

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE LEAD MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Decision Made: 17 June 2022

Lower Thames Crossing – Local Refinement Consultation

Issue for Decision

To consider the response to the Lower Thames Crossing Local Refinement Consultation.

Decision Made

That the content of the Lower Thames Crossing Local refinement consultation be noted and the Council's response, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved for submission.

Reasons for Decision

- 1.1 National Highways is currently consulting on proposed local refinements to the Lower Thames Crossing highway infrastructure improvements. The consultation runs from 12 May to 11.59pm on the 20 June 2022.
- 1.2 This report summarises the consultation and the proposed response from Maidstone Borough Council. National Highways has provided a standard template to collect responses; a draft version of the Council's response is attached in Appendix 1.

Background

- 2.1 National Highways is proposing a new road and tunnel, approximately 23km long, the A122 Lower Thames Crossing.
- 2.2 It would connect to the A2 and M2 in Kent, passing through a tunnel under the River Thames, before linking to the A13 in Thurrock and junction 29 of the M25, north of the Thames.
- 2.3 Prior to this consultation there have been five previous consultations. These include:
 - 2.3.1 Route Consultation 2016
 - 2.3.2 Statutory Consultation 2018
 - 2.3.3 Supplementary Consultation 2020
 - 2.3.4 Design Refinement Consultation 2020, and;
 - 2.3.5 Community Impacts Consultation 2021.

Consultation content

2.4 National Highways is consulting on the following elements as part of the present consultation:

- More public open space to the east of the tunnel entrance in Kent,
- The redesign of Tilbury Fields
- Modifying the emergency and maintenance access to the northern tunnel entrance, providing safer operation of the tunnel facilities and better access for emergency services
- Replacing a slip road on the A13 junction with a new link from the Orsett Cock roundabout to the A1089 to reduce traffic impacts on local roads
- A new footbridge over the A127 and further improvements for walkers, cyclists and horse riders including improved bridleways
- Further refinement of utility works to enable the project to be built
- Additional environmental compensation and mitigation with potential woodland and green open space

2.5 Further details of the consultation can be found on the specific National Highways website for the consultation that can be located via the link in Background Paper 1.

2.6 Most of the proposals outlined in this consultation do not directly affect Maidstone Borough however the proposals relating to additional environmental compensation and mitigation do. These proposals relate to further traffic enforcement between M2 junctions 3 & 4 (Background paper 2 pp.144-145) and the creation of a new compensation site in the M2 corridor at Blue Bell Hill (Background Paper 2 pp.150-151).

2.7 The Lower Thames Crossing proposal could have an impact on borough's road network especially the A229 corridor, however at this point in time it is difficult to ascertain the extent of any impacts until further information on the transport modelling and proposed mitigations are published. Both are expected in due course as National Highways undertake further work.

2.8 The purpose of these environmental interventions is to the reduce nitrogen and ammonia deposition levels on designated habitats caused by traffic using the Lower Thames Crossing. Summary of responses

2.9 The Council's full proposed response is set out in Appendix 1 to this report and uses the standard template provided by National Highways. In summary:

- 2.9.1 The Council has no comments to make on sections 1,2, and 5
- 2.9.2 In principal Maidstone Borough Council is supportive of the proposed environmental compensation measures proposed (sections 3 and 4)

3. Policy Advisory Committee Feedback

- 3.1 At its meeting on 8 June 2022 the Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee agreed the following:
"That the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure be recommended to note content of the Lower Thames Crossing Local refinement consultation and approve for submission the Council's response as set out in Appendix 1."

Alternatives considered and why rejected

- 4.1 The consultation response could be approved. This would allow the response to be sent by the submission deadline.
- 4.2 The consultation response could be approved and subject to further comments and changes. This would allow the response to be sent by the submission deadline.
- 4.3 It could be decided not to approve the consultation response. However, this would mean the response would not be sent and the Council's views would not be factored into the Lower Thames Crossing proposals.

Background Papers

None

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) set out.

Signed: _____
(Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure – Paul Cooper)

Full details of the report for the decision can be found online at:

[17 June 2022 Agenda](#)

Call-In Waiver: This is an urgent decision due to the consultation response deadline of 20 June 2022. This decision will therefore not be subject to call-in and will be implemented immediately.