

<b>LABOUR GROUP MEETING</b>	<b>DATE</b> 26 November 2012	<b>ITEM NO:</b> 7
<b>TITLE -</b> <b>TfL Consultation on New River Crossings in East &amp; South-East London</b>	<b>WARD (S)</b>	
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b> Director, Regeneration, Enterprise & Skills	<b>CABINET MEMBER</b> Regeneration, Enterprise & Skills	

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Group with information about the consultation exercise that TfL are undertaking on proposed river crossings in east and south-east London, to identify issues that need to be considered in the Council's final response and to seek approval of an initial position for the purposes of a communication strategy which is intended to stimulate support which would complement the Council's position.

2. Background

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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 provide crossings for cyclists and pedestrians only. The DLR, cable car and Jubilee Line provide capacity for foot passengers (which will be enhanced by Crossrail) but plainly do not accommodate vehicular movements.
- 2.3 The Council's strategy has for many years included the need for the delivery of a package of river crossings and 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 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.

- 2.4 There has been a history of proposals for additional crossings:
- 2.5 Early (GLC) proposals included the construction of an East London River Crossing (ELRiC) as part of a London-wide strategic “ring road” network.
- 2.6 In 2005, TfL promoted the Thames Gateway Bridge which would have crossed the river from Thamesmead to Barking at Gallion’s Reach. This proposal was within the public inquiry deliberations process when the Mayor cancelled the project without consultation.
- 2.7 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.

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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.

2.11 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 Newham (Canning Town).

## 2. The current consultation

2.1 On 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012 TfL launched a second, more detailed, consultation on a crossings package. The consultation will run until 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013.

2.2 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 will be supported by a series of road shows during November and December. A number of the road shows will be held within the Royal Borough.

2.3 The consultation documentation is shown at Appendix A.

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.

2.4 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.

2.5 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. There has been a reasonable amount of interest in the consultation although it is too early to assess how that interest will translate into a significant number of responses or what those responses might be. Much of the early media interest has concentrated on the issue of tolling and less on the proposals themselves. There is evidence that those environmental groups against an increase in vehicle crossings are already rehearsing previous arguments.

### 3. Discussion & proposed way forward

3.1 The current consultation offers the Royal Borough opportunity to develop and publicise the arguments in support of the Silvertown tunnel and a bridge link at Gallions Reach (as opposed to a Ferry) in order to support the continued regeneration of the Royal Borough and address the negative impacts of the Blackwall Crossing .

A significant portfolio of developable land exists within the Growth Boroughs which, if brought into productive use, will help London develop a growth agenda which can secure local employment, reduce welfare costs and improve the overall quality of life for residents in the Royal Borough and the Growth Boroughs. The potential associated with this land can only be realised by investment in major transport infrastructure within an acceptable timeframe. The map at Appendix B shows the major regeneration sites within the Growth Boroughs and the transport schemes necessary to release their potential. This includes sites at Greenwich Peninsula, Woolwich, Charlton Riverside, Kidbrooke and Thamesmead.

- 3.2 A sound "regeneration" business case will be needed to support those arguments. That business case will necessitate reviewing TfL's current regeneration case (where it exists) together with previous work undertaken on the Thames Gateway Bridge. Additional capacity is required to undertake this work.
- 3.3 The current consultation also offers the opportunity to lobby TfL for the use of an immersed tunnel at Silvertown in order to facilitate a DLR extension to the south of the Royal Borough in the future. By association it offers the opportunity to highlight aspirations for improved north-south public transport links.
- 3.4 The timescales proposed in the consultation are unacceptable and are said to be due to a lack of capacity at TfL. It can be argued that powers should be devolved to a borough level to allow the Royal Borough to proceed with river crossing schemes.
- 3.5 The possible introduction of tolling is likely to be a significant issue within the consultation.

The introduction of a sensibly balanced regime, informed by the regime at Dartford, will be important to ensure that the additional capacity provided by a new tunnel at Silvertown is not absorbed in a way that fails to stimulate growth within the Growth Boroughs and fails to improve traffic conditions in local roads in the proximity of the crossings.

The protection of the World Heritage Site from the impact of traffic would need to be assured.

