

A new river crossing between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf

Sustrans' response to Transport for London

About Sustrans

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

We are engineers and educators, experts and advocates. We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Sustrans works in partnership, bringing people together to find the right solutions. We make the case for walking and cycling by using robust evidence and showing what can be done. We are grounded in communities and believe that grassroots support combined with political leadership drives real change, fast.

Summary

Sustrans strongly supports proposals for a river crossing between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf, specifically a navigable bridge on either the Central or Northern Alignments.

With the level of growth expected to take place in east London – both in terms of jobs and housing – a new crossing at this location is desperately needed, with the Hilton ferry remaining prohibitively expensive, the Greenwich Foot Tunnel overcrowded, inconvenient and unwelcoming and the Rotherhithe Tunnel dangerous and polluted. A bridge tying into local infrastructure improvements such as Cycle Superhighway 3 and 4 is vital to help unlock new journeys by foot and cycle, and support the Mayor's aim for 80% of Londoners' trips to be on foot, by cycle or by public transport by 2041.

Overall proposals

Sustrans strongly supports a crossing at this location, which would address a number of the needs of the local area and London as a whole. These include the increased growth in cycling, the projected employment growth in the area, the expected population growth, and the lack of appropriate or sufficient infrastructure to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians wishing to cross the river.

- London is set to grow by 2.5 million by 2030, with a third of that growth taking place in the east.
- The lack of crossings accessible to pedestrians and cyclists in the east of London causes the river to be a significant obstacle, suppressing everyday active travel and walking and cycling demand. Crossings which do exist either have significant barriers or have reached their capacity. The Jubilee line is already one of the most crowded tube lines in London, and with the expected increases in demand over the coming decades it will remain so.
- This crossing will connect homes and jobs where existing infrastructure is struggling to cope. The number of jobs on the Isle of Dogs is planned to double, while the

number of homes on Rotherhithe is planned to increase dramatically, including 6,000 new homes in Canada water.

Crossing Options

Sustrans strongly supports TfL's preferred option of a navigable bridge, which would deliver the most benefits for London. A bridge will kick-start better cycle connectivity on either side of the river, and will directly encourage more people to cycle and walk in the local area, supporting the Mayor's aim for 80% of Londoners' trips to be on foot, by cycle or by public transport by 2041.

- A bridge will make cycling or walking the quickest and most pleasant option to cross the river. The bridge will get Londoners active and help reduce air pollution with zero harmful emissions
- TfL's Strategic Cycling Analysis identified this as a route from Peckham to Canary Wharf which would directly encourage more cycling.
- Alternatives such as a ferry would not provide the same level of service or journey time savings as a bridge. It would therefore not unlock the same benefits as a bridge, of supporting growth across London, relieving pressure on the jubilee line, and delivering journeys free of air pollution.
- A bridge will make big journey time reductions for people on foot, on bikes or using mobility aids, helping Londoners live healthy lives, save time and save money
- Trialling an enhanced ferry ahead of making a decision on a bridge does not make economic sense. A ferry will have high initial costs for the piers, access, and vessels, and would not help to demonstrate the case for a bridge as it would not be able to unlock journeys in the same way as a ferry.
- A bridge would be accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, providing a reliable crossing option most likely to encourage an increase in walking and cycling trips.
- Modelling by TfL suggests that, with future growth and development in the local area, by 2031 more than two million pedestrian and cyclist journey every year are expected to be made using the bridge. This would be good for Londoners' health, good for the city and good for business.

Crossing Location

Sustrans:

- Supports the Northern Alignment. The Northern alignment would land on Westferry Circus on the northern bank, which being at a higher ground level, may mean a shorter, easier access ramp on one side. There is a concern, however, that there would be objection by key stakeholders.
- Strongly Supports the Central Alignment. The Central alignment appears the best possible option for a strategically located link from Rotherhithe to Canary Wharf. It creates an optimum crossing point; meets the needs of river traffic and has sufficient space at the landing sites for access ramps and for construction.
- Strongly opposes the Southern Alignment. The Southern alignment is inappropriate due to the lack of space for ramps on the Isle of Dogs, therefore relying on a lift for access. This lack of space would also lead to crowding at peak times, discouraging use. It is also the least aligned with the preferred crossing corridor.

Bridge height

Sustrans supports a lower bridge, but only if this can be coupled with improvements to river navigation to reduce the number of times a bridge would have to open, and concentrate bridge openings outside peak times.

- The bridge needs to be low enough to be easily accessible with cycle ramps, stairs and a lift, but also to accommodate different types and sizes of ship using the river.
- In the current circumstances, and with a deck height of 20m above mean high water springs, a navigable bridge would allow the majority of river vessels to pass underneath without opening, and on average would have to open a maximum of 4 times per day. A bridge at this height would therefore bring the benefit of fewer openings and less disruption to journeys.
- A lower bridge, however, would require shorter/shallower access ramps or fewer steps, making it more accessible to all users (and therefore encourage use), as well as having less of a visual impact on the local neighbourhoods
- We believe that if the Port of London Authority can improve navigational efficiencies on the river, and minimise the number of bridge openings, this would provide the best level of service to users.

Bridge design

Sustrans considers all the following bridge design aspects as important:

- Access to the bridge deck (by ramps, lifts, stairs or other means)
- Accessibility and inclusivity for all types of user
- Architectural design and materials
- Bridge height (height of the deck for users)
- Bridge height (overall height of the structure/towers)
- Bridge opening system
- Construction impacts
- Environmental impacts
- Onward journey connections
- Opening time frequencies
- Opening time length
- Operation and maintenance of the bridge
- Safety and security
- Segregation between cyclists and pedestrians
- Urban realm and landscaping around the bridge landing sites
- Width of the bridge deck

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