



# **Rotherhithe to Canary Wharf crossing Community workshops**

Summary note

September 2017

# 1 Workshop overview

## 1.1. Project background

Transport for London (TfL) is investigating the feasibility of providing a new walking and cycling crossing of the River Thames between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf.

This project is one of a number of proposed new river crossings for London which are intended to improve cross-river connectivity in London. These crossings consist of public transport, highway, pedestrian and cycle links to improve access to jobs, facilitate business activity, support housing development, enhance the resilience of the transport network and encourage more sustainable travel.

The concept of a river crossing in this area first emerged around a decade ago, under plans to develop Greenways for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This work was previously led by Sustrans (a sustainable travel charity). In 2015 a reference design was produced by architects reForm and engineering firm Elliot Wood, working with Sustrans to support their feasibility report, *Bridging the Gap*.

There are a number of factors, which combined, make it appropriate for the case for this scheme to be considered by TfL, including:

- Both the Isle of Dogs and Canada Water on the Rotherhithe peninsula are designated as Opportunity Areas where significant housing and employment growth is anticipated in the coming years.
- Significant cycling growth has taken place in central and inner London.
- Central to the Mayor's Healthy Streets London vision is to encourage walking and cycling with safer and more appealing routes to create a better city for all Londoners. Improvements to cycling access and capacity are required if continued growth is to be supported, particularly for employees living south of the river, for whom the options for crossing the Thames onto the Isle of Dogs (to access Canary Wharf) are limited.
- The section of the Jubilee line between Canada Water and Canary Wharf is increasingly crowded in the peaks, but there are no convenient alternative options for travelling at surface level due to the position of these growth areas on peninsulas of the Thames. This congestion is forecast to remain even after the opening of the Elizabeth line (Crossrail). Improving the accessibility of the Rotherhithe peninsula for walking and cycling would provide existing and future residents of the area with an alternative active travel option.
- Because of the issues outlined above, the Mayor has asked TfL to assess a crossing at this location as a priority.

## 1.2. Community workshops

The intention of these workshops was to gather preliminary feedback from the local community on our proposals to build a cycling and pedestrian crossing over the River Thames in the area. The workshops did not constitute a formal consultation exercise, but provide early stage local feedback on a potential crossing and conditions around it. This document summarises the main discussion points of the workshops.

Four workshops were planned over June and July to provide local feedback, enabling the project team to access community knowledge and understanding of issues which would otherwise difficult to gather. A further two were held because the level of interest and response from local residents after our original invitation was sent out exceeded the capacity of the space. The dates and locations of these workshops were:

- 17<sup>th</sup> June Rotherhithe
- 24<sup>th</sup> June Canary Wharf
- 22<sup>nd</sup> June Canary Wharf
- 12<sup>th</sup> July Rotherhithe
- 19<sup>th</sup> July Rotherhithe
- 26<sup>th</sup> July Rotherhithe

## 2. Key Themes

### Introduction of themes

The workshops were devised to capture as much local knowledge and opinion as possible. reForm's bridge design is thought to be well-known within the local community, having established a presence over the course of Sustran's campaign. Since the Mayor's commitment to investigate the crossing, residents and local groups had been in correspondence to voice both support and opposition to the reForm bridge and its location. To determine some of the reasons behind these opinions, our workshops primarily focused on the concept of a bridge to pinpoint specific issues in order to consider these as part of the next stage of the scheme development, although discussion was also encouraged on other potential options as outlined below. The sessions were devoted to exploring local resident's knowledge and attitudes to the project.

This document is not meant to capture an exhaustive list of reasons for and against different types of crossing, but reflects the strongest themes, ideas and concerns about a proposed crossing that were raised at the workshops.

## **Optioneering**

### **1. Bridge**

- 1..1. Over the course of the workshops numerous attendees expressed support for a bridge, providing that it meets concerns which are detailed below. This was particular support from the Rotherhithe side of river.
- 1..2. Many of the attendees who support the bridge want the planning and building process to be implemented as quickly as possible, with many citing the long running campaign to build a crossing in this area. They were also critical of the perceived slow progress of the planning process.
- 1..3. Location was cited by many attendees as the most important element of choosing a bridge design and that the most suitable option would be sensitive to residential buildings and with a good design.
- 1..4. There was concern that only the bridge option was being looked at in detail and that all options needed to be carefully considered.
- 1..5. Among attendees who opposed a bridge, the effect on river views, impact of operations, construction and cost were cited as the principal reasons

### **2. Ferry**

- 2..1. A ferry was a popular choice among a number of attendees living on the north side of the river in the immediate vicinity of the crossing. Several attendees said that they live close to the JP Morgan site and they a ferry would have less of an impact on their quality of life.
- 2..2. However, many attendees felt, particularly south of the river that a fixed link would provide a real catalyst for the area and would be a more attractive option for those crossing the river. Many people commented that the low use of the current ferry demonstrated that this was not the answer.
- 2..3. An improved ferry service was felt to have less visual impact on the surrounding area and potentially be better value for money by those that supported it.
- 2..4. Some attendees thought that as long as it was high capacity, cheap (or free), accessible, timetabled and in the right location, it would be used more than the current ferry service running from the Hilton Double Tree.
- 2..5. As an improved ferry service would be potentially cheaper than other infrastructure, it was suggested that the money saved could be used to run a subsidised ferry crossing.

