

Minutes of the Meeting of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 14 March 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present:	Councillors Fraser Massey (Chair), Gary Byrne and Sue Sammons
Apologies:	Councillors John Kent (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter, Daniel Chukwu, Sara Muldowney Westley Mercer, Thurrock Business Board Representative Peter Ward, Business Representative
In attendance:	Colin Black, Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, with the recording to be made available on the Council's website.

57. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting from the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 14 February 2022 were approved as a true and correct record.

58. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

59. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

60. Orsett Cock/A13 Junction - Verbal Update

The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery introduced the report and stated that the Manorway junction, Orsett Cock roundabout, Daneholes junction, Marshfoot junction, and the Asda roundabout were all at risk of being impacted once the LTC was operational. He added that during the construction of the LTC Corringham, Horndon, Orsett, and Chadwell St Mary were also at risk of becoming rat runs. He moved on and explained that the A13/Orsett Cock junction would form part of the wider LTC/A13/A1089 interchange, but the Orsett Cock was a critical junction for existing communities and future local plan growth sites. He stated that the LTC could result in significant traffic flow increases on the A13 east of the LTC, as models were predicting an increase of 15% during morning rush hour, and a 24% increase during the evening rush hour. He explained that growth in cross river traffic via the LTC would be the most significant cause of the increase in traffic on the A13, as the LTC could increase the number of cross-river trips

by 50%. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery stated that National Highways (NH) were currently undertaking micro-simulation traffic modelling to fully assess LTC impacts and develop proposals to improve the Orsett Cock junction, which had never been undertaken before. He stated that the Council were currently waiting for National Highways (NH) to complete further modelling, and the Council were asking for access to this model, rather than receiving outputs. He added that the Council had taken the opportunity to observe traffic patterns within Orsett during the temporary weekend closures of the Orsett Cock, which had taken place during the construction of the current remodelling of the junction. He stated that data had been collected for 22 days between Thursday 19 August 2021 and Thursday 9 September 2021, which had included two weekend closures, and had shown that the future closures of the A13 and Orsett Cock due to LTC construction would be likely to have significant impact on the village due to increased traffic. He added that the future operation and improvements for the junction would need to consider the future local growth aspirations and measures to promote walking, cycling and bus usage.

The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery moved on and explained the impact that the LTC would have on the Manorway junction, which was also critical for local communities as well as access to London Gateway and DP World. He added that DP World and London Gateway has recently undertaken improvement works at the Manorway junction as part of their Local Development Order, as the Freeport status at the London Gateway was expected to generate additional freight and other traffic to the port sites. He stated that there was also a risk that the Manorway junction would be used as an alternative route to avoid the Orsett Cock junction, in order to reach the Port of Tilbury (via A0189) by u-turning at the Manorway. He stated that junction improvements had not yet been considered by NH although microsimulation traffic modelling was due to take place. He mentioned that a further predicted effect of the LTC was a substantive increase in traffic flow on B1420 and Southend Road. He stated that re-routing due to delay the Five Bells junction of the A13/A176 passed through residential areas in Corringham that were not appropriate for an increase in traffic.

The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery summarised and stated that the LTC scheme utilised local roads and junctions, such as the A13/Orsett Cock junction as part of their scheme, which would have an impact on these critical local junctions. He stated that the LTC used local road capacity and would impact on the Council's ability to deliver local economic growth aspirations, such as the Thames Freeport, and emerging Local Plan. He added that NH were considering trunking the A13 up to the Manorway junction to bring it into the strategic road network, and the Council were asking for clarification as to this process. He stated that junctions across Thurrock, such as the Orsett Cock would likely face a number of temporary closures and significant disruptions during the construction of the LTC, which could severely impact local communities as traffic could be diverted through these towns and villages. He added that the Council were urging NH to fully assess the impact of the LTC on key local junctions; develop and commit to junction improvements where necessary; commit to local traffic calming and

environmental mitigation measures in local villages such as Orsett; and develop and deliver an exemplar customer engagement strategy during the construction period.

The Chair thanked the Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery for his presentation and questioned who would be responsible for the decision to trunk the A13 up to the Manorway junction. The Interim Assistant Director replied that it would be up to the Department for Transport (DfT) to make this decision, but the Council would be fully engaged in the process. The Thames Crossing Action Group (TCAG) Representative stated that the traffic flow at Orsett Cock had changed, and no explanation had been provided by NH. She asked if an explanation as to the traffic flow within the diagram could be provided. The Interim Assistant Director replied that the diagrams of the Orsett Cock roundabout provided by NH could be confusing and explained that Thurrock were in the process of requesting the model, so officers could input their own data and form their own conclusions.

Councillor Byrne questioned why there would be a 15% traffic increase in the morning peak and 24% traffic increase in the evening peak, and queried why more people returned to Thurrock in the afternoon. The Interim Assistant Director replied that these figures depended on the profile of the peaks, as for example much of the morning traffic left before 7am and much of the afternoon traffic was involved in school runs. He stated that for the local road networks peak traffic occurred between 8am and 9am, but for the strategic road network the peak occurred between 7am and 8am and this could affect the outputs of the model. The TCAG Representative questioned if peak times at junctions such as the Orsett Cock and Manorway were different to traditional peak times due to the port shift times. The Interim Assistant Director replied that the times of the port shifts did have a large impact on the traffic at these junctions. He stated that traffic modelling only provided a general overview of traffic in an area and could not accurately predict different scenarios or real-life traffic flows. He stated that the Council were urging NH to add additional contingency into the model as this would improve the model's resilience and be able to better predict traffic flows during congestion. He added that traffic models also struggled to predict induced traffic flows, which was a situation whereby people used the road because that option was available. The TCAG Representative questioned if the traffic model included traffic due to port growth. The Interim Assistant Director replied that port growth traffic was not being directly modelled, but sensitivity tests were being run to model this scenario. He stated that NH were currently updating their traffic model and re-running the model, and the Council would be able to see outputs from this in June. He mentioned that it would also take time for the Council to be able to review and analyse the model outputs before Development Consent Order (DCO) submission. The TCAG Representative asked if the public would be able to see the outputs from the traffic model data. The Interim Assistant Director replied that the new traffic model outputs would not be made available during the next proposed consultation as NH believed that there was no significant difference between the old and new model, so did not require consultation.

