of the Environmental Statement
 - Transboundary Screening

EIA Scoping Report – Environmental Topic Structure

- Introduction
- NPSNN Requirements
- Consultations undertaken and proposed
- Baseline information obtained and surveys undertaken
- Other baseline information to be obtained
- Key Environmental Receptors and their Value
- Methodology
- Description of Possible Significant Effects on receptors
- Potential Mitigation Measures
- Aspects/Impacts Scoped out of the EIA
- Any Other Information

EIA Scoping Report – Cumulative Impact Assessment

- In accordance with Advice note seventeen: Cumulative effects assessment relevant to nationally significant infrastructure projects
- Initial review of developments carried out and initial zone of influence established

Environmental Stakeholders

Engagement with number of organisations during options phase:

- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Marine Management Organisation
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Essex and Kent County Archaeologists
- Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Buglife
- The Woodland Trust
- The Kent and Essex Wildlife Trusts.

Key Themes from Environmental Engagement and Consultation

- Recognition that the Western Southern Link less environmentally damaging than the Eastern Southern Link
- High potential for non designated archaeological remains to be affected
- Linkage and connections between cultural heritage assets must be recognised – East and West Tilbury, Scheduled Monuments on either side of the River Thames
- Thames Estuary (TE)2100 requirements need to be considered and opportunities maximised where possible
- Climate change allowance has increased significantly – needs to inform the Flood Risk Assessment
- Criticality of Habitats Regulations Assessment and potential requirement for mitigation land
- Opportunities for beneficial re-use of tunnelling spoil
- Certain details to be resolved between organisations re who is leading on certain issues e.g. underwater noise
- Need to consider Kent Downs AONB Management Plan in the assessment
- Landscape enhancement has been raised by Kent Downs AONB Unit
- Ancient woodland replaceability and need to minimise loss

Ecological Surveys

- Ornithological surveys commenced 11 April 2017 across all routes
- Survey of all routes ceased in order to focus on preferred route alignment following confirmation of survey extent with Natural England
- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey to commence in June 2017 (to include HSI of ponds for GCN and identification of potential bat roosting locations)
- Phase 1 will inform targeted protected species surveys later in 2017/2018

Survey Methodology

Initial Breeding Birds to support EIA

Survey transects will incorporate all suitable habitat within redline boundary of the route, including wider survey area associated with functional habitat linked to the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar site and SPA.

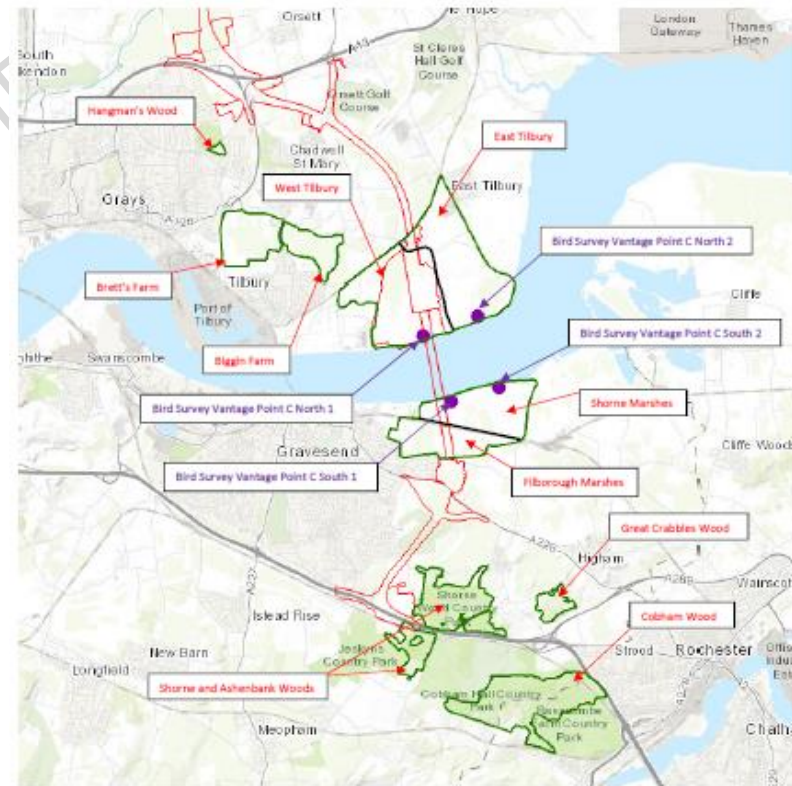
Surveys undertaken monthly between April – July (inclusive)

Surveys start ideally 0600 – 0700 BST, survey duration of 2-3hrs.

