
Introduction

Thames Crossing Action Group represents thousands of people who are opposed to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.

We are strongly opposed to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing because it would not fulfil the project objectives. It would be hugely destructive and harmful, is not fit for purpose and would be a complete waste of taxpayers' money.

This response to the Minor Refinements Consultation should be considered in addition to our responses to all previous consultations, and should be read in conjunction with those documents. The Statutory Consultation¹, Supplementary Consultation², Design Refinement Consultation³, and the Community Impacts Consultation⁴, Local Refinement Consultation⁵.

This consultation has been far from adequate, and contains many claims that cannot be backed up with evidence. The consultation booklet generates more questions than answers, yet we have done our best to prepare and submit our representation below.

We remain completely and strongly opposed to the proposed £10bn+++ hugely destructive and harmful, not fit for purpose Lower Thames Crossing.

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¹ [TCAG Response to LTC Statutory Consultation](#)

² [TCAG response to LTC Supplementary Consultation](#)

³ [TCAG response to LTC Design Refinement Consultation](#)

⁴ [TCAG response to LTC Community Impacts Consultation](#)

⁵ [TCAG response to LTC Local Refinement Consultation](#)

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Nitrogen Deposition changes

We begin by highlighting that this section of the consultation booklet was confusing and misleading with the way information was presented, and we have highlighted this further in our comments on the inadequacies of the consultation later in our response.

We would also voice concern that the site at Burham was added to the Order Limits without any public consultation, following the Local Refinement Consultation and prior to the LTC DCO application being resubmitted.

We consider any additional land being placed within the Order Limits to be significant and something that should have been consulted upon.

The fact you have only even highlighted this addition publicly at the time you are now proposing removing it, we consider to be unacceptable and underhand.

It also leads us to wonder and question what else you may or may not have changed/added to the DCO application that you are trying to bury in the sheer volume and complexity of the DCO documentation.

The way the Burham site was added just goes to show that you had not given adequate thought and consideration to what you were proposing prior to the Local Refinement Consultation.

We have to question why you had not discussed the Burham site adequately enough with the landowner to identify that there was Countryside Stewardship being considered.

This is not something that is applied for and awarded overnight. The fact you had not identified such relevant and important information again highlights yet more inadequacy.

This is made even worse by the fact that you sneakily added it without public

consultation, to now propose removing it again. This clearly shows a lack of adequate consultation and consideration of what you are proposing.

This is a common theme to the whole project in general, whereby there has not been adequate consultation right from the very beginning when you failed to present all the route options you were asked to consult on at route options stage.

You suggest that you are now proposing to remove the Burham site due to the Countryside Stewardship. In an email response to us you said, *“The new information about the Countryside Stewardship scheme led us to put forward alternative proposals which respond to the feedback from the landowner while also meeting our objectives.”*

In light of this we would question why you have not done similar in other areas and aspects of the project. Why for example have you moved the proposed route through The Wilderness in South Ockendon, an ancient/long established woodland, to avoid having to take the proposed route through a landfill site?

We believe it is because it is easier and cheaper to destroy The Wilderness than go through the landfill site, regardless of the fact that the woodland is an important and irreplaceable habitat and of historic importance.

You also suggest the removal of the Burham site is because of impacts to the farm and business. Whilst we support reducing impacts to farms, and all homes, businesses and land, we again question why you do not seem as concerned about impacts to other farms, land, businesses and homes. The proposed LTC is not fit for purpose and it cannot therefore be in any way deemed acceptable to be proposing destroying and impacting land, habitats, homes, businesses, communities etc anywhere.

We also do not buy into the fact that you feel it acceptable to further reduce the nitrogen deposition compensation.

You originally stated that there was an initial provision for 279ha of nitrogen deposition compensation, which you say you intended to reduce to around 250ha. Yet the latest proposal sees it drop to just 205ha.

It is unclear why you felt it necessary to propose the level of compensation you did, but then so quickly deem it acceptable to reduce it. This suggests that you either were not adequately calculating the necessary compensation in the first place (when you are only supposed to propose taking what is absolutely essential for an NSIP), or that you are attempting to reduce it below an acceptable level.

This is totally unacceptable. We also draw attention to the fact that this is not mitigation, it is compensation. This means that what is being proposed will not mitigate, but simply supposedly compensate for the impacts and harm caused. Your priority should be not to cause harm in the first place, and at very least if harm cannot be prevented or mitigated the compensation would need to be adequate.

You appear to be suggesting that the reduction in nitrogen deposition compensation land is acceptable because of the extra benefits the Countryside Stewardship brings. However, that is not part of the proposed LTC project and therefore should not be considered a 'benefit' or compensation for the impacts and harm of the proposed LTC project, should it go ahead.

The Examining Authority (ExA) responsible for examining the LTC Development Consent Order (DCO) also seem to have questions in this regard of double counting some elements of the proposed project, as highlighted in Item 4 of the agenda for Issue Specific Hearing 1 (Project Definition)⁶.

As also highlighted in that point in the agenda, this is not the only instance of creative accounting for the project. We also have concerns about this aspect and misleading and unethical behaviour and practice.

⁶ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-002237-LTC%20-%20ISH%201%20Project%20definition%20Draft%20Agenda.pdf>

We reiterate our concerns and frustrations that you are attempting to include Hole Farm Community Woodland as environmental mitigation and compensation for the LTC project. The reality is that you announced the new community woodland publicly as an initiative to 'improve' biodiversity along the major road network, and that it would be progressed regardless of whether the proposed LTC is granted permission or not.

This is all completely unacceptable, and must lead to questions about what else you are attempting to get away with, and mislead people about; and the implications of those factors on the whole project.

We also have serious concerns about the impacts to agriculture and the environment. The loss of land and impacts to land and the natural environment.

Our country faces serious concerns about food security, we cannot afford to be losing more agricultural land, especially for projects that like the proposed LTC are simply not fit for purpose.

Our country is one of the most nature depleted in the world, so again we cannot afford to be losing and negatively impacting our natural environment with projects like the proposed LTC.

We have concerns that your assessment of nitrogen deposition is also not taking the proposed Blue Bell Hill improvements into account. This is of particular importance since those works are needed as a direct result of the proposed LTC, if it goes ahead.

This again highlights the failings in assessing and consulting on route options, because you failed to give adequate importance and consultation on Option C variant, which included improvements between the M20 and M2, the A229 (Blue Bell Hill).

Option C variant was ruled out because it was deemed it would have limited economic benefits, high environmental impact, a high cost and would have little benefit in

transferring traffic from Dartford onto Location C routes. It was not considered to be essential to the new crossing scheme⁷. Yet as mentioned, it is now being progressed as a separate stand-alone project as a direct result of the proposed LTC, which stands to reason if the proposed LTC is aimed at serving the ports in the South East.

With 70% of all goods in and out of the Port of Dover alone using the Dartford Crossing, and there being no rail connection to the port, all freight is by road. The main route in and out of the Port of Dover is via the M20. The proposed LTC does not connect to the M20, which then leads to the need for the A229 (Blue Bell Hill) to be used by all port traffic wanting to access the LTC, if it goes ahead.

This is just another example of the false economy of the proposed LTC, which itself already has questionable value for money issues and an adjusted benefit cost ratio that continues to drop.

If as you say you are truly considering feedback, then why are you not taking all feedback into consideration and acting accordingly? It seems to us that the only thing you take into account is anything that benefits your needs and wants, rather than what is the right thing to do.

This of course becomes even more obvious when you take into account the fact that National Highways own Annual Reports highlight that failure to deliver the proposed LTC is an existential threat to the organisation⁸.

We are concerned that the consultation booklet reports an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Whilst NH/LTC may consider it to be small and insignificant, we believe all the 'small' 'insignificant' increases across the board will add up and make a difference, and should not be played down and ignored.

⁷ https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/ltc/lower-thames-crossing-consultation/user_uploads/lower-thames-crossing-consultation-summary-business-case.pdf

⁸ https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/baphtjxv/national_highways_ar22_interactive_final.pdf

It is of course impossible to properly assess this kind of thing, since NH/LTC are not sharing any actual data. Instead we are supposed to blindly trust what we are being told. With the track record that NH/LTC have we are not inclined to blindly trust, and instead remain concerned and questioning.

We also question the fact that despite Government announcing that the start of construction of the LTC will be delayed by two years, if permission is granted, no new assessment is being carried out by NH/LTC.

The cumulative impacts need to be given proper and adequate consideration.

We fail to see how you can consider it mitigation or compensation because for every bit of land you propose to take for the project, whether it be for the proposed route, or environmental mitigation or compensation, you are reducing the amount of land available for farming and the natural environment.

Particularly with habitats and wildlife you cannot keep attempting to cram more and more into smaller and smaller areas. How would you like it if more and more people were put in your home to live with you? How would you like it if the supermarket where you usually do your grocery shopping was unable to get more stock, but the amount of people shopping kept growing?

