

Lower Thames Crossing Statutory Consultation

Executive summary of consultation responses

July 2019



Introduction

Following the Secretary of State for Transport's announcement in April 2017 of the preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC), Highways England carried out a statutory consultation from 10 October 2018 to 20 December 2018. This consultation gave members of the public, prescribed bodies, including local authorities, businesses, organisations, and people with an interest in land (PILs) the opportunity to comment on an updated set of proposals for the preferred route.

The consultation received 28,493 responses, including 2,117 campaign responses and responses from 55 prescribed consultees. Responses were submitted in several formats, including 25,210 online responses, 945 feedback forms (both by email and via the post) and 221 free-text letters and emails.

The consultation questionnaire contained questions spanning 13 key topics as well as an option for respondents to provide general feedback. Traverse, an independent company specialising in public consultations, was commissioned to receive, analyse and report on the responses. Where comments were made in response to the general question or via emails and letters, these comments were coded based on the issues they raised and are included in the relevant sections of this report.

The purpose of this report is to provide a factual summary of responses received during the statutory consultation, including a statistical breakdown of responses to closed questions.

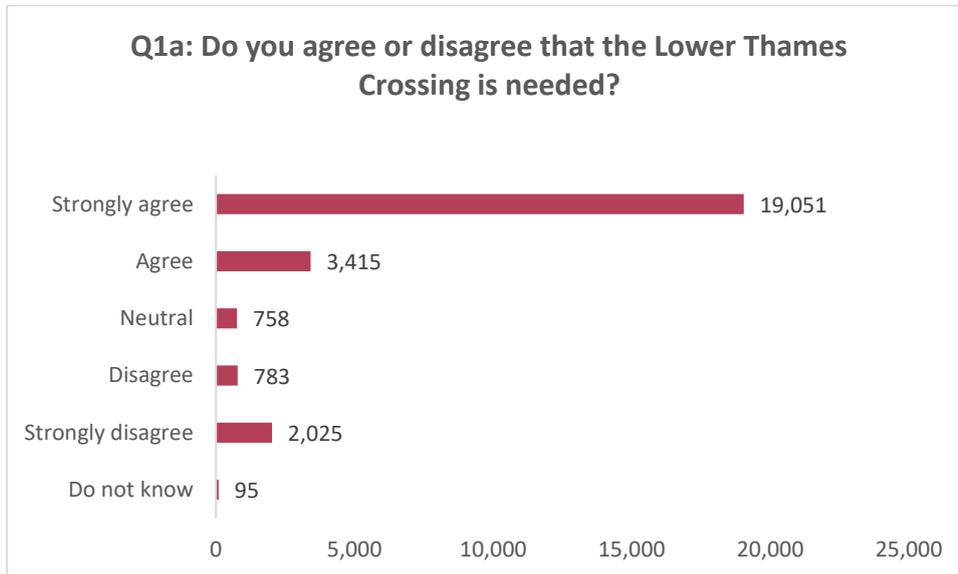
A full consultation report – providing detailed information about the consultation process, the issues raised, and setting out Highways England's responses to the issues raised – will be published as part of Highways England's application to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order.



Need case

Q1a asks: “Do you agree or disagree that the Lower Thames Crossing is needed?”

Chart 1: Views on the need case (number of respondents: 26,127)



Open-text comments

In addition, 24,306 respondents discussed the need case for the Lower Thames Crossing as part of their feedback.

Those who **support** the need case for the LTC typically refer to present levels of congestion at the Dartford Crossing or on the M25 and the need to alleviate this. These respondents frequently highlight the amount of time spent in traffic and the financial cost and health impacts associated with heavy congestion. Other prominent themes include the potential for reduced journey times between Kent and Thurrock and Essex or enhancements to the resilience of the local road network. Of the respondents who support the need case, some suggest that the potential transport improvements would deliver wide-ranging benefits such as an economic boost, improved air quality (as fewer vehicles would be stationary) and increased wellbeing for both drivers and local residents.

In contrast, those who are **opposed** to the need case often say that it would not improve the current traffic situation and could even make it worse by attracting more cars onto the roads. Many respondents are concerned that the increase in traffic would disrupt local communities and worsen air quality. Other concerns relate to the ownership of the new crossing or the way in which it would be financed, with some doubting that it would represent good value for money.

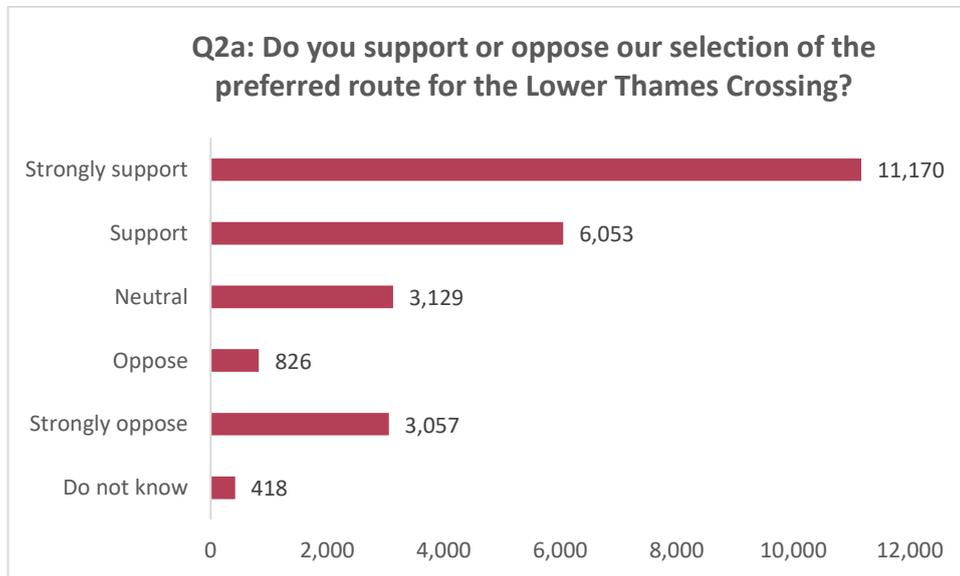
Many respondents offer suggestions about how congestion levels could be improved without the need for the LTC. Some of the most popular **alternatives** to a new crossing would be increased investment in public transport, particularly rail links, and efforts to reduce the volume of traffic on the roads. To this end, some respondents suggest measures to limit the number of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) using the roads, such as moving freight by rail, river or sea to a port nearer to its destination. Other frequently raised suggestions include improving the existing Dartford Crossing or road network.



