### EIA Quality Mark Case Study

**Silvertown Tunnel**

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| Transport for London (TfL) has been granted a Development Consent Order (DCO) by the Department for Transport to deliver the Silvertown Tunnel, a new road tunnel under the Thames in east London, after an Arcadis Environmental Impact Assessment. Because of the strategic significance of the scheme it was designated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, which meant they needed to get consent for the scheme under the Planning Act 2008. We had experience of working under this planning regime so were able to undertake their environmental studies while giving them the confidence that we would meet the very specific requirements of the regime. We undertook the environmental assessments and supported TfL through their statutory consultation process. We prepared an Environmental Statement and other supporting documents that formed part of their Development Consent Order Application, and then supported them through and beyond the examination process, preparing written responses, fielding expert witnesses at the Examination Hearings (similar to Public Inquiry), and preparing further modelling work following the examination to respond to the Planning Inspectorate’s further questions specifically related to the updated UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentration. | The new tunnel will:  
  - Reduce the impact of unplanned incidents at the Blackwall Tunnel by providing a nearby alternative route  
  - Cut down on queuing at the Blackwall Tunnel and approach roads  
  - Include user charging at the Blackwall and Silvertown Tunnels to manage demand and provide a source of revenue to help build and maintain the new tunnel  
  - Provide an opportunity to create new cross-river bus links in east London  
  - Improve road connections to and from Docklands and east London from South London  
  - Improve journey times and make travel, deliveries and servicing more reliable  
The tunnel will also create opportunities for new jobs in the local area, help local employers to access new markets and reduce the environmental impact of traffic congestion. |

### Description of the project:

The Silvertown Tunnel will connect to the A1020 Silvertown Way/Lower Lea Crossing on the north side and to the A102 Blackwall Tunnel Approach on the south side. The tunnel generally follows the alignment of the Emirates Air Line cable car.
### EIA Learning Outcomes

**Lessons learnt:**

We all agree that the best part of the project was the collaborative working one-team approach, that happened not by design, but because everyone on the project seemed to be able to put their egos and personal/company agendas aside and work towards the common goal of achieving the DCO.

There were multiple technical challenges, including complex negotiation on managing effects on air quality.

Air quality was a major consideration throughout the DCO application process, at a time when air quality was finally being recognised as a serious threat to public health rather than an environmental problem. The scheme application was progressed with the backdrop of the VW emissions scandal and the various Client Earth challenges to Defra’s air quality plans for achievement of Limit Values set by the EU. In late 2017, the SoS delayed the application decision on the grounds of air quality owing to the imminent release of new emissions projections from the government and the updated Defra Air Quality Plan [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017).

This was the first time a DCO application decision had been delayed solely due to concerns over air quality. This underlined the substantial weight that air quality now commands in the DCO process.

**Lessons learnt continued:**

It is unlikely that there has ever been a more stringent set of voluntary conditions attached to a DCO in relation to air quality than that which was proposed by the project team (including Arcadis/TfL) to ensure that air quality is both monitored and mitigated should the scheme deliver impacts materially different from those presented in the application. There are a number of elements to the conditions attached in the DCO, including the two outlined below:

1. A reassessment of the air quality impacts is to be undertaken prior to the operational phase of the scheme. This was to ensure that the most up to date information including traffic and air quality information is used to ensure that the opening year charging tariff is set at a level which leads to the same impacts and conclusions as reached in the environmental statement i.e. the scheme does not lead to a significant impact on air quality.

And

2. A comprehensive program of air quality monitoring is undertaken to pre and post opening to assess the real impact of the scheme on air quality.

The full conditions are laid out in the DCO under requirement 7 which references the monitoring and mitigation strategy that was developed in pre-application to ensure that air quality is still as an important a consideration as it was during the DCO.

To the best of our knowledge, no other road scheme has made a set of commitments as substantial as those which accompany the Silvertown Tunnel application. The commitments serve to provide assurances that air quality will still be considered following consent and that where material issues are identified, that they are effectively mitigated in the operational phase.

### Contact details

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