

2 March 2016		ITEM: 3 Urgent Business
Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Lower Thames Crossing Consultation		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: Key
Accountable Head of Service: Ann Osola, Head of Transportation and Highways		
Accountable Director: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on additional evidence gathering to inform Thurrock Council's response to Highways England's Route Option Consultation on the Lower Thames Crossing which has taken place since Scrutiny Committee's last meeting on the 9 February 2016. It also updates the Committee on actions taken in response to the resolutions of the Committee at that date, and seeks Committee endorsement of recommendations to Cabinet to support the Council's representation of stakeholder interests.

1. Recommendation(s)

That the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1.1 Notes actions taken in response to resolutions of the Planning, Transportation, Regeneration Committee at its meeting of 9 February 2016 as set out in paragraph 3.1.**
- 1.2 Note the views expressed by attendees at the public meeting on Lower Thames Crossing at Tilbury Cruise Terminal on Thursday the 25 February 2016 as summarised in paragraph 3.2.**
- 1.3 Note the views expressed at the meeting of Thurrock Business Board of 29 February 2016 to discuss highways England's Lower Thames Crossing proposals as set out in paragraphs 3.3 & 3.4.**
- 1.4 Call upon Cabinet to pursue the establishment of a Congestion Task Force comprised of Highway Authority, Emergency Service and business partners on both sides of the existing Dartford Crossing to**

develop measures to alleviate the unacceptable levels of network disruption which result from incidents or closures on that Crossing.

- 1.5 Note the Draft Evidence Gathering Report (see Appendix 1) which is being developed to reflect the representations made to this Committee on Lower Thames Crossing, and which will be finalised following this meeting.**
- 1.6 Agree to recommend to Cabinet at its meeting of 9 March 2016 that the final version of this Committee's Evidence Gathering Report be incorporated as an appendix to the Council's Formal Consultation Response to Highways England.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 In 2009 the Department for Transport (DfT) examined five locations where an additional crossing could be built. The report found that the most easterly of these (Locations D and E) would bring very limited congestion relief to the existing crossing. Both were also shown to encourage a low level of traffic demand, which, when coupled with their relatively high scheme costs, meant that they would be unlikely to provide value for money.
- 2.2 In 2013, further analysis of the three remaining options (Locations A, B and C) together with an option known as C Variant (which would involve widening of the A229 between the M2 and M20) was carried out. In 2013 the DfT ran a public consultation on the need for a new crossing and invited views on:
 - Location A (at the existing crossing)
 - Location B (connecting the A2 and the Swanscombe Peninsula with the A1089)
 - Location C (east of Gravesend and Tilbury)
 - C Variant (widening of the A229 between the M2 and M20)
- 2.3 Later that year the Government announced its decision not to proceed with Location B due to limited public support, the potential impact on local development plans and limited transport benefits.
- 2.4 In 2014, the Government published its response to the consultation, confirming the need for an additional crossing between Kent and Essex. The response acknowledged that there was no preference at that stage on location, and that further work would be carried out to develop and appraise route options for both Location A and C before choosing where to site a new crossing.
- 2.5 The Council held a public meeting on Monday the 25 January 2016 at Orsett Hall in anticipation of a consultation on the remaining routes. On Tuesday the

26 January, Highways England commenced the new consultation, which is due to run until the 24 March 2016. The consultation document included route options for Corridors A & C and recommended Corridor C / Option 3 as the preferred solution. The Council has held a further 3 public meetings, including a Witness Session of Planning, Transportation, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny (PTR O & S) and a special meeting of PTR O & S on the 9 February 2016.

3. Matters Arising Following Scrutiny's Last Meeting of 9 February 2016

Actions Taken in Relation to Resolutions of PTR O & S at its Meeting of 9 February 2016

3.1 The resolutions of PTR O & S have been actioned as follows:

- i. The Committee noted all representations from interested parties these are included in the Minutes provided for Item 2 of this Committee.
- ii. The then Director of Planning and Transportation has liaised with Highways England to ensure that Lower Thames Crossing consultation materials and maps are made available to Thurrock Council, members of the public and Councillors. All members were contacted to ascertain the needs of their wards and 22,000 questionnaires and 2,000 maps were requested of which, at the point of writing this report, Highways England supplied half of the requirement.
- iii. The Chair of the Committee in agreement with Group Leaders prepared a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport. The letter challenges the evidence on which the case for a crossing is made and requests an extension to the consultation period due to concerns over the inadequate information and consultation resources. It also requests the names and addresses of the 300 Thurrock residents and property owners who have received letters from Highways England informing them that their properties may be required for the new Crossing. No response has yet been received from the Secretary of State. However, Highways England has advised that they are unable to supply this information as it is covered by the Data Protection Act.

