

Royal Borough of Greenwich

Report to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.

Title: Proposed response to the Transport for London consultation on new river crossings in east and south east London.

Wards Affected: Peninsula, Thamesmead Moorings, Woolwich Riverside

Decision Classification: Non-Key

I. Decision Required

I.1 To seek approval to the Royal Borough's response to the current Transport for London (TfL) consultation on options for River (Thames) crossings in east and south London.

I. Background

I.1 The issue of the lack of River (Thames) crossings in east and south east London between the A102 Blackwall Tunnel and M25 Dartford Crossings has been "live" for a number of years.

I.2 The Blackwall Tunnel has insufficient capacity at certain times and has limited resilience. The Woolwich ferry provides a service for all road users but has limited capacity and does not operate at all times or in all conditions. The Greenwich and Woolwich foot tunnels and the cable car provide crossings for cyclists and pedestrians only. The DLR and Jubilee Line provide capacity for foot passengers (which will be enhanced by Crossrail) but plainly do not accommodate vehicular movements.

I.3 The Council's strategy has for many years included the need for the delivery of a package of river crossings and has emphasised that the lack of suitable crossings is compromising growth and regeneration on both sides of the river - in the very part of London where growth is projected and required.

Additionally, a symptom of the lack of adequate crossings is delay and congestion at the Blackwall Tunnel which impacts on users and on the

surrounding local road network, especially when there are unforeseen closures.

I.4 In March 2012 TfL undertook informal, “high level” consultation on proposals for a package of new highway river crossings. The consultation package included consultation on:

- (i) A new vehicle ferry at Gallions Reach (which could replace the Woolwich Ferry) on the same alignment as the Thames Gateway Bridge,
- (ii) A new road tunnel at Silvertown (to the east of Blackwall Tunnel).

The consultation was silent on the issue of tolling and contained no proposals for a fixed link (bridge or tunnel) at Gallions Reach.

I.5 The Royal Borough’s response argued for action as soon as possible, strongly supporting a crossing at Silvertown and rejecting the proposal for a Ferry at Gallions Reach in the absence of firm proposals for a fixed link (bridge) there. The response also expressed disappointment that the consultation had failed to open a debate on tolling and charges which could (i) manage road use and (ii) fund crossing schemes.

I.6 The overall response to the consultation demonstrated:

- (a) a high level of support for additional crossings;
- (b) that a high proportion of respondents experience problems crossing the River;
- (c) a high level of support for the Silvertown tunnel;
- (d) support for a ferry at Gallions Reach – but at a lower level than the support for the Silvertown tunnel.

I.7 There is no funding in TfL’s business plan for the construction of additional river crossings. However the Mayor has instructed TfL to progress the development of proposals.

I.8 Recent feasibility work on improving north-south links within the Royal Borough has promoted an extension of the DLR from Falconwood and/or Eltham and/or Kidbrooke to North Greenwich and across the river.

3 The current consultation

- 3.1 On 29th October 2012 TfL launched a second, more detailed, consultation on a crossings package. The consultation closes on 1st February 2013.
- 3.2 TfL are directly consulting (utilising a detailed leaflet and a questionnaire) residents & businesses in an extensive area in the vicinity of the proposed crossings and are seeking on-line responses. The consultation has been supported by a series of road shows during November and December 2012. A number of the road shows were held within the Royal Borough.
- 3.3 The consultation documentation is shown at Appendix I.

The documentation explains the need for new crossings in the context of growth in jobs and population and recent improvements in public transport. It argues that 4 problems need solving:

- (i) Regular long delays at the Blackwall Tunnel
- (ii) Unplanned closures at the Blackwall Tunnel
- (iii) The need to replace the ageing Woolwich Ferry
- (iv) The need for additional road connections to support growth.

