New Mersey Crossing Consultation – Stage Two

Final Report

Prepared for
Gifford and Partners

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Primary Author: Joanne Christensen

Other Author(s):

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Summary

Introduction

Halton Borough Council and the Mersey Crossing Group believe that a new Mersey crossing in Halton is essential as a solution to the problems of the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

The main objectives of a New Mersey Crossing are:

- To relieve the Silver Jubilee Bridge;
- To maximise development opportunities;
- To improve public transport links across the river; and
- To encourage the increased use of cycling and walking.

In July 2001, the Mersey Crossing Group appointed Gifford and Partners as Project Manager and Lead Consultant to undertake studies necessary to take the project forward. This included a comprehensive environmental impact assessment (EIA) to inform decisions on the preferred route option and bridge form, as well as detailed design work.

An important component of the EIA is to consult with relevant stakeholders including local residents, businesses, travellers, regional partners, local authorities, transport providers and user groups, environmental interests and Statutory Bodies. Effective consultation will ensure a scheme is developed which is widely acceptable.

The consultation process has been carried out in defined stages. Stage One focused on current perceptions of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and travel needs. This has now been reported (New Mersey Crossing Consultation – Stage One). The report details: current use of the bridge; problems using the bridge and their impacts; suggested improvements to the bridge; support for a new crossing; expectations and potential impacts of a new crossing;
and initial perceptions on a number of possible crossing options. However, the selection of a preferred route was not an objective at this stage.

Since the completion of Stage One, detailed research has provided an assessment of the impact of each of the route options. Stage Two therefore concentrated on detailed discussions of the routes, including: probable impacts; advantages; disadvantages; and preferred routes.

The main aim of Stage Two was to quantify support for a new crossing and identify any preferred route options.

Stage Two included consultation with the local stakeholder groups identified in Stage One: residents of Halton; businesses in the region; local interest groups; and respondents from Stage One who were interested in taking part in further consultation.

Consulting Engineers and Environmentalists examined a number of options for a new crossing, some of which were suggested during the Stage One consultation. Some of the options considered did not satisfactorily meet the project objectives or were too expensive and hence were rejected. The four options below did meet the project objectives and therefore were taken forward for public consultation.

For ease of explanation and reporting, the four proposed routes were given the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 3A. With Option 1 being the proposed route closest to the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge and Options 3 and 3A being the routes furthest east from the existing bridge. The proposed route options are as follows:

- Option 1 - A new bridge between West Bank in Widnes and Runcorn Old Town alongside the Silver Jubilee Bridge;
- Option 2 - From Astmoor interchange in Runcorn to Ditton roundabout in Widnes (passing to the West of the Rhodia works);
- Option 3 - From the Central Expressway in Runcorn to Widnes Eastern by-pass (passing to the East of the Rhodia works); and
- Option 3A - From the Central Expressway in Runcorn (as Option 3) to Ditton roundabout in Widnes (passing to the West of the Rhodia works).

The map below presents the position of the proposed routes and the rejected routes (Note: T- Tunnel).
A combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques were used for the project. Initial qualitative research with the identified stakeholder groups was used to generate detailed views regarding the proposed route options. In addition, a large-scale postal survey was conducted to determine preference for a route option with a larger sample.

Residents Focus Groups

- Six focus groups were conducted with residents in areas adjacent to the route options.

- A representative from Gifford and Partners was present at all focus groups to present research findings of probable impacts of the route options, and answer any technical questions.

- Discussions focused on the different options and their expected impacts. Detailed maps of the options were presented to the respondents one at a time in random order. Initial views of each option were obtained prior to communication regarding probable impacts. Once each of the options had been discussed, respondents were asked to choose their preferred option explaining why they had made that choice. The cost of each of the options was then shared with the group, to determine the impact of cost on choice. Finally, the importance of the different impact factors were discussed and any other issues regarding a new crossing.

Business Workshops

- Lunchtime workshops were conducted with businesses in Halton affected by the proposed routes for the new crossing.

- A database of 867 business addresses in the areas directly adjacent to the proposed route options was generated.

- Invitation letters to a lunchtime workshop were sent to all addresses on the database addressed to The Manager. Three workshops were arranged, two in Runcorn and one in Widnes.
• The workshops aimed to explore the views and expectations of local businesses regarding the proposed options and their expected impacts, and identify any preferred route options.

• The format of the workshops included a presentation by a representative of Gifford and Partners. This was followed by a question and answer session. Participants were then randomly divided into two smaller groups to discuss issues in more detail.