Route selection

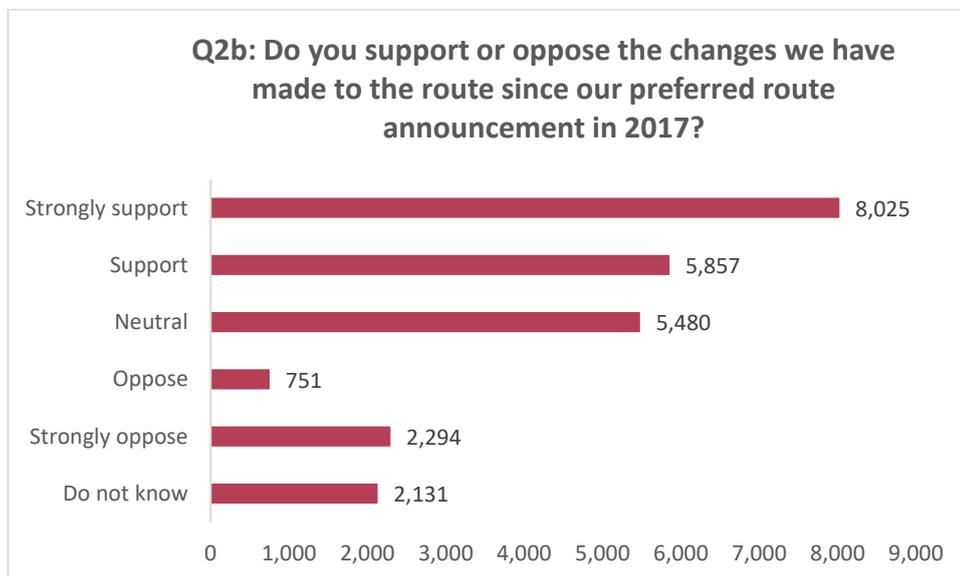
Q2a asks: “Do you support or oppose our selection of the preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing?”

Chart 2: Views on the route selection (number of respondents: 24,653)



Q2b asks: “Do you support or oppose the changes we have made to the route since our preferred route announcement in 2017?”

Chart 3: Views on the changes to the route (number of respondents: 24,538)



Open-text comments

In addition, 15,786 respondents discussed the selection of the preferred route and subsequent changes as part of their feedback. This section summarises comments made about the entire route.

Those who **support** the preferred route believe that it would alleviate traffic congestion and improve the resilience of the road network whilst reducing journey times and providing a more direct route between areas. Other reasons given for supporting the route selection broadly



reflect those given for supporting the need case, although some also comment positively on design features such as the number of lanes or on the process by which the preferred route was selected and the expertise of decision makers.

In contrast, those who are **opposed** to the preferred route say that it would not address the existing congestion problems either because they believe it is too close to the Dartford Crossing to offer a real alternative or because of concerns that it would attract more traffic onto the local network which, according to these respondents, is not equipped to deal with additional vehicles. Other reasons for opposing the preferred route broadly include a perceived lack of connectivity with the wider region, with some expressing concerns over access issues for local traffic. Changes to the design of the route, the overall decision-making process and the cost of the project also receive some negative comments.

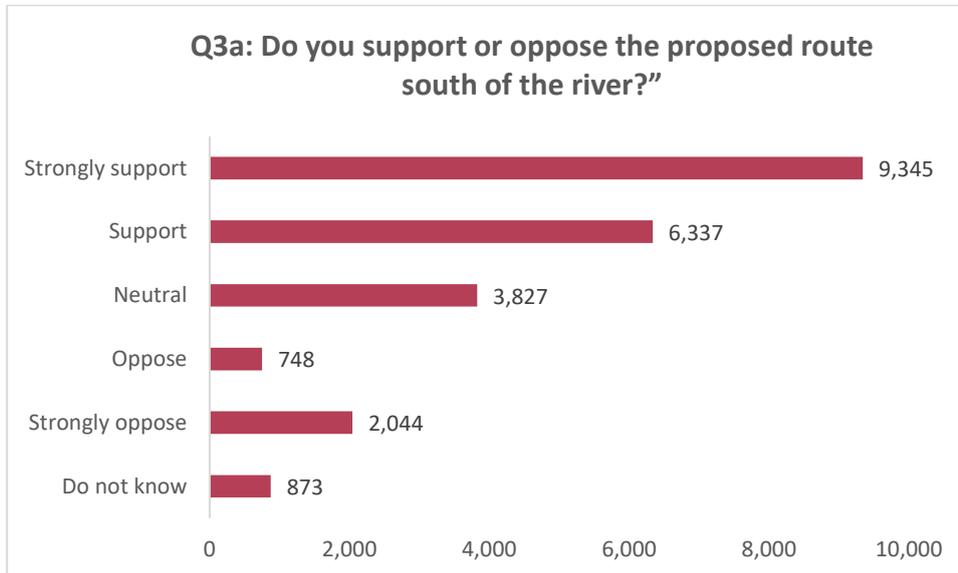
Alternative locations, both east and west of the preferred route, are suggested by respondents. These often refer to options previously considered by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Sections of the route

South of the river in Kent

Q3a asks: “Do you support or oppose the proposed route south of the river?”

Chart 4: Views on the proposed route south of the river (number of respondents: 23,174)



Open-text comments

In addition, 8,909 respondents discussed the section south of the river as part of their feedback.

Those respondents who support the proposed route south of the river in Kent make similar arguments to those already summarised in the section on the preferred route. However, these are raised in relation to specific locations or areas in Kent, such as Gravesend, Chalk, Shorne or Higham, and roads like the A2, M2 and M20.

Some respondents who **support** the proposed route south of the river in Kent also believe that bridges and embankments are a necessary part of the design, sometimes commenting positively on the inclusion of green bridges in this section, whilst others believe the new route would reduce traffic on the A2 between the new junction and the Dartford Crossing and improve access to areas of Kent such as the Medway towns and the Channel Ports.

In contrast, those who are **opposed** to the proposed route south of the river in Kent often raise traffic concerns. These either focus on worries that additional traffic would be diverted to the already congested A2 or that the design would lead to bottlenecks as the existing road network has fewer lanes than the southern leg of the LTC. The potential impact on residential areas such as Riverview Park is also frequently highlighted, as is the perceived visual impact of bridges incorporated into the design of the proposed route south of the river in Kent. Other environmental concerns focus on how the project would affect designated sites such as Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Suggestions offered by respondents include adopting the previously considered Eastern Southern Link, upgrading the existing local road network south of the river, or making changes to the design of the road, including that the tunnel should be extended further.



