

## **Brentwood Borough Council response to the Lower Thames Crossing route consultation 2016**

### **Principle**

The Council supports the need for an additional river crossing. Evidence and experience shows that Dartford is heavily congested, which not only delays journeys but also has a negative impact on the local and national economy.

### **Crossing Location and Structure**

The Council notes evidence that Highways England have provided regarding the existing constrained nature of Location A (Dartford) and that Route 1 does not provide an alternative route, intensifying congestion issues and with considerable disruption during construction. Dartford is also potentially vulnerable given the amount of traffic in one location with limited alternatives.

Location C by comparison provides a motorway-to-motorway connection between the M25 in Essex and M2 in Kent, with links to the strategic highway network. Economic growth potential for the wider region is clearer from this location, whilst construction would not impact Dartford and therefore detrimentally impact the region during construction years.

For these reasons, the Council support Location C.

The proposal for a bored tunnel is supported. This will have less of an environmental impact than a bridge or immersed tunnel, as well as being more aesthetically pleasing for the local area.

### **Route**

The preferred Route 3 as part of the proposed scheme is supported by the Council. Although the route will have an impact on the setting of the countryside and Green Belt in South Essex, in light of issues identified at Location A/Route 1 it appears to provide the shortest motorway-to-motorway route between Essex and Kent. This seems to be the most sensible way to direct traffic, reducing strain on Dartford and providing new connections with the A13 and areas of growth in the Thames Gateway, such as the London Gateway port and logistics park. It would also provide an economic boost to the area, and to Brentwood Borough. The Council is proposing growth in and around Brentwood to meet local needs but retain our unique local character. Employment growth and new homes in Brentwood Borough would benefit greatly from the improved highway links and business opportunities.

Whilst investment in the infrastructure network is welcomed where the new route crosses existing roads, the Council has concerns about the potential for increased use of the A128 to access the new crossing. For this reason, Route 2 may be more beneficial, although the identified impacts on exiting urban areas in Thurrock from this route are noted and seem to be sensible reasons to discount.

The Council has concerns about the impacts that Route 4 will have on the Borough. This route proposes that a new motorway follows the path of the A128 north and connects with the A127 in Brentwood Borough. Whilst this could increase capacity on the A127 between West Horndon and the M25, it would fundamentally change the nature of the highway and local area, and require new links to and from roads that currently have access onto the A127. Route 4 also has potentially profound impacts on the emerging Brentwood Local Development Plan, specifically two strategic sites at each end of the Borough's A127 Corridor proposed to provide 2,500 new homes and over 3,000 new jobs between them. The alignment of Route 4 in Brentwood Borough compromises these development opportunities as new roads would be built through the sites proposed for development. The Council is also concerned about the level of upgrade that would be required to both the A127 and M25 junction 29, the level of disruption to existing networks, and the high costs involved with no additional economic boost compared to Route 3. For these reasons, we object to Route 4.

### **Wider Strategy and Future Engagement**

It is clear that an additional crossing will only do so much to relieve congestion given the increasing level of traffic projected in the South East of England driven by economic and housing growth. For this reason a wider infrastructure strategy is required for various transport types and future needs. This includes additional Thames crossings to reduce congestion and improve reliability and resilience, as helpfully explained on page 8 of the consultation document (East London river crossing proposals).

We thank Highways England for involving the Council in this key public consultation and note the effort that has gone into preparing consultation material and holding public information events. The Council looks forward to continued dialogue on the subject and awaits a final decision from Government on the crossing location and route.