

# **The Disbenefits of the Lower Thames Crossing**

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The Lower Thames Crossing proposal, one of the largest infrastructure projects in the southeast UK in a lifetime, has sparked significant opposition. Critics argue that the proposal is fraught with numerous drawbacks, emphasizing environmental, economic, and social concerns.

## **Environmental Impact**

One of the most pressing concerns regarding the Lower Thames Crossing is its environmental impact. The construction and operation of the crossing are expected to produce over 6 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, significantly contributing to climate change. Additionally, the project threatens to harm local wildlife, ancient woodlands, and overall air quality, creating what opponents term a “toxic triangle” of pollution. Increased traffic volumes resulting from the new road are likely to exacerbate air and noise pollution, posing serious health risks to nearby residents, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. The construction process itself is also likely to cause substantial environmental damage, including habitat destruction and fragmentation, which harms wildlife and reduces biodiversity.

## **Economic and Traffic Concerns**

The economic rationale behind the Lower Thames Crossing is also questioned. Despite the estimated £9-10 billion cost, there is scepticism about the project’s ability to deliver the promised economic benefits. Empirical studies have shown that the correlation between new road investments and economic growth is inconsistent and highly context-dependent. Critics argue that this significant investment could be better allocated to sectors such as education, healthcare, and public transportation, which not only improve quality of life but also contribute to sustainable economic growth. Moreover, the phenomenon of “induced demand” suggests that increasing road capacity often leads to higher traffic volumes, ultimately resulting in congestion levels similar to or worse than before the road was expanded. This indicates that the Lower Thames Crossing might not provide

a sustainable solution to traffic problems and could instead perpetuate the cycle of congestion and road expansion.

## **Social and Community Impact**

Socially, the Lower Thames Crossing poses significant challenges. The construction of the new road is likely to lead to the displacement of residents and businesses, disrupting local communities and dismantling social networks. Additionally, the impact on property values is uneven, with some properties potentially seeing an increase in value due to improved accessibility, while others experience a decline due to the negative externalities associated with proximity to busy roads, such as noise and air pollution. This can exacerbate social inequalities, as wealthier areas may benefit from the new infrastructure while less affluent neighbourhoods suffer the consequences.

## **Flood Risks and Safety**

The development of the Lower Thames Crossing also raises concerns about flood risks. The area is already vulnerable to rising sea levels and heavy rainfall, and the construction of the new road could exacerbate these risks. Increased impermeable surfaces from the road construction can lead to higher runoff rates, potentially increasing the likelihood and severity of flooding in the area. This not only poses a direct threat to properties and infrastructure but also has broader implications for environmental sustainability and community safety.

## **Insufficient Alternatives**

Critics of the Lower Thames Crossing argue that there are insufficient alternatives to address congestion and transportation needs. Investing in public transportation, for instance, could provide a more effective way to reduce congestion and lower emissions while offering accessible mobility options for all residents. Urban planning that encourages walking, cycling, and the use of green spaces can enhance the quality of life and promote healthier, more vibrant communities.

Additionally, a road-based alternative, the Dartford Expressway, was proposed by opponents as a viable solution. This alternative aimed to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion without the extensive environmental and social impacts of the

Lower Thames Crossing. However, National Highways discarded this option, a decision that has been met with criticism from those who believe it was a more practical and less damaging solution.

