

# **TfL RIVER CROSSINGS CONSULTATION EXERCISE AND THE REDBRIDGE RESPONSE: BRIEFING PAPER**

## **1. Overview**

Building upon previous consultations, Transport for London is presently undertaking a public consultation exercise seeking views upon a revised set of options for new crossings of the River Thames east of Silvertown. (A proposed new tunnel under the Thames linking Silvertown with the North Greenwich peninsular has already attracted support and will be the subject of separate consultation later this year).

The four options upon which views are now sought comprise:

- A new modern ferry at Woolwich
- A ferry service at Gallions Reach
- A bridge at Gallions Reach
- A bridge at Belvedere.

The location of these options is shown in Appendix A in a separate document accompanying this one.

For each separate proposal, views are invited whether respondents Strongly Support/Support/Neither/ Oppose/ Strongly Oppose. The public consultation deadline is 12<sup>th</sup> September, but Boroughs have been given until 30<sup>th</sup> September to respond.

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to this consultation, summarise broadly the features of the emerging options and to seek a steer on the stance to be followed in LB Redbridge's formal reply.

## **2. Background**

It is important to be aware of previous formal LB Redbridge positions conveyed to TfL in respect of new river crossings proposals. Those stances are summarised in Appendix B to this paper.

The salient context surrounding the options now being considered is summarised below:

- TfL consultation in recent years has yielded support from a majority of respondents to provision of new Thames crossings, with businesses in east and south-east London very supportive.
- Against the background of expected population growth, the Mayor considers that east London will need a number of new road-based river crossings between now and 2050, in addition to both the proposed Silvertown Tunnel (which will provide extra capacity and resilience at the Blackwall Tunnel) and

the new Lower Thames Crossing being pursued by Government, which will provide additional capacity at the Dartford Crossing.

- TfL state: “New river crossings would connect people, businesses and communities with each other and with jobs and services. They would help to manage the impact of population growth, reducing congestion and making journey times more reliable. They would also help London’s growing economy by better connecting businesses, improving access to jobs and encouraging development”.
- The current Woolwich Ferry is reaching the end of its practical working life so its long term future needs addressing, and the current constraints of the Blackwall Tunnel and the significant congestion associated with its use are unsustainable.
- Vehicles would be charged to use any new crossings that would be provided to help pay for the new infrastructure construction. No decisions have been taken about charging levels but there is a statement that it is envisaged that peak period charges would be comparable to those at the Dartford Crossing (currently £2 for cars, £2.50 for vans, £5 for Heavy Goods Vehicles). It is also stated that detailed charging proposals would be the subject of a subsequent consultation.

The table below copied from the consultation document summarises the main effects of the new crossing options:

<b>Option</b>	<b>Earliest possible completion date</b>	<b>Up front cost</b>	<b>Transport improvements</b>	<b>Other benefits</b>
Woolwich Ferry	We could implement a new ferry by the early 2020s	£100m-£200m	Modest reductions in journey times, but unlikely to be significant	There would be no significant change in access to jobs or other opportunities, and it would not significantly support growth.
Gallions Reach Ferry	The land required to build the new terminals and access roads is safeguarded for a river crossing so it	£150m-£250m	Would provide a new link between Greenwich and Bexley and the rapidly growing Royal Docks area	Would put 20,000 firms and 300,000 jobs within an average commuting time (37 mins)** of

	could be built by the early 2020s			Thamesmead and help support development of housing in nearby areas
Gallions Reach Bridge	The land required to build a bridge is safeguarded for a river crossing so it could be built by 2022-2025	£350m-£600m	A fast 24 hour link would greatly improve access between Greenwich and Bexley and the rapidly growing Royal Docks area	Would put 100,000 firms and 800,000 jobs within an average commuting time (37 mins)** of Thamesmead, and would support development in Thamesmead and Beckton
Belvedere Bridge	As the land required to build a new bridge is not yet secured, it is unlikely to be built before 2025-2030	£500m-£900m	A fast, 24 hour link would greatly improve access between north Bexley and the London Riverside opportunity area	Would put 120,000 firms and 190,000 jobs within an average commuting time (37 mins)** of Belvedere and would support development in Belvedere and Havering.

\*\*(Note that the relevance of the 37 minutes quoted is that this is the average travel to work time for people in east and south-east London Boroughs as identified by TfL's London Travel Demand Survey).

Further details about the operation, timescale, maintenance costs and localised traffic, environmental and economic impacts are summarised within the consultation document.

Selected extracts cited below aim to highlight the key aspects to inform the LB Redbridge perspective:

### Woolwich Ferry

- A new modern ferry with bigger vessels and new terminals would be charged for (unlike current free operation) and average crossing time would be 12 minutes excluding queuing.

