



Thames Chase Trust

Response to the Highways England Lower Thames Crossing Public Consultation (December 2018)

1. The need for the Lower Thames Crossing

Q1a. Do you agree or disagree that the Lower Thames Crossing is needed?

TCT Response: Neutral

Q1b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q1a and any other views you have on the case for the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Thames Chase Trust's response is neutral but it must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

2. Our preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing

Q2a. Do you support or oppose our selection of the preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing?

TCT Response: Oppose

Q2b. Do you support or oppose the changes we have made to the route since our preferred route announcement in 2017?

TCT Response: Oppose

Q2c. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q2a-Q2b and any other views you have on our selection of a preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Thames Chase Trust's response to question **2a** is oppose. It must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

The Thames Chase Trust would have preferred that the route did not disrupt or adversely impact upon the Green Belt i.e. the lungs of east London. Our preferred route would have been outside the Green Belt e.g. the A130. This has contributed to the following stance.

The Thames Chase Trust response to question **2b** is oppose because the changes to the route since the preferred route announcement in 2017 now has a major and direct impact on the Thames Chase Forest Centre and adjacent Broadfields site. This site receives in excess of 120,000 visitors per year and accommodates staff, volunteers and Community Forest partner organisations.

The Thames Chase Trust is now extremely concerned about the following proposals contained within the 'Lower Thames Crossing Your guide to consultation' document:

- One-way road with two lanes and hard shoulder connecting to M25 junction 29 (No.1 Page 73)
- About 500 metres north of Ockendon Road the northbound slip road will divide, with two lanes continuing to connect to the M25 northbound and the third lane connecting to the northbound parallel link road (No.2 Page 73)
- On the northbound M25 carriageway, a two-lane slip road will leave close to the Ockendon Road crossing. This will pass over the LTC northbound to the M25 northbound connection before merging with the connection from the LTC northbound to the northbound parallel link road (No.3 Page 73)
- New bridge - M25 northbound to parallel link road to junction 29 crossing the LTC northbound to M25 (No.12 Page 74)

3. Sections of the route

South of the river in Kent

Q3a and b - Relates to the south of the river (Kent) and thus the Thames Chase Trust will not specifically respond to this.

The crossing

Q3c. Please give us your comments on the tunnel, the north and the south tunnel entrances and any other feedback you have on this part of the proposed route.

The Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned about the landscape impact of the tunnel and the increased pollution levels for south-west Essex. This area feeds into the Community Forest landscape. The Trust is also extremely concerned at the prospect of notable loss of habitat; loss of access routes; and adverse impact on heritage assets.

North of the river in Thurrock, Essex and Havering

Q3d. Do you support or oppose the proposed route north of the crossing?

TCT Response: Oppose

Q3e. Please give us your comments or any other views you have on the proposed route north of the river, including structures such as bridges, embankments and viaducts.

The Thames Chase Trust's response is oppose. It must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

The Thames Chase Trust has provided comments in relation to two distinct areas of responsibility for the Trust:

- a) The Thames Chase Forest Centre (the central hub site for the Forest with visitors' centre)
- b) The wider landscape of the Thames Chase Community Forest (40 square miles)

Recent planning reforms expressed through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) continue to recognise the ongoing role that Community Forests have to play in realising sustainable development. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF states:

"Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife. An approved Community Forest plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications."

Consequently, the Thames Chase Plan sets out five Forest-wide programmes of delivery that are in alignment with the core aims of the NPPF:

1. Forestry
2. Landscape Regeneration
3. Access
4. People
5. Promotion

The Thames Chase Plan covers a decade of Community Forest delivery (2014-2024) and will be renewed in 2024 to cover the next decade. The Plan is a current planning document that relates directly to the statutory plans of each partner local authority.

The vision for the Thames Chase Community Forest is simple:

"By 2030, Thames Chase Community Forest will be recognised as an inspirational example of landscape regeneration where enhanced, connected woodland and green space has made a clear difference to wildlife and peoples' lives."

In order to achieve this vision, delivery will be shaped by the following objectives:

1. To protect, improve and expand the woodland character of the Community Forest
2. To sustain the natural integrity of the Community Forest's air, land and water including wildlife
3. To develop a connected network of links and accessible, vibrant green spaces throughout the Community Forest
4. To integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation responses into the developing Community Forest

5. To use the Community Forest to improve local health and well-being, volunteering, learning and employment
6. To enable effective partnership working from national to local level to maximise impact of available resources

Since 1990 over 1.3 million trees have been planted in the Forest; there has been a 70% increase in woodlands through new planting; 41.2km of hedgerows created or restored; and 803 hectares of non-woodland habitat created or restored. In addition, since 2005, 12,050 volunteer days have been delivered across the Forest. NB: The figures quoted will have increased due to time in between monitoring.