The crossing

Q3c asks: “Please give us your comments on the tunnel, the north and the south tunnel entrances and any other feedback you have on this part of the preferred route.”

10,688 respondents discussed the proposed crossing and tunnel entrances as part of their feedback.

Many of the respondents who **support** the crossing wish for the tunnel to be completed as soon as possible, citing the transport benefits which they feel a crossing would bring. Others support the design of the crossing, including the use of a tunnel rather than a bridge, the location of the tunnel entrances and the number of lanes.

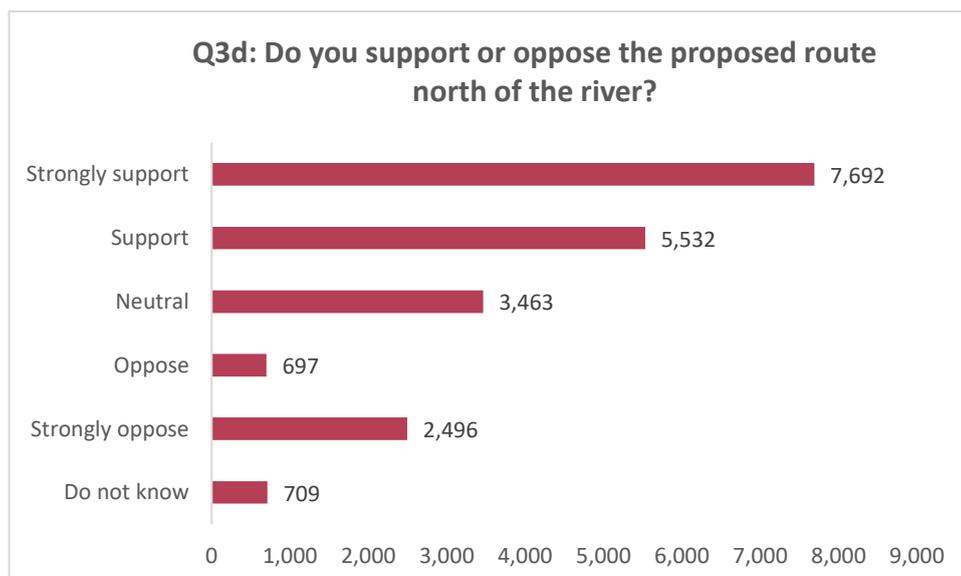
Those who are **opposed** to the crossing believe it would have an adverse impact on the environment, including on air quality, noise, wildlife and the green belt. They also express concern that a tunnel would lead to increased congestion with bottlenecks at the entrances, sometimes referencing delays at the tunnels at Dartford Crossing, and say that the number of lanes may not prove adequate to address future traffic volumes. Some criticise the location of the tunnel entrances, particularly the southern entrance, suggesting that it should be located further south. There are also concerns that HGVs would require an escort through the tunnel and this would hold up traffic.

The most common **suggestion** is that the tunnel must be future-proofed to handle future traffic volume. Related to this, respondents mainly refer to the need for more lanes, though others suggest that the tunnel should be longer, that more tunnels are needed or that the crossing should be a bridge instead.

North of the river in Thurrock, Essex and Havering

Q3d asks: “Do you support or oppose the proposed route north of river”

Chart 5: Views on the proposed route north of the river (number of respondents: 20,589)





Open-text comments

In addition, 8,680 respondents discussed the proposed route north of the river as part of their feedback.

Those respondents who **support** the proposed route north of the river in Thurrock, Essex and Havering make similar arguments to those already summarised in relation to route selection, at pages 4 and 5 of this report. However, these are raised in relation to specific locations or areas in Thurrock and Essex.

Some respondents who **support** the proposed route north of the river in Thurrock, Essex and Havering also believe that the design of structures such as bridges, viaducts and embankments north of the river appear sympathetic to the wider surroundings.

In contrast, those who are **opposed** say that the route would impact negatively on local communities in Thurrock, could cause a deterioration of already high levels of pollution, and could increase congestion on the A13 and in Orsett and Ockendon. Some also raise concerns about the height of the proposed Mardyke viaduct or suggest ways in which the design of the viaduct could be amended to reduce its impact.

Other **suggestions** include linking the LTC directly to the A12 or the M11, upgrading the existing local road network north of the river, or adopting one of the other routes put forward in the Lower Thames Crossing Route Consultation 2016.

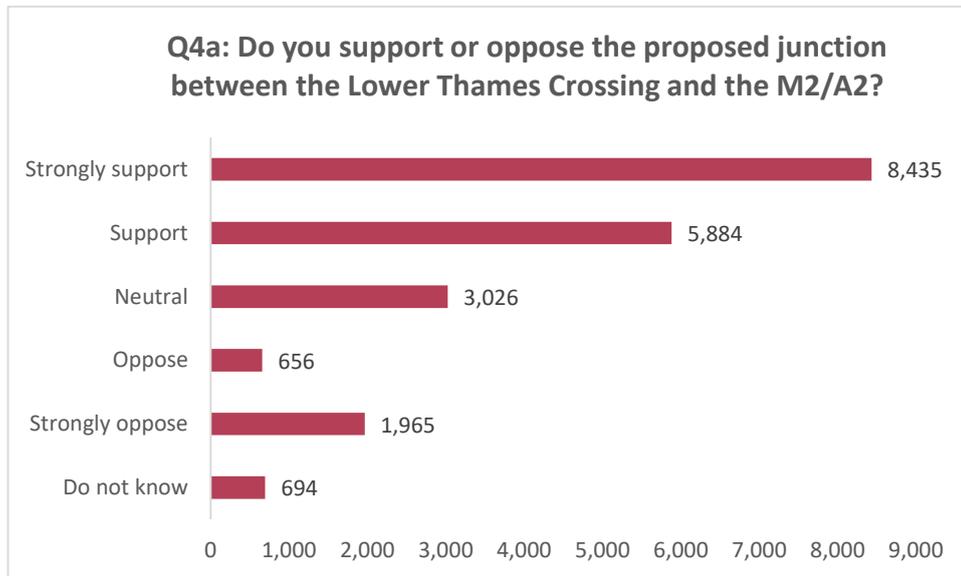


Connections

Southern connections

Q4a asks: “Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M2/A2?”

Chart 6: Views on the proposed junction between LTC and the M2/A2 (number of respondents: 20,660)



Open-text comments

In addition, 9,883 respondents discussed the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M2/A2.

Many respondents **support** the location and layout of the proposed M2/A2 junction or say that it will help to reduce traffic at the Dartford Crossing by diverting traffic away from some sections of the A2.