At a time of climate emergency all impacts to our environment, including nitrogen deposition need to be considered and steps taken to stop the harm caused. Rather than playing with the amount of compensation, the serious fact that the proposed LTC is not fit for purpose and needs scrapping needs to be addressed.

On the topic of nitrogen deposition, we also still have all the concerns we have voiced previously in earlier consultation. We do not deem that what is being proposed would be adequate, nor that consultation on this aspect has been adequate.

We are surprised since you are covering the topic of nitrogen deposition again in this consultation that you have not extended the consultation to cover the impacts to

Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation. This was an area that has been controversial as to what is deemed acceptable in regard to the impact of nitrogen deposition, but no consultation in the area has been carried out. This is not acceptable and a real concern.

We do not agree with the need to take land for this project full stop, whether it be for the proposed route, mitigation, or compensation, as evidence shows that the proposed LTC fails to meet scheme objectives, fails against various legislation, and is simply not fit for purpose. We therefore completely disagree with this and all changes being proposed, because they are part of a project that needs to be scrapped immediately.

Northern Tunnel Portal change

We begin by stating that yet again this section of the Consultation Booklet has been very confusing to many, and we do not feel that the information has been presented in a clear and informative way.

It is not clear why it has taken to this stage in the process for NH/LTC to finally decide that more leeway may be needed. We believe that this is just another example of inadequate planning and design up to this point, and it is something that should have been decided and clarified prior to the submission/resubmission of the LTC DCO.

Since the first attempt to submit the LTC DCO was in Oct 2020, it has been a considerable length of time for this aspect to be adequately considered and proposed. There has also been plenty of time for any further consultation such as this to be included in consultations prior to the resubmission of the LTC DCO application.

We also note that the ultimately decision will be up to the contractor, which seems to pre-determine that what we think is bypassed, and also that public perception is that the contractor will likely do what is deemed easiest and cheapest for them, rather than what is necessarily the best thing to do.

In light of the update about the possibility of using either one or two Tunnel Boring Machines (TBM) we also question why there is no clarification as to the assessment or potential need for any changes to the southern end of the LTC tunnel, if only one TBM were to be used, meaning it would start tunnelling back from the southern end.

If as NH/LTC state in an email to us there is no need for reassessment and proposed change to the southern portal we question why adequate assessment could be carried out for one side but not the other, and why this issue of leeway for the contractor has not been picked up sooner.

We fail to see how the claim of there being less material use and construction waste can be true, if the 'tunnel' is not actually changing in total length. NH/LTC have failed to provide any information or evidence to back up this claim.

Page 18 of the consultation booklet covers the ‘Environmental topic’ of Climate, and states that the proposed changes *“will have a negligible effect on resilience of the project to climate change and on the amount of carbon generated in the construction phase of LTC. Therefore, no new or different significant effects are anticipated”*

Again, we have concern and question what is deemed ‘significant’, and how cumulatively these ‘insignificant’ amounts add up.

This statement is contradictory, and doesn’t even clarify whether the negligible effect would be positive or negative, but we assume it would be negative, just like the rest of the proposed project.

When we questioned NH/LTC about this aspect the response we got was, *“There is no connection between the proposed increase to the limits of deviation and resilience for climate change. The headwall location is an internal interface between the bored tunnel and the cut and cover structure.”*

Yet again, this is contradictory to what is stated in the consultation booklet, as per above.

Resilience of the project to climate change is of particular concern in this aspect of the project due to concerns about the tunnel portals being within flood plain, and an area that is predicted to be at high risk of being flooded in the not too distant future.

Since flooding is one aspect of how the project needs to be climate resilient, this is a very important factor that is missing any real clarification within the booklet.

To be proposing such a hugely destructive and harmful project is bad enough.

To be proposing such a hugely destructive and harmful project, that fails to meet scheme objectives and is not fit for purpose is even worse.

To be proposing such a hugely destructive and harmful project, that fails to meet scheme objectives and is not fit for purpose, and would be part of the cause for the project not having longevity just to flood risk from climate change is ludicrous and unthinkable.

In regard to climate change impacts, we again stress our concerns that despite the Government's announcement to delay the start of LTC construction by two years, if permission is granted, NH/LTC are still not considering a review and reassessment of the project based on the two year delay, which could be extremely important as carbon budgets change year to year, and that fact needs to be analysed at very least.

It is not good enough that in the response provided to us via email on this topic said that *"the carbon assessment within the DCO Application represents a reasonable worst case assessment"*, because the DCO application was prepared and submitted before the two year delay was announced, so has not likely been factored into the analysis.

NH/LTC are very quick to publicise their claims of reduction in carbon emissions of the proposed LTC. Yet when questioned further on various occasions have been unable or unwilling to provide any evidence to back up the claims. This is blatant attempts to greenwash the project. The lack of transparency and evidence leaves a lot to be desired, and does not equate to fair and adequate consultation, or promotion of such a hugely destructive and harmful project.

Therefore, yet again we do not believe or trust the claims made, and remain concerned and strongly opposed.

Revised utility proposals (East Tilbury)

In regard to the first proposed change regarding the proposed change to the temporary Linford water pipeline, we question why the alignment of the temporary water pipeline was originally proposed in such a zigzag route.

It is our understanding that Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are supposed to be designed so they only include land that is essentially needed for the project.

To have been proposing taking so much land to accommodate such a zigzag route for the temporary water pipeline seems unnecessary.

We question why a route more closely aligned to the proposed route was not originally proposed, particularly since this is supposed to be a temporary pipeline. Why has it taken so long to propose such a change?

We also have concerns about the impacts the use of water for the Tunnel Boring Machines will have on future water security.

We note that Essex and Suffolk Water have concerns over this aspect also, as highlighted in their LTC DCO Procedural Deadline B submission⁹.

Now more than ever, at a time of climate emergency we need to be super careful to protect our natural environment and resources. To be negligent and wasteful of our water supply is completely irresponsible and unacceptable.

If people are going to be in a position of not having enough water to survive, or not having another road that is not fit for purpose, it is obvious where priorities should lay.

⁹ [https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-002179-Northumbrian%20Water%20Limited%20\(operating%20as%20Essex%20and%20Suffolk%20Water\)%20-%20Written%20submissions%20on%20the%20Examination%20procedure%20and%20draft%20timetable.pdf](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-002179-Northumbrian%20Water%20Limited%20(operating%20as%20Essex%20and%20Suffolk%20Water)%20-%20Written%20submissions%20on%20the%20Examination%20procedure%20and%20draft%20timetable.pdf)

We also question the additional impact of getting the water for the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) south of the river, if only one TBM is used, for when it returns south to north for the second tunnel.

Pumping water a further distance must have implications too, which don't appear to have been covered in the information provided. It seems to us to again be a case of NH/LTC only presenting the information that is favourable to getting what they want and need, rather than offering the facts and realities.

We also question the fact that the land proposed to be removed from the order limits is land that is currently subject to a planning application for a housing development that has been ongoing since 2016 (Planning Application 16/01232/OUT)¹⁰.

The latest documentation associated with this housing development planning application has provision for whether the proposed LTC goes ahead or not.

We note that part of the housing development planning application covers a new bridge across the railway line, as a selling point, presumably to win over locals in the hope they will support the proposed housing development because East Tilbury is so cut off due to the railway line.

It appears to us that the proposed new bridge is similar if not the same location as was being discussed and offered by NH/LTC to Thurrock Council as also discussed at an LTC Task Force meeting.

It seems very co-incidental to us that NH/LTC were offering to build this bridge to firstly facilitate a haul road route for construction of the LTC, but also as a permanent bridge for future use by the public, and that such an offer was withdrawn, only for the said land to now be in a position of being removed from the order limits and the associated housing developer of said site is now proposing the same bridge.

¹⁰ <https://regs.thurrock.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=OD52TXQGH2J00>

We find it unacceptable that NH/LTC have denied the promise of the bridge, despite it being on public record that they had indeed made the offer¹¹.

In regard to the housing development we asked via email whether NH/LTC have assessed the impacts to the proposed housing development (on the shaded orange area)? If so please provide details. If not please explain why not.

We were told: *“The proposed development is included within the Project’s Uncertainty Log – as set out in Table A.1 of 7.7 Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report – Appendix C – Transport Forecasting Package Annexes [APP-523¹²]. This means the growth within the Project’s transport model has been spatially adjusted to include this proposed 1,000 residential development.*

Output from the Project’s transport model is shown within the 7.9 Transport Assessment [APP-529]¹³ and data from the model is used by a number of environmental topics as set out within the 6.1 Environmental Statement.

The inter-project cumulative effects assessment presented in ES Chapter 16 Cumulative Effects Assessment [APP-154]¹⁴ did not include Planning application 16/01232/OUT as at the time of assessment the development did not fall within the temporal scope of the assessment. The age of the information available for the planning application indicated that the development was no longer being progressed. The amended information for the development was not submitted until after the DCO Application for the Project was submitted.