Public Meeting 25 February 2016

- 3.2** The Council facilitated a public meeting at the Tilbury Cruise Terminal on the 25 February 2016 which was attended by approximately 1000 people. Presentations were received from Highways England, Jackie Doyle-Price MP, Stephen Metcalfe MP, Cllr John Kent and George Abbot representing Thurrock Residents. The meeting was vocal in opposing any new crossing in Thurrock. A common theme in points raised by the audience was a desire to revisit Corridor Option D (a crossing to the east of Thurrock at Canvey Island).

Meeting of the Thurrock Business Board 29 February 2016

- 3.3** On the 29 February 2016, a meeting of the Thurrock Business Board was convened to consider Highways England's proposals in relation to a Lower

Thames Crossing. Board Members were broadly in favour of a new crossing, but expressed concerns that further work was needed in relation to proposed junctions, and that further information was required to give comfort that the proposed solution would alleviate rather than add to congestion in Thurrock.

- 3.4 Businesses also expressed concern that the current congestion issues arising in Thurrock when problems arose on the Dartford Crossing could not wait ten years to be addressed. It was proposed that a Congestion Task Force should be established, bringing together business stakeholders with Highways England, and their contractors, Local Highway Authorities on both sides of the crossing and Emergency Services to develop and progress a programme of mitigation measures to alleviate the problem.

Draft Evidence Gathering Report (Appendix 1)

- 3.5 Subsequent to PTR O & S's meeting of 9 February 2016, the growing body of stakeholder comments, including the initial findings of technical experts engaged by the Council to review Highways England's consultation materials, have been captured in a Draft Evidence Gathering Report (Appendix 1). The intention is that this will continue to be developed over the next two weeks, and a finalised version could be available to support Thurrock Council's formal consultation response to Highways England. Key points in the draft document can be summarised as follows:

- 3.5.1 It is apparent that a number of the issues raised by the Witness Session participants are also picked up by the technical experts – specifically that the environmental impacts have not been adequately captured and could outweigh the benefits of a new crossing, and that further traffic flow modelling is needed using more up-to-date information; and that there are a number of other procedural and technical issues which merit mention. The Witness Sessions highlighted the serious flaws in the consultation process which need to feature highly in the Council's consultation response. These issues have been reinforced by members of the public at the meeting on the 25 February 2016.
- 3.5.2 The strength of feeling of residents across the Borough largely against any Lower Thames Crossing through Thurrock should be noted. Business views are broadly in favour of a crossing, with specific representation received from the Port of Tilbury in regard to the importance of a new crossing in the east of Thurrock in supporting Port expansion (with an associated request to ensure improved local access to Tilbury Port).
- 3.5.3. Base traffic origin/ destination information from 2001 even if improved by validation data from 2009 does not produce a traffic model with sufficient confidence on its accuracy for a scheme which may start construction in

2021, at the earliest. An accurate traffic model is essential to provide a valid basis for assessment of a scheme of this national importance.

- 3.5.4 The Highways England proposal' preferred option only takes 14% of traffic from the Dartford Crossing. There is a strong case for government to consider the national interest by undertaking a full strategic road network review for a wider area and make it clear what it is trying to achieve.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The recommendations support an effective and integrated Council response to Highways England's proposals for a Lower Thames Crossing.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This report details extensive consultation with residents, Members and businesses.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The Council's objections to Highways England's Lower Thames Crossing proposals are aligned with Council's corporate plan priorities of "improving health and well-being" and "promoting and protecting our clean and green environment".

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Chief Accountant

Any direct costs arising from the recommendations of this report will be absorbed within existing service budgets.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Vivienne Williams**
Planning and Regeneration Solicitor

The statute of Local Government Act 1986, Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity requires that the Council's consultation response 'provides a balanced and factually accurate view in a fair manner'.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development and Equalities
Manager**

There are no direct equality implications resulting from this report. Any final decision regarding the Lower Thames Crossing will need to be informed by an equality impact assessment with due consideration to the health impact of the proposal on all people with protected characteristics.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny 9 February 2016 report: Lower Thames Crossing – Highways England's Options
- Cabinet 10 February 2016 report: Lower Thames Crossing – Highways England's Options
- Highways England consultation documents are available at:
<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/cip/lower-thames-crossing-consultation>
- The consultation is also available through Thurrock Council's website at:
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/thames-crossing/thames-crossing-campaign>

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1- Draft Evidence Gathering Report

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Transportation & Highways

Lower Thames Crossing

Draft Evidence Gathering Report Planning, Transportation, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Background	3
3. Highways England Presentation	4
4. Representations from the Public and Businesses	7
5. Correspondence from Stephen Metcalfe	8
6. The Councils Independent Expert Advice	9
7. Summary and conclusions	12
Annex 1 - The Lower Thames Crossing Witness Session	13

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is a draft evidence gathering report which is to be used to formulate the Council's response to the Lower Thames Crossing consultation. It summarises representations from the public, businesses, Councillors, Members of Parliament, the Council's highways and transportation experts and Highways England. This report will be updated following Planning, Transportation, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee deliberations on the 2nd of March 2016 to inform Cabinet on the 9th of March 2016.