The proposed route north of the river will impact on 9 of our 13 Strategic Opportunities identified within the Thames Chase Plan. These are:

1. **SO1 Forest Centre Hub** - Establish the Forest Centre at Broadfields Farm as the information and recreational hub for the Community Forest, with an accessible path network for cycling and walking, self guided easy access trails and state of the art interpretation both on site and online.
2. **SO2 Thames Chase Mosaic** - Create a mosaic of woodland and open spaces in Thames Chase that might be used for recreation, biomass, orchards for food production, allotments, wet woodlands and screening and improved access to the open countryside.
3. **SO3 Land of the Fanns Landscape Partnership** - Promote the cultural heritage of the area, making connections between Thames Chase people and places through time. Use creative engagement and educational projects alongside capital projects to create a compelling new narrative for the contemporary creation of the Community Forest landscape. This project is now live and is bringing in excess of £2m investment into the Thames Chase area. The scheme is engaging local communities, with a focus on heritage, environment, and access.
4. **SO4 River Corridor Links** - Improve links, north to south along river corridors such as Mardyke and Beam by upgrading access infrastructure and transforming parks en route.
5. **SO5 Landfill and Quarry Remediation** - Restore previous mineral extractions and landfill sites with an accessible landscape structure of woods and hedgerows for instance Pinch Mountain, Little Gerpins, Baldwins Farm, Aveley and South Ockendon sites.
6. **SO6 East-West Links** - Improve and strengthen east-west links across neighbouring boroughs, into the Community Forest and connecting Country Parks by increasing access and connectivity along major east/west infrastructure corridors such as the A13, A1306 and railway lines - and by opening new Greenways and tree lined Quiet Ways.
7. **SO11 Aveley Park** - Develop and deliver a shared vision to create cohesion and integrate the use and management of land in two different ownerships, establishing a showcase for good practice in multi-purpose Community Forest land management.
8. **SO12 South Ockendon integration** - Improve the setting and integration of South Ockendon into the Community Forest, with a focus on recreation and bringing large areas of filled and often derelict land into a framework of landscape and access improvements.
9. **SO13 Mardyke Valley Country Park** - Establish a bold vision for the future of the Mardyke Valley to achieve nature conservation, landscape and recreational objectives, by coordinating the management of the river as part of the Catchment Management Plan, integrating management of adjacent land and woodland, and improving collaboration between delivery partners.

Since its inception in 1990, Thames Chase has worked tirelessly to repair and regenerate the Community Forest landscape and in turn, *'transform landscapes and transform lives.'* The Thames Chase Forest Centre is the central hub for the 40 square miles of Community Forest in this area and the Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned to see the following listed within the "Lower Thames Crossing - Your guide to consultation" document.

- One-way road with two lanes and hard shoulder connecting to M25 junction 29 (No.1 Page 73)
- About 500 metres north of Ockendon Road the northbound slip road will divide, with two lanes continuing to connect to the M25 northbound and the third lane connecting to the northbound parallel link road (No.2 Page 73)

- On the northbound M25 carriageway, a two-lane slip road will leave close to the Ockendon Road crossing. This will pass over the LTC northbound to the M25 northbound connection before merging with the connection from the LTC northbound to the northbound parallel link road (No.3 Page 73)
- New bridge - M25 northbound to parallel link road to junction 29 crossing the LTC northbound to M25 (No.12 Page 74)
- New bridge - northbound parallel link road to junction 29 over the river (No.13 Page 80)
- Widened bridge - M25 over the river (No.14 Page 80)

The route will alter existing access routes and heritage will be affected. The work delivered by the Land of the Fanns scheme will also be affected by the new route.

4. Connections

South of the crossing

Q4a. Relates to the proposed junction between the LTC and the M2/A2 and as such, the TCT will not specifically respond to this.

(Q4b. Asks for reasons for the response i.e. N/A to the TCT)

North of the crossing

Q4c. Do you support or oppose the proposed Tilbury junction?

TCT Response: Neutral

Q4d. Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the A13/A1089?

TCT Response: Neutral

Q4e. Do you support or oppose the proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M25?

TCT Response: Strongly oppose

Q4f. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q4c-Q4e, indicating which junction or junctions you are referring to, and any other comments you have on the proposed connections of the route north of the crossing.