¹¹ <https://youtu.be/hukA4RHw-hQ?t=2425>

¹² <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001334-7.7%20Combined%20Modelling%20and%20Appraisal%20Report%20-%20Appendix%20C%20-%20Transport%20Forecasting%20Package%20Annexes.pdf>

¹³ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001481-7.9%20Transport%20Assessment.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001585-6.1%20Environmental%20Statement%20Chapter%2016%20-%20Cumulative%20Effects%20Assessment.pdf>

The proposed housing development was not included in ES Chapter 13's [APP-151] assessment of development land because it does not benefit from an allocation or planning permission."

Yet again it appears that NH/LTC are manipulating the information and analysis to suit the needs and wants of the project and themselves.

How can it be that the housing development is included in one aspect of analysis, yet deemed it wasn't available at the time of the DCO application being submitted for another form of analysis.

There were 1000 house proposed within the original 2016 planning application¹⁵, and all associated documentation is available on Thurrock Council's planning portal. We would also expect that the landowner/developer would have been in discussions of some sort with NH/LTC, so would likely have expressed their interest in moving ahead with the development.

The Uncertainty Log actually details the development as 'More than likely', which hardly matched the comment of "*The age of the information available for the planning application indicated that the development was no longer being progressed*".

We again have to question the coincidence and timing of the withdrawal of the promise by NH/LTC of a bridge over the railway, the housing developer updating the planning application including details of the bridge across the railway, and now the removal of the said land from the LTC order limits.

In regard to the second proposed relocation of Low Street Lane Utility Logistics Hub we again question why it has taken so long to make such a proposal?

¹⁵ https://regs.thurrock.gov.uk/online-applications/files/EFB3DA5B59750A1B50A6A153FFF0747C/pdf/16_01232_OUT-APPLICATION_FORM-275250.pdf

We also question why there is a need for two different Utility Logistics Hub in this location, and why they have not been combined.

How can you reduce the size of land needed for the two Utility Logistics Hubs, if you say they are co-located rather than combined? This is particularly questionable since you directed us to the Indicative ULH layouts contained on Page 39 of 6.3 Environmental Statement – Appendix 2.1 – Construction Supporting Information Plate 1.19 Utility Logistics Hub alternative indicative layout – [APP-335]¹⁶.

The indicative plans show two different shaped plans, one rectangular and other square. Neither match the proposed shape of the co-located hubs. If they are co-located and not combined then how can a size reduction be viable if no sections of the hubs to be shared, since they are co-located not combined?

The information provided has certainly not been clear and informative.

In a number of the responses sent by NH/LTC to our questions via email on these aspects of change there was mention of reduction in Flood Compensation Area (FCA).

Our question:

Can someone please explain why the temporary water pipeline was proposed in a zigzag line prior to this proposed change? What was the reasoning of that configuration, and why is a similar configuration not needed now?

NH/LTC response:

“The previous alignment was located between the proposed Tilbury Flood Compensation Area (FCA) – which has subsequently reduced in size, and existing utility networks. The pipeline is now located within the area that the FCA has vacated and is located further from receptors in East Tilbury.”

Our question:

¹⁶ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001485-6.3%20Environmental%20Statement%20Appendix%202.1%20-%20Construction%20Supporting%20Information.pdf>

Why all of a sudden is the land that is proposed to be removed from the Order Limits not needed? What changed and why wasn't the reason identified sooner?

NH/LTC response:

“The Project continues to develop its design as a collaborative and iterative process, as explained in the Environmental Statement Chapter 2 – Project Description [APP-140]. Following stakeholder feedback and other design developments such as the reduction in the size of the FCA, the Project has reviewed its wider proposals, and following assessments of them, has determined it wishes to undertake these modifications to the application. This consultation was the first point at which these were developed sufficiently to consider and consult on them.”

Our question:

Why has it taken this long to consider and propose locating the Utility Logistics Hub where it is now being proposed? Why was there previously a need to have two separate ULH rather than condensing them into one ULH?

NH/LTC response:

“To clarify, there are still two ULH proposed. The ULH are co-located rather than combined.

The Project continues to develop its design as a collaborative and iterative process, as explained in the Environmental Statement Chapter 2 – Project Description [APP-140]. Following stakeholder feedback and other design and programme developments such as the reduction in the size of the FCA and when this FCA would need to be constructed, the Project has reviewed its wider proposals and determined that re-locating the ULH to its proposed location reduces the impact to the residents of Low Street Lane and permits the reduction of the combined sizes of the ULH's, therefore impacting less land temporarily whilst ensuring the deliverability of the Project on time.”

What is not apparent is where and when the Flood Compensation Area (FCA) was reduced. If it was prior to the DCO application being resubmitted why were these latest changes not also identified and either consulted on or changed in the DCO application? If it was since the DCO application was resubmitted why are details of the reduction not being highlighted and consulted on now?

This appears to be more confusing and misleading information, that is yet again anything but clear and informative.

In regard to the third proposed change of land use to the west of Linford we yet again question why this something that hadn't been considered and dealt with before now, and certainly prior to the DCO application being resubmitted.

The overhead powerlines have not changed location, so why didn't the utility owner or NH/LTC recognise that the land in question was only detailed and being proposed as a temporary possession of land, rather than temporary possession of land with permanent acquisition of rights before now?

It has been apparent to us that proposed utility works tend to also seek this land use status by the very nature that utilities will need ongoing maintenance, so rights would be needed.

Rather than a proposed change as such we see this as yet another example of inadequacies of the LTC consultation and project works.

It leaves us concerned about what other aspects have been poorly considered or overlooked that could lead to other changes being proposed, or issues being created through poor design and planning.

Tunnel Boring Machine

We note that NH/LTC consider whether one of two Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) are to be used an update rather than a proposed change that is being consulted on.

However, we also note that the LTC DCO Examining Authority feel it is relevant, since they have included such an aspect in Item 4 of the agenda for the Issue Specific Hearing 1 (Project Definition)¹⁷.

Since this is technically something that has changed, or not been presented to us previously we too believe it is something to be consulted on, and therefore share our comments.

The consultation booklet states that *“Delivering the works using a single TBM could deliver several efficiencies, particularly in terms of significant cost savings and a reduction in material use. Using a single TBM would result in a saving of approximately 38,000 tonnes of carbon by using less machinery.”*

These claims have been made, but no real information or evidence to back up the claims was provided, so we asked some questions via email.

In response to us asking for an estimated cost of using two TBMs would be, and also what the estimated cost of using 1 TBM would be, we received the following response: *“We are currently in the process of procuring the delivery partner for the Tunnels and Approach Roads contract. We anticipate cost savings could be derived from using one tunnel boring machine (TBM), however costs will not be firmed up until the procurement is completed. No decision has been taken on whether one or two TBMs would be used.”*

¹⁷ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-002237-LTC%20-%20ISH%201%20Project%20definition%20Draft%20Agenda.pdf>

This clearly shows that claims are being made which have not/cannot be quantified, and are yet again misleading.

We could equally claim that we could buy a lottery ticket and anticipate that we could become millionaires, doesn't mean to say it will happen!

Of the claim about reduction of carbon emissions we asked how the reduction of 38,000 tonnes of carbon emissions has been calculated, since you would still be completing two tunnels and therefore the same amount of work must need to be done regardless of whether it is done with 1 or 2 TBMs. The response we received was *“The reduction in carbon emissions relates to the reduction in machinery required for one TBM, for example the reduced TBM steel required to build one TBM rather than two.”*

According to the LTC 7.19 Carbon and Energy Management Plan¹⁸ Table C3 states in regard to tunnels activities that *“Bill of Quantities except for any items not quantified in sufficient detail, in which case, professional judgement has been used. This mainly relates to temporary assets that have not yet been designed in detail. Third-party data for tunnel boring machine and mechanical and ventilation plant in tunnel.”*

Why is it that when asked about carbon figures you feel it suitably adequate and acceptable to provide guesstimates, but when asked about cost of a project that is clearly increasing in cost and dropping in Benefit Cost Ratio you are unable or unwilling to provide an estimated cost of TBMs?

Again, this is not clear and informative, it is speculative propoganda, that has not or cannot be quantified at this stage.

As has already been mentioned previously in regard to the temporary Linford water pipeline to supply the water for the TBM(s), we have concerns over the risk and impacts to the water supply.

¹⁸ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001501-7.19%20Carbon%20and%20Energy%20Management%20Plan.pdf>

We know Kent have issues of water shortages, and clearly Essex and Suffolk Water are also concerned about the threat of the LTC to this water supply.

No clear information has been shared about the consequences of pumping the water to the south side of the river to supply the TBM on the return journey south to north, if only one TBM is used. We anticipate, since anticipating seems to be deemed acceptable when you are doing so, that there would be a negative impact as more power would be needed as well as materials to pipe the water to the southern side of the tunnel.

Similarly, we questioned what process would be used in regards to slurry treatment and segment production facilities, and how the spoil would be taken back through the first tunnel, if only one TBM was used, and whether they would need to be set up on both sides of the river to accommodate which side of the river the TBM was starting from.

