

Shorne Parish Council

————— Borough of Gravesham —————



PARISH COUNCIL MATTERS

March 2016

Lower Thames Crossing – The Proposed Route

The consultation for the proposed Lower Thames Crossing was announced on Tuesday 26th January, just after last month's parish magazine went to press. We managed to rush out a loose-leaf sheet for insertion in the magazine before it was delivered to give you the bad news.

Highways England's preferred route south of the river is the Eastern Southern Link (ESL), which would be a 70mph motorway-standard dual carriageway through some of the most beautiful parts of Shorne.

From the tunnel entrance near Lower Higham Road just to the east of Chalk, the ESL would cross the A226 close to Chalk Church, then on to a new junction with the A226 opposite the entrance to the crematorium site. The dual carriageway would continue through farmland parallel to the Gravesend Road before crossing over Forge Lane by the bend just up from Shorne Crossroads. The link road would then be on an elevated embankment, crossing part of Smiths Farm, cutting across The Warren, before crossing Pear Tree Lane in a deep cutting. It would then cut a swathe through Great Crabbles Wood, where it would divide. The elevated western fork would cross Bowesden Lane near Boysden Shaw before joining the A2 near Park Pale. The elevated eastern forks would cross over the Wainscott Bypass to join the M2 near junction 1.

Hundreds of parishioners attended Highways England's public information events at Cascades in Thong Lane on Thursday 4th February and at Shorne Village Hall on Saturday 6th February, as well as other venues, to see the proposed routes for themselves. The alternative Western Southern Route also impacts Shorne Parish, crossing Thong Lane and cutting off Shorne West from the rest of the parish, before joining the A2 between Marling Cross and the Inn on the Lake.

Lower Thames Crossing – Parish Council Actions

Shorne Parish Council held a public meeting at Shorne Village Hall on Friday 12th February, attended by around 300 people. Robin Theobald gave an overview of the background to the Lower Thames Crossing, and illustrated both routes with the aid of maps, and provided an overview of the principal physical and environmental impacts. Susan Lindley gave a very informative analysis of the contents of the Scheme Assessment Report prepared for the consultation, while Bob Lane gave an insight to the consultation questionnaire, together with information to consider when completing the questionnaire. Adam Holloway MP and Kent County Councillor Bryan Sweetland also participated.

Full information on the Lower Thames Crossing is available on Shorne Parish Council's Website at <http://www.shornepc.kentparishes.gov.uk/default.cfm?pid=3385>, together with links to enable you to download the presentations given by Susan Lindley and Bob Lane.

The Parish Council continues to hold emergency and routine progress meetings, and a number of actions are being taken. We are contacting large organisations who may be willing to stir up their membership in opposition to Option C, and also writing officially to many others who might be able

to make expert influential responses. We are liaising with other organisations and groups to co-ordinate actions and share information, and also seeking expert legal advice about the possibility of challenging the consultation itself. We have submitted a number of Freedom of Information requests to access more information, and are continually collating information towards submitting the Parish Council's official response.

The Parish Council is obtaining further copies of the consultation response forms and other campaign materials, and we will be holding open sessions to assist anyone who needs help to fill in either an on-line or paper consultation response. We will shortly be writing out to all parishioners with details.

Lower Thames Crossing – Have Your Say

If you value Shorne, its beauty, its history, and its community, you should **Strongly Disagree** with a crossing at Location C. Why?

It is the most expensive Option.

It will devastate the environment and the community, blighting the lives of thousands of people in Kent and Essex. It will spread noise, pollution, and poor air quality to thousands of people not currently affected.

It will cut through ancient woodland, the Green Belt, and Areas of Special Scientific Interest, an act of ecological and archaeological vandalism.

All Option C plans cut off Chalk Church from its community.

It will not resolve the problems at Dartford, which are caused by the inherent tunnel restrictions and the need for frequent stoppages to escort hazardous loads and oversize vehicles through the tunnels. Only a new bridge at Dartford will address these problems.

Try not to fall into the trap of supporting the Western Southern Link (WSL) in preference to the Eastern Southern Link (ESL) or vice versa. This will be interpreted as 'broad support for Location C'. We are not in favour of **any** route east of Gravesend. If we were given the choice, many of us would express a preference for addressing the problems at Dartford.

By all means express your displeasure at this so-called consultation. The Transport Minister has publicly stated that the Dartford option is **NOT** off the table, but Highways England has denied us that option. The estimated cost of a bridge at Dartford has been vastly inflated since the previous consultation in order to make it less attractive, just as the value-for-money attributed to Location C has been doubled to make it appear more attractive than Dartford.

Scant regard has been given to the impact of the estimated extra 8,500 vehicles a day that would use the A226 Gravesend Road to access the crossing from Gravesend and the Medway Towns, or to travel between the crossing and the Wainscott Bypass. Even less has been given to traffic using the A227 and the A228, and through the villages in the area. We do not want an access junction on the A226.

The on-line consultation form and documentation can be found at www.lower-thames-crossing.co.uk. Please make sure you have your say on the consultation, and pass it to your friends and relatives. Help those who do not have access to the internet, or who might have difficulty in completing the questionnaire. Don't forget the closing date is 24th March 2016. After that, it's too late to have your say. **Say no to Option C.**

Kent County Council Electoral Boundary Review

On Tuesday 26th January, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) announced its decisions on the electoral divisions for Kent following its consultation in June and July last year. You may recall that one of its recommendations was to remove Lower Shorne from the KCC Gravesham Rural division, together with Higham and all the area north of the A226, and to place them in a new "Gravesham North" division which would also include Chalk, Denton, and all of Gravesend riverside.

With regards to the parish electoral divisions, they recommended the removal of Lower Shorne from the "Shorne Village" ward and the establishment of a new "Shorne North" ward to cover Lower Shorne and the area north of the A226. The current "Shorne West" ward would have been discontinued and merged with the remaining part of the Shorne Village ward.

We are pleased to report that the LGBCE has taken account of the representations made by the Parish Council and by a number of individual parishioners, and has decided to leave Lower Shorne and Higham in KCC's Gravesham Rural division where they rightly belong. They have also decided to leave Shorne Parish unchanged, represented as it is by Shorne Village Ward and Shorne West Ward.

They have, however, decided to transfer the urban part of Shorne West out of KCC's Gravesham Rural Division and into Gravesham East Division. Whilst this has no direct impact on Shorne Parish Council's boundaries or responsibilities, it does mean that our parish will now be split across two separate KCC electoral divisions.

Shornemead Level Crossing

Following our successful appeal to have Shornemead Crossing registered as a public right of way, no objections were lodged by the due date of 22 January 2016 to the draft order to modify the Definitive Map. It is believed that on seeing the Parish Council's evidence, Network Rail decided not to appeal against the decision, and therefore there will be no need for a public inquiry. The Parish Council will now press for the modification to the Definitive Map to be carried out as ordered, and for the level crossing to be reopened to pedestrians.

Clean For The Queen – Saturday 5th March

We will be carrying out another Volunteer Litter Patrol on **Saturday 5th March**, to coincide with the national "Clean for the Queen" campaign taking place throughout the UK over that weekend, in preparation for the Queen's 90th birthday.

We will meet at the Village Hall Car Park from 09.45, ready for a 10.00 start, and we expect to be finished by midday. Hi-Viz vests, litter pickers, and rubbish sacks will be provided, but please bring your own gloves.

If you are interested in joining us for our 'Clean for the Queen' litter patrol, please contact Bob Lane on 01474 822680, or email shorne.volunteers@gmx.co.uk for further information.

Bob Lane

Shorne Parish Council