

<b>9 February 2016</b>		<b>ITEM: 9</b>
<b>Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Lower Thames Crossing Consultation Options</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Cllr Brian Little, Chair		
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Ann Osola, Head of Service, Planning and Transportation		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> David Bull, Director of Planning & Transportation		
<b>This report is</b> Public		

## **Executive Summary**

The Lower Thames Crossing consultation is taking place between 26 January and 24 March 2016. Highways England proposed a dual carriageway connecting Junction 1 of the M2 to the M25 between Junctions 29 and 30, which crosses under the Thames at a site just east of Gravesend and Tilbury, known as Location C, and seeks views on three routes north of the river and two routes south of the river. In Highways England view this proposal “best matches the objectives and balances the need of road users, the community, the environment and business”.

The consultation is available online and the copies of the consultation materials, maps and questionnaires are available in main Thurrock Libraries. Highways England has also organised all day public information events at 11 different Thurrock locations between 3 and 18 February 2016.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

**That Committee:**

- 1.1 Hear representations from all interested parties and report their views in a report to Cabinet in March for their consideration.**

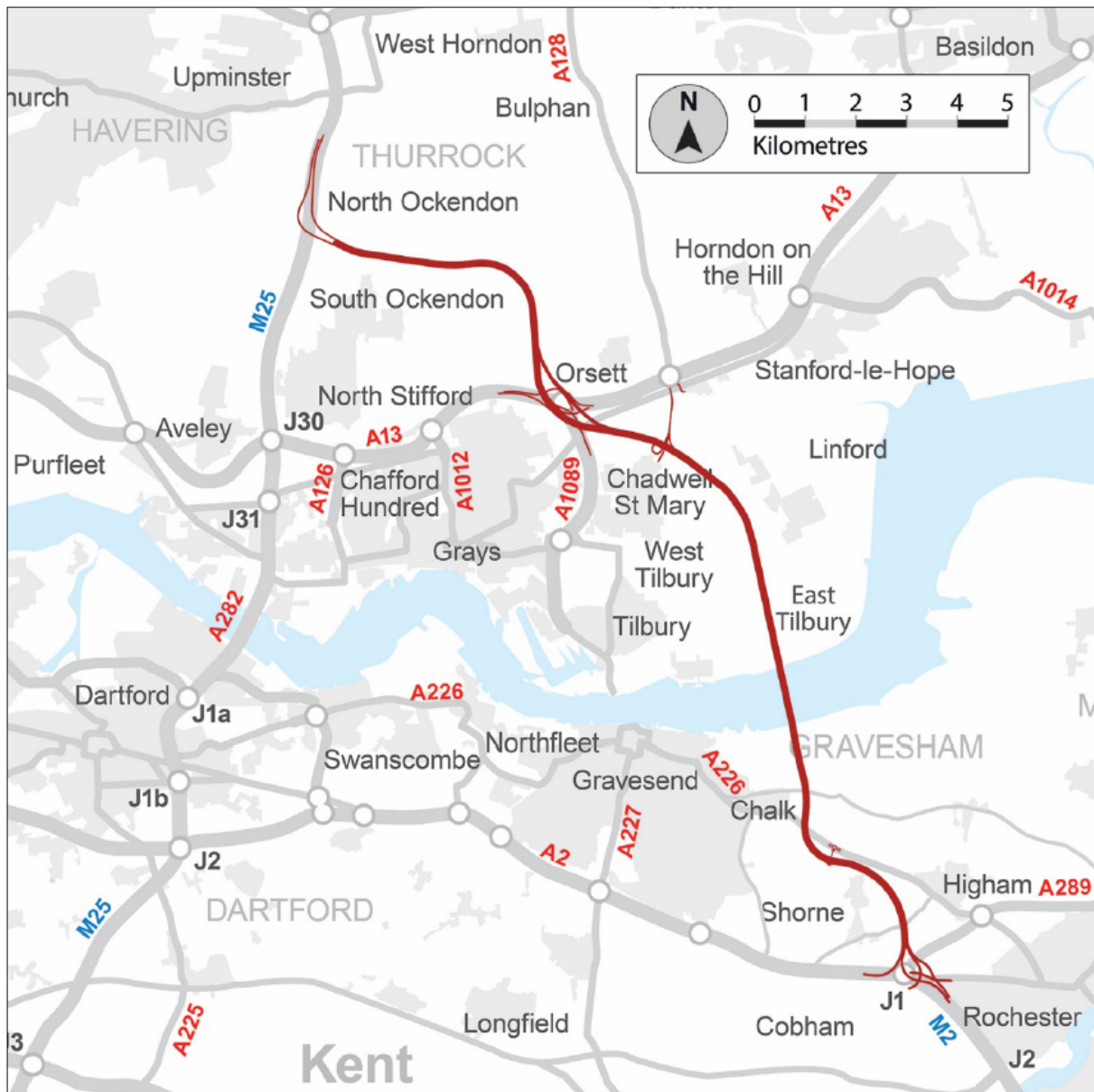
### **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 For over 50 years, the Dartford Crossing has provided the only road crossing of the Thames east of London. It is a critical part of the UK's major road network carrying local, national and international traffic.
- 2.2 The existing crossing has a typical daily traffic flow of 137,000 vehicles with the highest throughput for 2015 recorded in May of 162,140 vehicles when the original design capacity was 135,000 vehicles. The Crossing suffers from high level of incidents and delays and is highly unreliable in comparison to other routes on the strategic road network.
- 2.3 The recent removal of toll booths and introduction of electronic payments in peak time shortens the queue over the bridge. The widening of the junction 30 on M25 will further improve capacity and help to alleviate the delays.
- 2.4 Throughout the process of public consultations Thurrock's policy towards another Lower Thames Crossing was "opposed to government plans for a further river crossing in Thurrock and commits to continue campaigning, alongside residents, on this issue". This was agreed on 28 November 2012 and unanimously reaffirmed on 25 November 2015 when Councillor Kent's motion was declared carried.