The response from NH/LTC was, *““Slurry treatment and tunnel segment production remains the same as described in the Environmental Statement Chapter 2 – Project Description [APP-140]¹⁹. Please refer to paragraphs 2.7.147 to 2.7.150. All tunnel production activities remain within the North portal, and slurry from the northbound tunnel drive would be pumped through a pipe network to the north portal through the tunnel that would already have been constructed by the southbound drive.”*

and

“The spoil arising from the tunnelling process, as described in the consultation material, will be a slurry of chalk and water, which is fluid and can be pumped through pipelines. The excavation arisings from the tunnelling, suspended in a water-based slurry as detailed in the Environmental Statement Chapter 2 – Project Description [APP-140], Paragraph 2.7.147 will be pumped via a pipe network from the cutter head back to the

¹⁹ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001588-6.1%20Environmental%20Statement%20Chapter%202%20-%20Project%20Description.pdf>

slurry treatment plant (STP) which is located within the North portal. This process remains unchanged for a single TBM, with the pipeline passing through the first tunnel during the construction of the second tunnel. “

We again question the implications this would have on the power and materials need for this, also how the segments would be transported through to the southern side for use when the single TBM tunnels south to north, and we anticipate it would have a negative impact.

The consultation booklet states that *“the construction works required at the northern tunnel entrance before the tunnelling can start would be smaller in scale, allowing tunnelling to start approximately 10 months earlier in the programme”*.

Even with the response provided by NH/LTC via email this does not make sense as portal structures must surely still be needed for both tunnel entrances, so works would still need to be carried out, the only difference being that part of the work would be carried out south of the river rather than to the north to accommodate the single TBM on the return journey south to north.

We asked via email how many staff would be used if two TBMs were to be used, and also how many staff would be used if one TBM were to be used. The response we received from NH/LTC was, *“Please refer to the Workers Accommodation Report [APP-551]²⁰ for information on estimated worker numbers for TBM(s). Numbers for one TBM will be slightly lower associated with the reduction in the number of TBMs.”*

Yet again the response does not answer the question asked. The linked DCO document is a 73 page document and no clear signposting was offered. We also question why a simply answer could not be shared, ie an actual figure.

²⁰ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001497-7.18%20Workers%20Accommodation%20Report.pdf>

Clearly there is not a relevant figure in the linked DCO document for if only one TBM were to be used, as the DCO application has been submitted on the basis of two TBMs being used.

Again, we question why a clear and informative answer could not be provided, as in an actual estimated figure, rather than an evasive response that told us nothing, and offered nothing to back up the claim being made.

Whilst it may be so that if only one TBM is used less staff may be required, the staff that were needed would be needed for at least twice as long, because the fact is the TBMs would not be tunnelling any faster.

Statements are made about there being changes to staffing patterns, but when questioned about it the NH/LTC response said that “Staffing patterns will be determined by the Delivery Partner”.

Again, the information is not clear and informative, and is not based on any real planning that has been confirmed.

Yet again, this is another aspect that appears to be being left to the contractor, and we again question what is to say that they will do the right thing as opposed to what is cheapest and best for them?

It seems that whilst there have been many consultations, there are many aspects that are simply going to be left to the contractors to decide. Why consult us on things, and how can a true image of what is actually being proposed be considered when there are so many unknowns, with things being left to contractors whose main concern is going to be the cost and their profit, not what’s in our best interest. This is a serious concern.

When questioned we were told that the workers accommodation would still be on the north side of the river, and also that there wouldn’t be any additional set up/units etc needed on the south side of the river, if only one TBM were used.

We question how many additional vehicles movements this would generate if only one TBM is used with workers having to travel north to south to work and then back to the north when not working?

When we asked about this we were told *“As noted within the consultation booklet, there would be an overall reduction in movements related to the tunnelling activities if a single TBM was chosen. As the remainder of the construction programme and movements would not be affected by this change, this means that overall the total number of vehicle movements would reduce.”*

We cannot see how this can be, and do not trust or believe such a statement, as workers would need to make additional journeys to the south side of the river if everything associated remains on the north side of the river.

The consultation booklet states, *“As some works would be starting sooner at the northern compound, there would be an increase in journeys related to construction in the second year of building LTC. However, even with this increase they would remain lower than during the most intensive construction phase. Traffic during the most intensive construction phase would be slightly lower than compared with using two TBMs.”*

This statement is confusing and contradictory in itself, especially when the response to our question about when the most intensive construction phase is considered to be is taken into account.

We were told, *“The proposed construction programme would be complex in nature, lasting for a number of years and covering a wide area. Given its complexity, there is no one phase that is most intensive in all locations. The forecast impact of the construction of the Project remains as is set out in Chapter 8 of 7.9 Transport Assessment [APP-529]²¹.”*

²¹ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001481-7.9%20Transport%20Assessment.pdf>

How can you be stating something would remain lower than during the most intensive phase of construction, but then also be admitting that there is no one phase that is most intensive in all locations? This is again confusing and contradictory.

We asked, “When you have previously quoted tunnelling would take 4.5-5 years was this with both TBMs tunnelling at the same time simultaneously, or sending one through, then setting it back up north of the river to do the second tunnel?”

The response we received, “*The duration referred to relates to the tunnel construction as a whole and includes fit out and commissioning*”.

The response doesn’t actually answer the question that was asked.

We also asked, “How long would it take one TBM to tunnel each tunnel?”

The response was, “*The indicative tunnelling programme remains consistent with the programme shown in Plate 2.13 on page 147 in the Environmental Statement Chapter 2 – Project Description [APP-140]*²².”

Firstly, when we asked if the 4.5-5 years previously quoted as how long tunnelling would take you said it was the duration relating to the tunnel construction as a whole and includes fit out and commissioning.

Yet Plate 2.13 (as signposted above) states ‘Tunnel and fit out’ as taking 3.75 years.

This is clearly different from the information we have been told previously, and there has been no further update or explanation as to the difference in the time scale.

²² <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001588-6.1%20Environmental%20Statement%20Chapter%202%20-%20Project%20Description.pdf>

Secondly, the details in the DCO document that was signposted and link provided for, is based on two TBMs being used, so why have we been signposted to it in response to a question asking how long it would take one TBM to tunnel each tunnel?

Just another example of NH/LTC not being willing or able to answer our questions, and provide clear and informative information.

Additionally, we asked how long would it take to turn the TBM around, if only one is used. The response we got was, *“The indicative tunnelling programme remains consistent with the programme shown in Plate 2.13 on page 147 in the Environmental Statement Chapter 2 – Project Description [APP-140]. The duration of the turn around will be determined by the Delivery Partner.”*

Again, no answer to our question, and again being signposted to a document that is clearly about a scenario where two TBMs are being proposed.

How can it be stated that the indicative tunnelling programme remains consistent with the programme for using two TBMs, if only one TBM were to be used? It stands to reason that there would be a difference in the schedule and timings if only one TBM were used.

Plus, you admit that you do not know how long the turn around of the TBM would take as it would be determined by the Delivery Partner.

By default you would also therefore not know how long the overall tunnelling is expected to take, yet you advised us that the indicative programme would remain consistent. This does not add up as you admit certain aspects would be determined by the Delivery Partner.

We asked NH/LTC to provide details of the process involved in setting up, turning, and dismantling the TBMs. Would cranes be needed at both ends? How long would the cranes be set up for? What would the additional vehicle movements associated with the cranes be?

The response, *“There is no change to the process for setting up or dismantling the TBMs. The TBM will be turned around using temporary moveable platforms. There are no additional fixed cranes required to turn the TBM around and no additional vehicle movements required for cranes.”*

This response does not make it clear whether the temporary moveable platforms would generate additional vehicle movements or other impacts. We suspect that careful wording has been used to avoid disclosing the possibility of additional vehicle movements, as there must be some level of additional impact involved in the turn around of such a huge TBM.

We also asked NH/LTC to provide further details of the negative impacts to those living south of the river, as clearly there would be a significant difference between them having the TBMs arrive south of the river compared to having one TBM that needs to be turned around and then all the spoil arriving south of the river and having to be taken back to the northern side.

We were told, *“The TBM will be turned around within the southern portal structure. There are no changes to the impacts already assessed for those residents south of the river associated with the turnaround of the TBM or a south-north tunnel drive. Please refer to Q5 for details on the slurry movement.”*

This makes no sense at all, how can a huge TBM be turned around within the southern portal structure? What is this structure? If it is large enough to accommodate the turn around of a huge TBM then there must be impacts associated with the construction of such a structure. Surely there would be no need for such a structure if two TBMs were used and tunnelling were coming from the north to the south, so this would be an additional impact as a result of only using one TBM.

We do not believe that there would not be additional impacts to those in the vicinity of the southern tunnel portal and construction area, if only one TBM were to be used, and we have concerns about those impacts.

Additionally, we asked, whether NH/LTC would be questioning the shortlisted contractors on whether they will use 1 or 2 TBMs prior to awarding the tunnels contract?

