

<b>Committee:</b> Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee	<b>Date:</b> 18 March 2020
<b>Subject:</b> Lower Thames Crossing Supplementary Consultation 2020 and South Brentwood Growth Corridor Sustainable Transport Vision	<b>Wards Affected:</b> All
<b>Report of:</b> Phil Drane, Director of Planning and Economy	<b>Public</b>
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### Summary

Highways England are inviting views on the Lower Thames Crossing, a proposed new motorway connecting Essex and Kent through a tunnel beneath the River Thames to provide additional road capacity. A Supplementary Consultation has been launched following several proposed design changes. A response to the consultation is proposed and set out in Appendix A.

The Council has prepared a sustainable transport vision to enable the integration of new development planned in the south of the borough. The area, known as the South Brentwood Growth Corridor in the Brentwood Pre-Submission Local Plan, has several development allocations proposed to meet employment and housing needs. In order to ensure that the negative transport aspects from development are reduced and sustainable travel choices are made in future, a vision and set of principles have been produced in consultation with stakeholders. The work has been published as part of submission materials for the Local Development Plan. Members are provided an update on the work as it progresses, as set out in Appendix B.

### Recommendations

**Members are asked to:**

- R1. Approve the response to the Lower Thames Crossing supplementary consultation as set out in Appendix A.**
- R2. Note the update contained within this report regarding the South Brentwood Growth Corridor Sustainable Transport Vision.**

## **Main Report**

### **Introduction and Background**

#### **Lower Thames Crossing**

1. The Lower Thames Crossing is a proposed new motorway connecting Kent, Thurrock and Essex through a tunnel beneath the River Thames. On the south side of the Thames, the new road will link the tunnel to the A2 and M2 in Kent. On the north side, it will link to the A13 and junction 29 of the M25 in the London Borough of Havering, and areas for associated works in the south-west of Brentwood Borough. According to Highways England it will provide much needed new road capacity across the river east of London with quicker and more reliable journeys locally, regionally and nationally.
2. This is the most ambitious project of its kind in the country. It is the largest single road investment project in the UK since the M25 was completed more than 30 years ago. The crossing under the Thames will be the longest road tunnel in the country. At 16 metres in diameter, it will be one of the largest bored tunnels in the world.
3. There have been several consultations held regarding the Lower Thames Crossing as the project has progressed, which the Council has responded to. Most recently the Council responded to the Statutory Consultation launched in October 2018 (Item 263, Ordinary Council, 5 December 2018). This consultation received comments from 29,000 people.
4. The current Supplementary Consultation proposes several design changes based on feedback and where further information has become available. Some of these changes relate to the south of Brentwood Borough, identified in the Pre-Submission Local Plan as the South Brentwood Growth Corridor (one of two growth corridors in the borough).

#### **South Brentwood Growth Corridor Sustainable Transport Vision**

5. The Pre-Submission Local Plan (including Addendum of Focussed Changes) has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, on behalf of the Secretary of State, commencing the Examination in Public process. As part of the submission materials draft work in progress on a sustainable transport vision for development proposed in the south of the borough (South Brentwood Growth Corridor) has been published.
6. A sustainable transport vision has been prepared for the growth corridor in order to instil a vision and set of principles to guide new development. This will

help ensure that the negative travel impacts from development are minimised (e.g. congestion, noise, poor air quality, reliance on single occupancy cars, and poor health), and sustainable travel choices can be embedded into the culture of new communities. The goal is to enable a shift in current travel behaviours, thereby encouraging a culture change from the private car as first choice to more sustainable choices.

7. There are seven development allocations proposed in the growth corridor as part of the Brentwood Pre-Submission Local Plan (east to west: Brentwood Enterprise Park new employment land; Codham Hall Farm designation of existing employment land; Childerditch Industrial Estate new employment land extension; West Horndon Industrial Estate residential-led redevelopment; East Horndon Hall new employment land; and Dunton Hills Garden Village mixed-use new community). The Local Plan sets out several sustainable transport policies that will be embedded within new development. In addition, for new development in the growth corridor to be better connected and linked to a new public transport hub at West Horndon station, a vision and set of principles are presented to enable sustainable development.

## **Issue, Options and Analysis of Options**

### **Lower Thames Crossing**

8. There are several changes to the design of the proposed road. Most of these are outside Brentwood Borough or areas that are near the borough boundary.
9. Key changes that are physically relevant to the borough are:
  - a. M25 junction 29: The layout of proposed changes to the junction have been amended to reduce the amount of overhead cable diversion works.
  - b. B186 (Warley Street): New works access off the B186, opposite Upminster Trading Park (within Brentwood Borough), involving the permanent acquisition of land.
10. Key changes elsewhere that relate to the rest of the proposal include (from north to south):
  - a. M25 junction: Redesign of the southbound link from the M25 to the Lower Thames Crossing to avoid demolition and reconstruction of the existing Ockenden Road bridge over the M25.
  - b. Route through the Mardyke: Changed structures over the Mardyke River, Golden Bridge Sewer and Orsett Fen Sewer to reduce visual impact and

volume of flood compensation needed. The route has moved approximately 200 metres south-west to reduce the work required to move an existing gas main. It also reduces the impact on a nearby landfill site.

