

Gareth Johnson
Member of Parliament for Dartford



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Freepost RTTH-GRYG-SCXZ
Lower Thames Crossing Consultation
PO Box 1188 Harrow
HA1 9NU

GJ/SB/Johnson

Dear Sirs,

I am supportive of the recommendation by Highways England to build the Lower Thames Crossing at Option C and strongly against any crossing being built at Dartford.

Having discussed this issue with many of my constituents, it is clear that the overwhelming view of people from Dartford is that Highways England should make a formal announcement quickly that Option A is not viable and will not be proceeded with.

Traffic congestion in Dartford is the most common issue that my constituents contact me about. Congestion caused by the Dartford Crossing has been a major issue in the area for many years. It affects both local residents and businesses and occurs on a regular basis.

There are several thousand people employed in the area immediately surrounding the crossing at Crossways Boulevard and the Bridge Community Science Park. The congestion in the area has a huge impact upon the smooth running of these businesses and jeopardises the viability of their work. I believe strongly that many of these businesses will relocate should a further crossing be located at Dartford. The congestion can also have a serious impact on businesses situated slightly further away from the crossing but nevertheless affected by the traffic problems.

The problems caused by the congestion to local residents cannot easily be overstated. On occasions children cannot get to and from school and people cannot get to work or travel across the area. Dartford Bridge Community Primary School is heavily affected whenever there is congestion at the crossing. Local people often tell me that they feel like prisoners in their own homes when the traffic is particularly bad.

Dartford cannot cope with another river crossing. We do not have the capacity for another major infrastructure project. The local roads cannot cope at present with the traffic and certainly could not withstand the years of construction it would take to build another crossing in Dartford. Simply building another crossing at Dartford is not the answer. It doesn't matter how many crossings we have here, traffic will always have to rely on the current pinch point of roads funnelling traffic along the M25. Motorists need a clear alternative, a crossing which offers people another choice, well away from the existing one at Dartford.

Building a new crossing east of Gravesend will not only offer motorists an alternative but also reduce congestion across North Kent. It would provide resilience and choice. It is essential that we are forward thinking in our approach to our road network and that means providing another location for traffic to cross the Thames. It has been suggested that the problems at Dartford need to be addressed in Dartford but this cannot be successful by placing more and more crossings in one location. The problems in Dartford can only be resolved by moving a sizeable amount of the traffic currently using the Dartford Crossing to another location and that location is provided by Option C.

Earlier this year people were held in their vehicles for several hours when the QEII Bridge was shut due to high winds. We desperately need an alternative route and a crossing which can remain open even during major weather events.

A tunnel in Gravesend would solve this problem, as well as providing much needed extra capacity. It would also help open up new routes, development and business opportunities between Kent and Essex.

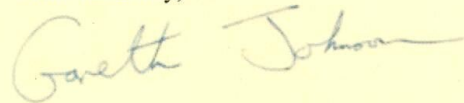
Worsening pollution in Dartford is another reason Option A is untenable. Dartford has the second highest pollution rate in the south-east, second only to the area surrounding Heathrow. According to Public Health England, a staggering 6.7% of the deaths in Dartford are at least partly attributable to long-term exposure to human caused particle air pollution. This truly shocking statistic underlines why Highways England must do everything possible to reduce the levels of air pollution in my constituency and move forward with Option C. This will help to save the lives of my constituents who have already suffered for far too long.

In my experience, opponents to option C tend to come from the Gravesham area whereas those who approach the issue with a degree of objectivity tend to favour Option C. This illustrates the strong, logical arguments that favour building a tunnel at Option C.

Nobody would suggest that we move all the river crossings in London to one location. This would be ridiculous and create huge traffic problems. Yet it is a similar approach that the supporters of Option A take. They believe that the solution is to cram as many crossings in to one area as possible to cure the problem. I believe this is short sighted and unworkable.

It is clear that we need another crossing over the Thames and an alternative to the existing Dartford Crossing at Option C is the only viable solution.

Yours faithfully,



Gareth Johnson