The response was, *“The bidders will set out their proposed construction methods in their tender submissions.”*

If this is the case then firstly with some contracts already having been awarded surely there must be a new level of information available that has not yet been highlighted/shared with the public?

We have been told “it will be up to the contractor” on various aspects, if they are at a stage whereby proposed construction methods have been set out, then further clarity could be given on these aspects.

We also raise concerns and question the impacts of the Government decision to delay the start of construction by two years on the costing and bids that have been awarded contracts, as costs will of course rise over the course of the delay, which could be extremely relevant and impactful to both the bids that have been accepted, and the overall cost and associated Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of the project.

We therefore believe that the cost and BCR should be reviewed and updated, as the costings that are currently being used are already out of date, because they are as at August 2020.

All too often projects like this run over time and over budget, and we have concerns about the rising cost and dropping BCR of the proposed LTC before the project has even been examined, let alone been granted permission or works begun.

The cost has risen from £4.1bn up to £9bn, and the adjusted BCR dropping from 3.1 down to 1.22. This is all of course as at August 2020, and doesn't take many other aspects, including the two year delay into consideration which would clearly make a difference.

We asked whether the TBM/s would be rented or bought, if LTC goes ahead?

We were told, *“The TBMs would be procured by the Delivery Partner. It will be a matter for them which procurement route they choose.”*

We also asked, if rented, how can it be considered a cost saving to use only one as it would need to be rented twice as long?

The reply, *“Irrespective of the procurement mechanism taken by the Delivery Partner there would be savings from the use of only 1 TBM both in terms of its procurement and operation.”*

And, if bought, please provide the estimated cost, and what would be done with the TBM/s after LTC is constructed (if it goes ahead)?

The response, *“Costs for TBMs will form part of the bids for the Tunnels and Approaches contract. The TBMs would likely be dismantled and recycled at the end of construction, however that is a matter for the appointed delivery partner.”*

All three responses show a clear lack of clarity on what the cost implications of whether one or two TBMs were used would actually be, along with any other associated impacts.

If NH/LTC do not know these things how can the claims being made be considered legitimate and trustworthy?

The consultation booklet states there would be minimal changes to the construction that would alter the air quality effects, no new or different significant effects are anticipated.

This does not clarify whether the minimal change would be a potential worsening or improvement in air quality. The response you offered to our questioning this fact did not answer the question either.

We have as outlined above concerns about how much anticipated outcomes there might be, and how little confidence we have in the claims that have been made in regard to whether one or two TBMs would be used, if the proposed LTC goes ahead.

We therefore have no way of knowing the truth about effects on air quality as a result of this possible change to the construction of the tunnels, which is cause for concern.

On the topic of tunnelling and TBMs we also have concerns about the potential of incidents and impacts associated with tunnelling.

Particularly in light of the strange and worrying issues that are being faced in regard to HS2.

Bubbling water and foam, large sinkholes appearing, are not things that we wish to have the potential risk of.

From what we have seen possible causes have been so far pointing towards the fact the area that is being tunnelled is largely chalk.

With the proposed LTC route largely passing through chalk areas, we are not reassured that similar won't happen if the proposed LTC goes ahead.

The response we got from NH/LTC about this, "*We regularly meet with other major projects to learn lessons across different programmes relating to a range of matters. HS2 have confirmed their investigations are ongoing.*" offers no real reassurance.

We have little, if any, confidence in HS2 as they initially said the first issue was a one off, when the reality has obviously been very different.

From experience of dealing with NH/LTC for a number of years now, and the amount of inadequate and misleading information that has been provided, we equally have little if any confidence on that front either.

Consultation booklet – Foreword

The LTC Minor Refinements Booklet includes a Foreword by the LTC Executive Director, Matt Palmer. The wording of this Foreword contains information that is misleading and full of propaganda and nonsense.

For a government company to be misrepresenting information in this way it totally unacceptable, and to us screams of the desperation of a project that is struggling and hopefully soon to be put out of its misery.

It also wrongly gives the impression that the proposed LTC is guaranteed to go ahead, which is simply not true, and to attempt to insinuate anything else is disingenuous to say the least.

It is stated, “This is an important stage in the development of the Lower Thames Crossing, which will be vital in tackling the dally delays and frustration caused by congestion at the Dartford Crossing and in unlocking the true potential of the Thames Estuary.”

When we questioned how the proposed LTC would be vital in tackling the daily delays etc as above we were told, *“The Project would include junctions with key parts of the strategic road network (SRN), such as the A2/M2, A13/A1089 and M25. It would also provide connections to a number of local roads via the junctions at Orsett Cock in Thurrock and at Gravesend East.*

The new road would feature advanced safety systems, including variable mandatory speed limits, red X lane signalling to support incident management, stopped vehicle detection systems, CCTV, and emergency areas for road users to access in an emergency. Incident management plans and protocols would play a key part in minimising the impact of incidents.

The number of incidents and collisions at the Dartford Crossing would fall as a result of the reduced traffic flows, which would improve resilience at both crossings. For more information about the traffic modelling, see 7.7 Transport Forecasting Package, which is Appendix C of the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report [Application Document

*APP-523*²³. As a result of the around 20% reduction in traffic in the peak hours the impact of incidents on the road network would be reduced and the road network would be able to recover faster.”

The simple fact is that the Dartford Crossing has a design capacity of 135,000 vehicles per day, yet regularly sees 180,000 per day. This means that we’d need to see a reduction of more than 25% to bring the current crossing back below design capacity.

As stated in the response the traffic reduction at the current crossing, if the proposed LTC goes ahead, is expected to be around 20%. We have also previously been told that this would drop to just 14% by 2044.

Thurrock Council as a host Local Authority has been provided with official traffic modelling data and a cordoned model, and after analysis have publicly stated that they believe the reduction to actually be as low as 4% in the am peak hour and 11% in the pm peak hour.

It is clear to see that even if the proposed LTC were to go ahead, the current Dartford Crossing would remain over design capacity, and therefore still suffer many of the same issues and incidents.

Evidence states that there are over 3000 incidents per year at the current crossing, so this is hardly a small number of incidents that are going to vanish overnight.

The proposed LTC will also not address the fact that traffic is brought to a halt every 15-20 minutes by the traffic lights turning red to allow hazardous vehicles to be escorted. Nor the traffic being stopped to allow oversized vehicles to be corralled when they are in the wrong lane. It does not change the fact there is a stretch of road that has a 50mph speed limit on what is essentially part of the M25, that was never properly completed as a motorway orbital. Nor the fact that poor planning and design sees junctions too close to the crossing. All with more and more development being proposed that would increase traffic in and through the area.

²³ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001348-7.7%20Combined%20Modelling%20and%20Appraisal%20Report%20-%20Appendix%20C%20-%20Transport%20Forecasting%20Package.pdf>

It is therefore apparent that there would still be a high number of incidents at the current crossing, which would remain over design capacity.

Not only that, but since NH/LTC are not planning how traffic would migrate between the two crossings, when there are incidents, and there wouldn't be adequate connections, the result would be more chaos, congestion and pollution.

We are seriously concerned that there would be just one single lane for traffic from the A2 coastbound onto the LTC.

Also, that there would be no direct access to the LTC from the A13 eastbound, and that traffic would instead have to take the Stanford Detour as it have become known. All the way down the A13 eastbound to the A1014/Stanford junction, up around the already busy traffic lighted roundabout alongside all the port and other traffic, then back westbound on the A13 until the LTC slip road which would be just after, but accessible from, the A128 Orsett junction.

If instead traffic tries to come off the M25 onto the LTC directly, the M25 would be 5 lanes at this point, going onto just 2 lanes southbound on the LTC until past the A13 junction.

This would again all cause further negative impacts, more chaos, congestion and pollution.

As for connections with other existing roads, the proposed LTC would negatively impact traffic flow on many other roads, many of which are already at or overcapacity themselves.

It is not acceptable for NH/LTC to utilise roads like the A13/Orsett Cock roundabout in order for the LTC to be able to operate. These roads/junctions are already busy. There would also be the question of not only the congestion and pollution created, but who takes responsibility for the management and maintenance and associated costs for such impacts.

There is also the fact that new roads create more traffic, induced demand, and that around a 50% increase in cross river traffic is expected, if the proposed LTC goes ahead. New roads do not solve the problem of congestion, far from it.

As for the 'advanced safety system' it doesn't matter how NH/LTC attempt to dress it up and hide the fact, the proposed LTC would be a 'smart' motorway by stealth, as covered later in our response.

We asked NH/LTC for an explanation of how it has been calculated that the proposed LTC would be the greenest road ever built, and provide evidence to back up this claim.

The response, "There are a number of ways in which the Lower Thames Crossing will be the greenest road ever built in the UK. A Pathfinder scheme, the Lower Thames Crossing is exploring ways to achieve carbon neutral construction, and will pass on learnings to future major infrastructure projects. The amount of carbon expected from construction has been significantly reduced by optimising the design of the road, as well as the methods and materials used to construct it. For example, we are considering alternatives to carbon intensive materials such as concrete and steel; and exploring removing diesel from our work sites by only using hydrogen and electric powered plant.