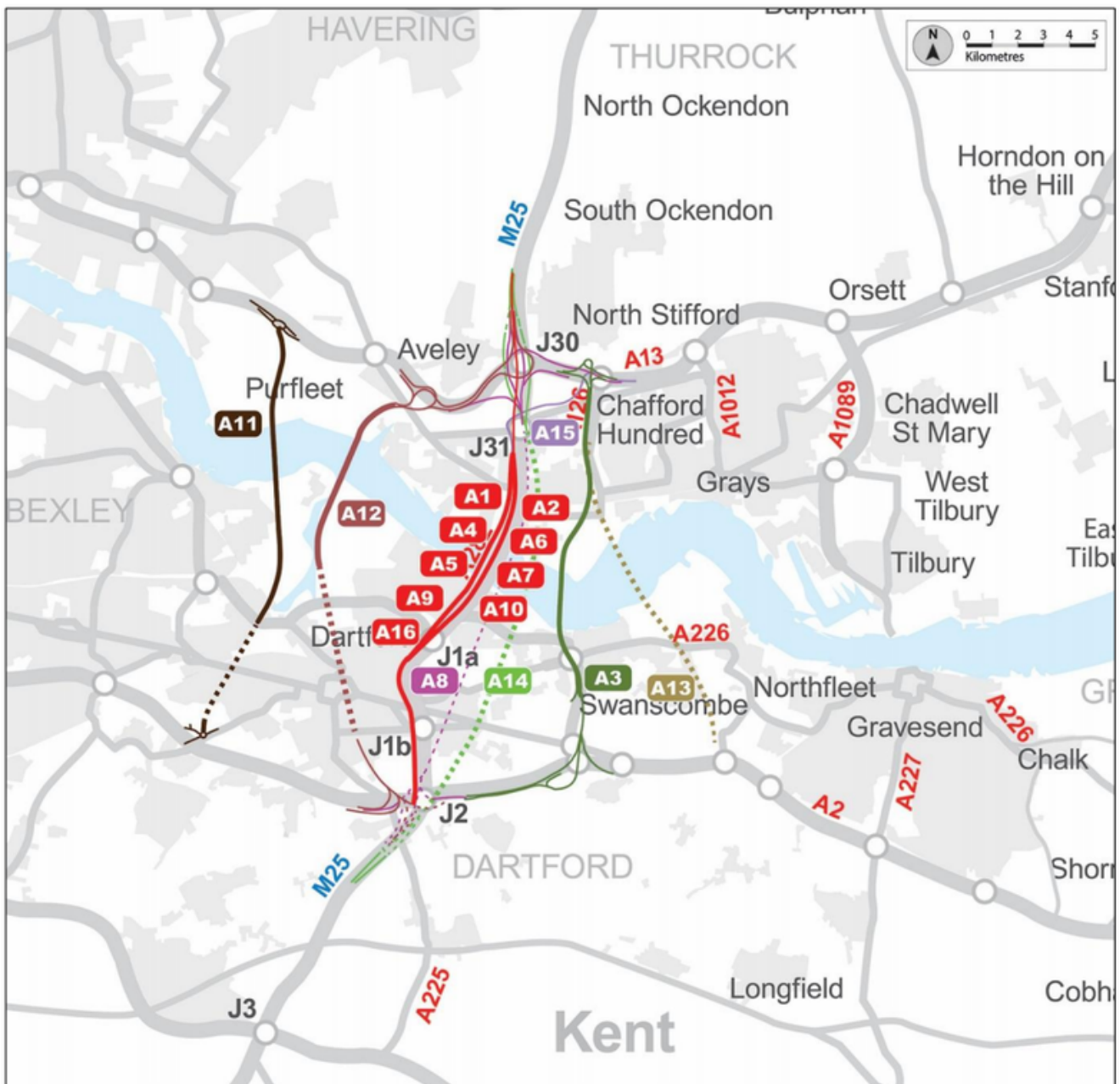


FIGURE 3.1 - LOCATION A - ALL ROUTE OPTIONS



By exploring and prioritizing these sustainable transportation solutions and reconsidering viable road-based alternatives, it is possible to achieve long-term benefits for all members of society, ensuring a healthier and more equitable future.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Lower Thames Crossing proposal presents several significant disbenefits. The anticipated economic growth is often elusive, the intended relief from congestion is temporary at best, and the environmental and social costs are substantial. Given these drawbacks, it is imperative to consider alternative approaches that are more sustainable and equitable. By redirecting focus towards sustainable transportation solutions, it is possible to foster economic development that is both robust and environmentally and socially responsible. It is crucial to move forward with policies that prioritize long-term benefits for all members of society, ensuring a healthier and more equitable future.

For more detailed information, visit the [Thames Crossing Action Group website](#) and the [Lower Thames Crossing Association website](#). You can also read about the broader disbenefits of new road investment on [No Bull Politics](#).