

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

13 November 2018

Report of the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

Summary

This report provides an update on the current consultation process relating to the Lower Thames Crossing and Gatwick Airport.

1.1 Lower Thames Crossing

- 1.1.1 A 10-week [consultation](#) on the Lower Thames Crossing is open from 10 October until 20 December. The proposed new road link is a priority for government, which will connect Kent from the M2/A2 at Shorne in Kent, with Thurrock and Essex at junction 29 of the M25 and the A13 at Tilbury.
- 1.1.2 Highways England state that the infrastructure project will provide over 90% more road capacity across the River Thames east of London. In its first year, more than 27 million drivers are forecast to use it, reducing the number of vehicles using the Dartford crossing by 22%. Proposed benefits also include reduced congestion on approach roads to the Dartford Crossing, including parts of the M25, A13 and A2, and improved journey times on the M20 west of junction 6.
- 1.1.3 Following publication of the preferred route of the crossing in April 2017, Highways England has continued to assess and refine proposals which are the subject of the consultation. These include an updated, more detailed design which aims to maximise the project's benefits and includes changes to minimise the impact on local communities and the environment.
- 1.1.4 The updated proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing include;
- Inclusion of 14.5 miles (23km) of new roads connecting the tunnel to the existing road network.
 - Improvements to the M25, A2 and A13, where the crossing connects to these roads.

- Two 2.5 mile (4km) tunnels, one for southbound traffic, one for northbound traffic crossing beneath the river.
 - A reduction in height of the road in some locations by as much as 5-6 metres to reduce its visual impact.
 - Delivery of the route as a motorway with three lanes in each direction, along the whole route from the M25 to the A2.
 - No hard shoulders in common with other smart motorways.
- 1.1.5 Updated maps have been published alongside further project details, which include information on environmental and construction impacts. **Annex 1** shows the arrangement of the whole scheme.
- 1.1.6 In terms of wider impacts upon the road network within Tonbridge and Malling, Highways England say that they are investigating how the new crossing will impact both the nearby local roads as well as the wider regional road network. They are developing their understanding of where there will be a reduction in traffic, and also where increases are predicted.
- 1.1.7 Maps shown under section 8 of the [consultation](#), show an estimated decrease in traffic flow on the M20 between junctions 4 and 6 during the 7-8am) and 5-6pm peak periods, of between 100 and 999 vehicles. Loading on the A228 and A229 is however shown to increase on these routes by 101 – 500 vehicles during these times. These approach roads will be handling addition traffic due to the expected ease of using the new crossing.
- 1.1.8 Highways England are working with local authorities to identify the locations where further improvements may be needed, which are suggested for consideration as part of both current and future road investment programmes. Kent's Local Transport Plan 4 identifies transport priorities for Tonbridge and Malling, these include improvements for the A228 corridor between the M20 and the M2, as well as improvements on the A229 Bluebell Hill.
- 1.1.9 In response to the consultation, officers from TMBC will be engaging in dialogue with Highways England and Kent County Highways through the North Kent Lower Thames Crossing Working Group, which is being co-ordinated by Thames Gateway Kent Partnership.

1.2 Conclusion

- 1.2.1 TMBC welcomes the delivery of the Lower Thames Crossing, which will provide a significant improvement in terms of journey times and reliability for those wishing to cross the river. Whilst the cost of the project is substantial (£5.3-£6.8 billion), the economic benefits are potentially positive for Kent, with a Benefit Cost Ratio estimated to be between 1.5 and 2, which means that for every pound spent £1.50 to £2 in wider benefits is expected.

1.2.2 The implications for the A228 and A229 are, however, a concern and there is currently no detailed analysis of traffic impacts. The delivery of improvements for these routes will need to be prioritised going forwards to meet growing demand.

1.3 Recommendation

1.3.1 That the content of this report be **NOTED**, and that the issues raised in response to the Lower Thames Crossing consultation, be supported for **APPROVAL** by Cabinet and submission to Highways England.