The project is the first major UK infrastructure project to put carbon reduction at the heart of its procurement process, with incentives for contractors to drive further continuous carbon reduction. Due to planned government policy, (outlined in the Transport decarbonisation plan – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)²⁴) by the time the new road opens, brand new petrol and diesel cars will no longer be offered for sale. The government's plans to decarbonise cars and goods vehicles would cut the 60-year forecast of carbon emissions from Lower Thames Crossing traffic by at least 80%.

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-decarbonisation-plan>

The Lower Thames Crossing is also green by design – over 80% of the road will be in a tunnel, cutting or behind an embankment to reduce its visual impact on the landscape. Two new public parks will be created,

Chalk Park on the south bank of the River Thames and Tilbury Fields on the north bank. Over one million extra trees will be planted in Kent, Thurrock, Essex, Havering and Brentwood.”

We firstly comment that the bar for the greenest road every built in the UK is an extremely low bar in the first place, as road building is anything but green.

Secondly, the response received, and the propaganda that has been used in this respect for the project is highly speculative without any evidence to back up the actual claim.

Intentions, expectations, hopes and a fancy made up title of ‘pathfinder project’ are no guarantee that the road will be anything other than what evidence shows, a hugely destructive and harmful project.

The carbon emissions are still estimated to be a whopping 6.6 million tonnes, which is not compliant and in keeping with Net Zero.

There has also been a distinct lack of transparency on carbon emissions, with NH/LTC failing to share evidence to back up claims and data provided varying greatly and being completely all over the place.

When questioned by us and a leading industry journalist NH/LTC admitted that the technology is not available, and is unlikely to be available until at least towards the end of the construction period, if the LTC goes ahead.

The claim of an 80% reduction is also based on government claims for which there is no guarantee of happening. In fact, evidence suggest that Government are likely to fail to meet their legal commitments to Net Zero.

Putting a road in tunnel, cutting and embankment to reduce visual impact in no way stops the road being hugely destructive and harmful.

As for the claims of 'parks' please stop with the misleading propaganda, the reality is they are dumping grounds for the tunnel spoil, and a way to attempt to reduce vehicle movements by dumping the spoil as close to the tunnel portals as possible.

Nobody considers the 'parks' to be genuine community assets. Who wants to spend time in a park that is being polluted from a busy road like the proposed LTC?

And please no nonsense about air pollution dispersing within 200m of the road. Evidence shows that PM2.5 can travel thousands of miles and is deadly.

The claim of large amounts of tree planting is equally insulting considering the destruction and impacts to existing woodland and trees, including ancient woodland and veteran trees.

There is also the serious concern and issue that many of the proposed trees are to be planted within Hole Farm Community Woodland, which as highlighted elsewhere in our response is questionable to say the least, since the woodland is being progressed regardless of whether LTC goes ahead or not.

We therefore strongly object and declare that there is no way the proposed LTC can or should be considered or claimed to be green in any way shape or form.

When we asked NH/LTC to explain and provide evidence of how the proposed LTC would connect communities, the response we got was *"The Lower Thames Crossing would provide much needed additional capacity and reliability that would not only improve journeys, but drive growth across the region, as well create new jobs and green spaces for the local community and wildlife. It would give millions of people more flexibility and choice regarding where they choose to work, where they live and where they get their education, through quicker and more reliable journeys. Over 400,000 more jobs would be accessible within a 60-minute commute due to improved journey times.*

We are also creating around 40 miles of new and improved routes for walkers, cyclists and horseriders that will make it easier to enjoy nature as they move between parks, woodlands and heritage sites."

As we have already detailed the proposed LTC would not provide additional capacity, it would actually create more traffic and more issues and chaos. It would not improve journeys, and growth simply results in yet more traffic movements and therefore more congestion and pollution, which ultimately leads to more calls for more roads, and so the vicious downward spiral continues.

Claims of more jobs being more accessible within a 60 minute commute just confirm what we have just said, that new roads create more traffic, more traffic creates more congestion.

We need to be moving to more sustainable transport/travel options, not encouraging the destructive and harmful modes of transport, we need to encourage and see modal shift.

We see a large part of the problem in that being that National Highways exists, and the clue is in the name, the pure focus in highways. What we actually need is integrated sustainable transport/travel options, not such a huge focus on highways.

Claims of creating new and improved routes for walkers, cyclist and horse riders are infuriating, and in many instances untrue. The realignment of an existing route purely because of the need to move it due to the proposed LTC is not and should not be claimed as a 'new' route.

There is no provision for any cross river active travel, and largely the proposed 'new and improved' routes are routes to nowhere. Take for example the zigzag and spiral routes, and the route that runs directly parallel to another through Tilbury Fields. All clear attempts to tick the active travel box, without any real benefits to active travel.

The proposed route is also not viable for public transport options, such as bus routes, due to the lack of adequate connections.

As a group that represents many in the local communities and those from further afield we do not agree that there are any benefits or ways in which the proposed LTC

would connect communities, other than in our fight against the proposed LTC, as it would sever, destroy and harm our communities.

The claim that the proposed LTC would enhance nature would be laughable if it wasn't so insulting and misleading.

When we asked for evidence to back up this claim the response we received was *“The Lower Thames Crossing is green by design, and aims to give nature the chance to thrive in the area. We’re building seven green bridges to connect habitats across the new road, providing safe and easy ways for wildlife to travel between new and existing habitats along the length of the route. We will be planting over one million extra trees in the region, and we’re working closely with wildlife experts to create bigger, better, more connected habitats across the region. We are creating three times as much woodland as that being lost, twice as much ditch and watercourse length as that affected, four times as many ponds, and a 50% increase in hedgerow length.”*

As has already been highlighted, there is nothing green about the proposed LTC. Far from giving nature the chance to thrive, it would destroy and impact many habitats and much wildlife, including endangered species.

The ‘green’ bridges are just more attempts to greenwash the hugely destructive and harmful project.

Take the proposed Thong Lane ‘green’ bridge that comes to a T-junction after crossing the A2 southbound and provides no means for wildlife to safely cross a busy road. This is not a true green bridge and it is not beneficial to wildlife, more it would be guiding wildlife to a dangerous and busy road junction with no safe means to cross.

Such a hugely destructive and harmful project can never be considered to enhance nature, the complete opposite is the reality.

This fact is proven by the fact that the proposed LTC would fail to meet the newly set legal requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain.

We also asked NH/LTC to provide evidence/details of how the proposed LTC provides new ways to build infrastructure in a net zero future.

The response was *“As mentioned above, the Lower Thames Crossing is a Pathfinder scheme, exploring ways to achieve carbon neutral construction. This means the project will be exploring new and innovative methods of construction, power and materials to help the UK government achieve its target of being net zero by 2050 – and, crucially – the project will share its carbon reduction learnings with the next major UK infrastructure scheme. The UK will still need new infrastructure in the future, whether that be transport, homes, schools or hospitals. The challenge for the UK construction sector is how can it continue to provide that new infrastructure in a net zero future. We are determined to play a significant part in defining how that can be achieved.”*

The title of Pathfinder scheme offers no guarantees, it is just fancy made up title that has been created to try and greenwash a hugely destructive and harmful project.

‘Exploring’ new and innovative methods does not guarantee anything, other than time and money will be spent trying to find new/different ways of doing things, with no guaranteed results.

The reality is that the new ways we need, in regard to infrastructure in a net zero future, need to move away from the crazy and destructive and harmful obsession with new roads.

In conclusion on the Foreword by Mr Palmer, it is very clear that there is no evidence to back up any of the ludicrous claims being made, and to make these claims is disingenuous at any time, but particularly underhand and unethical to do so as a Foreword for a consultation booklet. It simply wreaks of desperation to try and make a failing project look better than it truly is.

Adequacy of Consultation

The Foreword

The foreword in the consultation booklet is very misleading and wrongly attempts to give the impression the proposed LTC is better than it would actually be if granted permission.

It attempts to give the impression that it would solve the problems at the Dartford Crossing. The reality is that evidence shows that the current crossing would still remain over design capacity, even if the proposed LTC goes ahead.

It advises that the construction partner for the roads to the north has been appointed, and that the tunnels and road to the south will be announced in the months ahead. We believe this is a blatant attempt to give the impression that the proposed LTC is definitely going ahead, a done deal, when the reality is that permission has not been granted and any agreements with contractors like this will be subject to permission being granted. To suggest anything else is disingenuous, especially within a foreword for a consultation.

Similar can be said of the statement about the proposed LTC being *the greenest road ever built in the UK, connect communities, enhance nature, and provide new ways to build infrastructure in a net zero future.*

The reality is that the bar of being a green road is set extremely low, and there is definitely nothing green about the hugely destructive and harmful proposed LTC.

