

Blue Bell Hill Improvements Consultation Response

Thames Crossing Action Group represents thousands of people who are strongly opposed to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing. We object to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing for many different reasons and do not consider the project to be in any way fit for purpose.

Our response to this consultation is based purely on our opinions in relation to the impacts of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing in connection to the proposed Blue Bell Hill scheme.

Since you yourselves state that the proposed Blue Bell Hill Improvements would be needed because of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing (LTC), we find it highly unacceptable that Kent County Council are enabling Highways England (HE) in their false economy of not including all necessary works that would be needed as a direct result into the LTC project. It is clear to us that HE are attempting to manipulate the benefit cost ratio for LTC by not including key components as part of the LTC project. Things such as these 'improvements' to Blue Bell Hill should have to be included in the LTC project, since they would be needed as a direct result of LTC.

The same can be said of the Tilbury Link Rd, which was removed from the LTC project, but is being pushed forward as a stand-alone pipeline project in Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3). Also the Rest/Service Area that was removed from the LTC, but is still being discussed as a separate stand-alone project.

We note and seriously question that you are stating that AECOM are working on the Blue Bell Hill scheme considering their involvement in LTC. Is this not a conflict of interest, since they stand to benefit on this scheme because the other scheme is not fit for purpose?

How can Kent County Council support LTC knowing the project is not fit for purpose and Highways England are behaving in such an underhand manner?

The M20 is the UK's main route in and out of Europe. It therefore goes without saying that there is a huge amount of traffic that uses it. It also goes without saying that if the proposed Lower Thames Crossing goes ahead then a huge amount of that traffic will want to cross the River Thames using the LTC to and from the M20. To do this means traffic will use the A229 to cut through to and from the LTC.

It is therefore totally unacceptable that Highways England are not taking this into account with the LTC design, which would have a hugely negative impact on the A229/Blue Bell Hill because of this.

Not only is this underhand and a false economy, it also forces the cost and responsibility to clean up their proposed mess onto a local Authority, Kent County Council. This is not right or fair.

It is also typical of Highways England to move forward with one scheme only for it force the need for further works/schemes due to their inadequacies. Not only is the proposed LTC not fit for purpose we also feel that Highways England are not fit for purpose, and their lack of consideration over the huge negative impact the LTC would have on the A229/Blue Bell Hill, and it not being taken into account as part of the proposed LTC is unacceptable.

Whilst we do not agree that the Blue Bell Hill improvements should be a separate project, and that since these works are needed as a direct result of LTC it should be included in the LTC project/budget, we also identify that there most definitely will be a need for something to be done.

We know that much of the landscape either side of the road up Blue Bell Hill is very protected, and we would ask that this is respected and honoured with whichever 'solution' goes ahead.

Another thing our group has serious concerns about is the environmental impact of road building, both to biodiversity and in regard to pollution.

We know that the proposed LTC would fail against World Health Organization (WHO) standards for PM2.5. We know that many areas surrounding the LTC are already suffering with illegally high levels of pollution.

If 'improvements' at Blue Bell Hill do go ahead then it is essential that they genuinely improve air quality, and that everything that can possibly be done, is done, to minimise negative impacts to the environment as a whole.

We would of course be happy to discuss any of the points raised in this response further should you wish, please do not hesitate to contact us.

More info on our objections and opposition to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing can also be found on our website www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com