### Gallions Reach Ferry Service (linking Thamesmead and Beckton)

- Pedestrians, cyclists, cars and lorries could all use the ferry, which would take around twice as many passengers and vehicles as the existing service at Woolwich. Maximum flow of around 350 to 400 vehicles per hour in one direction at the busiest time. Boarding, alighting and crossing could take up to around 18 minutes, though queuing time would vary.
- On the north side of the river, a new approach road would connect to the Royal Docks Road.
- Would likely operate similar hours as the current Woolwich Ferry, but, like the latter, would be suspended in thick fog. The Woolwich Ferry would continue to operate until the Gallions Reach Ferry was built, then it would close.
- Annual costs of c£3.5m to operate and maintain.

### Gallions Reach bridge (linking Thamesmead and Beckton)

- Would carry two lanes in each direction: one for general traffic and one for buses and heavy goods vehicles. It would be open to all road users for 24 hours daily, including cyclists and pedestrians, and would open up opportunities for new cross-river public transport links.
- On the north side of the river, the bridge would connect to the Royal Docks Road.
- The Woolwich Ferry would continue to operate until the Gallions Reach bridge was built, then it would close.
- Annual costs of c£0.5m to operate and maintain.
- Generally, journey times across the river would be reduced significantly compared to existing crossing options, and a maximum flow of c1,350 to 1,600 vehicles per hour in one direction would be carried.
- This would result in changes in traffic volumes and origins and destinations across large parts of east and south-east London. It is considered likely, however, that local traffic would make up a large proportion of users of the new bridge, especially if the Silvertown Tunnel is built.

### Belvedere Bridge (a new road bridge between Belvedere and Rainham)

- Most recently-emerging option, developed after TfL analysis of outcomes of the last consultation exercise in 2012/13. Could help stimulate growth in North Bexley and London Riverside opportunity areas.
- Would carry two lanes in each direction: one for general traffic and one for buses and heavy goods vehicles. It would be open to all road users for 24

hours daily, including cyclists and pedestrians, and would open up opportunities for new cross-river public transport links.

- On the north side of the river, a new road would be built to connect the bridge with the A13 near the Marsh Way junction by the LB Havering/ LB Barking and Dagenham boundary.
- Whether or not the Woolwich Ferry (being a long way from Belvedere) would continue to operate would be reviewed.
- Annual costs of c£0.5m to operate and maintain.
- Journey times across the river would be reduced significantly compared to existing crossing options. Dependent upon the level of charge, a maximum flow of c1,500 to 1,650 vehicles per hour in one direction would be carried.
- This would result in changes in traffic across a wide area of east and south-east London.

### **3. Impacts upon LB Redbridge**

#### Overview

It is important to bear in mind that TfL's modelling work upon which the comments above and below are based has been conducted at a strategic level designed to identify broad changes in the traffic patterns across the highway network in the sub-region. Though certain specific flow figures have been quoted, TfL say that their modelling results should not be taken as a definitive forecast of future flows, especially on minor roads or at individual junctions. It is also pointed out that their models do not yet assume any mitigation measures that might be introduced such as changes to junction capacities or new traffic calming measures. Also, the modelling did not allow for inclusion of any bus routes across the Gallions Reach and Belvedere Bridges, so overall their findings represent a "worst case" in terms of impact on the highway network.

Also, for the purposes of their consultation exercise, just one particular charging scenario has been used for all options, which comprises application of current Dartford Crossing rates northbound in morning peak and southbound in evening peak, and 50% of the Dartford rate at southbound morning peak/ both directions interpeak period and evening peak northbound.

That said, it remains the case that we are only able to comment upon the information that TfL has made available.

#### Emerging information

The publication by TfL alongside the current consultation document of a series of technical reports provides additional supporting information relating to the wider impacts of pursuit of the new crossings options. Those technical reports of more

direct relevance to LB Redbridge have been perused and TfL officers consulted, and key outputs with regard (mostly) to Redbridge impacts are summarised below.

- (a) It needs to be borne in mind first that, even without any new river crossings, there will be much more traffic looking towards 2021 and beyond. Strategic-level traffic modelling has been undertaken by TfL based upon the Mayor's 2009 London Plan and including Government assumptions on economic growth to predict overall travel demand on both public transport and the highway network. This has demonstrated that without any interventions, there will be large increases in traffic flows across the whole strategic road network in the east London area, e.g. A13, A406, A102 and M25 and to a lesser extent across large sections of the network (A1400 and Ilford Hill are particular examples within our Borough).
- (b) Looking at a scenario which involves a Silvertown Tunnel being in place, and with both it, the Blackwall Tunnel and Woolwich Ferry being charged but with no other new crossings provided, a major reduction in delays at Blackwall Tunnel would be achieved. Within our Borough, TfL estimate that
- In the morning peak hour, the A406, M11 and A12 west of Redbridge Roundabout would see traffic increases of under 100 vehicles plus some increased junction delays on A12 east of Redbridge Roundabout.
  - In the interpeak period, there would be a similar flow increase on the A406 south of Redbridge Roundabout but a reduction in this section in the evening peak, when modest extra traffic on the A12 west of Redbridge Roundabout would occur.