- 2.5 A meeting at Orsett Hall on 25 January 2016 attracted around 400 people and included representation from all political parties. A further public meeting is scheduled to be held at the Culver Centre, South Ockendon on Thursday 25 February, and any relevant comments will be incorporated into Scrutiny's report to Cabinet in March.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 Highways England has completed their evaluations and recommended a new road crossing at Location C, at a site just east of Gravesend and Tilbury. The proposed scheme has a dual carriageway connecting junction 1 of the M2 to the M25 between junctions 29 and 30, which crosses under the River Thames.
- 3.2 This report contains only broad information on the consultation and the Members are advised to visit Highways England website for further details.
- 3.3 The option proposed would provide a 70mph motorway to motorway connection with the greatest improvement in journey times and it would alleviate congestion at the existing crossing. The new road would be 15 mile long and consist of a 2-mile twin bored tunnel. Please see Picture 1 below.

Picture 1 – Preferred Scheme



- 3.4 The scheme would cost between £4.3 and £5.9 billion and subject to funding and planning process the new crossing is anticipated to be opened in 2025 (public funding) or 2027 (private funding).
- 3.5 The benefits to the road users in journey times include 12 minutes reduction in journey time between M2 junction 4 and M25 junction 28. The economic assessment indicates that UK's GDP could benefit from this option by over £7 billion and that over 5,000 new jobs nationally could be created. The adjusted benefit cost ratios (BCRs) for the options range from 2.9 to 3.4 which presents high value for money.
- 3.6 A bored tunnel solution has been preferred over a bridge and an immersed tunnel because it is the least environmentally damaging solution. A bored tunnel would generate the least of noise and visual impact during both,

construction and operation, and would have the least impact on the protected habitats and species in Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar sites.

- 3.7 The analysis of the three routes north of the river proposed in this consultation indicate that Route 3 would provide the shortest route with the lowest environmental impact which would be constructed with the least disruption to existing traffic routes. Route 3 presents the greatest improvement to journey time and, being an entirely new road, would deliver a modern high quality 70mph road. Please see a picture 2 of the three routes north of the river below.