In contrast, those who are **opposed** to the proposed junction say that insufficient consideration has been given to the potential impacts of the new road on the rest of the road network in Kent, including local roads, major roads such as the M2 and the M20, and trunk roads such as the A229. Some also raise access concerns either related to the removal of the A226 junction at Chalk, or to what they consider to be overly complicated design arrangements which could impede local traffic. The perceived negative impact on air quality, local communities and wildlife are also mentioned.

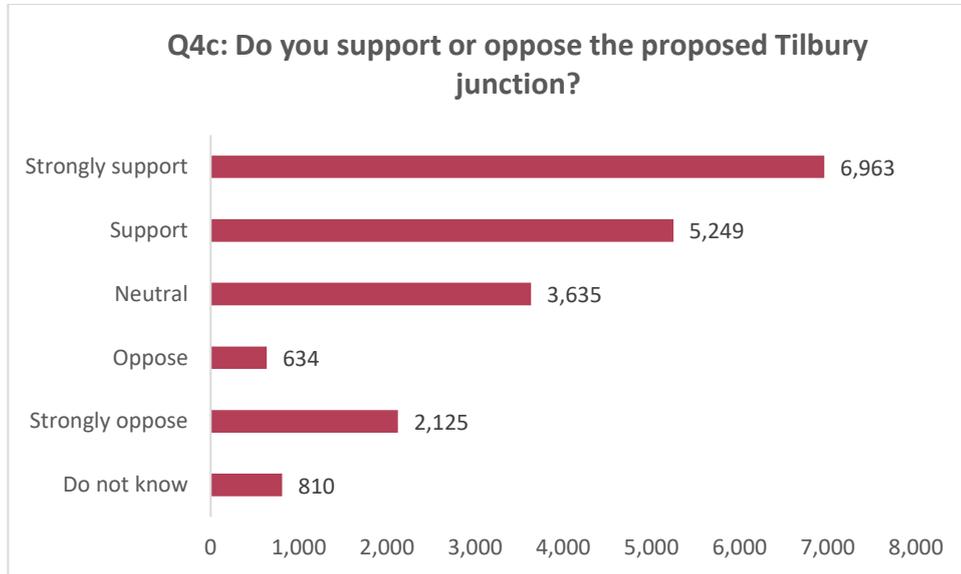
Suggestions put forward by respondents mainly focus on the need for additional connections with some specifically calling for the reinstatement of the 'C variant' link to the M20, which was explored in previous studies by Highways England. Others would like to see improvements to the existing road network, including the M2, A2, M20, A20 and the connecting roads between these routes. Changes to the design of the proposed M2/A2 junction are also recommended.



Northern connections

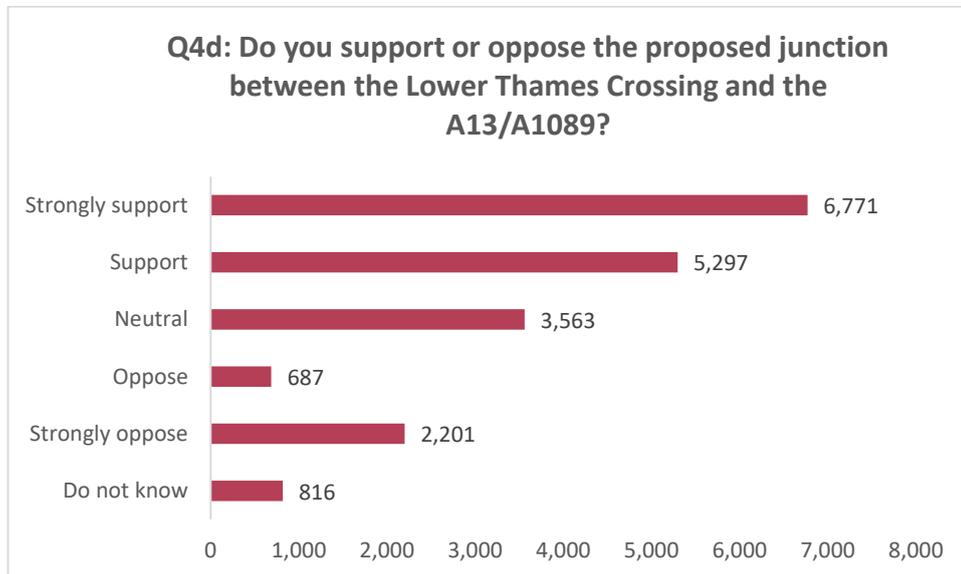
Q4c asks: “Do you support or oppose the proposed Tilbury junction?”

Chart 7: Views on the proposed Tilbury junction (number of respondents: 19,416)



Q4d asks: “Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the A13/A1089?”

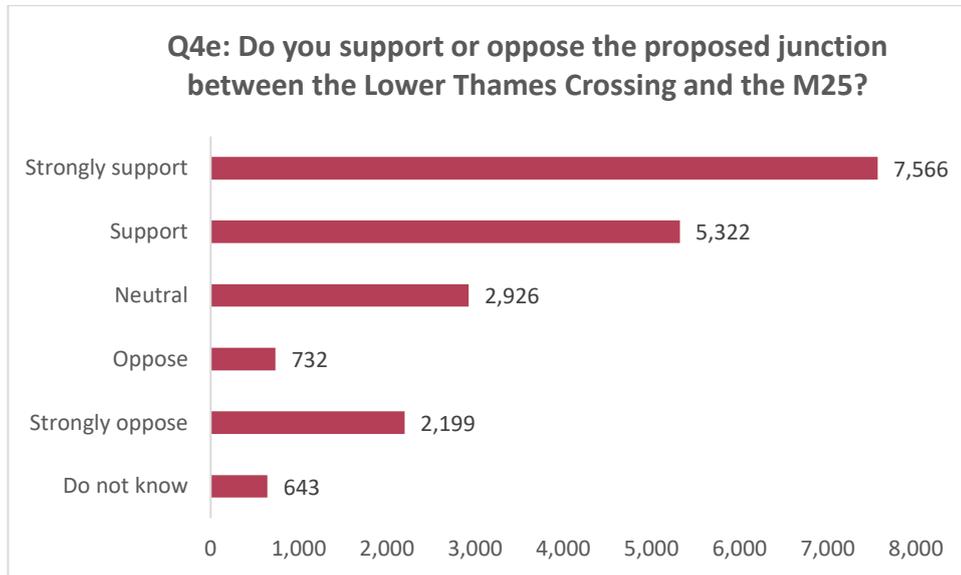
Chart 8: Views on the proposed junction between LTC and the A13/A1089 (number of respondents: 19,335)





Q4e asks: “Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M25?”

