

Cabinet 10 July 2013

LOWER THAMES CROSSING CONSULTATION OPTIONS

Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1st July 2013

KEY POINTS

AFTERNOON SESSION

Fiona Wilson – Department for Transport

- Options being looked at are to address existing crossing capacity issues.
- The DfT has no plan to look at an outer ring.
- The DfT are only planning to improve the existing M25 orbital. Options further east had least economic benefits and least effect on reducing congestion at the existing crossing.
- The DfT are aware that options will have traffic impacts upon the local network but until their modelling work is developed they cannot assess impacts in detail and any necessary mitigation.
- Removal of charges at the Crossing would attract more traffic and more congestion.
- The DfT are aware of noise issues associated road schemes but are committed to mitigating the effects.
- The consultation is to draw out such issues as whether it should be a bridge or tunnel. But tunnelling apart from at the crossing point would have cost implications.
- The DfT have to undertake environmental assessments as part of any scheme development process including noise and air quality.
- Schemes have to meet national and EU environmental requirements in terms of air quality.
- DfT looks at a range of criteria in assessing options. Not just Economic Benefits and Environmental Impact.
- DfT stated that all 3 options have low value for money levels; lower than other schemes the DfT are looking at nationally.
- There will be free-flow charging at any new crossing.
- The TfL are consulting on a new crossing at Silvertown but this is not likely to affect flows at the Dartford Crossing.
- Free-flow charging at the existing crossing cannot come forward any sooner than Autumn 2014 because of the formal processes involved.

Committee Members expressed a view that the true affect of introducing free-flow charging is not known and therefore the DfT should be looking at introducing improvements now to J30/31.

Martin Hall – Greening for Medway and Kent

- Martin is particularly concerned about Option C and its impact upon the Thames Marshes.
- Previous work has been undertaken which needs to be brought to the DfT's attention.

Susan Priest – South East LEP

- Atkins have produced a report on behalf of the SELEP.
- SELEP are aware that all options impact upon Thurrock.

- SELEP is interested in best economic benefits and believes that Option C is the best Option but also feels that other options further east should have been revisited.
- SELEP will continue to support Thurrock in pursuing the early introduction of free-flow charging and improvements at J30/31.

Jonathan Bustard – National England

- Prefers Option A and as a bored tunnel.
- B and C have issues in the context of wildlife habitat.

Tony Wilson – TfL

- Concerned about the effect Option A will have on J30/31.
- Considers that Option C has the best strategic benefits.
- It would be difficult to prepare a good business case for a new rail crossing.

Alex Cooper – RSPB

- Option A is the best option in terms of impact upon habitats and Option C the worse.
- Tunnelling would help reduce the impact.
- However he also feels that the crossing should cater for Rail.

Guy Pomroy – Canute

- We have not seen the effect that introducing free-flow tolling and improvements at J30/31 will have.
- He believes that the DfT should be undertaking further assessment work.

John Kent – Thurrock Leader

- The Council agreed that there should be no new crossing in Thurrock.
- A new crossing in 2024 will not deal with the existing congestion issues.
- Option A would involve 7 lanes going into 4, this cannot work.
- Option B would have most negative effect upon homes.
- Option C would have the greatest environmental impact crossing green fields and is unacceptable.
- We haven't seen any evidence of any benefits to Thurrock businesses from any of the options.
- Options further east need to be revisited.

Stephen Metcalfe MP (by letter – available upon request)

- Stephen states that with free-flow tolling the crossing will be back to full capacity by 2031.
- Any new crossing must properly relieve congestion at the Crossing, not increase congestion on local roads and not lead to the destruction of the greenbelt and the division of communities.
- Option C is the most costly option and will have most negative environmental impacts and would increase congestion in the Borough and is unacceptable.
- Stephen supports the options to the east (D & E) that were previously considered and believes these should be revisited.

Jackie Doyle-Price MP (by letter - available upon request)

- Oppose all three options
- More crossings east of Tower Bridge
- Government needs more integrated approach to planning for transport...these with London
- The M25 has capacity issues....time to look at potential for a new outer ring road

- With so much support expressed for option C Government should look again at options D and E

General Committee Comments

- We need to see what effect free-flow tolling and improvements at J30/31 will have on congestion before a new crossing is to be considered.
- Option C has unacceptable impacts upon the environment.

EVENING SESSION – Summary of Key comments made:

Held in the Council Chamber attended by 120 people from across the Borough.

- Option C will not relieve local congestion
- More easterly crossing better linking A12 and down the A130
- Dartford Crossing should be free as this was promised by the Government
- The Toll is a congestion charge but is not stopping congestion
- People do not believe that removing charging will lead to further congestion
- Option C is unacceptable in terms of impact on the greenbelt
- We should say no to all options
- B and C would have worse effect on residents health
- Option C would have major impact upon the environment
- How can we attract people and businesses to the Borough if a new crossing is constructed and ruins the environment; we want it to be a nice place to live and work
- A new crossing will bring too much pollution to the Borough
- We haven't tried free-flow tolling yet. Let's try it and see what happens
- We all need to make sure we send our comments to the DfT
- Elected Members need to make consultation documents available at the constituents
- Kent and Essex want Option C
- Option C will adversely affect the Essex Wildlife Hospital
- Need to preserve access to our Thames frontage including the Fort
- Kent and Essex want to link the M2 and M25 they are not interested in Thurrock residents
- Why only 3 options; we need more options
- Another option is required to the east linking to the A130
- The press should be covering this more
- Options will be dividing communities; we need to be united and fight against all 3 options
- West Tilbury will be devastated by Option C
- The Community should have been engaged earlier by the Council
- Why hasn't the Council tapped into schools
- The Council will email more detailed information out to the Forums
- Why are we not using Lakeside to advertise "no crossing in Thurrock"
- We are having this meeting too late; why was it not done earlier
- Why is a further option to the east only being mentioned now
- Option A will be good for Kent; Option B will not be good for Grays
- The Minister will make a decision in the Autumn