Currently proposed 2017 (initial surveys) and 2018 for:

- the Ramsar site and SSSI affected by Route
- Areas of potential functional habitat associated with the Ramsar site and SPA affected by Route alignment
- any SSSIs designated for breeding birds potentially impacted by route alignment

Proposed 1 year of survey of any other suitable habitat for remainder of route alignment



Survey Methodology

HRA (on passage and overwintering birds)

- 2 years survey of Ramsar site and functional habitat associated with river crossing. Survey data supported by BTO WeBS data to inform DCO application and HRA.
- Surveys commenced 11 April 2017, to be completed by end of March 2019.
- Survey year to follow BTO WeBS survey timings: Spring passage: **April to June** inclusive; Autumn passage: **July to October** inclusive and Wintering birds: **November to March** inclusive
- Twice monthly Vantage Point survey of crossing location for Route
- Monthly transect surveys of suitable terrestrial habitat associated with crossing location (areas identified as potential functional habitat as well as the Ramsar site)
- Monthly nocturnal assessment of terrestrial habitat (as above)
- Surveys to cover 6hr periods across the tidal cycle

Environmental Design

- Environmental Masterplan will be prepared
- Ongoing engagement with environmental stakeholders to develop the design
- Highways England Environment Strategy
- Highways England Licence and Biodiversity Plan
- Seek to identify environmental enhancement opportunities where possible

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- HRA Screening in progress for the preferred route
- Sites screened in:
 - Thames Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA)
 - Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar site
 - North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Holehaven Creek potential SPA (Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI))
- Surveys in progress to inform the HRA
- Natural England will be involved throughout

Land Use

- Project in early stages of engagement with land owners
- Over 200 land interests have been identified and contacted to date
- Land ownership includes
 - Permanent use:
 - Significant number of commercial & residential land owners (18 residential, 3 commercial properties for demolition)
 - Land owned by local government, occupied by traveller community (22 plots)
 - Agricultural land (including 3 buildings)
 - Statutory undertakers land
 - Forestry Commission
 - Temporary use and permanent rights
 - Crown Estate land (river areas)
 - Land owned by RSPB, occupied by Metropolitan Police
 - Statutory undertakers land
- Majority of land (by area) comprises agricultural usage
- Further work on land referencing will be ongoing, as the design and construction plans are developed

