

Mr Tim Jones,
Project Director,
Highways England

20 December 2018

Dear Mr Jones,

LOWER THAMES CROSSING (LTC) STATUTORY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

On behalf of Ebbsfleet Development Corporation I am writing to confirm our strong support for the Lower Thames Crossing proposals submitted as part of the 2018 statutory consultation. We would also like to raise your attention to a number of points we would wish you to consider to ensure the full benefits of the scheme and wider government objectives are realised.

Working with Highways England, Kent County Council, Dartford and Gravesham Councils, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation is developing an integrated transport plan for the Garden City and its environs. This plan will ensure that Ebbsfleet Garden City achieves the Government's priorities of significant new housing and sustainable growth. Our transport plans include forward funding essential improvements to the Bean and Ebbsfleet A2 junctions to address immediate congestion problems, forward funding the Fastrack bus system, delivering new pedestrian and cycle routes to encourage more non-car journeys. We are working in partnership with our local authorities, building the case for Crossrail to be extended to Ebbsfleet International to boost overall growth and increase rail capacity.

The Lower Thames Crossing Option C is essential to this integrated transport approach and to the housing and economic growth of the wider North Kent area, as it may divert significant volumes of national and international traffic, most notably freight vehicles, away from the significantly congested A2/M25 junction, which may allow the local road network to work more effectively.

The increased connectivity and capacity provided by LTC between Kent and Essex may boost the local economy and help facilitate Ebbsfleet Development Corporations aspirations to deliver a new benchmark for 21st Century Garden City development including up to 15,000 high quality new homes and employment for up to 30,000 people.

Ebbsfleet and the surrounding area, particularly Dartford, are significantly blighted by congestion because of regular operational failure at the Dartford Crossing. This has a significant area-wide impact whereby the local economy cannot function. A new Thames Crossing should reduce the frequency of issues at Dartford Crossing and enable the area to develop and thrive.

These delays are also responsible for reliability issues to the local public transport network – including Fastrack, one of our core infrastructure projects for the garden city, thereby

reducing the propensity for modal shift from the private car to public transport. Providing a frequent, reliable Fastrack service is fundamental to the Ebbsfleet vision.

However, the Strategic modelling shows how the implementation of LTC will result in increased traffic flow, particularly HGVs, which may in turn lead to increased congestion on Kent roads in particular to the East, notably the M2, A229, A249, A2 from Brenley Corner to Dover, A299, A227 and A228; key link roads to access Ebbsfleet Garden City from Kent and the international ports of Kent. The full impact on these Strategic Routes has not been shown as part of the statutory consultation nor have mitigation measures been proposed.

EDC strongly advise that Highways England work with local stakeholders in developing mitigating measures before LTC is operational.

EDC recommends HE investigate providing additional resting facilities for HGVs at the proposed service area in coordination with KCC. Many locations in the south east, including Ebbsfleet, are used for unofficial HGV parking; a large HGV rest area would facilitate the removal of these unofficial parking areas.

Key to the successful implementation of LTC will be the use of Smart Technologies, guiding HGVs and other road users to the quickest route across the Thames and early warning of congestion. We would wish to see how the LTC could link with the work that EDC and KCC are undertaking on smart transport and schemes locally, such as the A2 corridor connected vehicles pilot study. An integrated approach between Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, KCC and LTC will be important as Smart Transport systems are developed for the area.

Major projects of this scale can have a significant positive impact on the local economy and we expect Highways England to put in place measures to ensure that any negative impacts are mitigated and that benefits are fully realised. This is particularly relevant given the development of Ebbsfleet Garden City and the construction resources required in the delivery of housing.

During the LTC construction period, high development levels are expected in the south east of England and a co-ordinated approach to staffing, skills development and resources needs to be developed between LTC and stakeholders, including Ebbsfleet Development Corporation.

We look forward to working with Highways England on this scheme in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Pullin
Chief Planning Officer