2. Background

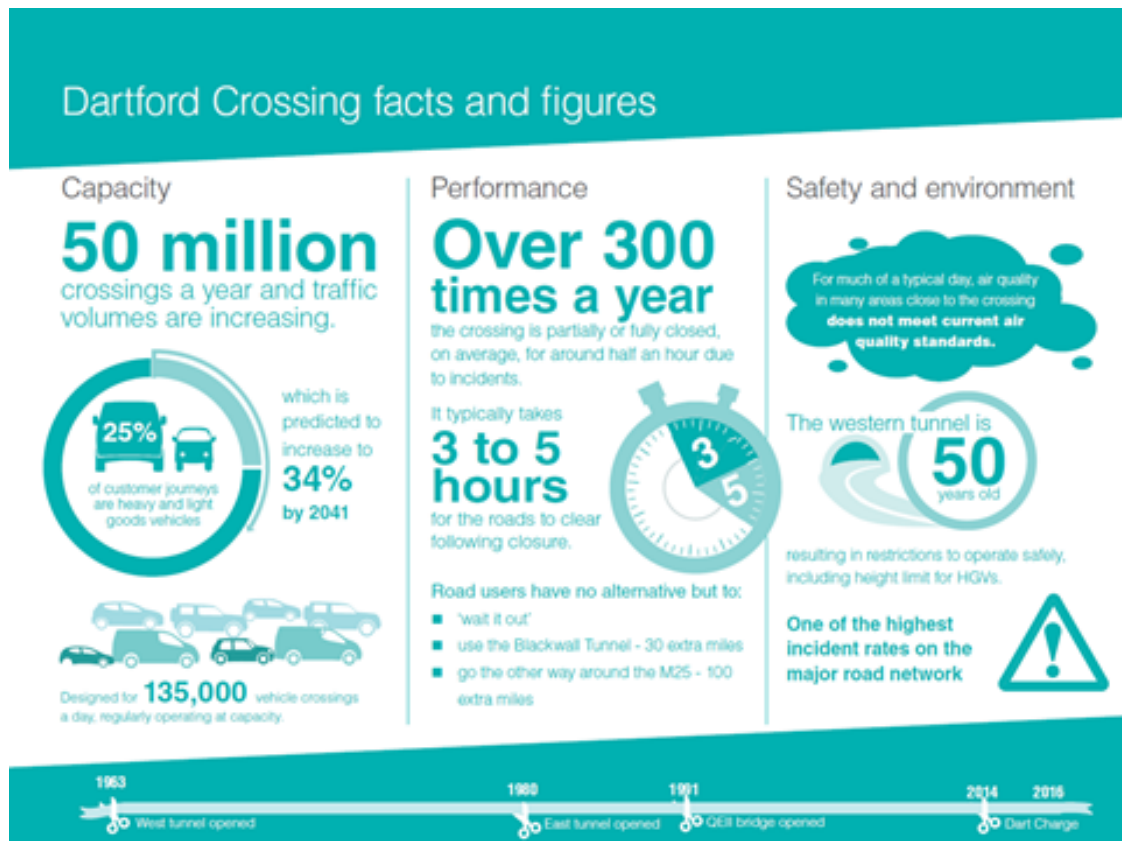
- 2.1 In 2009 the Department for Transport examined five locations where an additional crossing could be built. The report found that the most easterly of these (Locations D and E) would bring very limited congestion relief to the existing crossing and would have relatively high scheme costs, which would mean that they would be unlikely to provide value for money.
- 2.2 In 2013 further analysis of the three remaining options (Locations A, B and C) together with an option known as C Variant (which would involve widening of the A229 between the M2 and M20) was carried out. In 2013 the Department for Transport ran a public consultation on the need for a new crossing and invited views on:
- Location A (at the existing crossing)
 - Location B (connecting the A2 and the Swanscombe Peninsula with the A1089)
 - Location C (east of Gravesend and Tilbury)
 - C Variant (widening of the A229 between the M2 and M20)
- 2.3 Later that year the Government announced its decision not to proceed with Location B due to limited public support, the potential impact on local development plans and limited transport benefits. In 2014, the Government published its response to the consultation, confirming the need for an additional crossing between Kent and Essex. The response acknowledged that there was no preference at that stage concerning the location, and that further work would be carried out to develop and appraise route options for both Location A and C before choosing where to site a new crossing.
- 2.4 The Council held a public meeting on Monday the 25th of January at Orsett Hall in anticipation of a consultation on the remaining routes.
- 2.5 On Tuesday the 26th of January, Highways England commenced the new consultation, which is due to run until the 24th of March 2016. The consultation document included a recommendation in favour of Route 3 (one of 3 Location C options).
- 2.6 At the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 February 2016, Members received a number of other representations which are considered in more detail below. The Committee resolved that those representations be incorporated with more detailed advice from our transport experts into a report to Cabinet as part of the Council's response to the Lower Thames Crossing Consultation. The Committee also resolved that their Director

of Planning and Transportation liaise with Highways England to ensure that Lower Thames Crossing consultation materials and maps are made available to Thurrock Council, members of the public and Councillors.

