

Response to the National Infrastructure Commission Call for Evidence on London's transport needs from the Royal Borough of Greenwich Conservative Council Group

January 2016

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The Greenwich Conservative Council Group welcomes this opportunity to contribute evidence to the National Infrastructure Commission's Call for Evidence on London's transport needs.
- 1.2. We have responded to the questions laid out in the call for evidence from our perspective as a Group of (opposition) councillors representing residents in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Our response naturally focuses on South East London.
- 1.3. Any queries about this response should be directed to Councillor Matt Clare, Greenwich Conservatives Transport Spokesperson at [email redacted]

2. Question (1): What are the major economic and social challenges facing London and its commuter hinterland over the next two to three decades?

- 2.1. Over the next 10 years alone 80,000 new homes will be built in the 5 most South Easterly London boroughs.
- 2.2. Large-scale building will continue beyond the current 10 year targets of 80,000 new homes. Moreover significant home building is underway further out from London on already crowded commuter routes which are shared by residents of the five South East London boroughs.
- 2.3. With efforts to shift commuters from car to public transport the already overcrowded Southeastern trains commuter routes from Kent via South East London will not cope with increased passenger volumes unless significant capacity is added and alternatives such as cycling and buses maximised.

Road capacity in Southeast London is considerably less than in North London and already overcrowded. The Silvertown tunnel, of which we are supportive in principle, will go some way to address this. However clearly the roads are at capacity with there being no option to build further. This further reinforces the arguments in favour of significant improvements to public transport in South East London.

3. Question (2): What are the strategic options for future investment in large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London - on road, rail and underground - including, but not limited to Crossrail 2?

3.1. The Bakerloo Line extension from Elephant & Castle to New Cross Gate, Lewisham and onward to Catford & Hayes via an existing National Rail line is essential to help address the challenges described above.

3.2. The Bakerloo line extension will provide

- an additional high frequency public transport route from very high population growth areas such as Catford, Lewisham and the Old Kent Road to Central London
- a freeing up of line capacity on already overcrowded regional train routes from Dartford via Sidcup and Bexleyheath as well as from Orpington on the Lewisham to London terminii stretch
- a high frequency 'turn up and go' tube service to central London from Hayes, Catford and beyond to replace infrequent trains

3.3. The Bakerloo line extension will also deliver excellent value for money. At approx £2.5bn the proposed Bakerloo Line extension represents only around 15% of the cost of Crossrail 2, but will serve heavily populated relatively central London areas not currently on the tube/train at all (e.g Old Kent Road, Camberwell)

3.4. It is worth noting that this extension was first considered in the 1930s and again in the 1950s and 1970s, long before the volumes of traffic and commuting by train we see today. Due to its currently very central terminus the Bakerloo line is seemingly the only rail line in London which has the capacity to cope with an extension like that proposed above.

3.5. We also support the proposed London Overground extension from Barking Riverside to Abbey Wood.

3.6. The London Overground is being extended from Barking to Barking Riverside. Continuing south eastwards to include Thamesmead and Abbey Wood would

bring significant further employment opportunities to residents on both sides of the river.

- 3.7. It is worth noting that with its 50,000 residents Thamesmead is the largest area of London to not be served by tube or rail at all.
- 3.8. **We believe that cycling infrastructure must see significant investment in South East London.**
- 3.9. South East London remains under served by public transport compared to other parts of London. Unfortunately commuting by bike is not yet as attractive an option in South East London as it is from other areas of London which are a comparable distance from the centre such as Newham, Wandsworth or Merton. This is largely due to a lack of safe segregated cycling routes.
- 3.10. The Old Kent Road, Central Lewisham and Lee High Road in particular are considered dangerous and a barrier to many people commuting to work on a bike.
- 3.11. The approved CS4 and CS5 routes will go along way to achieving this. However further extensions outwards should be considered (for example, to Plumstead and Eltham) as well as additional alternative routes. These should only continue with the consent of residents, including all types of road users, and so proper consultation with the public is essential.
- 3.12. **Crucially, the highly successful TfL/Santander Cycle Hire Scheme must be extended into South East London** in the same way that it has been to East, West and South West London all of which already enjoy far better public transport connections.
- 3.13. Extending TfL cycle hire into South East London will give more resilience to the transport network and reduce reliance on cars and buses for shorter journeys.
- 3.14. Greenwich Conservatives are already campaigning for an expansion of TfL cycle hire into Greenwich via the foot tunnels from Island Gardens, including lobbying the Labour administration of Greenwich Council to make a pro-active case to Transport for London, which it has so far failed to do.
- 3.15. It is estimated that a few docking stations could be delivered for around the cost of a brand-new double-decker bus. Contrast this with that bus which travels from point A to point B via predetermined stops and is only available at the point the bus finds itself on that route at any one time. Investing in Santander cycles gives docking stations and bikes which are available at scattered points and can be ridden at flexible times to any one of 750 docking points across London.

4. (Question 3): How should they be prioritised, taking account of their response to London's strategic transport challenges, including their impact on capacity, reliability, journey times and connectivity to jobs?

- 4.1. Given the already overcrowded and inadequate public transport in South East London (See PTAL ratings) we strongly believe that the Bakerloo line extension must be prioritised. The Bakerloo line extension can be delivered for only around 15% of the cost of Crossrail 2.

5. (Question 4): What might their potential impact be on employment, productivity and housing supply in London and the southeast?

- 5.1. Each of the above three projects will bring residents of South East London (old and new) within reach of more employment opportunities.
- 5.2. Faster, more reliable train and tube journeys into central London will be key to London remaining productive. Already with current volumes of commuters Southeastern trains are frequently delayed resulting in regular productivity losses for London businesses.