Far from connecting communities, the proposed LTC would sever connections and have a large negative impact on communities.

Again, the proposed LTC would be hugely destructive and harmful, and would have a significant adverse impact on nature.

To date we have seen no evidence to show any new ways to build infrastructure in a net zero future. The estimated 6.6 million tonnes of carbon is very likely an underestimate, and in no way compatible with Net Zero commitments.

For the Executive Director of the project to be making statements and claims in this way is misleading and we deem it unacceptable at any time, and particularly as a foreword in the consultation booklet.

The consultation booklet

Whilst we acknowledge that National Highways/LTC believe this to be a minor refinements consultation, the consultation booklet provided is far from adequate.

We believe this to be more than a minor refinements consultation, and the consultation booklet has a distinct lack of evidence to back up the claims being made, and is also contradictory in places.

The consultation booklet generates more questions than providing answers or offering any real information, which is unacceptable when consultation materials should be clear and informative.

There is misleading and confusing information in the Minor Refinements Consultation booklet, for example you refer to Land Use on page 4, and state' "The land we need permanently to build and operate the LTC was 14.87km² and is now proposed to be 14.49km². This is indicated by pink shading in Figure 3.8 and Figure 3.9".

When you turn to pages 24 and 25 where Figures 3.8 and 3.9 are located there is no difference at all that we can see between the pink shaded areas. (*shown below*).

Figure 3.8 West of Linford land use at DCO Application

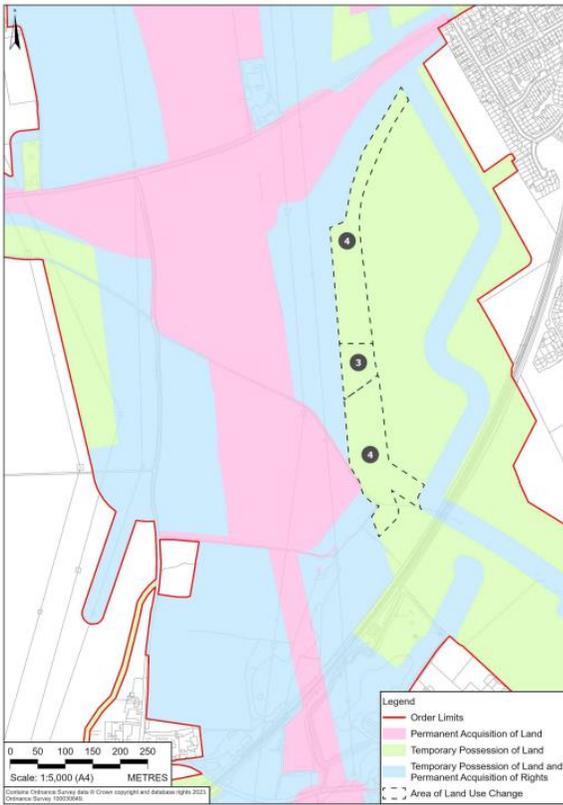
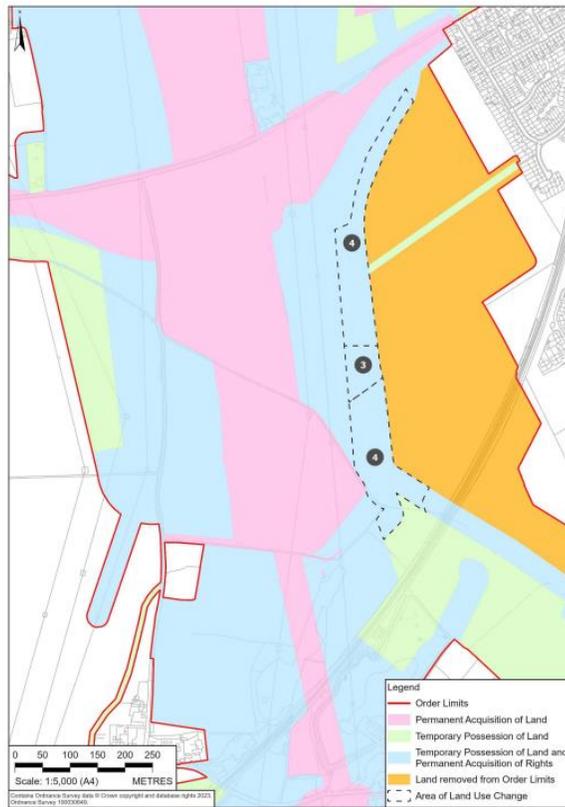


Figure 3.9 West of Linford land use at minor refinement consultation



You have actually since admitted/confirmed there is no change in the land you need permanently to build and operate the LTC shown in in Figure 3.8 and Figure 3.9. To word the information in this way is extremely misleading and inadequate.

Lack of consultation events

The frustration and inadequacy of the consultation booklet is further exasperated by the fact there are no consultation events to attend to seek further clarification and information.

Even if National Highways/LTC didn't deem it necessary to have in person consultation events, some kind of virtual event would have been a token gesture for people to ask questions and seek further clarification on the confusing and inadequate consultation booklet.

Responses to questions via email

With the consultation booklet being far from adequate, clear or informative, and no consultation events to attend, we submitted a large number of questions to National Highways/LTC.

We did not receive responses to the majority of questions until within the last few days of the consultation. This has not given us fair opportunity to be able to send follow up questions and receive further responses before the deadline for responses.

The reference of responses, rather than answers, is purposeful and an accurate description of what we received, since many of the questions were not actually answered. Instead we received more nonsense and propaganda that avoided answering the questions we had submitted.

For us this appears to be a case that National Highways/LTC are unable to provide the answers because they don't want us to know the realities, and/or they simply do not have the answers of evidence to back up their claims and statements within the consultation booklet. Either way this is not acceptable behaviour during a public consultation, and confirms the inadequacy of the LTC Minor Refinements Consultation further.

Timings

When the potential of another round of consultation was made NH/LTC stated the intention of holding the consultation during the local election purdah period.

At that time, it was also stated that any proposed changes to the DCO application, along with a consultation report, would be made to the Examining Authority (ExA) in June 2023.

Whilst we raised concerns about the conflict of the consultation being held during purdah, so appreciate that didn't happen, we are still not happy that the delay and holding of another consultation has impacted resources to prepare for the DCO.

The timing has also meant that our Local Authorities have had extra pressure because they are busy trying to prepare for the DCO, and are also reforming after local elections.

We consider most, if not all, the proposed changes to be things that could have been dealt with prior to the DCO being resubmitted. Instead NH/LTC chose to push ahead and rush getting the DCO application resubmitted, which is unprofessional and unacceptable behaviour that has resulted in additional work and effort for all, including the ExA.

Inadequacies Conclusion

We conclude by saying that we and many people who we have been in contact with believe this to be yet another inadequate consultation from National Highways/LTC.

The information was misleading, confusing, contradictory, greatly lacking, inadequate, and lacked any real substance and evidence to back up much of what was being said.

National Highways/LTC failed to provide adequate answers to questions, instead choosing to avoid answering what was asked, and providing more propaganda and nonsense.

The fact the consultation booklet included a Foreword by the LTC Executive Director which was misleading propaganda is also deemed totally unacceptable, but sadly typical of National Highways/LTC behaviour throughout the project and process.

This consultation is largely about things that we believe could have and should have been dealt with prior to the DCO application being resubmitted. It has been an additional drain on time and resources of all who are attempting to participate in both the consultation and the LTC DCO.

The LTC Minor Refinements Consultation, just like all the LTC consultations that preceded it, has been another example of the inadequacies of National Highways and the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.

Other comments

Carbon Emissions

Since the Local Refinement Consultation ended in June 2022, and in December 2022 it was reported by New Civil Engineer²⁵ that NH/LTC had admitted that there wouldn't be an LTC if they don't resolve the carbon issues, we are surprised that there has been no further consultation or update in regard to carbon emissions of the proposed LTC.

We are equally surprised that bearing this fact in mind NH/LTC have continued to resubmit the LTC DCO knowing that with an estimated 6.6 million tonnes of carbon emissions, the proposed LTC would not be in keeping with the UK's legal commitment to Net Zero.

If an NH/LTC boss can publicly state that if the problems are not resolved there won't be an LTC, it is concerning that no evidence of progress in reducing the emissions has been announced and consulted on, and even more puzzling that NH/LTC are attempting to push ahead regardless.

Environment Act

Also in December 2022, new legal targets for the Environment Act were finally set²⁶. Legally these targets should have been set by the 31st October 2022, but despite knowing the new legal targets were being set NH/LTC chose to rush to resubmit the LTC DCO application rather than waiting for the new targets to be set, and carrying out the appropriate assessments and deal with any issues.

We have been voicing concerns that the whole proposed LTC route would fail against World Health Organization targets for PM2.5, from when it was WHO-10.

²⁵ <https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/national-highways-boss-there-wont-be-a-lower-thames-crossing-if-we-dont-resolve-carbon-issues-09-12-2022/>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-legally-binding-environment-targets-set-out>

The newly adopted legal target in the Environment Act is the same level as WHO-10, and therefore the whole proposed LTC route would fail against the newly set legal target.