• In total, thirty-five local businesses were represented at the workshops, with some businesses sending more than one representative. A wide range of businesses participated, ranging from large-scale international companies to local shopkeepers.

Local Stakeholder Groups Workshop

• A workshop was conducted with local interest groups from Halton and the region on Tuesday 18th February at The Halton Stadium in Widnes.

• It aimed to explore the views and expectations of local interest groups regarding the proposed options and their expected impacts, and identify any preferred route options.

• A list of 64 local stakeholders were invited, in writing, to attend the workshop. Following this invitation, many subsequently made contact by telephone, email or post to confirm their attendance or make apologies for their absence. Those who did not make contact were telephoned by a member of MVA staff to confirm their attendance.

• Eighteen stakeholders attended the workshop.

• The format of the workshop included a presentation by Project Manager Pedr Roberts of Gifford and Partners, followed by a question and answer session.

• Respondents were then randomly divided into two smaller groups to discuss issues in more detail.

Postal Survey

In addition to the qualitative research, a quantitative survey was required to measure support for a new crossing and identify stakeholders’ preferred route option(s) with a larger sample.

In order for participants to make an informed decision on the new crossing, a six-page brochure was designed. It covered the following topics:

• Why another Mersey Crossing is needed;
• The main objectives of the new crossing;
• The four route options
• Impact factors for each option;
• Other options that have been considered;
• The public consultation; and
• What happens next.
A questionnaire was designed in close consultation with Gifford and Partners with due consideration for the aims of the survey.

The questionnaire was divided into sections to cover the key themes. It was two pages long and was designed using a mixture of closed and open questions to enable essential information to be determined. It covered the following topics:

- Support for a new Mersey crossing;
- Impact factors of the proposed routes;
- The importance of the impact factors when selecting the best route for a new crossing;
- Other impact factors that should be considered for the route options;
- Additional information respondents require;
- Comments regarding other options presented in the brochure;
- Preferred option; and
- Reason for preference.

In addition, a number of questions were included to determine information about the respondent:

- How often they use the current bridge;
- Age;
- Gender;
- Type of respondent; and
- Area of residence.

In order to consult with a wide range of members of the public that would be affected by a new crossing, a number of methods of distribution were used. Firstly, brochures and questionnaires were posted to the following groups of people:

- 7762 households residing in areas directly adjacent to the proposed route options;
- 867 business premises in areas directly adjacent to the proposed route options;
- Members of Halton’s Citizen’s Panel;
- Wider travelling public that indicated their interest in further involvement during Stage One;
- Business that indicated their interest in further involvement during Stage One; and
- Members of local interest groups identified in Stage One.

In addition, brochures and questionnaires were distributed via libraries and other central locations in Halton, and Gifford and Partners organised a New Mersey Crossing exhibition in Runcorn and Widnes at which locations questionnaires were also made available. Reply paid envelopes were supplied for returning all completed questionnaires.
Research Results

Support for a new crossing

The congestion on the bridge is perceived to be extreme. It is viewed as difficult to cross, even outside of busy/rush hours and journeys involving its use are thought to be unpredictable.

Traffic congestion on the Silver Jubilee Bridge has a high impact on residents and local businesses. Employees are often late and many businesses have to plan their deliveries around peak traffic times. In addition, the bridge acts as a barrier to both residents and businesses on opposite sides of the river, making it difficult for them to socialise or work together.

Participants thought that a new bridge was needed as quickly as possible and were keen for the project to progress swiftly.

The postal survey showed strong support for a new Mersey crossing, with over nine in ten (96.5%) respondents agreeing that one is needed. The figure below shows these data. This was independent of gender, age, frequency of use of the bridge, area of residence, and group. Any differences found were small and in all cases over 90% of respondents agreed that a new crossing was needed.

![Chart showing support for a new Mersey crossing](image)

Respondents thought that it was important to free the Silver Jubilee Bridge from high levels of traffic, allowing it to be used to get from one side of the borough to the other and to encourage walking and cycling.

In general it was believed that a new bridge should be kept away from residential areas of Halton, whilst remaining near enough to still be a local crossing and beneficial to the Borough.

Option 1

Option 1 was dismissed by many of the respondents as the level of negative impact on the surrounding communities was thought to be unacceptable. There were concerns about the
lack of land nearby to build new houses for residents being relocated and thus the break-up of communities.

"People are happy here (West Bank), they've lived here all their lives, you can't just move them somewhere else. They'd have to start all over again."