- 3.4 The documentation seeks views on:
 - (a) A new fixed link (tunnel) at Silvertown (plus associated access roads) from Greenwich Peninsula to Silvertown. This would “spur” off the A102 and cross the river east of Blackwall costing in the region of £600m and could be implemented by 2021.
 - (b) Options for a second crossing further east.
The options for a second crossing comprise:
 - (i) Replacing the existing Woolwich Ferry (at the current location) at a cost of around £100m,
 - (ii) Providing a new ferry at Gallions Reach, recognising that this would cost around £150m with an earliest opening date of 2017,
 - (iii) Constructing a new fixed link (bridge or tunnel) at Gallions Reach (on the route of the previously proposed Thames Gateway Bridge) by 2031, if a new ferry were not to meet the area’s needs,

- (iv) Constructing a new fixed link at Gallions Reach by 2021 (rather than a ferry) at a cost of around £600m - recognising that this would mean that significant investment in the Woolwich Ferry would also be needed to keep it operating until the fixed link was complete.
 - (c) The introduction of tolling on the new crossings and on the Blackwall Tunnel in order to pay for the crossing(s) and to manage traffic.
- 3.5 The proposals in the consultation document are set in the context of TfL's capacity to deliver crossings in a logical order and the likely availability of funding.
- 3.6 The consultation is essentially a high level one. No detailed traffic modelling or environmental impact analysis information has been made available to the Royal Borough or potential respondents. That detailed "impact analysis" work would be undertaken and placed in the public domain following any decision(s) made after consideration of responses to the current round of consultation.
- 4. Formulation of the Royal Borough's response
- 4.1 The essence of the Royal Borough's response is based upon the recognition that essential regeneration and growth in south and south east London is being severely compromised by the real physical barrier that the river provides in the absence of a suitable package of adequate crossings for vehicular movements.
- 4.2 This constraint on growth is evidenced by a number of indicators including the price of land in areas such as Thamesmead, the number of sites within the sub-region with capacity for employment growth, the number of sites with the capacity for new housing and workforce commuting patterns.
- 4.3 Consistent with the Royal Borough's general policy in relation to river crossings and with the response to the March 2012 consultation, an exercise to improve awareness of the consultation and the Royal Borough's emerging response to the consultation has been undertaken.
- 4.4 The "Bridge the Gap" campaign was launched in December 2012 and continued until the consultation closing date. The campaign has

necessarily focused on the key strands of the outline stance – that in addition to the Mayor’s proposal for a tunnel at Silvertown there should be a fixed link bridge crossing at Gallions Reach to facilitate the necessary development and growth in east and south east London.

- 4.5 The campaign has engaged residents by asking them to pledge their support for the campaign and by encouraging them to respond (in the same vein) to the TfL consultation. Support from local businesses has been generated through direct contact. A number of media events have been organised to increase awareness of the consultation and the Royal Boroughs outline position.
- 4.6 The campaign has been successful in increasing awareness, debate and support. A total of 1200 pledges of support from residents have been received (795 electronically and 405 on post cards) and over 205 businesses have voiced support.
- 4.7 The council recognises that progression of the crossings will require the development of economic environmental and traffic studies which should properly be conducted by the GLA/TfL.

5. Proposed response to the consultation

- 5.1 Having given consideration to overall policy objectives, earlier responses, the response to the “Bridge the Gap” campaign, emerging views of partners and neighbouring Boroughs a proposed response has been developed and is set out at Appendix 2.
- 5.2 The response has been structured within TfL’s 9 point questionnaire.
- 5.3 The key elements of the response are:
 - 5.3.1 Recognition of the current situation around public transport crossings:
 - i. A recognition that the Royal Borough has been successful in securing significant improvements (Jubilee line extension, DLR extensions, the cable car, river services and Crossrail) to public transport services and infrastructure that facilitate non-vehicular cross river movements,
 - 5.3.2 Recognition that existing vehicular crossings are inadequate and are constraining growth:

- i. A recognition that, despite the recent improvements in public transport crossing infrastructure, the lack of a package of adequate, reliable and resilient vehicular crossings is hindering the projected and necessary growth of east and south east London,
- ii. A recognition that there are essential sub-regional movements that need to be undertaken by road and improved cross river public transport and services cannot alone support growth and development.