We are concerned that NH/LTC have not shared details of PM2.5 analysis, if such assessment has even yet been completed, as we were told it was still being assessed when we last asked.

Since NH/LTC knew these new targets were coming, and had a good idea what they would be from the consultation process for the new targets, we find it unacceptable that these works had not been carried out and considered.

However, from experience we are not surprised NH/LTC have stuck heads in the sand over the new legal targets, and they will not be favourable to the project, which is another problem for NH/LTC, as well as a serious concern for all of us.

Noise pollution

Since NH/LTC have admitted that more info is shared by contractors as bids are put together and awarded, we are disappointed that no further information has been shared and consulted upon in regard to noise pollution, and what is being proposed by way of noise barriers, which again is another aspect that is worryingly being left to contractors.

We also have concerns that noise pollution has been calculated to a distance of 300m of the proposed route.

As we are currently experiencing levels of noise pollution over a distance greater than 300m from the works taking place for London Gateway we are concerned that the distance being used to calculate the noise pollution of the LTC, particularly during construction is not adequate, and will result in issues, if the LTC goes ahead.

We would ask that further consideration is given and assessments carried out to ensure similar does not occur, if the proposed LTC goes ahead.

We also have concerns that the air and noise pollution monitors that have been placed in impacted communities are currently recording unusually high levels of noise pollution associated with the London Gateway works, which will not be a true representation when it comes to baselines for the proposed LTC.

Biodiversity Net Gain

We are also disappointed that there has been no further update or consultation in regard to Biodiversity Net Gain, since the proposed LTC would fail to meet the newly set legal requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain²⁷ either.

‘Smart’ Motorway by stealth

Following the Government’s announcement on 15th April 2023 that all new ‘smart’ motorways are being scrapped²⁸, we are concerned that National Highways/LTC still continue to attempt to push ahead with the proposed LTC, when evidence shows it would be a ‘smart’ motorway by stealth.

Paragraph 2.2.6 of Section 6.2 of the Transport Forecasting Package²⁹ states:

“In common with most A-roads, the A122 would operate with no hard shoulder but would feature a 1m hard strip on either side of the carriageway. It would also feature technology including stopped vehicle and incident detection, lane control, variable speed limits and electronic signage and signalling”

This shows LTC would have no hard shoulder, and is designed to use ‘smart’ technology as used on ‘smart’ motorways.

²⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/notes/division/21/index.htm>

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-new-smart-motorways-scrapped>

²⁹ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001348-7.7%20Combined%20Modelling%20and%20Appraisal%20Report%20-%20Appendix%20C%20-%20Transport%20Forecasting%20Package.pdf>

Paragraph 6.2.3 of Section 6.2 of the Transport Forecasting Package³⁰ states:

“Notwithstanding that the Project is to be designated as an all-purpose trunk road (APTR), the mainline is coded as a three-lane motorway (except for the northern section between the M25 and A13 where the southbound direction has two lanes)”

This shows LTC is designed as a 3 lane motorway.

We note the use of the word ‘coded’ which has definitions such as “converted into a code to convey a secret meaning” and “expressed in an indirect way”.

Based on the information provided in National Highways official LTC documentation, highlighted above, it is quite clear to us that the proposed LTC would be a ‘Smart’ Motorway by stealth if it goes ahead.

No hard shoulder + ‘Smart’ technology + motorway design = ‘Smart’ motorway

How does calling it an All Purpose Trunk Road make it any safer than what it would actually be, a ‘Smart’ Motorway by stealth? It doesn’t.

In light of the decision by Government, this further round of consultation could have been used to seek feedback on this highly controversial aspect of the project.

The proposed LTC would be a ‘Smart’ Motorway by stealth, and should therefore be scrapped in keeping with the Government’s decision on ‘Smart’ Motorways.

³⁰ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010032/TR010032-001348-7.7%20Combined%20Modelling%20and%20Appraisal%20Report%20-%20Appendix%20C%20-%20Transport%20Forecasting%20Package.pdf>

Food Security

With climate change becoming more and more apparent, and food security becoming more and more of an issue as result of this and other matters, we are concerned that no further assessment has been carried out in regard to the loss and impacts to agricultural land, if the proposed LTC goes ahead.

Other relevant consultation and inquiries etc

NH/LTC are more than aware that the Transport Select Committee are in the midst of their inquiry into the Strategic Road Investment Programme, and have already been voicing serious concerns, even mentioning the LTC within hearings.

There is also the matter that the proposed LTC is knowingly being pushed through the DCO process, as quickly as possible, because the National Networks National Policy Statement is knowingly out of date and will be updated.

Not to mention the fact RIS3, which the LTC now falls into and beyond, is being consulted on.

Government have also announced a new 'Long Established Woodland' status, which should result in further assessment of impacts of the proposed LTC, as we know it would destroy at least one woodland in this new category, The Wilderness in South Ockendon.

Again, to knowingly be attempting to push ahead, knowing there are so many changes that would go against the LTC is unethical and unacceptable.

With so many other inquiries, consultations and changes in legislation it would be good practice and the right thing to at very least pause the proposed LTC. The right thing to do would be to finally put it out of its misery since it clearly is not fit for purpose.

Other issues

We are concerned about the level of greenwashing attempts, as well as general misleading propaganda that NH/LTC are using in an attempt to promote and save a project that is hanging by a thread and needs putting out of its misery as a matter of urgency.

LTC Objectives

Considering the evidence that shows that the LTC would fail to meet scheme objectives³¹ we are concerned that there have been no changes or consultation in this regard.

Alternatives

Considering there are clearly better and more sustainable alternatives to the proposed LTC, like rail improvements between Ashford and Reading³² that would negate the need for the proposed LTC, we are concerned that there has been no review assessment of whether the proposed LTC is still considered a viable option, as clearly evidence proves it is not.

Cost and value for money

With the cost of the proposed LTC having risen from £4.1bn up to £9bn, and the adjusted Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) dropping from 3.1 down to 1.22, and that's as at August 2020, we have concerns that there has been no further update in regard to cost and BCR.

We are not alone in concerns about the poor value for money the proposed LTC offers. With costs now expected to be £10bn+++ the BCR will have dropped even lower. The

³¹ <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/ltc-project-objectives/>

³² <https://www.thamescrossingactiongroup.com/rail-and-tram-alternatives/>

two year delay announced by Government will further push the cost up and the BCR down.

The reality is that the estimated cost of the proposed LTC is a false economy anyway, due to all the associated works that would be needed as a direct result of the LTC, if it goes ahead, that are being progressed as separate stand-alone projects.

With delays and changes impacting RIS3 there is also the question about whether stand-alone projects like the Tilbury Link Road (which was a RIS3 pipeline, and Blue Bell Hill which is seeking funding by Kent County Council, we seriously question the associated implications.

We are concerned that the LTC Accounting Officer Assessment is now nearly 3 years out of date, and is not a true reflection of the transparent guidance that is supposed to be presented in such an important report.

We believe a new up to date LTC Accounting Officer Assessment should be prepared and published to reflect a true representation of the LTC.

We have serious concerns, and believe the proposed LTC is terrible value for money and should be scrapped now before further millions, if not billions of taxpayers' money is wasted on a hugely destructive and harmful project that is not fit for purpose.

Government's announcement of 2 year delay

We at very least expected there to be further analysis and updates in regard to the impacts and implications of the two year delay that Government have announced about the start of construction of the proposed LTC, if permission is granted.

We believe there is a definite need for such assessment and review, and are concerned, disappointed, and angry that NH/LTC do not deem such important assessment necessary, it is irresponsible and unacceptable.

Conclusion

The LTC Minor Refinements Consultation fails to provide adequate information regarding the proposed changes, and contains large amounts of misleading propaganda, and claims that cannot be backed up with evidence.

By association of the fact that all changes relate to the progression of the proposed LTC, we strongly oppose the proposed changes, by default of the fact we strongly oppose the project as a whole.

The proposed LTC would be hugely destructive and harmful, fails to meet the scheme objectives, and is not fit for purpose.

Particularly it would not solve the problems at the Dartford Crossing, and would also add to the chaos, congestion and pollution both in the vicinity of the current crossing, in the vicinity of the proposed LTC (if it goes ahead), and further afield.

It is not compliant with our legal commitments to Net Zero.

The whole proposed route fails against newly set targets for PM2.5.

It would fail to meet the newly set legal requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain.

Evidence shows it would be a 'smart' motorway by stealth, so should therefore be scrapped inline with the government announcement that new 'smart' motorways have been scrapped.

Put simply the proposed LTC would be hugely destructive and harmful, is not fit for purpose, and would be a complete waste of £10bn+++ of taxpayers' money.

We need and deserve better, and there are better and more sustainable alternatives available. We remain strongly opposed to the proposed LTC and call for it to be scrapped NOW!