In addition, noise and air pollution levels in these areas were of particular concern, and the disruption during construction was expected to be extreme.

The planned demolition of a school in West Bank was of primary concern for a number of respondents who are resident in this area. It is the only school in the area and even if another school was built, it is not expected to be within walking distance for children. This in turn was expected to have a negative impact on the number of young families moving into the area.

Furthermore, this option was not expected to improve the levels of congestion on the bridge approaches due to its use of the same link roads.

These concerns were also highlighted by the responses to the postal survey, where the majority of comments regarding Option 1 were related to the fact that it was not expected to relieve congestion problems, that there was expected to be a high impact on residential areas, and that there were concerns about its' proximity to the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

**Option 2**

The junction in Runcorn was viewed as the main drawback for Option 2, respondents thought that it would be too close to the current bridge and therefore congestion problems were expected to remain. It is also thought to be a small junction, and even with improvements, respondents were sceptical about its ability to cope with heavy traffic.

It was also recognised that Option 2 would not have direct access to Astmoor industrial estate and this was expected to cause confusion for industrial vehicles.

In addition, there were concerns about the proximity of Option 2 to residential areas in Widnes.

Once again responses to the postal survey suggested that Option 2 would not relieve existing congestion problems.

**Option 3**

The main benefit of Option 3 was thought to be the junction in Runcorn, as this was expected to allow easy access to the M56 via junctions 11 or 12.

Option 3 was also expected to be less disruptive to residents, being further away from residential areas than Options 1 and 2.

However, there were some concerns about the junction for Option 3 in Widnes. This is already perceived to be a complicated and busy junction, with high accident statistics. The effect of extra traffic, even with a change in traffic light priorities, was expected to cause further congestion and an increase in accidents.

The response to Option 3 from the postal survey was generally positive. However, there were some concerns regarding environmental impact and some respondents thought that traffic would still be congested.
Option 3A

Once again, the Runcorn junction for Option 3A was expected to allow easy access to the M56 via junctions 11 and 12. It was also thought to link in well with other road systems and could have good links with public transport.

There were some concerns about the junction in Widnes, as this appeared to be complicated to some of the respondents in the qualitative phase. However, when it was explained that the bridge traffic would flow over the junction, and not have to stop at Ditton roundabout, it was not thought to be an issue.

Option 3A, unlike Options 2 and 3, was also expected to stop through traffic between Liverpool and the M56 from using the Silver Jubilee Bridge, as the junctions would make it easier for the traffic to flow onto and off the new bridge.

This option produced mainly positive comments from the postal survey, however it did highlight concerns about congestion at Ditton roundabout in Widnes.

Impact Factors

The impact of a new crossing on traffic congestion was considered to be of prime importance. A road and bridge network that encourages traffic flow, minimises standing traffic and keeps heavy traffic away from the town centres was considered ideal. The need to consider increases in traffic levels in the future when selecting a route was highlighted.

Respondents also thought that it was important to attract a high percentage of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge. This would allow it to be used for local traffic, public transport and cyclists.

In addition, the impact of a new crossing on local communities was considered to be important. Respondents believe that the best option for a new crossing would be the one that caused the least impact to residential areas, with noise and air pollution being of primary concern.

"The environment does matter, of course it does. But we need to improve Runcorn Old Town, there are fewer children being born, less people moving into the area and we have to turn this around. We need to improve job prospects and market it as a nice place to live, open up new businesses and attract young families."

Preferred Option

Focus Groups

Three-quarters of the focus group respondents preferred Option 3A. This was mainly due to the fact that it was thought to have better junctions than the other options, allowing traffic to flow on and off the bridge. In addition, it was expected to have a low impact on residential areas and attract a high percentage of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

Business Workshops

The majority of the business people also preferred Option 3A. This was expected to cause the least congestion both during and after construction, due to the nature of the approach and exit roads.

A few of the respondents preferred Option 3, due to the distance of the Widnes junction from the Silver Jubilee Bridge. However, they were concerned about the nature of the junction in Widnes and respondents believed that modifications would be required if congestion was to be avoided.
Local Stakeholder Group Workshop

All but one of the local stakeholders preferred Option 3A. This was expected to have the best road links for through traffic and the best public transport links for Halton traffic. Junctions on the approach and exit roads of this option were expected to allow through traffic to flow freely, thereby limiting congestion in the town centres.

However, it was acknowledged that Option 3A would limit access to the river on the North Bank, in an area currently used by Fiddler’s Ferry Sailing Club.