The Thames Chase Trust's response is neutral (**4c and 4d**) but it must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

The proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the A13/A1089 will have an impact on the following Thames Chase Plan Strategic Opportunities:

1. SO2 Thames Chase Mosaic
2. SO3 Land of the Fanns Landscape Partnership
3. SO4 River Corridor Links
4. SO12 South Ockendon integration
5. SO13 Mardyke Valley Country Park

The proposed junction between the Lower Thames Crossing and the M25 will have an impact on the following Thames Chase Plan Strategic Opportunities:

1. SO1 Forest Centre Hub
2. SO2 Thames Chase Mosaic
3. SO3 Land of the Fanns Landscape Partnership
4. SO4 River Corridor Links
5. SO5 Landfill and Quarry Remediation
6. SO6 East-West Links
7. SO11 Aveley Park
8. SO12 South Ockendon integration

The Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned to see the following listed within the “Lower Thames Crossing -Your guide to consultation” document.

- One-way road with two lanes and hard shoulder connecting to M25 junction 29 (No.1 Page 73)
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The current landscape at the Thames Chase Forest Centre provides multiple benefits for people and wildlife. Visitors to the Centre include families, youth groups, walkers, cyclists, wedding parties, birthday parties, and local community groups with limited mobility or health problems who need access to the green environment and a space to meet.

The current landscape at the Forest Centre has taken over 20 years to establish and it is still in the process of establishing. The woodland zones to the east of the site serve to screen the M25 (visually and audibly) and the Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned that the proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing at this location will destroy over 20 years of hard work by Thames Chase and its partners, including the local community and volunteers. The latter two groups have been extensively involved in the creation and continued development of the Forest Centre and adjoining Broadfields site.

The new road network at this location will destroy habitats, decrease access for visitors, bring the road closer to the complex of buildings (many of which are of historic significance), and remove vital play structures provided for local children and families. It will destroy early planting (site creation) by the community; much of which has been recorded in the Thames Chase Book of Celebrations in which members of the public record personal messages associated with the significance of planting a memorial tree on the Broadfields site.

The Thames Chase Trust expresses its extreme concern at the substantial landscape impact (including loss of habitats, heritage and access) associated with the Tilbury junction and the A13/A1089.

The Thames Chase Trust is strongly opposing **4e** because of the major impact on the Thames Chase Forest Centre. As mentioned this site receives in excess of 120,000 visitors each year and accommodates staff, volunteers and Community Forest partner organisations. The proposed changes will be permanent and the new route proposes development much closer to the Visitors' Centre and adjacent building complex (including historic buildings).

The Thames Chase Trust has been managing a Book of Celebrations since the 1990's. The book contains details and memories of special trees planted by members of the public at the Forest Centre. The new roads within this complex will remove these trees.

The Thames Chase Trust is strongly opposing **4e** because of the increased amount of land-take and the potential for increased pollution at this location. Since the 1990's there has been much investment in the Forest Centre, including from local businesses, and the new road will undo the work achieved to date by so many local people. The new route appears to be located ever closer to the offices at the Forest Centre and the Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned with regard to the potential closure, or even loss, of the existing access under the M25 that provides vital access to the remainder of the Forest Centre site.

5. Walkers, cyclists and horse riders

Q5a. Do you support or oppose our proposals in relation to public rights of way?

TCT Response: Don't know

Q5b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q5a. And any other views you have on our plans in relation to public rights of way, including the new routes we have proposed.

Note to Highways England: The Thames Chase Trust politely requests a separate meeting with the Lower Thames Crossing Access Team to consider access issues in greater detail, as currently, there is not sufficient information for a firm response to be provided.

The Thames Chase Trust's response is don't know. It must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

Access is a high priority for the Thames Chase Trust. It is one of five Forest-wide programmes of delivery contained within the Thames Chase Plan and is identified under its own section on Page 26 of the Plan.

Since the inception of Thames Chase, the Community Forest has been planned to favour informal access to the area on foot, cycle and horse. Most access will be via an improved rights of way network, particularly footpaths, designed to meet the needs of resident, visitor and landowner; and often across land managed for agriculture or other purposes.

A strategic network of recreational routes - referred to as Greenways in previous Thames Chase Plans - has aimed to integrate the safe use of the Forest by all local communities and improved connections between public transport networks and the Forest continues to remain high on the agenda. Use of the river corridors and their naturalisation, as illustrated by the Ingrebourne Greenway and Mardyke Way, is an efficient and achievable means to facilitate these linkages.

