

# Lower Thames Crossing Task Force

## Summary of Key Priorities

While Thurrock Council remains opposed to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) being developed by Highways England in the Borough, as part of the response to the Preferred Route Announcement, Thurrock Council established a cross party 'Lower Thames Crossing Task Force' which included representation of local residents, the business community and the local action group opposing the scheme.

The following list captures some of the most frequently raised concerns, issues and priorities associated with the project to date. Thurrock Council and the Task Force remain opposed to the Highway England development of a crossing in this location. However the list below is intended to illustrate the real cost of the LTC on Thurrock and its communities and if Highways England take these seriously and factor the cost of remedy it will fundamentally affect the Business Case for the scheme. This can be read in conjunction with the Thurrock response to PINS.

It is without prejudice and those attending the Task Force will keep this list under review as and when HE provides additional information.

### 1. Business Case

- a. How much of this scheme is
  - i. Time savings for trips already on the road network?
  - ii. Real jobs and growth and how much of this will be in Thurrock?
  - iii. Simply creating more journeys by car and longer trips?
  - iv. If jobs was the highest priority (not a few minutes shaved off M25 journey times) how would this scheme compare to say a Crossing at Canvey?
- b. Who is to fund the entirety of the scheme?
- c. Tilbury Docks link road
  - i. Is this confirmed as part of the core 'funded' project?
  - ii. HE must design – for genuine consultation – a dual carriageway
  - iii. There are notable views as to the relative merits of downgrading the A1089. What are HE proposals and how will HE manage this sensitivity.
- d. When can local contractors access all current and future HE contracts?

### 2. Involvement of Thurrock Council

- a. HE to commence full and detailed technical assessment with Thurrock Officers and how each and every scheme aspects is genuinely captured by HE and local harm fully mitigated and costed in their current understanding of their proposal.

- b. As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project HE must
  - i. Accept that this scheme must be scrutinised in exactly the same manner as other NSIP's such as Purfleet, Tilbury 2 etc. albeit the sheer scale, impact and potential lack of benefit to Thurrock makes this all the more concerning.
  - ii. As developer, understand the full and significant impacts on Officer resources and democratic time and our ability to respond in advancing *any* Application of a DCO.

### **3. Alternatives to this proposal**

- a. The Planning Inspectorate has demanded these be set out – when will HE share with Thurrock how they intend this respond?
- b. All the historic crossing capacity (1963, 1980, 1991). This crossing will last 120 years at least. Will there ever be anything other than more and more roads when there is a need to safeguard and future proof for alternatives modes.

### **4. What is the scheme and how will the network operate?**

- a. When will we know the precise capacity of the crossing? This has already become 3 lanes through the tunnel, then up to the A13 but no detail thereafter.
- b. What is the capacity of the Tilbury Docks Link road and will the proposed design work?
- c. M25 / A2 Junction will be diversion point for the LTC; then back on to the M25. Can you prove that the entire network will be able to cope and that LTC does not simply create a new connection but with roads and junction either side at gridlock?

### **5. Design of the new Crossing**

- a. HE to provide detail of when and where Thurrock can genuinely influence HE proposals. HE must demonstrate where we can or cannot influence the scheme. The DCO process demands genuine consultation rather than keep telling us what you have decided.
- b. The tunnel portal as currently described is within the SSSI. HE must undertake full assessment (now) to adequately consider and respond to demands that it stay in tunnel until North of the railway line (*a key concern of the taskforce*).
- c. HE must provide alternative options for tunnelling and cut and cover at all junctions and sensitive areas. These worked up options to be discussed in detail with Thurrock Council prior to the Application for the DCO.
- d. All slips to have detailed designs developed for cut and cover as now being developed north of Thurrock on the M25. These designs to be open for genuine consultation and consideration by Thurrock Council.

- e. The legacy impact of road elevations – especially over the MarDyke valley needs to be fully recognised and addressed. A detailed understanding of the potential for cut and cover instead of highly elevated structures is needed including areas such as Chadwell St Mary, Orsett, Baker Street, Stifford Clays / Blackshots, Ockendon, Bulphan.
- f. More detail is needed beyond the current red line boundary and we need to have guarantees that HE is designing in robust mitigation including significant planting (5-10 metres) either side of the road (for masking the road, wild life protection, and creation of new community links for cycling, walking and equestrians).
- g. Where is HE's construction plan in terms of access routes / haul routes to enable construction to commence.

## **6. Incident Management**

- a. Action is needed now on current gridlock – can HE lobby DfT for strategic action reflecting the local observations that the actual need is for better management of the current crossing rather than any suggestion of a new crossing.
- b. A new state of the art traffic control centre is need now. Why is it worth spending £6bn for a new crossing but not £60m for state of the art integrated traffic control 24/7 covering the current crossing and local roads either side. Robust network management is now needed as any crossing is a decade away and once in place would secure additional capacity that supposedly is only possible with a £6Bn LTC. The incident management, delay in response and absence of smart management (including alerts, roadside information, recovery) is not as good as elsewhere in the country (i.e. as now being developed in the West Midlands).
- c. Full Borough wide traffic micro-simulation is needed to understand the knock on effect of incidents on either network. Any new crossing is a decade away – so requires action now, especially with planned housing growth.
- d. As HE have now confirmed that tankers will have unescorted use of the use of any new crossing, can they confirm they will ban / restrict tankers using the current tunnels and thereby remove the delays currently seen?.

## **7. Environmental, ecological and health impacts**

- a. The severance of the new road – visual and communities will create separation and segregation especially in historic settings such as Coal House Fort.

- b. Construction impacts of noise, dust and road traffic need to be fully mitigated especially given the prevailing SW wind.
- c. The visual intrusion demands a maximum tunnelling and the remainder fully screened.
- d. More road trips will result in greater pollution than would otherwise be the case and an air quality assessment must be undertaken.
- e. A Full Health Impact Assessment must be produced by HE to consider the full health impact of the proposed route on local populations.
- f. Pollution models for noise, air, light and vibration must be set out for the community.
- g. How much of the Greenbelt will be lost to this scheme and how might HE mitigate the risk of making the Borough being less attractive to house builders.
- h. Each and every community, and heritage asset Including Coal House Fort, Tilbury Fort and East Tilbury Village will be irreplaceably damaged – where has HE experienced and mitigated this across its many years of experience.

## **8. Consultation**

- a. HE has adopted approaches to consultation that removed over 10,000 voices against this scheme. Can HE confirm that they will work more transparently in the future to ensure genuine consultation and show how Thurrock can genuinely influence the scheme?
- b. HE has yet to produce a detailed consultation timeline and the approaches to the Council and local community have lacked any visible plan, and appear ad hoc. When can we have presented a clear communication strategy?
- c. When will HE provide a basic 'fly through' of the current proposals as used in other schemes? Even if this subsequently changes it has been six months since the PRA.
- d. When can detailed drawings be presented to allow local communities to be informed?

## **9. Charging**

- a. Tolling has been removed in Scotland and M4 Severn Bridge into Wales. LTC should be free at point of use to benefit the local economy and business on both side of the crossing.
- b. The Thurrock Community that will be impacted by nearly 2/3 of the scheme in the event of charging a share of the proceeds must go to those communities who suffer the ongoing harm.
- c. The Dartford Crossing has already paid for itself and local residents and businesses should receive toll free crossings.