When each of the remaining charged new crossing options are added to the charged Silvertown Tunnel/ Blackwall Tunnel /Woolwich scenario, the key implications for Redbridge, followed by initial officer views, are summarised below:

- (c) Woolwich Ferry: introduction of charges would reduce usage. **SUMMARY - No significant impact upon LB Redbridge.**
- (d) Gallions Reach Ferry: The most notable negative impact in Redbridge would be about 80 extra vehicles on the A406 and M11 in the morning peak, with a smaller figure in the interpeak and reduced flow in the pm peak. Some junction delay improvements in the morning peak would be offset by some increased delays in the evening peak. There would be no significant impact to our Borough in terms of increased accessibility to jobs within an average 37 minute commute. **SUMMARY - Mainly a modest additional traffic impact upon Redbridge, mostly in morning peak, no significant jobs impact.**

(e) Gallions Reach Bridge: There would be significant additional traffic flow through Redbridge, principally on the A406 (particularly the section south of the A12, e.g. around 200 extra vehicles in the morning peak), though the A406 and M11 north of A12 also have to cope with notable extra traffic. The modelling shows delays worsening at a number of key junctions within the Borough in both the morning and evening peak hours. Apparently a 10% increase in delay at the M11/A406 junction is forecast in the morning peak while Ilford Lane being shown as receiving additional traffic in the evening peak also represents a particular concern. Within an average 37 minute commute, TfL indicate that the southern and central part of the Borough would see a small increase in access to jobs and a moderate increase in access to the economically active population. **SUMMARY – Though there are substantial sub-regional highway network connectivity benefits to Redbridge businesses and residents resulting from this major new link as well as jobs access benefits, there would be environmental disbenefits caused by the additional traffic and significant concerns about the congestion impacts of increased delays at a number of key junctions, especially in the evening peak, when these problems appear particularly widespread.**

(f) Belvedere Bridge: Very little impact upon traffic flow through Redbridge is expected during the morning and interpeak periods. The evening peak period, however, would see modest increases in traffic along the A406 and Ilford Lane with delays increasing at a number of junctions. The southern and south-eastern parts of the Borough would see increases in access to jobs and the economically active population within the 37 minute commuting range. **SUMMARY – As with the Gallions Reach Bridge option, there would be sub-regional highway connectivity benefits to people in Redbridge and increased access to jobs, though less so than with Gallions Reach Bridge. Additional traffic impacts for Redbridge for the morning and interpeak periods appear to be tolerable, but we would need to be clearer about evening peak and junction delay flow and congestion implications.**

A separate assessment of emissions implications was included within the technical documentation. This indicated that based upon a “reference case” of expected traffic levels in the sub-region in 2021 without any new crossings:

- Redbridge would see reductions in carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide of around 3% once the Silvertown Tunnel is built.
- If the Gallions Reach bridge option were to follow, this would be partially offset by 1% increases in emissions in both cases. For nitrogen oxide, this is borne

out by site specific examples cited for the A12 Horns Road to Gants Hill section, Redbridge Roundabout and A123/ Ilford Hill junction, though the position at Wanstead on the A12 would improve by 2%.

- If the Belvedere bridge option was pursued instead, nitrogen oxide emissions worsen by 2% for the A12 Horns Road to Gants Hill section, and by 1% at the A123/ Ilford Hill junction.

#### **4. The future LB Redbridge stance**

Though it is outside the scope of the present consultation, it should be noted that the introduction of the Silvertown Tunnel option on its own (but with it and Blackwall Tunnel charged for use) would appear to have Mayoral momentum and, even though there will be further later consultation on this option alone, its construction does seem likely to go forward.

While it is essential to have regard to the previous formal LB Redbridge position as outlined in Appendix B, the new Cabinet may have different views about the Council's policy towards new river crossings and a political steer is now needed to direct officers both in preparing the Borough's response to the current consultation exercise and in moving forward generally on this topic.

It boils down to the extent to which Redbridge wants to:

- support the greater sub-regional highway network and improved connectivity benefits that would follow from new crossings.
- welcome increased car access to job opportunities south of the Thames, while acknowledging that improved access to Redbridge from south of the Thames may lead to increased take-up of future jobs in Redbridge from people in south-east London Boroughs.
- accept, particularly in the case of the Gallions Reach bridge option, and much less so in the case of the Belvedere Bridge option, that there will be additional traffic passing through the Borough and increasing congestion at various junctions at certain peak hours.

This warrants further discussion.

