

This response to the Lower Lea Crossing consultation is from **Newham Cyclists**, the local borough group of the London Cycling Campaign (LCC). We are a grassroots volunteer group who exist to help all kinds of people access cycling as a cheap, accessible, and convenient form of transport.

### **We neither support nor oppose these proposals.**

The changes are minimal and don't deliver transformative change to make walking and cycling direct and convenient.

For people walking or cycling to City Hall on the Lower Lea Crossing, the proposed scheme is not enough to mitigate the impact of the Silvertown Tunnel, a 1960s-quality urban motorway project that should not have been approved.

## **ASPEN WAY ROUNDABOUT**

No substantial changes are proposed to the layout of Aspen Way Roundabout, a large & intimidating roundabout with 3 lanes of traffic, and a radius of about 50 m which invites speeding. It isn't an inviting or pleasant place to walk or cycle.

The scheme proposes to:

- **Convert the two existing toucan crossings of Aspen Way into signalised pedestrian and cycle crossings.**
  - We support this element of the proposals.
- **Convert the uncontrolled crossings of Blackwall Way into toucan crossings**, and adjust the kerblines to reduce entry to Blackwall Way to one lane.
  - **It is unclear why these crossings are staggered toucan crossings rather than separate signalised pedestrian and cycle crossings, like the crossings of East India Dock Road/Aspen Way.** There is plenty of space to provide a separated track. Shared areas should be avoided as they are inconvenient for cyclists and intimidating for pedestrians, particularly those with sensory impairments and who are less mobile.
  - While the principles of signalising the crossings are sound, we are concerned that this adds **an additional level of delay** for those cycling from Cycleway 3 towards the Royal Docks.

- Ultimately those crossing the roundabout between Cycleway 3 and Lower Lea Crossing will need to wait **4 times** at red lights. This compares unfavourably to the experience of those driving, who typically won't have to wait more than twice.

We are concerned that:

- **No changes are proposed to the other arms of the roundabout on Leamouth Road or Silvocea Way.** On the north side of the roundabout, developments such as Orchard Wharf remain isolated from the cycle network by virtue of there being no crossings on these roundabout arms (there is not even a dropped kerb on the crossing of Leamouth Road.) Heading into London via Cycleway 3 from these premises involves an indirect detour the long way round the roundabout. Under the new scheme it will involve waiting at traffic lights **6 times**.
- **The geometry of the Aspen Way roundabout continues to invite speeding.** The posted speed limit according to signs and painted roundels may be 20mph, but it is ultimately a high-capacity 3-lane roundabout with geometry that allows speeding.
- At busy times, or if there is some kind of blockage (for instance in the Silvertown Tunnel or on Aspen Way) traffic could back up over the crossings, making them unsafe or unusable. This is evident at other places where cycle tracks dance across busy gyratories prone to standstill traffic (e.g. Cycleway 3 from Parliament Square onto Great George Street.)
- **The issue of the roundabout being an unpleasant place to walk and cycle has not been addressed.** Indeed, with the opening of the Silvertown Tunnel, traffic volumes here will increase significantly.

**At junctions like this, best practice would be to build an underpass or overpass for people walking and cycling.** There are no kerbside activities or premises to access on the south side of the roundabout; grade separation would improve safety by eliminating the possibility of collisions, and also reduce delay for all modes.

We suggest the following changes to the proposed design:

- **Before construction: Change the crossing of Blackwall Way to a separated pedestrian and cycle crossing.** This would be consistent with the crossing of Aspen Way.
  - Potentially, the crossing of the northbound carriageway could be a priority crossing as opposed to a signalised crossing, to reduce waiting times.

- **Before construction: Add crossings for walking and cycling on the northern arms of this roundabout at Leamouth Road and Silvocea Way.** This would:
  - connect the newly active premises at Orchard Wharf to the cycle network with a more direct route to Cycleway 3 to central London
  - offer an opportunity to re-route Cycleway 3 via Bow Creek. This would eliminate the awkward 4-stage crossing at the junction of East India Dock Road, and provide a less polluted, more comfortable, and more socially safe route which is attractive to a wider range of people.
- **Come up with a plan to grade-separate active travel at this junction in the medium term (next 10 years.)** Possible models could be the Green Man Roundabout in Leytonstone (where people walking and cycling use wide, landscaped underpasses) or the many cycling overpasses of countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark.

## LOWER LEA CROSSING

The Lower Lea Crossing is a flyover connecting Aspen Way Roundabout to Tidal Basin Roundabout (the entrance point for the new Silvertown Tunnel.) It is a concrete flyover with a design that suggests a motorway interchange. That said, people walking and cycling are separated from motor traffic, and the cycle track is well-used.

The proposals are to:

- **Convert the crossing of the slip road from Orchard Place onto Lower Lea Crossing into a priority parallel pedestrian and cycle crossing,** with an additional kerb buildout.
  - We support this element of the proposals.
  - We do note that the geometry and character of the area will still be that of a motorway slip road. Drivers may be focusing more on matching speed with traffic on the main road rather than watching for people they are supposed to give way to.
  - It is not clear why the cycle track is not continuous through the crossing, and disappears into a short shared area beforehand.
- **Widen the footway and cycleway,** and **remove the barrier** instead separating the carriageway from the cycleway with a raised kerb.
  - We support the widening and full separation of the cycleway and footway.