Postal Survey

Results from the postal survey show that Options 3 and 3A are the most preferred route options independent of gender, age, frequency of use of the current bridge, area of residence, and respondent type. Over four in ten respondents preferred Option 3, and three in ten preferred Option 3A. This is shown in the figure below.

![Bar chart showing preference for different options]

The respondents who preferred Option 3 stated the expected improvements in traffic flow and ease in congestion, the good road connections, easy access to the M56 and low impact on local communities as their main reasons for choice.

Respondents who preferred Option 3A gave the same reasons for their selection.

The difference in preference between Option 3 and 3A may be attributed to the junctions in Widnes. Respondents of the postal survey had concerns about the junction at Ditton roundabout for Option 3A, however, respondents in the focus groups and workshops who had the advantage of more detailed plans did not expect congestion problems at this junction.

Key Findings

Support for a new crossing

It is clear from the consultation that respondents are supportive of a new crossing. Congestion problems on the current bridge have a great impact on residents and
businesses in the Borough of Halton, and improvement is vital. In addition, the bridge also acts as a barrier to both residents and businesses on opposite sides of the river, making it difficult for them to socialise and work together.

Impact Factors

Communication of the detailed information regarding the route options and expected impact factors has been key to the success of this research, as it has allowed respondents to make an informed decision.

Respondents involved in the focus groups, workshops and survey are in agreement that the major impact factors that should be considered when deciding on the best route for a new crossing are:

- Improving congestion;
- Decreasing the level of traffic using the Silver Jubilee Bridge; and
- Disruption to residents and local communities.

Rejected Options

Option 1 has been rejected by the majority of respondents due to the expected negative impact on the local community and local businesses. Option 2 was also generally rejected as it is not expected to resolve the congestion problems. Less than one in ten respondents selected Option 1 as their preferred choice and just over one in ten selected Option 2.

Preferred Options

Respondents who took part in the qualitative stage of this consultation (focus groups and workshops) are clearly in favour of Option 3A. However, results from the survey indicate that Option 3 is the favoured route, followed by Option 3A.

This difference in opinion can be explained by the different stimulus materials supplied to the respondents. Respondents taking part in the qualitative stage of the research were shown detailed maps of the areas under discussion in addition to expected impact factors. Thus, they were able to examine the junctions for the route options carefully and make a considered judgement based on all available information. Respondents completing the survey were supplied with the list of expected impact factors and a map showing the overall placement of the routes but not specific junctions.

The reason that many of the survey respondents selected Option 3 as their preferred route appears to be the fact that the junction in Widnes is expected to be less of a problem than the junction for Option 3A. The Widnes junction for Option 3A is thought to involve the negotiation of Ditton roundabout and therefore expected to be problematic. However, the detailed maps show that traffic heading in the direction of Liverpool would not be directed onto Ditton roundabout, rather, it would be directed straight onto Speke Road.

This research indicates that Halton Borough Council can expect to secure public support for a new crossing at either Option 3 or Option 3A. However, if the Council select Option 1 or Option 2 it will need to clearly communicate its reasons and have strong reasons for its choice. Option 1, in particular, will not be a popular choice.

Impact on local residents

The impact that Option 1 would have on the communities of West Bank and Runcorn Old Town was of major concern. A new bridge was expected to create an increase in traffic levels in the area and therefore unacceptable levels of noise and air pollution. Respondents were concerned about the levels of stress that a new crossing would create and the effect
on the community’s health. Furthermore, residents who live close to the route for the new bridge, but whose homes would remain, were particularly worried about the devaluation of their properties.

Although the main concerns regarding impact on local residents focused on Option 1, respondents also raised concerns about the other options. Option 2 was expected to have a negative impact on residential areas on both sides of the river, particularly during construction. The worries expressed included: health (air and noise pollution); safety (children playing in the vicinity of industrial traffic); and accidents.

Options 3 and 3A were both though to be further away from residential areas than Options 1 and 2. However, there was expected to be an increase in noise and air pollution for residents in the Castlefields area of Runcorn as traffic on the Central Expressway increased. This was expected to be of most concern during construction. A negative effect on house prices in this area was also highlighted.

The Widnes junction for Option 3A, although in a similar position, was not expected to have the same impact as Option 2. The detailed maps showed that the route for Option 3A does not bring traffic as close to residential areas as for Option 2. In addition, respondents also thought that most of the traffic would be travelling straight across the junction without having to stop at traffic lights or a roundabout and therefore there would be less standing traffic causing problems.