Picture 2 - North of the river routes

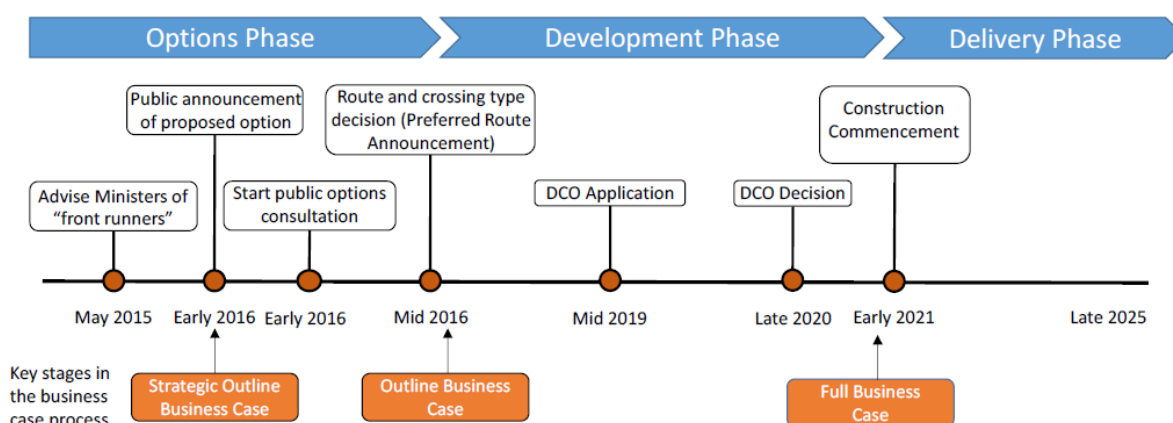


Table 1 indicates the cost/benefit appraisal for the various options.

## Comparison of costs, benefits and reduction in journey time

Features	Eastern Southern Link with		
	Route 2	Route 3	Route 4
Capital Cost Range (P50/P90 Out-turn)	£4,294m to £5,981m	£4,279m to £5,937m	£4,620m to £6,390m
O&M Costs over 60 years	£553m	£586m	£607m
Adjusted benefit cost ratio	3.3 - 2.4	3.4 - 2.5	3.1 - 2.2
Value for money	High	High	High
Reduction in Journey time between junction 3 and 28 on M25 using the Dartford Crossing	3 mins southbound 4.5 mins northbound	3 mins southbound 4.5 mins northbound	3 mins southbound 5 mins northbound
Reduction in journey time between M2 junction 4 and M25 junction 28 using new crossing at C	11 mins	12 mins	11mins
Route length	14.7 miles	14.2 miles	16.8 miles

Table 2 shows the timescales for scheme development (assuming public funding)



#### 4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The recommendation supports proper engagement with residents and other Thurrock stakeholders to inform a Council response.

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

5.1 This report supports a wider Highways England consultation on scheme options.

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

6.1 The scheme proposed in the consultation will affect all residents of Thurrock, the communities, the environment and businesses. The government's analysis show a positive impact on the regeneration of national economy however the negative externalities produced in the process of construction and in operations is considered to be greater and long lasting for the local environment.

6.2 The new crossing is has potential negative impacts on our corporate priorities of improving health and well-being and promoting and protecting our clean and green environment.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: Mike Jones  
Group Accountant

There are no financial implications of this report.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: Vivienne Williams  
Planning & Regeneration Solicitor

There are no legal implications of this report.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: Natalie Warren  
Community Development & Equality Manager

There are no direct diversity and equality implications arising from the report. Meaningful consultation with all of Thurrock's communities during this Lower Thames Crossing consultation will be important.

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

The proposed scheme will have varying degrees of impact upon the Borough in terms of the environment, economic growth and the delivery of the Council's regeneration agenda.

**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):

- 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**

- None

**Report Author:**

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