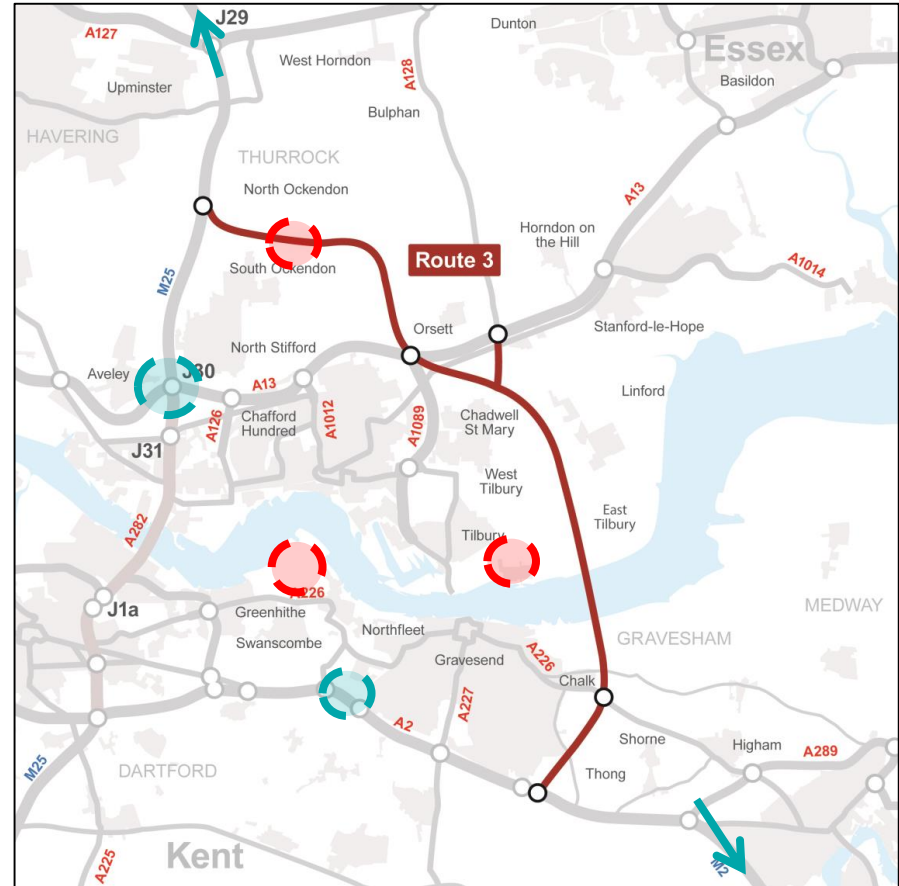
Regional Development

Major development proposed by others

- Regional:
 - Paramount Park
 - Tilbury 2
- Within route alignment
 - Solar project (38MW PV array)

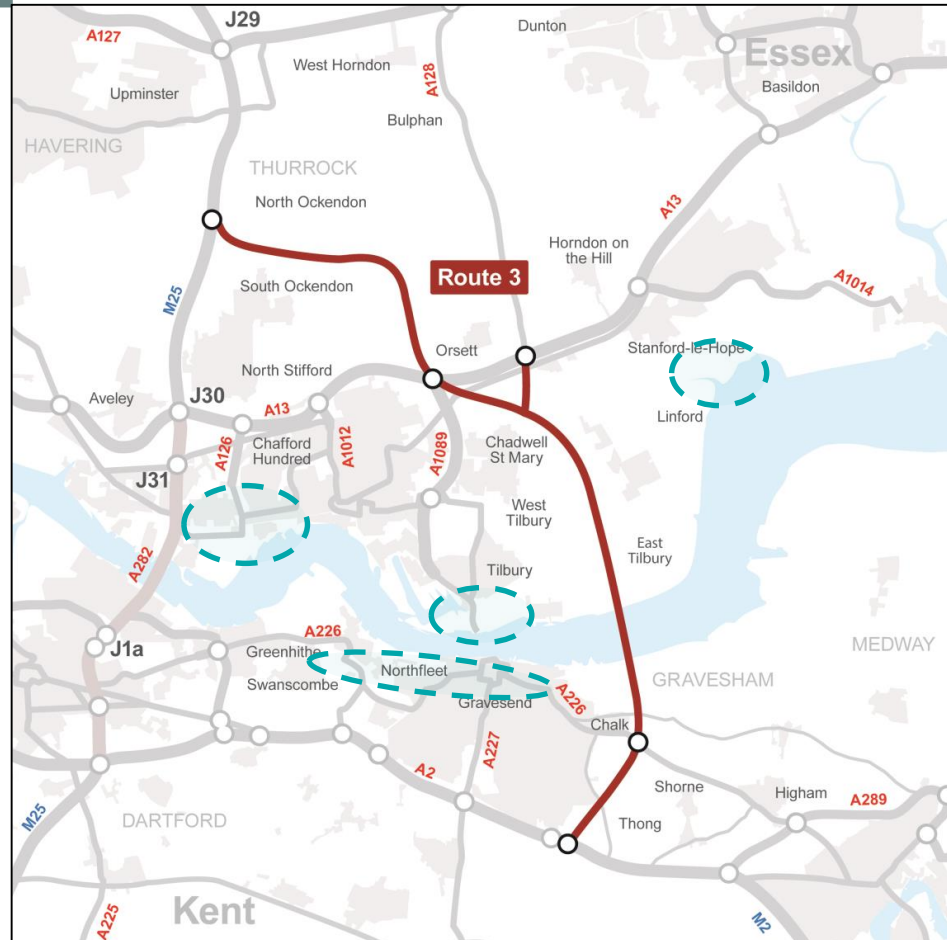
Development by Highways England

- A2 Bean & Ebbsfleet junction
- M25 Junction 30 improvement
- M25 Junction 28 improvement
- M2 Junction 5 improvement