Impact on local businesses

Some of the businesses represented at the workshops would be severely affected by the construction of a new crossing, particularly by Options 3 and 3A. They stressed how important it is for Halton Borough Council to keep them informed about the project, and that as soon as detailed information is available the Council should share it with them. Larger businesses in particular will require adequate planning time to prepare for any necessary relocation.

Although the respondents accepted that some business relocation would probably be necessary, they were concerned that the Council needed to give the process due importance and provide adequate support and monetary aid.

Other considerations

Respondents stressed how important it was to consider the traffic network for the whole region when planning a new crossing. They believe that improvements will need to be made to the link roads between the new bridge and the motorways (M56 and M62), if congestion in the area is to be avoided.

Consideration of the links with public transport when selecting a route option was also thought to important by respondents. Furthermore, a number of the stakeholders believed that an LRT system should be included in the bridge plans.

Future Consultation

Once a decision on a new crossing has been made, future consultation will be required regarding the exact design and functionality of the new bridge. In addition, this process will aid in early identification of the impacts on the surrounding areas, based on knowledge of the defined plans. All of the proposed routes are expected to have an impact on residents and businesses in the Borough especially during construction.

It is recommended that a detailed model is used for this consultation in order to generate a realistic response.
In addition, as this initiative progresses it is vital that the residents and businesses of Halton are kept informed, and where possible involved in the decision making process.
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Halton Borough Council and the Merseyside region are heavily dependent on the existing Runcorn – Widnes (Silver Jubilee) bridge. But it can no longer cope with the heavy traffic flows that cause:

- An unacceptable number of personal injury accidents;
- Congestion during peak periods; and
- Regular gridlock over a wide area.

1.1.2 As traffic levels continue to increase, congestion will become worse and essential maintenance will become increasingly disruptive.

1.1.3 Halton Borough Council and the Mersey Crossing Group believe that a new Mersey crossing in Halton is essential as a solution to the problems of the existing bridge. The Mersey Crossing Group was formed to promote a new Mersey crossing and to guide the development of the project. The Group comprises Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, the Metropolitan Borough Councils of Knowsley, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral, Warrington Borough Council, Merseytravel, English Partnerships, Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise, other local Chambers of Commerce and Peel Holdings.

1.1.4 The main objectives of a New Mersey Crossing are:

- To relieve the Silver Jubilee Bridge;
- To maximise development opportunities;
- To improve public transport links across the river; and
- To encourage the increased use of cycling and walking.

1.1.5 In July 2001, the Mersey Crossing Group appointed Gifford and Partners as Project Manager and Lead Consultant to undertake further studies necessary to take the project forward. This includes a comprehensive environmental impact assessment (EIA) to inform decisions on the preferred route option and bridge form, as well as detailed design work.

1.1.6 An important component of the EIA is to consult with relevant stakeholders including local residents, businesses, travellers, regional partners, local authorities, transport providers and user groups, environmental interest and Statutory Bodies. Effective consultation will ensure a scheme is developed which is widely acceptable.

1.2 Stage One

1.2.1 The consultation process has been carried out in defined stages. Stage One focused on current perceptions of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and travel needs. This has now been reported (New Mersey Crossing Consultation – Stage One). The report details: current use of the bridge; problems using the bridge and their impacts; suggested improvements to the bridge; support for a new crossing; and expectations and potential impacts of a new crossing.

1.2.2 The Stage One public consultation also included initial perceptions on a number of possible crossing options. However, the selection of a preferred route option was not an objective at this stage.

1.3 Stage Two

1.3.1 Since the completion of Stage One, detailed research has provided an assessment of the impact of each of the route options. Stage Two therefore concentrated on
detailed discussions of the routes, including: probable impacts; advantages, disadvantages; and the identification of preferred routes.

1.4 Route Options

1.4.1 Consulting Engineers and Environmentalists examined a number of options for a new crossing, some of which were suggested during the Stage One consultation. Some of the options considered did not satisfactorily meet the objectives or were too expensive and hence were rejected. The four options below did meet the project objectives and have therefore been taken forward for public consultation.