- 2..6. Some attendees at the Canary Wharf events also favoured trialling a new free ferry service to see if it could match our objectives without having to build infrastructure. It could also help in determining usage of a future fixed crossing.
- 2..7. Some attendees' cited that they would not like to extend a ferry service, as it would be less accessible to disabled people crossing the river.
- 2..8. Cyclists tended to think that a ferry would be less attractive to them and other cyclists.
- 2..9. Participants wanted to understand the different mechanisms TfL will use determine the preferred option and that these reasons include the concerns of local people.

### **3. Tunnel**

- 3..1. A tunnel was generally not favoured because of the relative cost of the scheme and value for money compared to the other options.
- 3..2. However, some attendees felt that it was preferable to a bridge, as it would be less intrusive to nearby residents and would fit into the character of the area.
- 3..3. The Greenwich foot tunnel was cited by several attendees, although they had conflicting views on its utility. Some felt it was a good example of a crossing and would like to see it replicated.
- 3..4. However, other participants felt it encourages anti-social behaviour, especially at night, and that cyclists often occupied space meant for pedestrians.
- 3..5. Many attendees felt a tunnel was not an attractive option because of anti-social behaviour concerns.

## **How the crossing looks**

### **4. Design style**

- 4..1. The majority of workshop attendees had seen the design developed by reForm. There was a variety of views on whether this was an acceptable design. Many of the attendees thought the design was sleek, iconic and would add to the area. Others thought that the reForm design was too large and imposing.
- 4..2. A common theme on the design was that the Canary Wharf area is a unique centre for modern and superior design, the bridge should be an attractive, iconic design, which fits into the character of the area.

- 4..3. Another theme was the need to consider the different architectural styles on each side of the river – the north side is much more modern and could accommodate contemporary and more bulky design, but the south has lower rise buildings and has more heritage so needs design sympathetic to this.
- 4..4. The look of the bridge is extremely important as that stretch of the river has very good views and people travel to the area to view them.
- 4..5. The bridge needs to be elegant and not too blocky. The Gateshead Millennium Bridge as good by several attendees.
- 4..6. The columns should be elegant and slender
- 4..7. The structure should be no taller than existing buildings where it lands
- 4..8. The bridge design should sympathetic to views from people's homes

## **5. Height**

- 5..1. The height of the bridge was a major issue for local attendees, many of whom thought the bridge should be as low as practically possible. This is to lessen impact of the surrounding area, including views from near by residences. It was also felt to improve user experience, as the crossing would be less exposed to the elements and easier to access.
- 5..2. At 20 metres high, it was felt that the reForm design was too high and imposing. After explaining navigation restrictions set by the Port of London Authority who manages the River Thames in this location, many attendees asked if we could negotiate a lower height.
- 5..3. Although opening should be kept at a minimum, limiting overall height was still seen to take precedence over reducing the times and length of opening.

## **How the crossing fits into the area**

### **6. Location**

- 6..1. Attendees would like transparency around how the preferred location is chosen.
- 6..2. Some north side attendees would like a landing location to be as far from the Cascades building as possible, preferably further into the JP Morgan owned site or elsewhere on the Isle of Dogs.
- 6..3. Westferry Circus and West India Wharf were suggested as preferred landing points by several attendees at the Canary Wharf workshops..

- 6..4. The landing should be more towards the commercial hub of Canary Wharf – i.e. towards Westferry Circus. The current landing point on the north was felt to be too narrow to land a bridge.
- 6..5. It was felt that the environmental impact would need to be looked at carefully, including the impact on wildlife, such as bats.
- 6..6. Several attendees felt that a bridge will be more encouraging to cyclist than a ferry. Cyclists will know that it is there to use, unlike the ferry, and should be part of existing cycle routes.
- 6..7. There are a large amount of British Land homes being built on the Rotherhithe side, so it was highlight that the crossing needs to provide good access to this site.
- 6..8. A plaza at the landing point was an idea supported by some attendees, including for other uses such as a coffee shop or bar – particularly to give people something to do while waiting if the bridge was open.
- 6..9. There was concern about the loss of green space at Durand's Wharf on the south side, although a well designed bridge could enhance the green space.
- 6..10. A number of attendees asked how cyclists would get to a crossing. On the south, in particular, the residential nature of approach roads, parking issues and impacts on Russia Dock Woodland were noted as considerations that needed to be investigated
- 6..11. Concerns were raised at all Rotherhithe sessions about the possibility of people parking in the area and using the bridge to cross to Canary Wharf.