The Resident Representative stated that East Tilbury and Linford had not been included on the diagram and felt that the A13/Orsett Cock/LTC junction would have a large impact on these communities. He stated that these towns were also impacted by the railway line, and future LTC construction traffic and this needed to be included in the Traffic Assessment. The Interim Assistant Director responded that he would ask the team to take a look at the traffic impacts in East Tilbury and Linford. The Chair queried how the London Resort plans on the Swanscombe peninsula might affect the LTC, and if this was being taken into account in the updated traffic model. He added that the proposed Bradwell B site in North Essex may also have effect on traffic on the A13 and LTC. The Interim Assistant Director stated that NH would only have to take the London Resort and Bradwell B schemes into account once they had submitted their DCOs and therefore became a material consideration. He stated that NH were currently analysing the effect of the London Resort on the LTC through sensitivity testing. He explained that there was currently lots of uncertainty and speculation regarding the London Resort which made it difficult to incorporate into the model. He added that the DfT provided their predicted traffic growth figures which were included in NH traffic model, although these were generalised and did not focus on specific junctions or local developments. The Chair felt concerned that there were a number of DCOs being proposed for the area that were not included in traffic models. The TCAG Representative added that the traffic models only predicted traffic flows during normal conditions and could not account for traffic during incidents. She felt that due to the cost of the project and inconvenience on local traffic flows, the proposed LTC was the wrong project in the wrong location. The Resident Representative added that NH were not including other local works into their traffic models which would have a negative impact on the local area. The Interim Assistant Director stated that the NH were proposing that the LTC scheme would be the greenest construction scheme in the UK, but the Council felt concerned that this would increase the budget envelope for the site and could concern the Treasury. He added that Thurrock Council would continue to ask these questions to NH, the DfT and Treasury.

Councillor Byrne stated that the Orsett Royals football team had had to sell their pitches to NH due to the LTC scheme, and although they had found new pitches in Corringham, they required additional funding for goals, fences and other infrastructure, otherwise the club would have to shut down. He questioned if NH would be able to help with this funding. The Interim Assistant Director replied that NH could help with this type of funding and asked Councillor Byrne to email him outside of the meeting for this process to begin. The Resident Representative questioned if any progress had been made on the East Facing Access project on the A13 at Lakeside. The Interim Assistant Director replied that this project was still progressing, and officers were considering the acceptability of different designs as the site was relatively constrained. The Chair summarised and stated that the Task Force remained concerned regarding the LTC and junction connectivity with the Orsett Cock and Manorway junctions.

61. National Highways Consultation - Verbal Update

The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery explained that NH were currently reviewing their options for a consultation, and would be making an announcement regarding the proposed consultation at the end of this week. The Chair felt that as little promotion had occurred for the consultation and it was due to start soon, the consultation would be postponed. Councillor Byrne confirmed that NH had cancelled the hall they had booked for their consultation event next month and were looking to rearrange. The Chair questioned what areas would be included in the consultation. The Interim Assistant Director confirmed that it would be a refinement consultation, although the Council had suggested that the consultation be broader in scope as lots of areas had changed and developed since the previous consultation. He stated that many stakeholders and residents wished to see what how their previous consultation responses had affected the scheme, and the Council had urged NH to include this in the upcoming consultation. He stated that the consultation would capture the changes that were being proposed to the Tilbury Fields area, as one third of this land had been granted to the Freeport. He added that the consultation would also capture the changes that were being proposed at the Orsett Cock/A13/LTC junction. The Resident Representative highlighted that one of the reasons the previous DCO had been withdrawn was due to a lack of public consultation and felt that this upcoming consultation should rectify this issue and allow local residents to give their feedback on the overall scheme. The Interim Assistant Director stated that NH had to meet a necessary threshold regarding the level of consultation, and officers felt that this consultation would not meet the required threshold. He stated that the team had categorised all outstanding LTC issues and hundreds of these issues fell into the most urgent category. He felt that these issues should be answered before the proposed consultation began. The Chair stated that when the consultation went live, an invitation should be extended to NH to attend a Task Force meeting.

62. Health Impact Assessment - Verbal Update

The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery stated that there was no update regarding the Health Impact Assessment (HIA), but the team continued to press NH on this issue and were waiting for answers. He explained that a CIPHAG meeting had been held on 27 January and another meeting would be held in late March. The Chair stated that the Task Force felt frustrated with the lack of information from NH on this issue, and hoped to see more information presented soon.

63. Work Programme

The Chair stated that the next Task Force meeting was scheduled during purdah and would likely be cancelled. The TCAG Representative added that the TCAG had called on government to pause the smart motorways scheme and had recently sent evidence on this to the government and Secretary of State. She added that TCAG were also calling on the government to re-open the RIS2 scheme and the Transport Action Network had done the same. She stated that NH Annual Report 2021 had stated that the failure to progress the

LTC scheme posed a risk for NH, and TCAG hoped that the Secretary of State would review this.

The meeting finished at 7.05 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**