1.4.2 For ease of explanation and reporting, the four proposed routes were given the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 3A. With Option 1 being the proposed route closest to the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge and Options 3 and 3A being the routes furthest east from the existing bridge. The proposed route options are as follows:

- Option 1 - A new bridge between West Bank in Widnes and Runcorn Old Town alongside the Silver Jubilee Bridge;

- Option 2 - From Astmoor interchange in Runcorn to Ditton roundabout in Widnes (passing to the West of the Rhodia works);

- Option 3 - From the Central Expressway in Runcorn to Widnes Eastern bypass (passing to the East of the Rhodia works); and

- Option 3A - From the Central Expressway in Runcorn (as Option 3) to Ditton roundabout in Widnes (passing to the West of the Rhodia works).

1.4.3 Figure 1.1 shows a map of the proposed and rejected routes (T-Tunnel).
1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Three specific stakeholder groups have been identified for inclusion in the consultation process:

- local residents of Halton;
- businesses in Halton; and
- local interest groups.

1.5.2 In addition, members of the wider travelling public and businesses in the wider region, identified during Stage One, have been included in the consultation.

1.5.3 A combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques were required for the project, as follows:

- Focus groups with residents;
- Workshops with businesses in Halton;
- Workshops with local interest groups; and
- Postal survey with all stakeholders.

Residents’ Focus Groups

1.5.4 Six focus group discussions were conducted, including a total of forty-seven Halton residents. Respondents were selected based on their residential location as shown in Table 1.1.
Table 1.1  Focus Group Recruitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Residents adjacent to Option 1 in Runcorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Residents adjacent to Option 1 in Widnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Residents adjacent to Options 2 &amp; 3 in Runcorn and Widnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Residents adjacent to Option 2 in Widnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Other Runcorn residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other Widnes residents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.5.5 The areas for recruitment are shown in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2  Map of areas adjacent to route options
1.5.6 The postcodes used to identify addresses in these areas can be found in Appendix G.

1.5.7 Further recruitment criteria aimed at a mix of males and females, age and working status were also specified; however, location was the most important criteria.

1.5.8 Respondents included a number of people who had participated in Stage One of the project and expressed an interest in continuing their involvement. Additional respondents were recruited from face-to-face interviews at their homes.

1.5.9 A member of MVA professional staff moderated each focus group. A representative from Gifford and Partners was present at all focus groups to present research findings of probable impacts of the route options, and answer any technical questions.

1.5.10 The discussions were focused on the different options and their expected impacts. Maps of the options were presented to the respondents one at a time in random order. Initial views of each option were obtained prior to communication regarding probable impacts. (Details of the impact factors for each option can be found in Appendix A.) Once each of the options had been discussed, respondents were asked to choose their preferred option explaining why they had made that choice.

1.5.11 The cost of each of the options was then shared with the group, to determine the impact of cost on choice. Finally, the importance of the different impact factors and any other issues regarding a new crossing were discussed.

1.5.12 Appendix B contains a copy of the discussion guide.

1.5.13 The summaries of the individual groups can be found in Appendix C.

**Businesses**

1.5.14 Lunchtime workshops were conducted for businesses in areas of Halton likely to be affected by the proposed routes for the new crossing.

1.5.15 A database of 867 business addresses in the areas directly adjacent to the proposed route options was generated. (see Figure 1.2 for map of areas)

1.5.16 Invitation letters to a lunchtime workshop were sent to all addresses on the database addressed to The Manager. Three workshops were arranged, two in Runcorn and one in Widnes:

- Thursday 13th February 2003, Campanile Hotel, Runcorn;
- Friday 14th February 2003, The Heath Conference Centre, Runcorn; and
- Tuesday 18th February 2003, Halton Stadium, Widnes.

1.5.17 The workshops aimed to explore the views and expectations of local businesses regarding the proposed options and their expected impacts, and identify any preferred route options.

1.5.18 The format of the workshops included a presentation by a representative of Gifford and Partners. This was followed by a question and answer session. Participants were then randomly divided into two smaller groups to discuss issues in more detail.
1.5.19 Some businesses sent more than one representative to the workshop. In total, fifty-two respondents attended the workshops, representing thirty-five local businesses. The businesses are listed in Appendix D. A wide range of businesses were represented, ranging from large-scale international companies to local shopkeepers.

**Local Interest Groups**

1.5.20 A workshop was conducted with local interest groups from Halton and the region on Tuesday 18th February at The Halton Stadium in Widnes. It aimed to explore the views and expectations of local interest groups regarding the proposed options and their expected impacts and identify any preferred route options.

1.5.21 A list of 64 local stakeholders were invited, in writing, to attend the workshop. Following this invitation, many subsequently made contact by telephone, email or post to confirm their attendance or make apologies for their absence. Those who did not make contact were telephoned by a member of MVA staff to confirm their attendance. Eighteen stakeholders attended the workshop, representing thirteen different organisations.