1.4 Gatwick Masterplan

1.4.1 Gatwick Airport published an [updated masterplan](#) on 18 October for 12 weeks consultation. This sets out proposals for the airport's ongoing development, to meet anticipated passenger growth and global connectivity requirements. Currently Gatwick handles 45 million passengers per year, this could increase to 53 million passengers over the next 5 years. The airport's infrastructure would need to evolve to meet the various levels of passenger growth that could be achieved.

1.4.2 The masterplan will replace the current version which was prepared in 2012, and seeks to strike a balance between economic growth and environmental impact. This updated masterplan is a response to the Government's Aviation Strategy call for evidence, titled '[making best use of existing runways](#)'. The Gatwick consultation sets out options as to how this could be pursued, which include;

- 1) Main runway - Using only the main runway could support incremental passenger growth. Up to 61 million passengers could be accommodated through the use of advanced air management technology to intensify use during peak and off-peak periods and through the use of larger capacity aircraft. Modern engines are expected to reduce noise impacts.
- 2) Standby runway - Under its current planning agreement, Gatwick's existing standby runway is only used when the main runway is closed for maintenance or emergencies. However, the 40-year planning agreement will come to an end in 2019. The draft masterplan sets out how the standby runway could be brought into routine use for departing flights only, alongside the main runway by the mid-2020s.

Gatwick state that the concurrent use of the standby runway would allow the airport to accommodate an additional 10-15 aircraft per hour. This could support the handling of up to 70 million passengers per year by 2032. This level of growth could meet all international safety requirements, and be delivered without increasing airport charges or the airport's noise footprint, providing greater operational resilience.

Planning permission would however, be required through the Development Consent Order process for this option, further feasibility work and public

consultation would be required to support this during 2019. Implementation of this option could be achieved in 5 years.

- 3) Additional runway - Gatwick are not currently pursuing the option of building a brand new runway to the south of the airport. This follows the publication of the Airports National Policy Statement, which confirmed government's preference for expansion at Heathrow. They do however, believe it is in the national interest to continue to safeguard the land for use in the longer term.

This option could support the handling of 95 million passengers per annum, but would require substantial changes to the airports infrastructure, as well as infrastructure improvements to the surrounding road network and sub-regional connections. Environmental implications would require mitigation and compensation measures.

- 1.4.3 There has been longstanding opposition to a second runway at Gatwick amongst West Kent local authorities and Kent County Council, primarily due to the impact of aircraft noise upon those who are situated under flight paths, the limited perceived direct economic benefits for residents, and concerns regarding the adequacy of surface transport connectivity. West Kent Partners continue to lobby for a convenient rail service to Gatwick from Tonbridge, via Redhill.
- 1.4.4 Gatwick airport is committed to a reduction in car based flight trips. Whilst the masterplan states that there is a commitment to increase the frequency of connecting rail services to Redhill, to every half hour under the forthcoming GTR franchise agreement, no other measures are proposed to improve sustainable transport access for passengers and airport workers who are based in Kent. Only under the second runway scenario is there a pledge to provide a £46.5m contribution to wider transport and noise mitigation measures.

1.5 Conclusion

- 1.5.1 According to Gatwick Airport 7.4% of all terminating passengers that use the transport hub are based in Kent, the highest amongst counties in the South East. Significant concerns remain regarding the further expansion of the airport through the intensification in use of the main runway, and/or the simultaneous use of the standby runway, in terms of noise impacts and surface transport connectivity for residents and those visiting the borough. Further technical evidence would need to be provided by the airport to support the assumptions set out in the masterplan document.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 There are no direct financial or value for money considerations arising from this report, there may however be wider benefits for local residents and businesses as a result of some of the improvements being proposed in this report.

1.8 Recommendation

- 1.8.1 That the content of this report be **NOTED**, and that the issues raised in response to the Gatwick Master Plan consultation, be supported for **APPROVAL** by Cabinet and submission to Gatwick Airport Ltd.

The Director of Central Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's budget and policy framework.

Background papers:

Nil

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