On the face of the information provided to date, purely from the highways perspective, there remain concerns about the impacts in the Borough of a Gallions Reach Bridge option. Additional information has been sought from TfL regarding traffic impacts and will be made available to us shortly. When received this further inform future discussion.



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Previous LBR stances**

The Borough's stance in responding to the current consultation should be considered against the background of the position previously taken regarding the original Thames Gateway Bridge proposal in 2005 as well as comments offered in reply to TfL's "Seeking your Views on Improving River Crossing" consultation of late 2012. The principal message conveyed in the LB Redbridge reply to the latter was to neither support nor oppose the development of river crossings strategy in east London until more information about impacts had been made available to consider.

More details are provided below.

#### **a) Earlier Thames Gateway Bridge proposal**

The original Thames Gateway Bridge proposal in the previous decade involved a new tolled road crossing in the Beckton/ Thamesmead area that would have ultimately been linked to the A406 North Circular Road via a new flyover at the A13/ A406 junction. This was planned to comprise a bridge of six traffic lanes (of which two would have been reserved for public transport vehicles), and included provision for pedestrian and cycle paths and a vehicle charging strategy aimed at discouraging long distance travel.

Redbridge supported that proposal, provided that all the Council's mitigation and monitoring concerns were taken into account. Reasons for this support included improved accessibility to jobs and leisure opportunities, the potential for widespread regeneration and improvements in public transport provision.

The support was dependent upon TfL undertaking traffic monitoring studies to ascertain if any highway mitigation measures needed to be considered for implementation before the bridge was opened. A Cabinet report in July 2005 (CAB/12/180705) cited concern over the level of additional traffic that could be generated, the effect on traffic distribution to and from the A406, and the need for arrangements for traffic and environmental monitoring after the bridge opening to be confirmed. It also authorised the Chief Executive to sign a legal agreement on behalf of the Council with TfL and the London Boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Greenwich and Newham covering these mitigation and monitoring concerns. This agreement was subsequently finalised and submitted to the Public Inquiry held to consider the Thames Gateway Bridge proposal.

Following Boris Johnson's election as Mayor of London, TfL dropped these Thames Gateway Bridge proposals, and so no further action was taken.

#### **b) The response to the "Seeking Your Views on Improving River Crossings" consultation of November 2012**

As conveyed in a letter to TfL dated 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013 from the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transportation and Crime (following consideration of this matter by Cabinet Management Board on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013):

*“The detailed content of this consultation document has been reviewed by the Borough. After careful consideration of the information available and supporting commentary provided, our formal position at this time is to neither support nor oppose the development of river crossings strategy in East London.*

*This stance has been taken against the background that:*

- We have not yet been provided with sufficient information from TfL concerning potential impacts on highways passing through the Borough to enable us to offer an adequately informed view on the key consultation questions. Any of the proposals could have significant impact on the levels of through-traffic and air pollution in Redbridge.*
- We feel TfL should discuss informally with East and South East London Borough representatives the emerging outcomes from their future modelling work, before proceeding with their proposed next stage of public consultation late in 2013. Traffic flow, dispersal and junction impacts must be disseminated and questioned/ clarified. This should also facilitate early identification of any potential environmental dis-benefits that may need attention.*
- In similar vein, we consider that TfL must share with Boroughs prior to the next public consultation the outcomes of their modelling work demonstrating the effects of different toll charges, and different charging hours etc, and to consider initial informal Borough feedback before finalising their proposals. The Borough is mindful that the continued application of toll charges at the Dartford Crossing (apart from overnight), despite the promise made during construction that when construction costs had been recouped, the tolls there would be removed) currently creates an incentive for orbital traffic to travel through London instead.*
- We consider that key proposed design elements of the emerging crossings ought to be more widely publicised to assist transparency, even if proposals*

*are not yet finalised. For example, in the 196-page “Assessment of Options” supporting document, it is apparent that a potential new bridge or tunnel at Gallions Reach would comprise two lanes each way, but one lane in each direction is assumed to be reserved for buses and goods vehicles only. This latter detail is not evident within the current consultation document. In terms of potential through-traffic impact on Redbridge, the suggestion of a future bridge or tunnel at Gallions Reach raises the greatest concern, particularly if untolled.*

- More detail is needed about the extent to which the needs of pedestrians and cyclists would be catered for in proposals taken forward, and that some indication of preliminary thoughts from TfL regarding potential frequency and destinations of bus services that would use the new crossings would be helpful.*

*Additionally, while not wishing to pre-judge any eventual formal feedback from LB Redbridge regarding the specific Silvertown Tunnel proposal, we would point out that the proposed layout of that Tunnel’s northbound connection with the existing highway network does not appear adequate from the perspective of keeping traffic moving and avoiding tailbacks towards the Tunnel exit.”*