Chart 9: Views on the proposed junction between LTC and the M25 (number of respondents: 19,388)



Open-text comments

In addition, 9,014 respondents discussed the proposed northern connections as part of their feedback. Where respondents comment specifically on one of the proposed junctions, those comments are captured later in this chapter. However, most respondents comment on the proposed northern connections together and are not specific about which of the junctions their comments relate to.

Northern connections as a whole

Those who **support** the proposed northern connections in general terms say that any potential community impacts have been minimised and that the connections would promote smoother traffic flow, reduce air pollution and have a positive influence on the economy.

Those who are **opposed** say that the proposed northern connections would impact negatively on communities in Thurrock and cause a deterioration in air quality whilst worsening congestion by adding traffic to already busy local roads.

Tilbury junction

The focus of comments on the **Tilbury junction** is the lack of a link road or any kind of access to the local area. It is suggested that a link road is necessary to provide access to Tilbury port, which, respondents say, would stimulate local economic growth.

A13/A1089 junction

Supportive comments on the **A13/A1089 junction** suggest that it would provide access to one of the key arterial roads through South Essex, but a major concern is that the junction would generate extra traffic on the A13 and other busy local roads. Concerns are also raised in relation to potential environmental impacts and the access arrangements at the junction, with some respondents saying that a six-mile detour would be required to make certain journeys. Others suggest that the design of this junction should facilitate a smooth traffic flow.



LTC/M25 junction

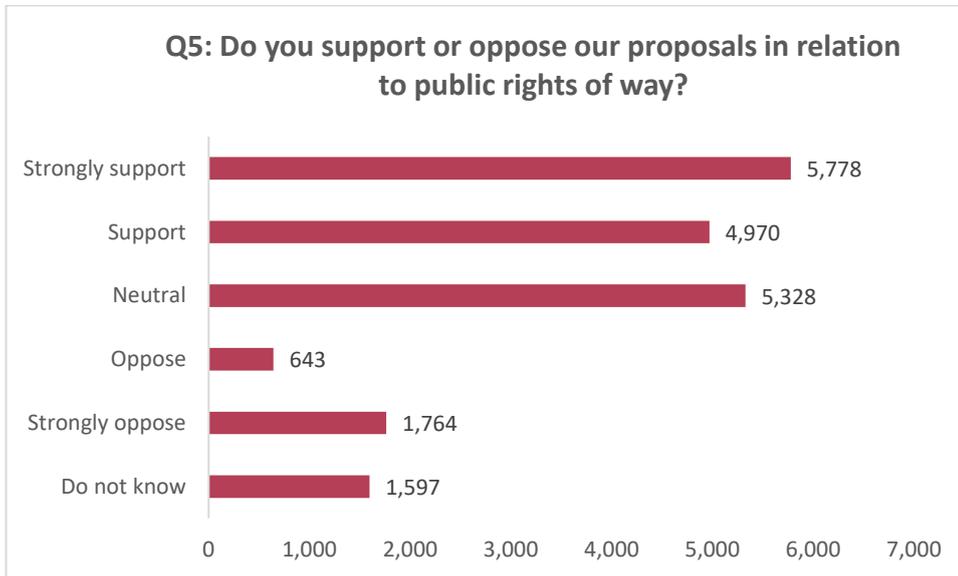
Many of the respondents who comment on the **junction between the LTC and the M25** say that it is important to provide access to the M25 but raise concerns about the impact the elevated sections of the junction would have on local communities in terms of increased noise and visual impacts. The potential impact on amenities such as Thames Chase Community Forest are also referenced. Similar concerns are raised in relation to **junction 29** of the M25. There are also suggestions that access to the A127 would be complicated or that traffic would be drawn onto this already busy road, although some argue that there should be direct access between the A127 and the LTC.



Walkers, cyclists and horse-riders

Q5 asks: “Do you support or oppose our proposals in relation to public rights of way?”

Chart 10: Views on the proposals in relation to public rights of way (number of respondents: 20,080)



Open-text comments

In addition, 10,533 respondents discussed the proposals in relation to public rights of way as part of their feedback. Even though the question only asks for feedback on the proposals in relation to public rights of way, many respondents also chose to comment on what should be the relationship of non-motorised users (walkers, cyclists and equestrians) with the LTC infrastructure.

Many respondents **support** the need to maintain or reinstate where possible lost public rights of way, highlighting their importance to local communities, and welcome Highways England's commitment to consider all users in the LTC proposals. In contrast, others **object** to any loss of public rights of way in general or raise concerns about specific public rights of way being affected. Some also say that the proposals for public rights of way and non-motorised users are not concrete enough and worry that they may not be implemented.

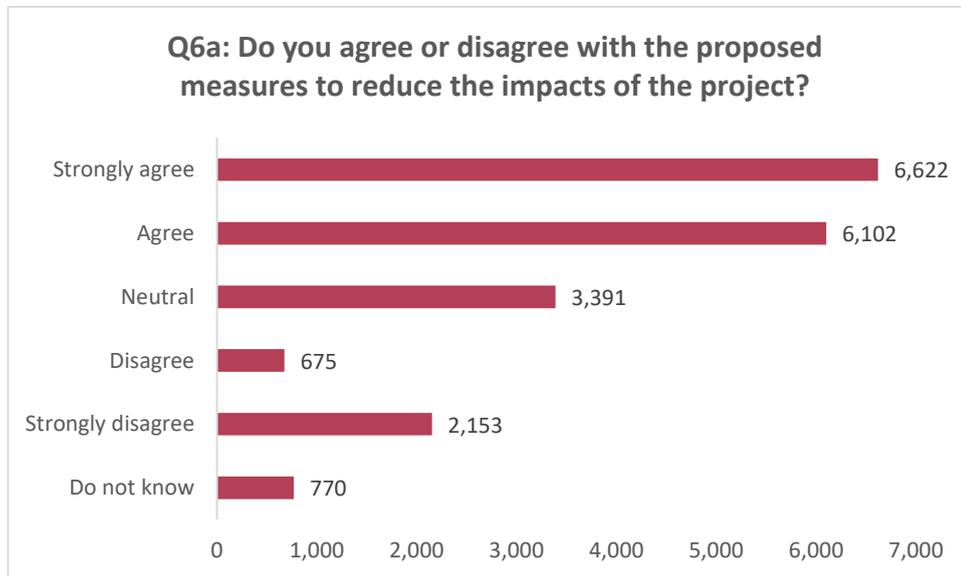
The most common **suggestion** is that there should be provisions made for non-motorised users to use the LTC tunnel in some way, including parallel routes or tunnels, or use of a shuttle service. However, other respondents expressly **oppose** the idea of non-motorised users being able to use the tunnel or the LTC in general, stressing that the need to relieve congestion must be prioritised.