Access on cycle will be along the Greenways network, some of which will be part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) or London Cycle Network (LCN) and link the Forest with the urban cycle network. The concept of the Forest Circle was originated as the core of the Greenway network. Many of the routes are historical including green lanes and pilgrim's routes.

In the longer term, reducing traffic in parts of Thames Chase would make some 'quiet roads' safer to use as Greenway links, whilst maintaining private access rights. Public transport services could connect with gateways, hubs and the Greenways network for a fully integrated system.

The vision of a network of Thames Chase Greenways, gateways and hubs has been delivered in part over the past 20 years. The Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned that the Lower Thames Crossing will reverse so much of the good work and progress made to date.

The Thames Chase Plan identified the following in relation to planning for access and delivering and maintaining access:

- Undertake a strategic review of Thames Chase access improvements over the last 25 years to enable more targeted interventions over the next decade
- Ensure that the planned Thames Chase Greenway network is suitably reflected within Local Plans
- Develop mitigation in the form of new access routes enabled by the planning process
- Establish a growth in conservation volunteering to support the local maintenance of access routes
- Work collaboratively with local authorities, land owners and communities to keep existing access routes available
- Seek opportunistic route creation through grant-funded projects and land restoration schemes
- Seek endowments and similar funding through development mitigation

6. Environmental impacts and how we plan to reduce them

Q6a. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed measures to reduce the impacts of the project?

TCT Response: Don't know

Q6b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q6a and any other views you have on the environmental impacts of the Lower Thames Crossing as set out in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report, including our approach to assessing and reducing the impacts of the project.

The Thames Chase Trust's response is don't know. It must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

Note to Highways England: The Thames Chase Trust would be happy to engage in working to establish clearer and more defined ways of reducing the impact of the project, should it proceed.

The Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned at the potential for air quality degradation, loss of cultural heritage, adverse landscape impact, adverse biodiversity impact, increased noise and vibration, adverse impact on people and communities, and on road drainage and the water environment and climate.

From its inception in 1990, the concept of Community Forests has been very much about people. The Thames Chase Trust continues to ensure that the Thames Chase Community Forest has a significant role to play in continuing to transform lives. It is more than just about providing opportunities for leisure and recreation, but also about improving people's health and wellbeing, strengthening pride and confidence in the area, supporting local economic growth (crafts, skills, businesses) and providing chances for people to directly share in these benefits through volunteering, learning, employment and skills development.

As a landscape scale intervention, Thames Chase can also contribute towards increasing local pride and the sense of being part of something special, in turn improving community cohesion. Tapping into its rich heritage represents the most effective way of creating a cohesive, unified narrative of the local area that combines modern day landscape regeneration with the past to generate a sense of shared identity amongst all local communities.

The heritage of the landscape within Thames Chase Community Forest is a complex one, influenced both by geology and human geography. Geology and the end of the Ice Age left the land in the southern half of the Forest covered in a blanket of gravel with England's most important river close by and the northern portion rich in woodland. The establishment of London on its doorstep has shaped the landscape since Roman times. Ease of cultivation, opportunities to supply the capital as well as local people with food, has shaped a rich agricultural history within Thames Chase. Proximity to London made the landscape an attractive place for the rising stars of commercial and political endeavour to choose and establish country estates within a day's reach of London.

Evidence of the impact this way of life had on landscape and buildings still remains. Archaeology has uncovered patterns of living from the first arrival of man in this part of the world from the 8th century BC, through Roman occupation to more recent times. Fragments of former country seats are still there. Farming methods of former times can be read through the buildings and records that remain.

The Community Forest is a resource that directly supports the growth of jobs and employment relating to forestry, land restoration, food production and natural approaches to mitigating climate change.

7. Development boundary

Q7a. Do you support or oppose the proposed area of land we require to build the Lower Thames Crossing?

TCT Response: Oppose

Q7b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q7a and any other views you have on the land we require to build the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Thames Chase Trust is opposing the land-take at the Forest Centre. The Trust's response across the wider Forest is neutral but it must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

The Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned about the impact of land loss at the Thames Chase Forest Centre. There are large areas identified on maps in pink shading stating 'Permanent acquisition of land required'. There are also adjacent areas of land in green shading stating 'Temporary use of land required'. The Trust is also extremely concerned that combined, this level of land-take will have a major detrimental impact on the central hub of the Thames Chase Community Forest and extensive landscape disruption will occur as a result of the building of the new road.

8. Proposed rest and service area, and maintenance depot

Q8a. Do you support or oppose our proposals for a rest and service area in this location?