5.3.3 Need to support growth:

- i. There is a need to recognise that the recent census figures substantiate the growth in population that is taking place in Newham (70,000 in 10 years) and the Royal Borough (40,000 in 10 years). Further substantial future growth is expected and will be focused on Kidbrooke, Greenwich Peninsula, Charlton Riverside, Woolwich, Thamesmead and the Royal Docks.
- ii. A significant portfolio of developable land exists within the Growth Boroughs which, if brought into productive use, is essential to helping London's growth agenda and would secure local employment, reduce welfare costs and improve the overall quality of life for residents in the Royal Borough and the Growth Boroughs.
- iii. Commercial activity ranging from waste treatment and transfer to that associated with the major Dubai ports development are already planned; there remains a lack of access especially for small businesses to service these developments across the river.
- iv. Until that infrastructure is in place the shortage of suitable and adequate crossings will restrict the support existing and potential businesses require to prosper which will, in turn, restrict employment opportunities for residents in the sub-region especially south of the river.

5.3.4 There is a need for both a fixed link at Gallions Reach and for a tunnel at Silvertown:

- i. It is disappointing that the consultation failed to present a fixed crossing at Gallions Reach as a key element of a crossing package.

The construction of a new Silvertown tunnel and a bridge (i.e. not a ferry) at Gallions Reach are essential elements of a river crossings package to support growth and development and are supported.

5.3.5 The need for integrated public transport provision within crossings:

- i. Any crossing(s) should facilitate public transport use. An analysis of the opportunity to incorporate provision for a DLR extension within both crossings would be welcomed.
- ii. An analysis of the opportunity to incorporate provision through a new tunnel at Silvertown for an extension of the DLR network through the major, GLA supported, regeneration area at Kidbrooke towards Eltham and Falconwood alongside an analysis of the prospect of a circular public transport arrangement that would connect Thamesmead, Beckton, the UEL campus, City Airport, ExCel, the O2, Ravensbourne College and North Greenwich station, Charlton Riverside, Woolwich, Crossrail (and on to Thamesmead) would be welcomed.

5.3.6 The necessity of tolling:

- i. The council accepts that tolling will be necessary to finance new crossings, to intelligently manage traffic flows and to prevent negative modal shift.

Tolling exemptions:

- ii. The council would welcome the chance to discuss local exemptions from tolling as work on the proposals develops.

5.3.7 Opposition to the provision of a ferry (rather than a bridge) at Gallions Reach.

- i. A ferry at Thamesmead will not effectively assist in the necessary development and growth of the sub-region. The provision of a ferry would be inconsistent with the Mayor's aspiration to maximise growth in the sub-region.
- ii. In effect, a new ferry would be a "half-way" house that would not address future needs and would be an ineffective use of financial resources.

5.3.8 Retention of the Woolwich Ferry

Council believes any proposals for the future of the Woolwich ferry should be shelved until the fixed link crossings at Silvertown and Gallions reach are operational.

5.3.9 There is significant business, resident and private sector support for the construction of both fixed crossings

The response to the “Bridge the Gap” campaign has demonstrated significant support for the proposed response (as set out in Appendix 2).

6 Summary

6.1 An outline of the key points to be made in the proposed response to the TfL consultation is set out above. The draft response is set out in full at Appendix 2.

This report seeks approval to submit the response set out in Appendix 2 to Transport for London.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – (TfL) Consultation on options for new river crossings in East and South East London (October 2012)

Appendix 2 – Proposed response to the TfL consultation.

Signed

Cllr Denise Hyland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration Enterprise and Skills

Dated

Not before

28 February 2013

Call-in deadline date

6 March 2013