Local Development Plans

- Havering
 - New Local Plan in development
- Thurrock:
 - Employment regeneration of Grays, Tilbury and London Gateway
 - New Local Plan in development
- Gravesham
 - Employment and housing along River Thames and Ebbsfleet



DCO Powers sought

- Works to be included comprise:
 - Enabling works
 - Construction of Tunnel & highways
 - Operational aspects, including maintenance
 - Any mitigation requirements
 - Relocation of Statutory Undertakers assets (notably several overhead power lines)
- Powers sought within the DCO will include:
 - Compulsory purchase
 - Temporary possession
 - Permanent acquisition of rights
- We are currently planning to include all works in the DCO. We may seek permission to undertake some early/enabling works via the Town & Country Planning Act, but will include them into the DCO as well
- Deemed Marine Licence
- Work on determining other powers sought is underway

Funding

- A range of funding options / delivery models are being considered
- The 2016 consultation stated that, subject to the necessary funding and planning approvals, the new crossing could be open in 2025 if wholly publicly funded. If private funding is also used to meet the costs of the project, it is anticipated the crossing would be open by 2027. The inclusion of private finance in delivery contracts typically takes longer due to the need to agree and procure the financing element.
- The projections we have used to date have all been based on the scheme being publicly funded, but we have always been upfront that other funding options may be considered also
- Ultimately this will be a decision for Government, and we will continue to work with Government to assess all funding options, including the potential for contributions from user charging and third parties, e.g. where there is development gain from the scheme

Stakeholders - overview

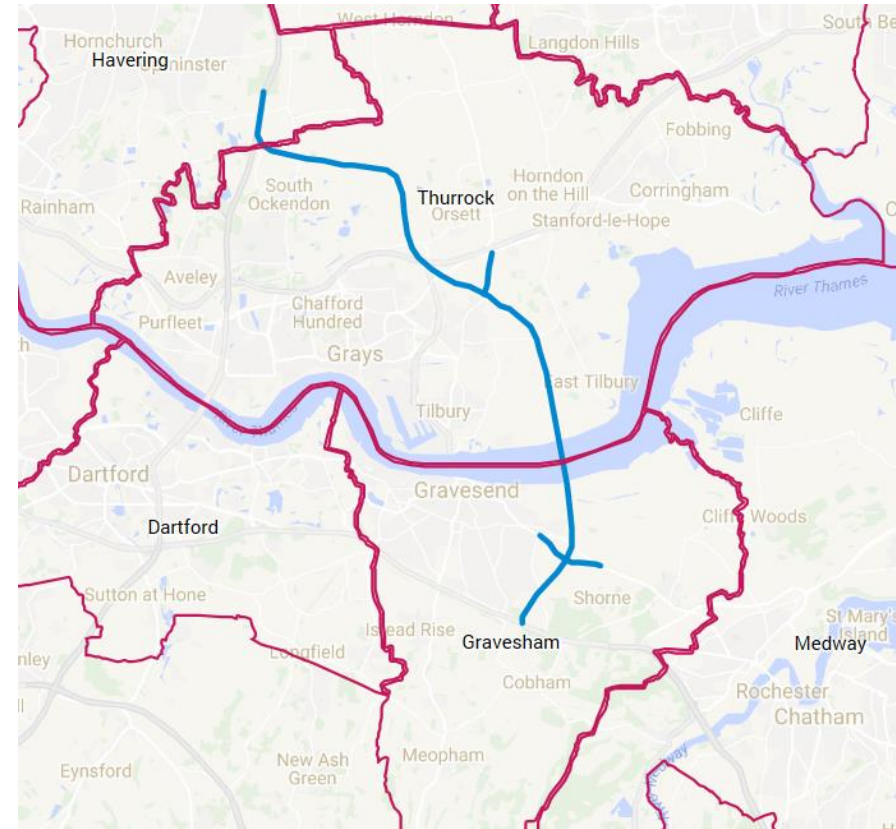
- Broad & diverse stakeholder base with significant regional and local political and community interest and opposition
- Record response to public consultation – 47,000
- Extensive engagement with stakeholders undertaken across 6 ‘cohorts’ as part of technical assessment during options phase
- Integrated strategy and continued cohort approach
- Community engagement key to development phase to inform design development and build relationships and advocacy