- **But we are concerned that removing a barrier between a multi-lane carriageway and the cycleway will contribute to a reduced feeling of safety**, while not significantly improving pedestrian or cyclist amenity. Simply put, people will have no reason to cross a flyover.
- **We are concerned about the possibility of drivers speeding and accidentally mounting the cycle track or pavement** at quieter times; **or deliberately mounting the cycle track to park or to bypass standing traffic** at busier times.
- We highlight that as per Local Transport Note 1/20, **the desirable minimum separation between a carriageway and cycle track on a 30mph road is 0.5m.**<sup>1</sup>
- **We also highlight that the proposed changes will not remove the bridge parapets or barriers on the edges of the bridge spans.** Ultimately, the character of the Lower Lea Crossing will still be that of a hostile trunk road designed for cars—not a “healthy street” by any reasonable definition of the word.

We suggest the following changes to the proposed design:

- **Make the cycle track continuous** through the crossing of the slip road from Orchard Place.
- **Build the crossing on a hump** as an additional feature to nudge those driving into giving people cycling and walking their legal priority.
- **Add an additional dividing feature** to the kerb separating the cycleway from the carriageway. In an ideal world this would be some kind of green infrastructure, although this may be contraindicated by the weight limits on the bridge. At the very minimum, some bollards would be appropriate to visually indicate to drivers that the cycle track is not another lane for them, and give reassurance to those cycling.

## **LIMMO ACCESS BRIDGE CROSSOVER & TIDAL BASIN ROUNDABOUT**

**In this section we discuss crossovers of the cycle track, and also the design of the Tidal Basin Roundabout being delivered by Riverlinx as part of the**

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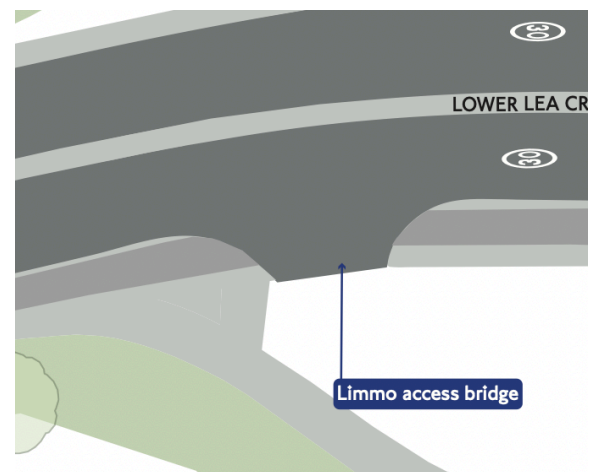
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<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ffa1f96d3bf7f65d9e35825/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf> LTN 1/20 pp 54

**Silvertown Tunnel scheme. We understand that the Tidal Basin Roundabout is beyond the scope of this consultation (in fact, we have not been consulted on the design for it at all.) However, we believe it is pertinent as this is what the Lower Lea Crossing scheme connects to on its east end, and so those hoping to use the consulted scheme to head to City Hall or the Royal Docks will then need to navigate it.**

We note the proposed interruption to the footway and cycle track for the Limmo access bridge.

Priority arrangements are not explicitly indicated in the consultation material. We are concerned that service vehicles entering this access bridge will do so at speed and without giving way to people walking and cycling. Such vehicles are likely to be large, and potentially carrying industrial material. Larger vehicles may well also have worse visibility, even where they conform to the Direct Vision standard.



We suspect, having obtained the detailed designs and a report from Riverlinx on the design of Tidal Basin Roundabout<sup>2</sup> that the intention is the footway and cycleway will **not** have priority at this crossover, likely with deference to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, a motorway design manual which prioritises motor traffic throughput and speed to the detriment of those walking & cycling.<sup>3</sup>

**We do not consider this appropriate for the key cycle link from City Hall and the Royal Docks to central London.** Junctions of this design—where those walking and cycling are expected to give way, and often with compromised visibility—are known to be dangerous. Less than one mile away from this scheme is North Woolwich Road, which, until it was rebuilt as part of the Royal Docks Corridor scheme, had a two-way cycle track that ceded priority to side roads which were heavily trafficked by service and construction vehicles. This

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<https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/transparency/freedom-of-information/foi-request-detail?referenceId=FOI-3333-2324>

<sup>3</sup> Riverlinx CJV Silvertown Tunnel Landscape Report pp 77: “The opportunity to give cyclist [sic] priority [over the DLR side access] was reviewed and levels of use confirmed in respect of the DLR access requirements and frequency. The outcomes of which coupled with the requirements of DMRB trunk roads negates this opportunity.” pp 78: “Proposed crossing point [of Scarab Close and Dock Road] gives priority to vehicles due to visibility.”

was where 32-year-old Benjamin Wales was killed in 2017: his cycle slipped on mud tracked in by construction vehicles, and he was then struck by a lorry.<sup>4</sup>

We suggest that:

- **At a bare minimum, there must be very clear markings on the crossovers of the Limmo access bridge—symbols, coloured surfacing, and signage—to indicate to drivers that they are crossing a cycle track and footway, and must anticipate people walking and cycling.** Under the Highway Code, drivers are supposed to give way when turning anyway.
- Within the constraints of an “urban motorway” type design prescribed by DMRB, we **insist** that all measures possible are taken to warn drivers of servicing vehicles that they need to look out for vulnerable road users.