## **7. Lighting**

- 7..1. A common concern from attendees on the north side of the river was that if the bridge is lit, light pollution might disturb the surrounding flats.
- 7..2. Therefore, any illumination should be focused on the users to limit light pollution.
- 7..3. However, some attendees felt that if it is iconic it should be illuminated as a structure, but these attendees appreciated that it shouldn't shine into people's homes.

## **8. Ramps**

- 8..1. If there are no ramps the crossing would be a lot less attractive to cyclists, who would have to dismount.

- 8..2. Ramp length was a big concern to many participants. The longer the ramps, the less usable they were deemed to be, especially by wheelchair users or those with buggies.
- 8..3. A major concern by attendees on both sides of the river was that the ramp length used in the reForm design was very long and not attractive.
- 8..4. As much green space should be kept as possible in Durand's Wharf, so ramps should be kept as short as possible or should oversail the river rather than the park.
- 8..5. Attendees felt that Bridge supports are often ugly, some people will be looking at them all the time from their flats. The underneath should be well designed and sympathetic to near by flats.

## **9. Green space**

- 9..1. Greening the landing would be beneficial to help it integrate into the context of the park – this could include more planting around the landing to hide it
- 9..2. Durand's Wharf is currently used for football, Frisbee, dog walking, and these uses should be protected if possible, but it is not all required as there are other green spaces not that far away.

## **10. Lifts**

- 10..1. If there are lifts then maintenance is very important
- 10..2. Ramps, lifts and stairs are all needed. Ramps for cyclists and those with mobility issues, stairs for able bodied walkers and lifts for those who can not use the stairs. Lifts only would not be good as they could break down.

## **11. Safety and Security**

- 11..1. One of the main concerns expressed by attendees was the potential abuse of a crossing by powered two wheelers (motorbikes and mopeds). There is an existing problem in the area and some felt, without proper mitigation, a crossing might exacerbate this problem.
- 11..2. There were also concerns about the impact of the ramps on the street creating darkened spaces and overshadowing, which could lead to anti-social behaviour.
- 11..3. Residents living near to Durand's Wharf considered it sometimes unsafe at night. Measures would be needed to address this. Some felt having a lit bridge might help alleviate concerns, as it would increase footfall.



- 11..4. The riverside is already an area for various anti-social behaviours, People would not want the bridge to become an escape route for criminals.

## **User experience**

### **12. Rest points**

- 12..1. Seating on the crossing was not felt necessary by the majority of attendees.
- 12..2. However, some were of the opinion that two to three groups of benches would be useful on the bridge for older people to rest.
- 12..3. Some felt that older and disabled people would appreciate a resting point at the crossings landing points.

### **13. User interactions**

- 13..1. Many of the workshop participants thought that cyclists and pedestrians should be segregated. This was largely to ensure that pedestrians were away from cyclists traveling at speed.
- 13..2. There were a few comments expressing softer segregation, so that cyclists needing to stop or slow down had a safe area to do so. This also may help children who cycle and other vulnerable cyclists.
- 13..3. A clear distinction between pedestrian and cycling space is required but this should be soft segregation rather than hard segregation. This should be subtle – for example different colours for each lane.
- 13..4. Enough space is needed for faster cyclists to overtake slower cyclists.
- 13..5. There was no vocal support for a shared space.
- 13..6. Some people also felt we need to find a way to reduce the impact of fast cyclists.
- 13..7. Some attendees felt the cycling side should be next to Cascades, so that pedestrians do not look into people's homes.

### **14. The elements**

- 14..1. There were concerns about the levels of wind on the bridge, given it is so windy on the Thames path and on balconies of homes.
- 14..2. It needs to be useable to cyclists and pedestrians in all weathers.
- 14..3. The bridge could be covered so it could be used whatever the weather. It could also contain noise pollution from people. However there was a concern this would limit the views and make the bridge less attractive from

the outside. They were also concerned it could lead to anti-social behaviour.

### **15. Opening**

- 15..1. Residents living in Cascades would like the opening to be as quiet as possible, especially if it is going to do so at night.
- 15..2. Opening times should be kept to a minimum to avoid disruption (note comments on height).
- 15..3. The impact of the opening could be mitigated by clear guidance of opening times, via an online notice board, apps and on the ground signage.
- 15..4. If cyclists have an excessive wait before the crossing, it could affect how many cyclists use the crossing.
- 15..5. Users would need to know when the bridge is opening to avoid disruption to journeys.
- 15..6. No more than 10-15 minutes is acceptable for an opening cycle. It needs to be less than waiting for a ferry and competitive with the Tube.

## **Next Steps**

We have now established a project team to take forward the crossing and work continues to progress on developing options, surveys, demand modelling, procurement, business case development, funding, planning consents, land requirements and engagement with stakeholders.

The first public consultation on the crossing, which will seek views on different locations and design options, will be held later this year.

Further information and updates can be found on our website:

[www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/planning-for-the-future/rotherhithe-canary-wharf-crossing](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/planning-for-the-future/rotherhithe-canary-wharf-crossing)