Stakeholder cohorts



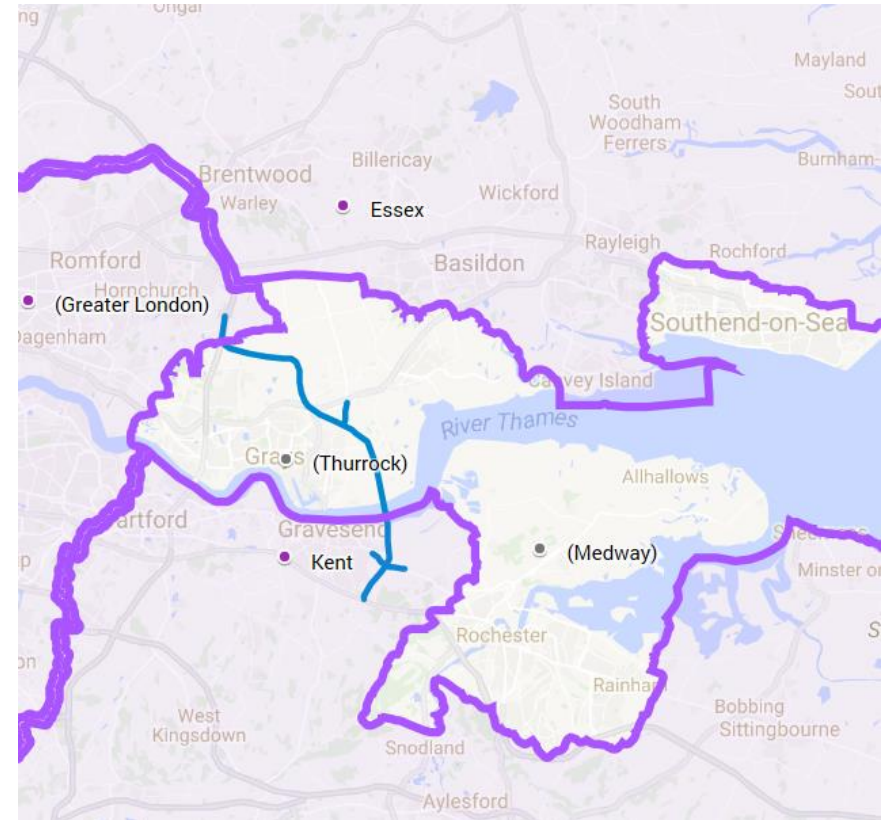
Key LA Stakeholders (Tier 1 Districts)

- Directly impacted:
 - Thurrock Council
 - Gravesham
 - London Borough of Havering



Key LA Stakeholders (Tier 1 Counties)

- Directly impacted:
 - Kent County Council
- Neighbouring
 - Essex County Council



Key LA Stakeholders (Tier 2)

- Indirectly impacted:
 - Transport for London
 - Medway Council
 - Dartford Borough Council
 - Basildon Borough Council
 - Brentwood Borough Council
 - Ebbsfleet Development Corporation
 - London Borough of Bexley
 - Maidstone Borough Council
 - Southend Borough Council
 - Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Industry

- Directly affected industry asset owners/operators:
 - High Speed 1
 - Network Rail
 - National Grid
 - UK Power Networks
 - Southern Water
 - RWE nPower
 - Veolia Environmental Services
 - Barking Reach Power Station
 - Metropolitan Police

Community

- Little or no direct engagement with local communities, prior to Public Consultation (2016)
- Significant interest
 - 13,000 people attended the public information events and over 47,000 responded to consultation
- Significant and vocal opposition from local communities

Other issues

- EIA Regulations and PINS view on significance of changes
- Red line boundary
- Year of Opening
- Forthcoming Advice Notes
- Design Manual for Roads and Bridges update
- Size of EIA Scoping Report
- Proportionate Assessment and Reporting
- HRA Evidence Plan?