
OPTIONS FOR A NEW LOWER THAMES CROSSING – CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines three Options presented by the Department for Transport for a new Lower Thames Crossing.
- 1.2 All options are expected to be feasible to deliver, in terms of construction, value for money and financing. However, a crossing at option C delivers the highest economic growth benefits of the three locations and on that basis merits support.
- 1.3 A suggested response to the consultation questions is attached to this report as appendix 1.

2 NEED FOR CHANGE

- 2.1 There is lack of capacity at the existing crossing, due partly to the lack of alternative routes on the strategic road network. The crossing experiences the third highest level of delay across the strategic road network, with delays in excess of nine minutes experienced by almost half of users travelling in both directions.
- 2.2 A study in 2009 concluded that some short and medium term improvements could be made to impact on the performance of the existing crossing, including suspension of charges at certain times and free-flow charging. However, these improvements would only create marginal headroom and it was concluded that a more strategic decision would be needed to resolve the capacity problem.

3 THE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Three options are put forward in the consultation – see appendix 2:

Option A: At the site of the existing A282 Dartford Thurrock crossing;

Option B: Connecting the A2 with the A1089; and

Option C: Connecting the M2 with the A13 and the M25 between junctions 29 and 30 (a variant would also link the M2 to the M20).
- 3.2 These three options have been assessed against the principles set out in the HM Treasury's Green Book. The intention is to show whether the schemes:-
 - are supported by a robust case for change;
 - demonstrate value for money;
 - are commercially viable;

- are financially affordable; and
- are achievable.

3.3 The findings of the review of the schemes indicate that the benefits, including wider economic impacts, of all the options are likely to outweigh the costs. This means, subject to further work, each option is economically justified.

3.4 For all the options public funding will be needed to initiate scheme development. It is, though, highlighted that options C and the C variant are likely to require public funding support, since they may not generate enough toll revenue to be self funding.

3.5 In terms of the impacts of each option it is concluded as follows:-

Option A – will perform better than the other options in alleviating congestion, but will not improve connectivity of the strategic road network. As a result will stimulate only limited economic growth compared to the other options.

Option B – not as effective as option A in alleviating congestion, but could add delay to the A2 and A13 east of Basildon. Will support some new economic activity in the local area. Greater environmental harm than A.

Option C – will alleviate congestion to the same extent as option B. Greater journey time savings than B and more economic benefits as a result of the agglomeration of business activity. Greatest impacts on environmentally sensitive areas.

Option C variant – forecast to bring the largest economic benefits.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 The suggested response to the consultation is set out in appendix 1 to this report. Whilst it is accepted that option C, including the variant, will have the greatest environmental impact and may require public funding, this route option provides a more direct route for many journeys and will generate more economic benefits.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In the current economic climate all major infrastructure projects carry an element of financial risk. However, there is a sound economic case for the construction of a new Lower Thames crossing in terms of reducing congestion, improving connectivity and delivering economic growth.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 All route options will have some environmental impact; options B and C will have a greater impact than option A. A careful assessment of mitigation measures will be essential.

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is proposed that Council RESOLVES

That a response to the consultation on Options for a New Lower Thames Crossing be made, as set out in appendix 1 with support for option C, including the option C variant.

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Background Papers:-

Department for Transport – Options for a new Lower Thames Crossing Consultation Document – May 2013.

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Appendix 1

Q1. Do you agree that there is a strong case to increase road-based river crossing capacity in the Lower Thames area?

A: AGREE

Q2. Which of the following location Options for a new crossing do you prefer?

A: OPTION C VARIANT

Q3. Please indicate how important the following factors were in influencing your preference for the location of a new crossing, in answer to Q2. Please mark whether they were very important, important or not important.

- Forecast contributions to the national economy.

A: Important.

- Forecast reductions in congestion at the existing Dartford-Thurrock crossing and forecast improvements to the resilience of the surrounding road network.

A: Important.

- Forecast reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

A: Important.

- Smaller forecast adverse impacts on environmentally sensitive areas and larger forecast improvements in quality of life relative to other location Options.

A: Important.

- Smaller forecast adverse impacts on planned development relative to other location Options.

A: Not important.

- The distribution of forecast impacts on people within a range of different income groups.

A: Important.

- Lower estimated costs relative to other location Options.

A: Not important.

- Forecast value for money.

A: Important.

Figure 5.1 Location options for a new Lower Thames crossing