- 2.7 The Committee also resolved that the Chair of the Committee, in agreement with the Group Leaders write a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport. The letter would request that the 300 addresses of residents whom received letters regarding their property being lost/affected would be provided to the Council. The letter would also request an extension to the consultation period and raise concerns over the inadequate information.

3. Highways England Presentation

- 3.1 The Highways England representative, Mr Martin Potts, opened the presentation to Members of the Committee with a number of slides. The image below outlines Highways England case in favour of the crossing.



- 3.2 Mr Potts explained Highways England opinion of the benefits of the proposed scheme, these included 5000 new jobs with £7billion contributed to the economy, unlocking the potential for investment in housing and regeneration. Mr Potts explained that the crossing would be a safer, faster and more reliable route, which would offer value for money and provide a return on investment. The consultation route options are highlighted on the Highways England image below.



3.3 Mr Potts highlighted the follow key points:

- Development of the proposals were assessed against the scheme objectives based on Economy, Transport, Community and Environment, through work with local authorities, environment bodies, commercial organisations and utility companies.
- Location C, route 3 was Highways England's proposed solution although 3 options north and 2 options south of the river were to be consulted on.
- It was explained that the new crossing would enable relief to the western end of A127 and A2 and significant relief to the existing Dartford Crossing Corridor, there would also be lesser relief to the M20.

3.4 Members were advised that the 8 week consultation period was closing on the 24 March 2016. The Committee were informed that there were 24 information public events, digital and online consultations, public events and questionnaires.

3.5 Members were given the opportunity to question Mr Potts. The Member questions and responses are summarised below.

- *Councillor Kerin felt that the proposed Lower Thames Crossing options would not enable communities to flourish and would add significant pressures to the borough. It was stated that Highways England must have a full understanding of the impact.*
- *Councillor Rice explained how residents were upset concerning the potential impact on their property and land. The Highways England representative explained that there was no correct time to share the unsettling news, but informed the Committee that 266,000 letters had been sent to make those that may have been affected aware of the consultation before it came to an end.*
- *Councillor Smith shared that communities felt disappointed due to the lack of information specifically regarding air quality statistics. Highways England explained that air quality assessments had been carried out which demonstrated how the preferred options would reduce traffic and recover air quality levels at the QE2 Bridge. It was questioned further by Councillor Smith what was in place to manage the risk of two accidents occurring at both crossings at the same time. The Highways England representative explained that national safety improvement targets were incorporated into the plan.*
- *Councillor Ray questioned why route 1 option A, a bridge adjacent to the current QE2 Bridge was discarded. The Highways England representative explained that the route was discarded due to the short life assessment which would not offer a substantial return on investment, it was added that the route would also require construction on live carriageways which would be dangerous for contractors. Councillor Ray queried if a Route 1 tunnel had been considered instead of a bridge, it was confirmed that this was also discarded.*
- *Councillor Gledhill questioned if the requested junctions for larger businesses such the Port of Tilbury would be included into the consultation. Highways England confirmed that there was a question in the consultation relating to this. It was questioned further what had been put in place to ensure that Thurrock benefited from the expected 5,000 jobs that were to be available from the Lower Thame Crossing nationally. Highways England informed the Committee that there had been discussion with contractors as to what they would do for local communities such as apprenticeships and training.*
- *Councillor Gledhill queried if the 14% of traffic from the QE2 Bridge being diverted to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing would balance out traffic flow. Highways England explained that a second crossing would enable relief for the QE2 Bridge but would not equally balance out the traffic.*
- *Councillor S Little explained that Orsett residents had received 300 letters from Highways England, it was felt that many other residents were still unaware of the proposals.*
- *Councillor Aker questioned if Highways England would post a letter with the consultation documents to every household in Thurrock with a free post return*

stamp. The Highways Group Manager agreed to look into this and informed the Committee that Highways had reached out to communities in other ways such as adverts, public consultations, and online consultations.