Environment

Q6a asks: “Do you agree or disagree with the proposed measures to reduce the impacts of the project?”

Chart 11: Views on the proposed environmental measures (number of respondents: 19,713)



Open-text comments

In addition, 12,531 respondents discussed the environmental impacts and plans to reduce them as part of their feedback.

Many respondents do not engage with the proposed mitigation measures directly but express their belief that the environment should be a high priority or should be minimally impacted by the project.

Those who **support** the proposals related to the reduction of impacts on environment say that air quality in the area would be improved by better traffic flow. They also back proposals to protect biodiversity and the visual landscape, as well as to minimise noise pollution.

Those who are **opposed** to the proposals say that environmental considerations have not been given sufficient weight or they express concerns about specific impacts. These include potential detrimental impacts on air and noise quality, biodiversity, climate, community and the landscape. Some express concern about a perceived lack of concrete assurances in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and suggest that words like ‘could’ and ‘should’ are non-committal. A campaign organised by the Woodland Trust also raises concern over potential loss of ancient woodland.

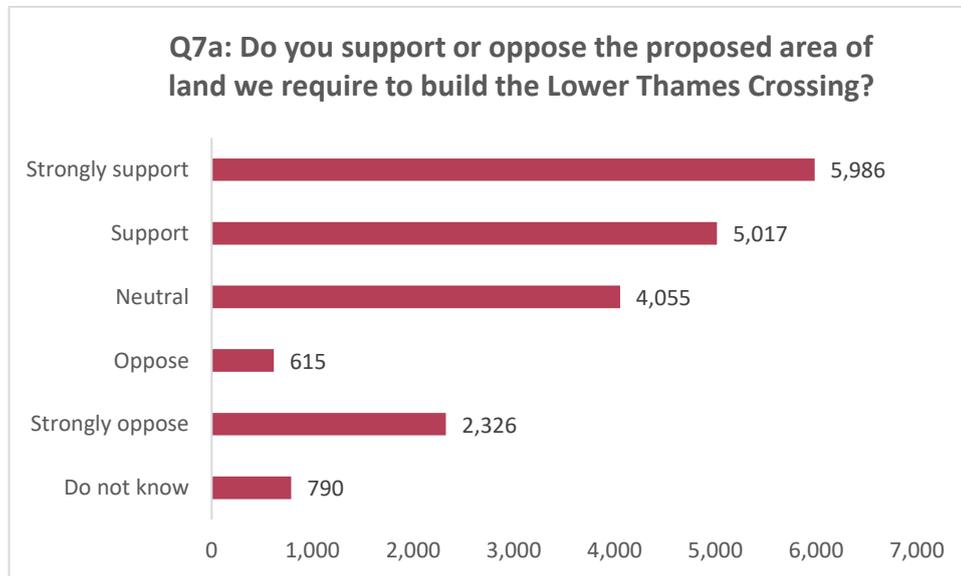
Frequent **suggestions** put forward by respondents include the creation of community facilities, tree planting and increasing the use of renewable energy as part of the LTC proposals. Other wide-ranging suggestions for reducing impacts on wildlife species are also presented.



Development boundary

Q7a asks: “Do you support or oppose the proposed area of land we require to build the Lower Thames Crossing?”

Chart 12: Views on the proposed development boundary (number of respondents: 18,789)



Open-text comments

In addition, 7,765 respondents discussed the proposed development boundary as part of their feedback.

Those who **support** the development boundary feel that it is necessary for the project to proceed and say that impacts on local communities and the environment have been minimised and the project may encourage regeneration of the area.

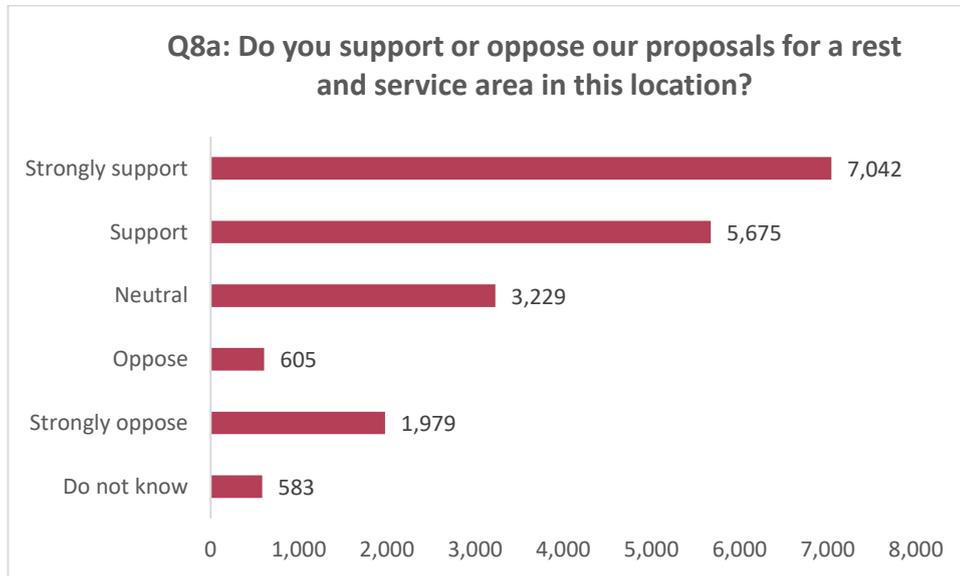
In contrast, those who **oppose** the development boundary express concern about the amount of land required or the number of homes that could be demolished and the impact this would have on local communities. There are also fears that the LTC would open up the area to further urbanisation. The decision-making process behind the proposed development boundary is also criticised, with respondents describing frequent changes to the boundary and other practices causing stress to residents. **Concerns** are also raised and **suggestions** made in relation to compulsory purchases and negotiations between Highways England and landowners.