1.5.22 The format of the workshop included a presentation by Project Manager Pedr Roberts of Gifford and Partners, followed by a question and answer session. Respondents were then randomly divided into two smaller groups to discuss issues in more detail.

1.5.23 A list of the organisations represented at the workshop is supplied with the individual group summaries in Chapter Four.

1.5.24 Each group discussion was moderated by a member of MVA professional staff.

**Postal Survey**

1.5.25 In addition to the qualitative research, a quantitative survey was required to measure support for a new crossing and identify preferred route options across a larger sample of respondents.

1.5.26 In order for participants to make an informed decision on the new crossing, a six-page brochure was designed. It covered the following topics:

- Why another Mersey Crossing is needed;
- The main objectives of the new crossing;
- The four route options;
- Impact factors for each option;
- Other Options that have been considered;
- The public consultation; and
- What happens next.

1.5.27 The brochure included a map detailing the sites of the proposed route options. A copy can be found in Appendix E.

1.5.28 A questionnaire was designed in close consultation with Gifford and Partners with due consideration for the aims of the survey.
1.5.29 The questionnaire was divided into sections to cover the key themes. It was two pages long and was designed using a mixture of closed and open questions to enable essential information to be determined. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix F. It covered the following topics:

- Support for a new Mersey crossing;
- Impact factors of the proposed routes;
- Importance of the impact factor when selecting the best route for a new crossing;
- Other impact factors that should be considered for the route options;
- Additional information respondents require;
- Comments regarding other options presented in the brochure;
- Preferred option; and
- Reason for preference.

1.5.30 In addition, a number of questions were included to determine information about the respondent:

- How often they use the current bridge;
- Age;
- Gender;
- Type of respondent; and
- Area of residence.

1.5.31 In order to consult with a wide range of members of the public that would be affected by a new crossing, a number of methods of distribution were used. Firstly, brochures and questionnaires were posted to the following groups of people:

- 7762 households residing in areas directly adjacent to the proposed route options;
- 867 businesses based in areas directly adjacent to the proposed route options;
- Members of Halton's Citizen's Panel;
- Wider travelling public that indicated their interest in further involvement during Stage One;
- Businesses that indicated their interest in further involvement during Stage One; and
- Members of local interest groups identified it the qualitative phase of Stage Two.
In addition, brochures and questionnaires were distributed via libraries and other central locations in Halton, and Gifford and Partners organised a New Mersey Crossing exhibition in Runcorn and Widnes at which locations questionnaires were also made available. A copy of the questionnaire was also available on the New Mersey Crossing Website (www.merseycrossing.co.uk).

Reply paid envelopes were supplied for the return of all completed questionnaires.
2 Focus Groups with Residents

2.1 The Silver Jubilee Bridge

2.1.1 The Silver Jubilee Bridge in some way affects all of the respondents who took part in the discussions. Many use it daily, whilst a few avoid it and only use it when they really have to. Two of the participants walk over the bridge, however this is a fraught process and neither thought that the bridge is comfortable or safe to cross.

2.1.2 The congestion on the bridge is perceived to be extreme “It’s terrible travelling to and from work every day” and getting even more so “It’s getting worse and worse, you tend to be stuck in queues every night”. It is viewed as difficult to use the bridge even outside of busy/rush hours. People do not trust the bridge, finding that journeys involving its use are unpredictable.

2.1.3 Many of the participants thought that the New Mersey Crossing initiative had been in progress for a number of years, with no decision being made on a way forward. All of the participants thought that a new bridge was needed as quickly as possible and were keen for the project to progress at a swifter rate than previously. However, respondents were also keen to stress the importance of public consultation in the process.

2.2 Proposed Route Options

2.2.1 For ease of explanation and reporting, the four proposed route options were given a number, with option one being the proposed route closest to the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge and option 3A being the proposed route furthest East from the existing bridge. The results have been presented in that order, however as mentioned above, the options were presented to the groups in a random order.
2.3 Option 1

2.3.1 Advantages of Option 1, prior to the communication of impact factors, included:

- Shortest;
- Cheapest;
- Easy for current users to negotiate;
- Immediate diversion onto other bridge if necessary; and
- Direct route for through traffic.