- *Councillor Snell queried how long it would be before the new Lower Thames Crossing would reach its full capacity. The Highways England Group Manager explained that route C would cope with traffic increases in the future however there was capacity to open a third lane.*
- *Councillor Worrall stated that information regarding the consultation materials and crossings had not been publicised correctly. Councillor Worrall felt that Councillors were carrying out work for Highways England to ensure that their Wards were provided with the correct information. The Committee requested that all consultation materials were provided to Thurrock Councillors and residents.*
- *Councillor Gerrish questioned what consultation response was required to discard the Lower Thames Crossing Options. Highways England informed the Committee that an independent consultation analysis by Ipsos MORI would be carried out then a consultation report would be sent to the Government.*
- *The Leader of the Council highlighted that the 300 letters had been sent to residents without any warnings or indication to the Council beforehand. Highways England explained that arrangements were shared as much as possible.*

4. Representations from the Public and Businesses

- 4.1 A Witness Session has been held which received representations from 16 residents groups, Forums, members of the public and three businesses, these representations are summarised in **Annex 1**. These were reported to the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 February 2016.
- 4.2 It was reported that all interested parties were concerned about various issues including flood risks and air quality impact on Thurrock residents' health and wellbeing. It was felt that the current options were not long term sustainable solutions to traffic growth and that the new routes would reach their full capacity in the near future. Interested parties highlighted that statistics used by Highways England were out of date and they alternatively raised many positive aspects of location D. Residents and communities feared that the only wildlife hospital in the region based in Orsett would be affected including rare wildlife. It was also felt that the green belt required to be preserved along with Grade 2 listed buildings.
- 4.3 Representations were received from Tilbury Port, Vopak and Green Energy. The Port of Tilbury supports Location C and are interested in developing local access to Tilbury Port in conjunction with their planned expansion proposals. Vopak also supported Location C, but had no particular preference for a route. They cited the continuous growth in traffic in the last 5 years and the increasing incidents of serious gridlock, which may lead to business reconsidering Thurrock as a location of future investment.

4.4 The then Director of Planning and Transportation explained that the questions raised from the afternoon and evening Witness Sessions had been recorded and that all queries would be answered. The Committee agreed that the following points from the Witness Session and Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be used to form a report to Cabinet in March:

- The Committee notes the strength of feelings and concerns shown by all interested parties.
- Seeks better engagement and consultation with the public.
- Seeks improved availability of consultation material to all interested parties.
- Seeks an extension of the consultation period.
- Agrees that consultants specifically look at the effects of the 3 proposals on congestion within the borough and the impact on the Strategic Road Network, particularly in the east of borough. Notes concerns were raised regarding M25 congestion.
- That the Scrutiny report would investigate issues around air quality, noise, environment degradation, loss of green belt and impact on health in the borough.
- Issues in relation to the Business Case would be linked into a review of data and whether the proposals would be value for money.
- Consultants would investigate strategic issues in relation to the 14% of traffic rerouting from the Dartford Crossing that would use the Lower Thames Crossing and how quickly the former would reach its full capacity.
- Further details would be sought from Highways England as to local traffic generation and route allocation.
- Notes concern that no considerations had been given to the alternative modal options. The Minister at the Select Committee on Crossings specifically said that sustainable transport and integrated land use and multi modal options would be considered. It was explained that Officers would be seeking through their consultants to see if this had taken place and how it would affect decision making when moving towards the preferred option in the future.

5. Correspondence from Stephen Metcalfe

- 5.1 At the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 February 2016, the Chair of the Committee read a written statement to Members which was produced by the South Basildon and East Thurrock Member of Parliament Stephen Metcalfe. The statement highlighted objections in principle and shared concerns over air quality, environment and the out of date evidence base for the proposals. The MP's statement specified that he remained firmly opposed to all the options, however if following the consultation Highways England were determined to press forward with a new crossing in Thurrock, it was stated that Thurrock must have confidence that this was a genuine consultation and not a public relations exercise.
- 5.2 The MP's statement explained that he remained committed to getting the best deal for Thurrock and promised to do the very best he could to work with all involved to make the best of a very difficult and unsettling situation. The Committee were informed that the MP would be holding a number of drop-in session events for residents to bring

their concerns directly, Members were informed that the details for these would be made public in the near future.