- 3.6 The consultation documentation says that the age of the Woolwich Ferry and the need to replace or upgrade it mutually exclusive options. An argument can be made that this is not the case and that the Woolwich Ferry should remain in use (with the necessary investment) until such time that the additional crossings are in place and its' place within the overall crossing package for South and East London can be reviewed. The consultation offers the Council the opportunity to present a view on that aspect.
- 3.7 Significantly, the consultation offers the opportunity to stimulate local (business and resident) interest in a package of crossings and to mobilise that interest in support of new crossings at Silvertown and Gallions Reach.

In order to stimulate that interest, mobilise any support generated, and publicise the Royal Borough's position in a way that will persuade the Mayor to progress both crossings at the earliest opportunity there is need to develop and implement an effective communications strategy.

The details of the communications strategy are currently being developed jointly by DRES and the DCSM.

The strategy will need to take account of the programme for the development of the regeneration business case and the Council's decision making process. It will also need to be formed in such a way that will enable activity by other, similarly minded, organisations to be utilised to best advantage.

The communications strategy would embrace:

- Articles in Greenwich Time
- Press releases at key milestones (publishing of the regeneration business case, Cabinet decisions etc.)
- Position statements on the web-site
- "Latest news" articles on the web-site
- A link to the TfL consultation which involves reading the Council's position
- Attendance at conferences etc. by key members and officers
- Lobbying the Mayor, directly and indirectly, outside of the consultation process
- Pre-paid cards or leaflets or similar encouraging residents to respond in support of a bridge at Gallions and tunnel at Silvertown
- Utilising existing officer liaison arrangements to influence TfL officer thinking
- A conference and/or public meeting to shape the Council's response with invited guest speakers

3.8 The overall objective of this work will be to shape the results of the consultation in such a way that the Mayor is persuaded to commit to providing both crossings and to identify a mechanism of funding them in the shortest possible timeframe.

The communications strategy will also identify key lines of opposition to the Council's view. Wherever possible, action will be taken to neutralise those views. Where that is not practicable it will inform the way forward at later

stages of the process (e.g. the development of evidence for any public inquiry).

#### 4. Proposed position

Between now and 1<sup>st</sup> February the Council will need to develop its formal response to the consultation which will need to be endorsed through the normal processes. This will essentially build on the response to the last consultation as described in 1.8 but will need to cover the Councils' position on tolling and the continuation of the Woolwich Ferry.

However the Council needs to have an interim position around which a communications strategy can be designed and implemented in a way that maximises interest and responses to the consultation in a way that aligns with the developing Council position.

Recognising the issues set out in this report it is proposed that the Council's position should be:

- (i) That the Council supports to building of the Silvertown Tunnel,
- (ii) That the Council supports the building of a bridge (and not a Ferry) at Gallions Reach,
- (iii) That the Council recognises that tolling of the new crossings will be necessary but would want to influence the tolling charges, arrangements and the possibility of having concessionary arrangements and consideration of local exemptions.
- (iv) That, notwithstanding the Council's support for the Silvertown tunnel and bridge at Gallions Reach, the Council will seek appropriate complimentary traffic management measures to protect the local road network and, particularly, the World Heritage Site as a pre-condition of tolling.
- (v) That the Woolwich Ferry should continue to operate until such time as both crossings are in operation – at which point its' role should be reviewed
- (vi) That the programme proposed by TfL is inadequate to support growth and the proposals should be brought forward at the earliest possible opportunity

- (vii) That the Mayor should delegate authority to progress a package of measures to the Boroughs in order that a package can be delivered in a timeframe that supports planned and necessary growth in east and south east London if TfL lacks the commissioning capacity to progress both crossings simultaneously.

The Director of Culture, Sport & Media has been involved in the drafting of this report.

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**Londons Growth Boroughs**

- Tower Hamlets
- Greenwich
- Newham
- Waltham Forrest
- Barking & Dagenham
- Hackney

**Transport Routes Key**

- ▬ Crossrail 1
- ▬ Crossrail 1 Safeguarding to Northfleet
- ▬ Crossrail 2 (Feasibility Study)
- HS1
- ▬ Barking to Gospel Oak Upgrade
- ▬ Cringford Stratford Link
- ▬ Stratford Tottenham Link
- ▬ DLR to Dagenham Dock
- ▬ Silvertown Link
- ▬ Riverside Transit
- ▬ Thames Gateway Bridge
- ▬ Potential for DLR Extension
- ▬ Borough Boundary