TCT Response: Neutral

Q8b. Do you support or oppose our proposals for the maintenance depot in this location?

TCT Response: Neutral

Q8c. Please let us know the reasons for your responses to Q8a and Q8b, and any other views you have on our proposals for a rest and service area, and for the maintenance depot.

The Thames Chase Trust's response is neutral but it must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

The Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned at the amount of land-take and its impact, particularly in relation to the landscape, disruption, pollution and heritage loss. A vast amount of heritage in the area is 'linked-heritage' i.e. running throughout the Community Forest.

9. Traffic

Q9a. Do you agree or disagree with the view that the Lower Thames Crossing would improve traffic conditions on the surrounding road network?

TCT Response: Neutral

Q9b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q9a and any other views you have on the Lower Thames Crossing's impact on traffic.

The Thames Chase Trust's response is neutral but it must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

The Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned at the disruption that will be caused during the build and which will affect the lanes and quiet roads within the Forest. This concern includes the impact of increased construction traffic in and around the area.

The Thames Chase Trust is also extremely concerned that the existing M25 and A13 routes already experience numerous problems e.g. if there is an accident on either, this currently places major pressure on local roads. Increased traffic associated with the new Lower Thames Crossing route will potentially further increase delays and local gridlock.

10. Charges for using the crossing

Please give us your views on our proposed approach to charging users of the crossing.

The Thames Chase Trust would wish to see a percentage of the charge returned to local environmental initiatives in the area, particularly those directly affected by the scheme i.e. the Thames Chase Community Forest.

11. Building the Lower Thames Crossing

Q11a. Do you support or oppose our initial plans for how to build the Lower Thames Crossing?

TCT Response: Neutral

Q11b. Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q11a and any other views you have on our initial plans on how to build the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Thames Chase Trust's response is neutral but it must be understood that the Trust is extremely concerned at the detrimental impact of the Lower Thames Crossing scheme on the Community Forest and associated landscape.

The Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned that the construction phase will have a much wider detrimental impact on landscape, people and wildlife. This area has suffered greatly from excessive levels of HGV traffic associated with the gravel extraction and landfill industries. This will be extended and exacerbated during the additional construction works associated with the Lower Thames Crossing.

12. Utilities and pylons

Please let us know any views you have on the proposed changes to utilities infrastructure.

The Thames Chase Trust is extremely concerned that access to the utilities infrastructure may have detrimental impacts on the landscape, communities and biodiversity. The Thames Chase Trust would require more information on the amount of disruption that this may cause and are therefore unable to comment in full at this stage.

13. Other comments

Part Three of the Thames Chase Plan sets out a schedule of projects that will help meet the strategic objectives in Part 1 of the Plan and which support the Forest-wide opportunities outlined in Part 2 of the Plan. The Forest is separated into five distinct Local Area Project zones and those that will be impacted by the Lower Thames Crossing are:

1. Area 2: Ingrebourne Valley and Quarry Landscapes
2. Area 3: Mardyke Valley and Aveley Forest
3. Area 5: Havering and Essex Fringe

Note to Highways England: A high number of the local area projects will be adversely affected by the Lower Thames Crossing and the Thames Chase Trust politely requests a meeting with the Lower Thames Crossing team to work through these in more detail.

The Thames Chase Trust requests that Highways England and the Lower Thames Crossing team consults the Thames Chase Trust website (www.thameschase.org.uk) and the Thames Chase Plan (on the website) to establish a better understanding of the Thames Chase Community Forest. Furthermore, we would also request that you visit the Land of the Fanns website (www.landofthefanns.org) to better understand this £2m+ Landscape Partnership scheme and its associated programme of projects (contained within the Landscape Conservation Action Plan).

14. A series of questions asking for feedback on the quality of the consultation, details about our organisation, and equality and diversity.

Question 14a: Information - was the information clear and easy to understand?

Good

Question 14b: Events - were the events of good quality?

Very good

Question 14c: Events - were the events suitably located?

Very good

Question 14d: Promotion - was the consultation promoted well and to the right people?

Very good

Question 14d: Please let us know the reasons for your response to Q14a-Q14d and any other views you have on the delivery of this consultation.

14a - The Thames Chase Trust has responded 'Good' but we do feel that some further detail is required in certain areas e.g. utilities.

14d - The Thames Chase Trust has appreciated the open communication with the LTC team and in particular, the organisation of face-to-face meetings when requested. However, the Thames Chase Trust feels that we were consulted rather late in the process.