6. The Councils Independent Expert Advice

- 6.1 The Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 February 2016 resolved to seek further expert advice on the transport and economic implication of the Lower Thames Crossing proposals. Since that time an interim advice note has been supplied by our experts, which is outlined below.
- 6.2 The traffic movement data on which the appraisal partly relies is historic (2001 demand data) and does not satisfy the DfT's own requirements to base assessment on more recent data. Highways England's assessment of the scheme uses two benefit to cost ratios (BCRs) for each option – an Initial BCR, which excludes Wider Economic Benefits and Reliability impacts, and an adjusted BCR, which includes Wider Economic Benefits and Reliability Impacts. There is typically only a 0.1 - 0.3 difference between like for like BCR figures, e.g. Routes 2,3 and 4 have an initial BCR of 2.2, 2.3 and 2.1 respectively (lower end) and an adjusted BCR of 3.3, 3.4 and 3.1 (upper end). There is no clear headway between the options considered and the preferred scheme in terms of the costs and benefits of each option. Route 3 has the slightly higher BCR and there are differences for all routes depending on whether there are eastern or western links in Kent. The “benefits” in the BCR are substantially made of the journey time savings arising from traffic using the new route. Given there are significant questions over the accuracy of the traffic modelling and the likely level of benefits, then until more accurate data is available concerning contemporary journey patterns and tangible benefits where there is some degree of confidence, identifying a preference for a particular route is clearly premature.
- 6.3 The route locations A and C fulfil substantially different strategic functions, and location C is likely to be less effective in improving the wider resilience of the Strategic Road Network than location A. The supporting information includes a “resilience” test concerning the implications of a partial closure of the northbound Dartford Crossing (SAR Volume 5, para 4.9.8). The overall traffic flow reductions as a result of such a closure are greater for location C than location A, showing that location A (route 1) is actually the more resilient proposal. This demonstrates the interdependencies between the existing and proposed crossing (in the event of one of the frequent closures of the Dartford crossing). Once the new crossing is open, combined traffic levels crossing using both crossings will increase from 140,000 a day to 240,000 a day total by 2041. There is no detailed analysis or evidence of the impacts of the frequent closure of the existing crossing and the diversion of traffic; indeed it may cause worse community and environmental problems on the A2 and A13 when the diverting traffic hits bottlenecks.
- 6.4 Forecast traffic volumes on Routes 3 and 4 are broadly similar, at around 77,000 annual average daily traffic movements (AADT) in 2025 rising to 89,000 vehicles (AADT) in 2041. At the existing Dartford Crossing, traffic volumes in 2025 are predicted to be around 14% lower than a scenario without the new crossing. By 2041,

traffic volumes at the Dartford Crossing are predicted to be 7% lower than the without scheme scenario, as any spare capacity on the existing crossing is utilised by diverting or previously suppressed traffic and new traffic growth. So with only 14% of traffic being attracted to the new route from the existing crossing, the scheme has limited benefits in terms of one of its core objectives to 'relieve the congested Dartford Crossing and approach roads'. Clearly the modelled 14% diversion of traffic from the existing Dartford Crossing is quite low and is unlikely to make a significant long term difference to general traffic conditions at the existing crossing and more importantly the 14% will not substantively address the existing problems at the Dartford Crossing. For example closure due to high winds and delays on the approach to the tunnels due to oversized vehicles.

- 6.5 There is a lack of information needed to make an informed decision over any route and the strategic case tests have not been met, particularly regarding the rationale for the scheme. In particular the output/analysis for Route 1 appears to have not been presented fully, with no detail being provided concerning wider flows, junction impacts etc.
- 6.6 In any event, the work on detailed route options is premature given that the strategic planning case has not been agreed and the required stages in reaching this point have not been properly assessed or developed. Highways England has mapped out the stages it has apparently gone through in reaching this stage of the process as summarised in their Figure 2.2 of the 'Identification and Description of Shortlisted Routes'



- 6.7 It is not accepted or agreed by Thurrock Council that the strategic case and longlist through to shortlist selection has been adequately consulted upon, or that due weight has been applied to the many constraints in reaching the routes for consultation.
- 6.8 The Strategic Business Case should be represented in the light of each option to demonstrate the need for the proposed Crossing. No consideration has been given to the integration of alternative modes within the scheme, or the way in which the scheme could support the sustainable travel and land use integration objectives set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Policy Framework (NN-NPS).