Rest and service area and maintenance depot

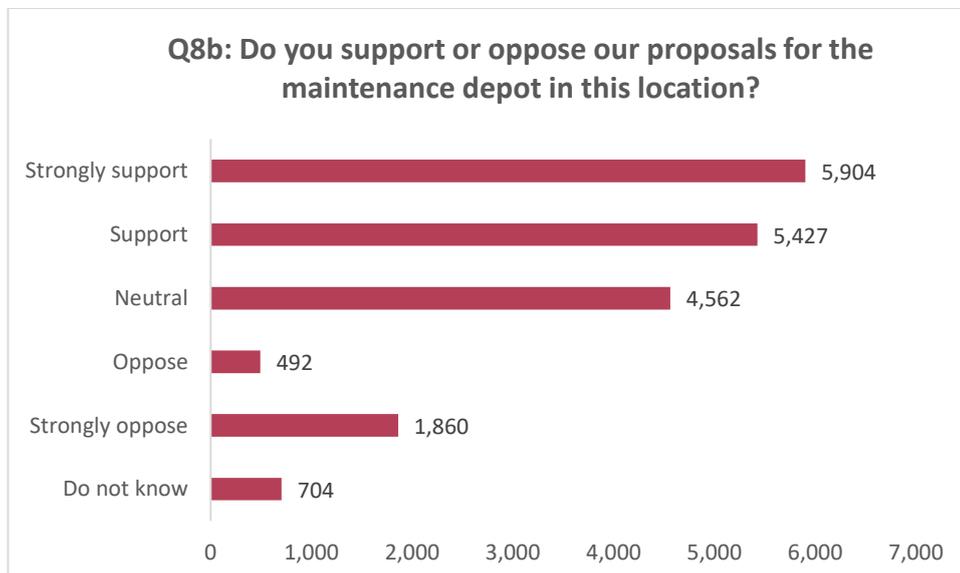
Q8a asks: “Do you support or oppose our proposals for a rest and service area in this location?”

Chart 13: Views on the proposed rest and service area (number of respondents: 19,113)



Q8b asks: “Do you support or oppose our proposals for the maintenance depot in this location?”

Chart 14: Views on the proposed maintenance depot (number of respondents: 18,949)



Open-text comments

In addition, 9,659 respondents discussed the proposals for a rest and service area and maintenance depot as part of their feedback. The majority of respondents comment on the rest and service area and maintenance depot together as one site or are not specific about which of these proposals their comments relate to.

Those respondents who **support** the proposed location of the rest and service area and maintenance depot often say that the existing Thurrock services are inadequate, that there is a general shortage of services in the area, and that there is a need for HGV parking facilities on



the LTC. They also say that the maintenance depot needs to be located near the tunnel entrance. Additionally, some respondents feel that co-locating the sites would minimise the community impacts and that the service area would help to create jobs and regenerate the local area.

In contrast, others **oppose** the service area, saying there is **no need** for it and objecting to its location in East Tilbury or Thurrock more widely. They say that it would impact on the local community as it is too close to residential areas and argue that these areas have been treated unfairly.

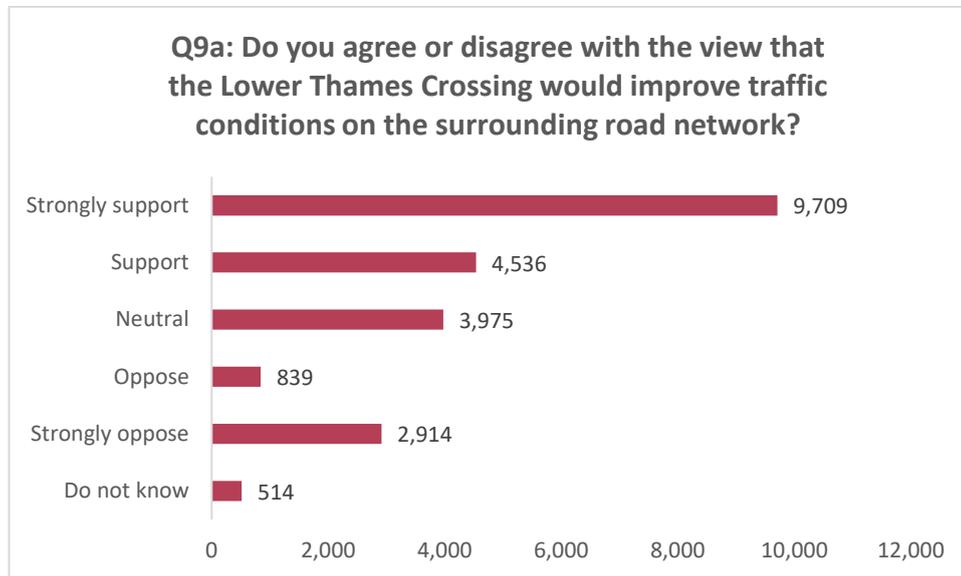
Suggestions put forward by respondents mainly focus on more HGV parking and facilities with green space and an outdoor area.



Traffic

Q9a asks: “Do you agree or disagree with the view that the Lower Thames Crossing would improve traffic conditions on the surrounding road network?”

Chart 15: Views on the impact LTC would have on traffic conditions (number of respondents: 22,487)



Open-text comments

In addition, 11,994 respondents discussed the forecast traffic improvements as part of their feedback.

Many of those respondents who feel that the LTC would improve traffic conditions **agree** with the forecasts that show congestion would ease and suggest that congestion around the Dartford Crossing in particular would be reduced.

In contrast, those who **disagree** with this notion challenge the accuracy of the forecasts, suggesting that they are unreliable or have failed to consider certain factors such as planned housing schemes and current traffic patterns. Others state that the LTC would not improve traffic, that any improvement would be temporary as extra capacity would be quickly filled, or that the LTC would worsen traffic conditions by attracting more cars onto the roads.

The most common **suggestion** put forward by respondents is that there is a need to future-proof designs by increasing the number of lanes and upgrading existing roads to support increased traffic flow, particularly the A229 at Blue Bell Hill. HGVs are also considered to be a major contributing factor in congestion and respondents offer suggestions for how they can be better managed.



Charges

Question 10 asks: “Please give us your views on our proposed approach to charging users of the crossing.”

In total, 19,144 respondents discussed the proposed approach to charging users of the LTC.

A number of respondents who **support** the approach to charging back a variable charging model, particularly in relation to peak and off-peak charges, but also for emissions-based or vehicle-based variance because they feel that this would better regulate the traffic flow and deliver some environmental benefits. Some also support free-flow e-charging to keep traffic moving and reduce delays. Other respondents see charging as necessary to meet the costs of the project.

In contrast, the majority of respondents **object** to the proposed approach to charging because they feel that the LTC should be free to use, with many referring to their experience at the Dartford Crossing in support of their views. Other objections focus on an emissions-based charging model because of concerns that it would discourage use of the new crossing or punish those drivers who cannot afford to upgrade their vehicles. There are also some concerns that a free-flow e-charging system would be less effective than toll booths for preventing non-payment.