**We also wish to highlight these points about the design for the Tidal Basin Roundabout and associated roads, which this scheme deposits people into:**

- The Silvertown Tunnel scheme provides a walking and cycling route from Lower Lea Crossing to Western Gateway which involves **3 separate staggered toucan crossings**, which is likely to cause unacceptable delay for those walking & cycling and encourage risk taking. Toucan crossings and shared footways are not preferred as they introduce conflicts between those walking and cycling. **Parallel signalised crossings and continuous cycle tracks would have been more appropriate.**
- The Silvertown Tunnel scheme rebuilds Dock Road (for a connection to North Woolwich Road) with a section of cycle track that **disappears into a 2.0-metre wide shared footway. This is not in line with LTN 1/20**, which recommends a minimum width of 3.0 metres for a shared footway with 300 or fewer cyclists per hour. **There is no excuse for this constraint given that Dock Road is being specifically realigned for the Silvertown Tunnel project.**
- Like the Limmo access crossover, the design **has the cycle track on Dock Road cede priority to motor traffic at servicing entrances**—despite Dock Road very clearly not being a trunk road in nature, and the fact drivers of vehicles turning into servicing entrances should be slowing down anyway.
- The scheme provides a walking and cycling route from Dock Road to Western Gateway which involves **5 separate staggered toucan crossings**, which will cause unacceptable delay for those walking & cycling

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<https://www.newhamrecorder.co.uk/news/crime/21428642.muddy-road-contributed-erith-cyclists-death-silvertown-commute-inquest-finds/>

and encourage risk taking. Toucan crossings and shared footways are not preferred as they introduce conflicts between those walking and cycling; staggers are awkward and difficult to navigate, particularly for less experienced cyclists, wheelchair users, and pedestrians pushing prams or trolleys. **Parallel signalised crossings and continuous cycle tracks would have been more appropriate.**

**As with the Aspen Way roundabout, we believe that the Tidal Basin Roundabout would have been an ideal candidate for grade-separating active travel from motor traffic,** particularly in light of the increased traffic volumes that will result from the Silvertown Tunnel scheme. TfL should investigate this as a medium-term aspiration in the next 10 years.

## CONCLUSION

**The proposed changes to Lower Lea Crossing and Aspen Way roundabout are piecemeal and underwhelming. They will not deliver any transformational change to the area, nor to the areas it connects.** The impression is of an afterthought, and tinkering around the edges. The crossings remain indirect and dependent on large shared areas. Excessive waiting times will continue to reward people who take risks. Developments in areas untouched by this scheme (such as the north arms of Aspen Way roundabout) will remain marooned from the wider cycle network.

**Ultimately, our biggest concern in the area remains the Silvertown Tunnel, an urban motorway project whose primary beneficiaries will be car drivers who don't live in Newham, and motorised haulage operators.** This will considerably increase motor traffic on the Lower Lea Crossing, making it noisier, dirtier, and less pleasant to cycle than it already is. **The proposed scheme does nothing substantial to mitigate these adverse effects.** In fact, by reducing the separation between the cycleway and the carriageway, at a time when traffic volumes will be increasing, it may make walking and cycling *less* appealing.

Stupendous amounts of money were available through the PPP scheme to deliver the Silvertown Tunnel. **We are disappointed and frustrated at the lack of ambition,** both in the consulted scheme and at the Tidal Basin Roundabout, to make genuine, meaningful improvements to allow people to walk and cycle.

**We hoped we could expect better from what should be a flagship scheme connecting Central London and City Hall.** However, in the context of TfL's and Riverlinx's attitude to non-car travel through the entire Silvertown Tunnel process—refusing to consider a pedestrian & cycle bore; proposing a desultory

'cycle bus' service; suggesting the weather-prone, tourist-oriented, and ruinously expensive cable car as a viable cycle crossing; severing the cycle link to City Hall during construction; and cutting the bus provision through the tunnel from the modelled 37 buses per hour to the proposed 20, many of which won't even stop in Newham—we find this lack of ambition as unsurprising as it is disappointing.

**There is no excuse for a new motorway tunnel in 2024. Marginally widening one cycle track and tweaking existing crossings will not change this.**

**We neither support nor oppose these proposals.**

The changes are minimal and don't deliver transformative change to make walking and cycling direct and convenient.

For people walking or cycling to City Hall on the Lower Lea Crossing, the proposed scheme is not enough to mitigate the impact of the Silvertown Tunnel, a 1960s-quality urban motorway project that should not have been approved.