- 6.9 The environmental harm that would be caused by the scheme has not been fully assessed or quantified, (including impacts on health and amenity), and this may not be out-weighed by any economic or transport benefits. Highways England notes that the scheme has significant impacts on:
- greenbelt land
 - landscape character
 - scheduled ancient monuments
 - listed buildings
 - conservation areas
 - functionally linked land and wildlife sites
 - Mardyke floodplain
 - Biodiversity
- 6.10 Further work is required to fully understand the environmental impact, in particular on air quality and public health and those impacts should be given appropriate weight when considered alongside any economic or transport benefits.
- 6.11 The preferred scheme is potentially in conflict with and would have a significant impact on Thurrock's strategic growth plan. In the earlier route options assessment process, Option B was rejected due to 'limited public support, the potential impact on local development plans and limited transport benefits. However, the HE preferred scheme also has significant potential impact on Thurrock's local development plans by severing and blighting large areas of potential development land to the north of the river Thames from the A1089 corridor through to East Tilbury, and north of the A13. It does not adequately address the impact on potential development in terms of access and operation. Highways England claim that the routes have 'the potential to unlock opportunities for housing and jobs', but this has not been demonstrated.
- 6.12 The preferred scheme could prejudice the much needed A13 upgrades that are already planned and essential to jobs growth and the expansion of the Ports. The existing housing and employment allocations have been planned in conjunction with a range of strategic road infrastructure improvements that have been delivered over time to allow traffic to circulate regionally between Chelmsford, Southend/Basildon, Thurrock and East London. These improvements include the A13 Wennington to Barking Extension, the A130 link to Chelmsford and the Saddlers Farm junction. More recently the M25 Junction 30 scheme and improved A13 link to the A126 has been committed and is being constructed on site and the A13 widening between the A128 and the A1014 is due to start on site in August this year. The proposed junction arrangements for the Lower Thames Crossing could have a significant impact in terms of access for existing users along the A13, in particular access to the Ports.
- 6.13 In light of the representations above, and in the light of the reintroduction of Option A to the consultation process, a full and 'like for like' assessment should be provided. The public interest 'compelling case' required for compulsory purchase orders has not yet been met, and the timescales of the consultation should now be extended to allow full consideration of the issues by affected parties and other stakeholders.

7. Summary and conclusions

- 7.1 This report outlines the representations made to the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 February 2016. This report goes on to incorporate the advice from the Council's expert. It is apparent that a number of the issues raised by the Witness Sessions and other representations have been highlighted by the Council's expert in their interim report and that there are also a number of other procedural and technical issues which need much further scrutiny. Additionally the Witness Sessions highlighted the serious flaws in the consultation process which need to feature highly in the Council's consultation response.

Annex 1 - The Lower Thames Crossing Witness Session

David Bull, Director for Planning and Transportation - David outlined the route options from the Highways England proposals. Noted that the route 3 is the preferred option but the cost benefits are very similar across all routes proposed. He went through the timetable for objections and the process over the next 3 years that Highways England are following.

Community Forums, Charities and Residents speakers – 3 minutes each

Bonnors Residents Associations – The association questioned the benefits of option C bring to Thurrock and whether the 14% traffic reduction at current crossing is big enough to justify a £6bn scheme.

Woolings Close Community – The community raised concerns about all roads coming through Thurrock and how the QE2 bridge closure could lead to Thurrock's network completely grid locked. The data provided by Highway England is questionable especially that traffic model has been based on 15 year old data and air quality in some areas is twice the allowed limit and which would result in increased exposure to risk of death. This shows that the new route through Thurrock would not really be fixing the congestion problem and that it would be a waste of £6bn of public funds.

Horndon on the Hill Society & Community Forum – The forum expressed their opposition to option C and to any other options going through Thurrock. The proposed route will not change the current congested situation on junction 29 or 30 and would restrict access to minor roads and further increase congestion on A13 and A127 in peak time. The new crossing will cause damage to the environment, loss of greenbelt and increased pollution and noise levels; all of which would lead to heart diseases etc. The forum also expressed their dissatisfaction that the figures / evidence for option D and A were not published and that the Government has not acted on the concerns raised by the residents of Thurrock to date.

Future East, the forum for aging in the East of England, have informed that they would submit their response in writing as they required more speaking time.

Bulphan Forum – The current proposal in the forum's view is not acceptable and the solution to the problem can only be overcome by option D which was dropped too early. The data provided by the Highways England is questionable when scrutinised in detail. The greenhouse gases are higher as compared to the option D. The current proposal should not be implemented due to the health grounds. The forum raised their concerns about the flood risk assessment not being developed until the route is decided. Concerns were also raised about the connections on the Kent side not including Paramount Park etc.

Lower Dunton Group – were not present

Stanford Forum – The forum expressed their opposition to any crossing through Thurrock. The proposed scheme would increase the pollution and extend current gridlock further afield. This will have adverse impact on the Essex Fire service response time. Also, since the proposed route does not have access off into Thurrock, the route is really a Thurrock by-pass. Overall, the forum stated that the Government is failing in its duty of care to Thurrock residents.

Orsett Forum – The forum would prefer to see a solution which doesn't threaten health and wellbeing of residents of Thurrock and thus option D seemed to be the best option. The central area greenbelt presents a peaceful and tranquil place and it is used by horse riders, hikers and cyclists. The truth is that the new crossing is beneficial for big businesses and it is supported by the Councillors of Kent and Essex not by the residents of Thurrock. The motorway is not going to change our lives for the better. Crossing further east would be better as at the Canvey Island crossing there would be more opportunity for pollution dispersion and thus environmental impact could be minimised. The Government should look at long term effect of the crossing.

South Essex Wildlife Hospital, is the only facility in region with 24/7 service including veterinary support – In the hospital's view the proposed scheme will destroy the wildlife habitats and there are no resources mentioned to help mitigate the effects. The scheme does not fulfil legal or moral requirement because of the complexity of bio diversity where rare creatures will be affected.