- c. Number of lanes: Removed one lane southbound between the M25 and A13 junction to reduce the route's impact, while still providing long-term vehicle capacity.
- d. A13/A1089 junction: Redesign of some slip roads at the junction between the Lower Thames Crossing, A13, A1089 and A1013 to reduce visual impact, move roads away from properties, and improve safety and connectivity at the junctions.
- e. Route between Tilbury and A13 junction: The route has been moved approximately 60 metres north-east to avoid the need for major overhead cable diversion works.
- f. Removal of the rest and service area and Tilbury junction: Following further investigation and consideration of feedback, Highways England have decided to not progress with the rest and service area previously proposed. The maintenance depot to existing Highways England facilities has been relocated, meaning the junction at Tilbury is no longer required.
- g. Southern tunnel entrance: The entrance has been moved 350 metres to the south to reduce the impact of the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar site.
- h. M2/A2, including the junction with the Lower Thames Crossing: Following feedback the junction configuration has been reconsidered. More direct connectivity between Gravesend and the M2/A2 eastbound is proposed, with a redesigned Gravesend East junction and link roads to improve journey times.

### **South Brentwood Growth Corridor Sustainable Transport Vision**

11. The vision for the South Brentwood Growth Corridor is proposed as follows:

*“We will seek to deliver a better balanced urban realm within the South Brentwood Growth Corridor and beyond, which retains the movement function of the Strategic Highway Network, but shifts priority through targeted interventions towards viable sustainable transport choices - for those that will live, work and attend school in a changing area.”*

12. The policy context under which the growth corridor work has been prepared includes the National Planning Policy Framework, specifically paragraph 102 regarding the need for transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals. In the Brentwood Pre-Submission Local Plan relevant travel policies include (in addition to site specific allocations within the growth corridor):
  - a. BE11: Sustainable Transport Infrastructure;
  - b. BE12: car Limited Development;
  - c. BE13: Sustainable Means of Travel and Walkable Streets;
  - d. BE14: Sustainable Passenger Transport;
  - e. BE15: Electric and Low Emission Vehicles;
  - f. BE16: Mitigating the Transport Impacts of Development; and
  - g. BE17: Parking Standards.
  
13. Giving future residents and employees of the growth corridor a viable alternative to using the private car as a primary transport choice is vital. The health and well-being of the future population will be greatly enhanced not only by providing them healthier more sustainable modes of transport, but also decreasing the impact of existing vehicular movements via alterations to the highway network. Both will deliver positive environmental benefits. To deliver an integrated sustainable transport network six principles are proposed:
  - a. Principle 1 (upfront delivery): Sustainable transport infrastructure within the growth corridor is to be delivered upfront in Phase One of all development sites.
  
  - b. Principle 2 (existing land uses): Sustainable transport infrastructure interventions within the growth corridor are to be delivered within the existing highway boundary and/or land under the control of the development site owner.
  
  - c. Principle 3 (traffic speeds): Wherever possible the speed of general traffic will be reduced on all growth corridor highways to make walking, cycling and the use of other sustainable transport modes – safer, convenient and a viable transport choice.
  
  - d. Principle 4 (parking standards): Within all growth corridor residential developments:
    - i. parking provision for private cars is to be reduced by the application of maximum parking numbers per unit.
    - ii. on street parking provision for private cars is to be banned and abuses to be enforced.

- iii. Compliance with parking standards is to be achieved through car club provision.
- e. Principle 5 (segregated cycling and walking): Within the growth corridor new provision of pedestrian walking and cycling lanes will be clearly segregated whenever possible.
- f. Principle 6 (restrict Heavy Goods Vehicles): Within the residential areas of the growth corridor, access of Heavy Goods Vehicles will be restricted.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

- 14. The Council has engaged with Highways England on the Lower Thames Crossing project to date. A Statement of Common Ground has been prepared by Highways England to list outstanding issues. It is proposed that issues raised in previous consultation responses are maintained where relevant and/or unresolved. This includes the role of new highway infrastructure unlocking economic growth in South Essex, and the need for wider transport improvements in Essex linking with the A12. New issues relating to changes at M25 junction 29 and works access on the B186 are raised in relation to the delivery of new employment land at Brentwood Enterprise Park and linkages to existing employment land at Codham Hall Farm.
- 15. It is important that the Local Plan is supported by credible evidence. The South Brentwood Growth Corridor vision and principles help reduce negative impacts of travel. The Local Plan examination-in-public will test the assumptions that development can be delivered with the integration of sustainable transport choices and the vision work will help to show a credible roadmap for how this is to be achieved. The growth corridor work is brought to Members attention as work will continue through the examination process towards finalisation of associated infrastructure costs and funding arrangements.