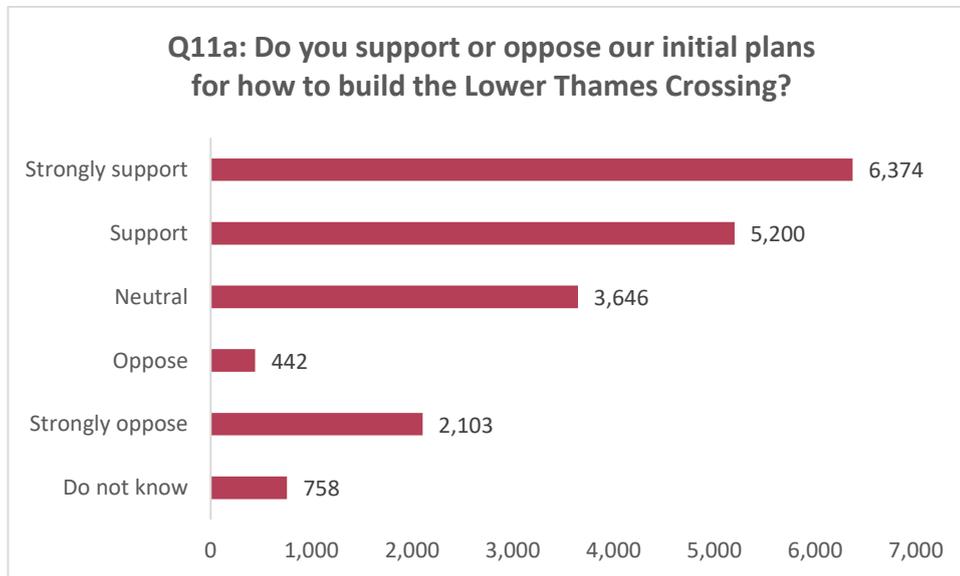
Many **suggestions** are put forward by respondents both in terms of the actual rate and the wider mechanisms and practices for charging. To ensure that the new crossing would be used, respondents call for the charge to be affordable, with some stressing that it should be the same or lower than that at the Dartford Crossing. Others ask for reimbursement of drivers in the event of significant delays as well as measures to ensure that overseas vehicles do not avoid payment.



Building the LTC

Q11a asks: “Do you support or oppose our initial plans for how to build the Lower Thames Crossing?”

Chart 16: Views on building the LTC (number of respondents: 18,523)



Open-text comments

In addition, 6,706 respondents discussed the proposed approach to building the LTC as part of their feedback.

Those who **support** the proposed approach to building the LTC acknowledge that some disruption during construction is inevitable, but that they are pleased with the proposed mitigation measures, with some adding that this is a matter best left to experts. These respondents stress the importance of completing the build on time or even faster to minimise any disruption.

Those who are **opposed** to the approach raise concerns about the length of the construction process or the possibility of the project over-running and suggest that the build would impact negatively on local communities and the environment.

Many respondents **suggest** that local companies and workforce should be contracted to build the LTC to maximise the local benefits of the project.



Utilities and pylons

Question 12 asks: “Please let us know any views you have on the proposed changes to utilities infrastructure.”

In total, 6,463 respondents discussed the proposed changes to utilities infrastructure.

Those who **support** the proposed utilities changes feel they are necessary for the project to proceed but seek assurances that disruption to utilities is kept to a minimum and that consideration is given to the local landscape.

Those who are **opposed** raise concerns over supply disruptions, environmental impacts, pylons near residential areas, as well as the cost of the proposals. The most popular **suggestion** is that the electricity lines should be placed underground to minimise their visual impact.



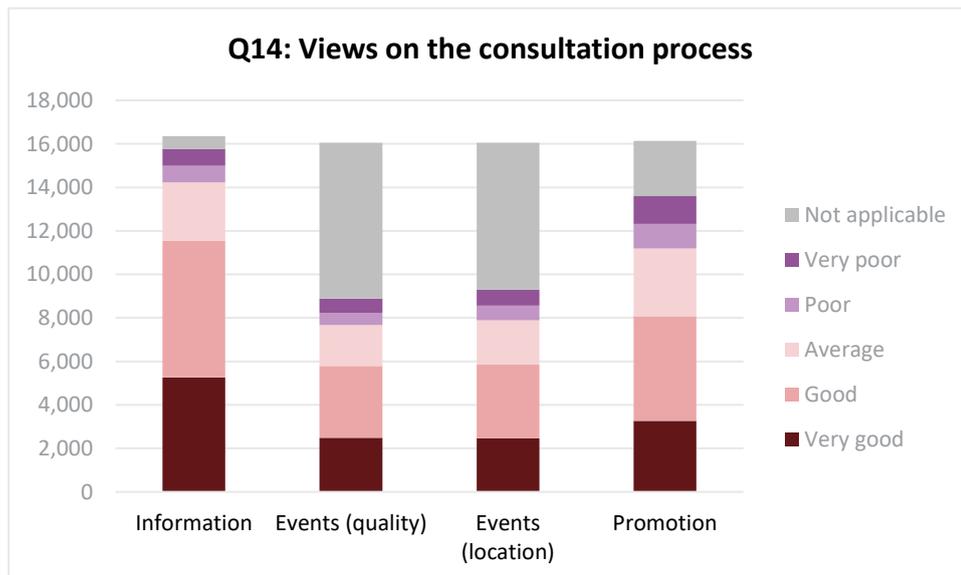
Consultation

Q14 was broken down into four sub-questions, which sought respondents' views on the quality of Highway England's consultation materials, events, the way in which it notified people about its plans, and anything else related to the consultation. There was another sub-question seeking further comments in relation to the consultation and its delivery.

In total:

- 16,354 respondents answered the closed question asking for views on the consultation information;
- 16,052 answered the closed question asking for view on the quality of the events;
- 16,043 answered the closed question asking for views on the location of the events;
- 16,130 answered the closed question asking for views on the promotion of the consultation.

Chart 17: Views on the consultation process



Open-text comments

In addition, 9,481 respondents discussed the consultation process as part of their feedback.

Those respondents who **support** the consultation process appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposals and describe the consultation events and materials as helpful and informative. The use of "before and after" pictures and the "fly-through" video received particularly positive mentions.

In contrast, other respondents feel that the outcome has been pre-determined and are sceptical that their feedback would influence decision-making. These respondents suggest that the information was biased or insufficient and that the consultation was poorly advertised. The location and time of events were also **criticised** by some who considered them to be inaccessible.