Campaign for Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) – The CPRE raised concerns about 130,000 people, industry and commerce currently residing in Thurrock and the necessity of the greenbelt being preserved to keep people healthy. All proposed routes consume huge amounts of greenbelt and no route serves a main purpose and chaos would still happen on the roads even with a tunnel. The project should be stopped and a judicial review should be started so the Government would have to review the whole situation including the outer ring.

Mr Bobby Lockwood, Resident from Baker Street – Mr Lockwood raised his concerns about Grade 2 listed cottages in Baker Street which are over 300 years old. The new route would require a demolition of the listed cottages. Also, the scheme would cause increased air pollution, noise levels and would not reduce current traffic chaos. Mr Lockwood recalled the 2008 proposal to build a road and rail tunnel linking to Ebbsfleet which could be looked at again. Mr Lockwood expressed strong opposition to route 3 and to any motorways through Thurrock.

Mr Steven Taylor, Advisor to Thurrock Planning Committee – Mr Taylor stated that the current proposal is destructive and the Government should be designing long term strategic solution dealing with an increased freight traffic and not only to increase the capacity but also to disperse it. The current proposals do not present solutions to the existing crossing's capacity issues.

Mr Frank Woollard, Resident – Mr Woollard said that option C routes 2 to 3, 70mph road through flood plain and greenbelt, would leave the existing crossing still over capacity therefore, further, an orbital ring road should be built to avoid gridlocks. With DP World and ports increasing demand, the capacity of new route would be reached quickly. The proposed route has a major adverse effect on the area as it increases the greenhouse gases and threatens the conservation area of Orsett's Baker Street.

Mr Michael Norcross, Bulphan Resident – was not present

Mr Peter Saunders, Chadwell Forum – Mr Saunders expressed the opposition to all options going through Thurrock. He was concerned about health impacts and inadequate environmental impact assessment carried out. Mr Saunders stated that Chadwell has a lower life expectancy than other wards already and that the proposed scheme would

increase risk of respiratory diseases in Thurrock due to the pollution. The Government did not allow sufficient time to look at free flow at the existing crossing and it seems that the volume of traffic has decreased between 2004 and 2013/14. Mr Saunders also raised his concern about the advice given by Highways England representative he was given at the Orsett Hall meeting which indicated that DP World were not consulted on the issue as Highways England didn't think that they were a major player and were not affected by the new crossing.

Mrs Pegly, King Edward Drive – Mrs Pegly was dissatisfied with the minimal information presented due to the small size of the maps. It would seem that route 2 and 3 pass dangerously close to schools and colleges, including Marshfoot Road Gateway Academy, Orsett school, nursery and hospital, and South Ockendon school. The proposed route would increase air pollution and bring toxic emissions closer to our residents and children and the noise levels would disturb our sleep.

Public Gallery – further concerns raised including that the wrong question had been asked in Highway England's Project Brief.

Teresa O'Keeffe, Orsett Resident – raised her concerns about the age of data used and fact that the figures presented may be out of date. Also, the impact of community severance was not measured, road through elderly communities will not help any of them, isolated communities may not survive.

Businesses opportunity to speak – 5 minutes each

Vopak / Greenergy – In Vopak's view Thurrock is an excellent location for logistics, this brings congestion, which has to be relieved in some way. There are 100,000 people employed in Borough, the industry do not have a strong view on crossing, however, congestion constantly disrupts business flow and resident flow. The consequence of delaying the new crossing may be that some businesses will relocate and new businesses will not come in, therefore, there is a danger in trying to delay the construction. Vopak have expressed their support to option C without stating a preference for any of the proposed three routes.

Business Referral Network and LG Networks – The Local Authority has worked hard to improve image but Thurrock is still an unattractive place to live and work in and the uncertainty around the new crossing is not helping. The traffic management on junction 30 and 31 and on the Dartford crossing has not been implemented; roundabouts are getting blocked by 4.8 metre Lorries. Implementing simple improvements could bring relief to the road network. In the short term, car-pooling and a free toll crossing with separate lanes could be introduced for those sharing a car. There are also a longer term issue such as the current state of A13 always being littered. Thurrock do not deserve another road covered in mess. The Government should go back to Option D which is less damaging.

Perry Glading, Statement from Port of Tilbury (read by David Bull) - In Ports opinion it is imperative that Thurrock extracts maximum value from the project. The Port is in favour of the option C with a proviso of a real step change in connectivity to and from Port. The Port supports improvements to local road network and calls for new road junctions on all option C routes to be near East Tilbury as this would enhance the access to Port Estate including new

Port expansion site. The Port called on Highways England to minimise environmental and air quality impacts.