

Sarah Collins
Land and Property Lead
Lower Thames Crossing 1st Floor
Woodlands
Manton Lane
Bedford
MK41 7LW

Date: 19 December 2018

Our Ref: 201/TC/L18/1

Your Ref: ORG10000061

Dear Sarah,

Forest Enterprise response to Lower Thames Crossing Consultation –

Lower Thames Crossing Statutory pre-application consultation between 10 October 2018 and 20 December 2018 - Planning Act 2008 Section 42: Duty to consult on a proposed application

I am writing to formally respond on behalf of Forest Enterprise, which owns areas of land directly affected by the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.

Forest Enterprise is the part of the Forestry Commission which manages the public forest estate, which is held under title of the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. Please note that this response is solely in relation to our interest as landowner, and that Forest Services may respond separately on behalf of the Forestry Commission in the capacity of statutory consultee.

The affected land is comprised in three separate parcels, two of which lie within the Thames Chase Community Forest. As such, our primary management objectives are to deliver recreational and environmental public benefit in accordance with the Thames Chase Plan, and the land was specifically acquired since 2000 and developed for this purpose.

Our land holdings within the Thames Chase Community Forest comprise a number of separate community woodlands areas which are generally linked by the public rights of way network. Loss of such land to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing therefore represents a considerable loss of public benefit following significant public investment, which will require appropriate mitigation to be undertaken by Highways England. I will now comment on each of the three separate parcels of land affected by the proposals, identified by reference to the eleven numbered 'Large Scale Land Use Sheets' forming part of the consultation documents:

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Charles Ashley FRICS FAAV

1. Broadfields Farm (sheets 9 and 10) - This is our most important single land holding within Thames Chase, comprising established woodland surrounding the Thames Chase Forest Centre. The holding is already divided by the M25, with the majority of land (including the Forest Centre) to the west, and a further parcel to the east connected by an underpass. The proposed land take is significant and will both reduce publicly accessible land and sever a number of trails. It will also further separate the two parcels of land. The impact on the site would be reduced if severance of trails could be minimised, particularly in the western parcel which attracts high numbers of visitors. Public access needs to be retained between the two parcels of land. Parts of the land use plans appear to show that some of the proposed acquisition is for temporary use and for the diversion of utilities. Provided such utilities are located underground and land subject to temporary use is appropriately restored, impact will be reduced. It is noted that some land immediately south of the western part of Broadfields is to be acquired for environmental mitigation or landscape enhancement, and could form a valuable extension to the Thames Chase Community Forest.
2. Folkes Lane (Sheet 11) – This is a popular local access woodland. Most of this land is shown as proposed acquisition for temporary use and for the diversion of utilities. Provided such utilities are located underground and land subject to temporary use is appropriately restored, impact will be reduced.
3. Jeskyns (Sheet 2) – This is a very important and popular community woodland with intensive public access and high environmental quality. Part of the site lies within an AONB, so landscaping is of particular importance. This includes essential car parks to enable visitors from Gravesend and the surrounding area. Most of the acquisition is shown as rights to be acquired for the diversion of utilities, and again, provided these can be located underground and the surface appropriately restored, then impact can be minimised. However please note that the area identified is of crucial importance to the existing and future areas of car parking. Any such diversions of utilities must include restoration to a specification that will enable continued uninterrupted use of the affected land for vehicle access and parking.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Ashley
Area Land Agent

cc. Tristram Hilborn
Bethany Cambridge
Mari Sibley
Neil Jarvis –Forest Services