### **Consultation**

- 16. The Lower Thames Crossing Supplementary Consultation began on 29 January and ends on 25 March 2020. Consultation documentation, including maps, computer generated images and video context, can be viewed on the Highways England website at:  
<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/ltc/consultation-2020/>
- 17. The South Brentwood Growth Corridor work has been informed by engagement with key stakeholders, including highways authorities and rail providers.

## References to Corporate Plan

18. The proposals in this report relate to transport infrastructure investment to improve links, capacity, and sustainable transport choices. These contribute to the Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-2025, specifically key priorities to grow the economy, protect the environment and develop communities.

## Implications

### Financial Implications

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19. There are no direct financial implications arising from the Lower Thames Crossing consultation. As part of the project a Development Consent Order (DCO) will eventually be submitted by Highways England to the Council as local planning authority. As the DCO is the means of obtaining permission for development categorised as nationally significant infrastructure projects, there will be resource implications for the Council's Planning Development Management Team in determining the DCO. The Council has little experience dealing with DCOs, although several are expected in future including proposals at M25 junction 28. This need can be delivered within the existing resource of the team although some training may be required that could have financial implications, although these are likely to be minor.
20. The South Brentwood Growth Corridor work has been funded from the Planning Policy budget. Expected costs for required transport investment are set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Council is working with partners and developers to identify funding arrangements.

### Legal Implications

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21. As a nationally significant infrastructure project with implications for the borough, it is important that the Council respond regarding proposals set out in the Brentwood Pre-Submission Local Plan. Engagement in this way is consistent with the Duty to Cooperate and the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

### Economic Implications

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22. The potential economic benefits of a new crossing will likely benefit Brentwood businesses and contribute to unlocking growth opportunities in the South

Brentwood Growth Corridor, as proposed in the Brentwood Pre-Submission Local Plan. However, the design of proposals at M25 junction 29 remain a point of discussion with Highways England in terms of the physical impact on delivery Brentwood Enterprise Park, a key strategic employment land proposal in the plan.

23. Good transport connections are vital for economic growth. The areas that the Lower Thames Crossing will serve are home to economic hubs, ports and neighbourhoods. The crossing will provide new connections between all of these and ensure better journeys, fewer delays and give more certainty on how long journeys will take. In addition, good connections across the region and throughout the country are essential for business growth. Highways England set out that many representatives from a range of businesses indicate their main concern is transport infrastructure. The project will also create new training and job opportunities during construction that will boost both the local and regional economies. However, opportunities for enabling economic growth in South Essex are not fully realised through the proposals because there is limited direct access between the new route and the areas of Thurrock that it passes through.
24. Principles for sustainable travel in the South Brentwood Growth Corridor include centralising links to a transformed West Horndon station public transport interchange. Delivery of new development with better connections will help establish employment opportunities in new communities (such as Dunton Hills Garden Village and Brentwood Enterprise Park) and enhance those in existing communities (such as West Horndon), contributing to economic growth in the borough.

**Other Implications** (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

25. Both the Lower Thames Crossing and South Brentwood Growth Corridor proposals involve partnership working with Essex County Council as highways authority (in addition to Highways England).
26. The proposals have implications for the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan. This will need to be considered through the plan-making process for both the Council and the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), of which the Council is a partner.
27. As the Lower Thames Crossing project progresses, in future a Development Consent Order (DCO) will be submitted by Highways England to the Council as local planning authority. A DCO is the means of obtaining permission for

development categorised as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). This includes energy, transport, water and waste projects. This is a statutory process and has implications for the resources of the Council's Planning Development Management Team.

28. When Highways England submit the DCO application, this will include an Environmental Statement outlining how it is proposed to minimise the impacts of the project. This may identify implications on the local environment and wellbeing of residents and businesses.
29. The sustainable transport principles of the South Brentwood Growth Corridor work would contribute to improved health and wellbeing for people in new and existing communities.

### **Background Papers**

- Highways England Lower Thames Crossing Supplementary Consultation, January-March 2020:  
<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/ltc/consultation-2020/>
- Brentwood Borough Council response to the Lower Thames Crossing Statutory Consultation, December 2018 (Item 263 Ordinary Council, 5 December 2018):  
<https://brentwood.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=128&MId=2027&Ver=4>
- Brentwood Borough Council response to the Lower Thames Crossing Route Consultation, March 2016 (Item 416 Policy, Finance and Resources Committee, 22 March 2016):  
<https://brentwood.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=359&MId=1749>
- South Brentwood Growth Corridor, "A Sustainable Transport Integration Vision", February 2020: <http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/pdf/14022020155022000000.pdf>

### **Appendices to this report**

- Appendix A: Brentwood Borough Council Response to the Lower Thames Crossing Supplementary Consultation, March 2020