2.3.2 After prompting, less impact on wildlife was also identified as an advantage of Option 1.

2.3.3 Disadvantages of Option 1, prior to the communication of impact factors, included:

- Negative impact on communities in Runcorn Old Town and West Bank in Widnes;
- Noise and air pollution levels in residential areas near to bridges would increase;
- High disturbance during construction, with heavy goods vehicles in residential areas;
- Silver Jubilee bridge may have to close at some point during construction or have lane closures;
- Negative impact on local businesses;
- Increased pressure on feeder roads, causing increased congestion;
- Less cycling and walking on Silver Jubilee Bridge, due to fumes and noise from new bridge;
- Traffic problems on one bridge would affect the other; and
- Safety concerns with two bridges so close together (wind effects, vibrations, terrorism).

2.3.4 No further comments were made regarding disadvantages, after the communication of the impact factors.

2.3.5 This option was completely dismissed by all but two of the respondents. The level of negative impact on the surrounding communities was felt to be unacceptable. It was recognised that a number of houses in Runcorn Old Town and West Bank would have to be demolished, and although compensation to homeowners was discussed, relocation was not viewed as a viable option.

"People are happy here [West Bank], they've lived here all their lives, you can't just move them somewhere else. They'd have to start all over again." (Widnes Route 1 group)

2.3.6 There were concerns regarding the lack of land nearby to build houses for residents being relocated, and thus the break-up of communities.
2.3.7 The demolition of the school in West Bank was of primary concern for a number of respondents. It is the only school in the area and even if another school was built, it was not expected to be within walking distance for children. This in turn was expected to have a negative impact on the number of young families moving into the area.

2.3.8 A new crossing was expected to create an increase in traffic levels in the area and therefore unacceptable levels of noise and air pollution especially with two bridges in the same location. Respondents were concerned about the levels of stress that two bridges together would create and the effect on the community’s health.

"The dirt in my hall is already terrible from one bridge. What would it be like from two?" (Widnes Route 1 group)

"What would it be doing to me, breathing in all those traffic fumes." (Runcorn Route 1 group)

2.3.9 Residents who live close to the new bridge, but whose houses would remain, were particularly worried about the devaluation of their properties. There was also a worry that residents given compulsory purchase orders would not get the true value of their houses.

"It’s okay for those that get compensation. But I’d have to stay, I wouldn’t want to live in an area with two bridges over my head, but I wouldn’t be able to sell my house and be able to afford to buy somewhere else." (Widnes Route 1 group)

"I wouldn’t have any say in what they offered me. I love my home, I’d never get the same.” (Widnes Route 1 Group)

2.3.10 Participants also had other issues regarding this option, with major concerns about congestion problems both during and after construction. Local businesses were expected to suffer during construction with the possibility of smaller ones being unable to recover.

2.3.11 The construction phase was expected to bring the most disturbance to the area. Respondents thought that it would be very difficult, describing it as "chaotic" and "unbearable". The implications on traffic congestion were recognised as immense, with lane closures on the current bridge and its approach roads.

"During the years of construction I’d have to add another 2 hours to my journey everyday." (Other Runcorn group)

2.4 Option 2

2.4.1 Advantages of Option 2, prior to the communication of the impact factors, included:

- Less impact on residential areas;
- Connected to main roads;
- Less impact on saltmarsh; and
- Links expressways in Runcorn and Widnes.

2.4.2 Disadvantages of Option 2, prior to the communication of impact factors, included:

- Close to residential areas in Widnes, backs onto new housing estate;
Focus Groups with Residents

- Standing traffic on the Widnes side due to stop and start junctions;
- Negative impact on business at Astmoor, particularly during construction;
- Near to important environmental areas;
- Junction at Runcorn too close to the Silver Jubilee Bridge and therefore could cause congestion;
- Junction at Runcorn is small, and even with improvements may not be adequate;
- Noise levels for communities living near to the canal (Runcorn); and
- Through traffic may still use the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

2.4.3 Respondents did not recognise from the map that there was a lack of direct access to Astmoor. Once this was communicated, however, it was identified as a disadvantage of the route and was of major concern to a number of respondents.

2.4.4 No other comments were made regarding advantages and disadvantages after communication of the impact factors.

2.4.5 The junction on the Runcorn side was viewed as the main drawback of this option. Respondents think that it is too close to the current bridge and therefore congestion problems would remain. It is perceived to be a small junction, and even with improvements, respondents were sceptical about its success. They also thought that as this option does not allow direct access to Astmoor it could cause confusion for heavy goods vehicles.

"I don't understand how the lorries would get onto Astmoor, why can't they just get off at the end of the bridge rather than driving all the way round. If it's the first time they've been they'll get lost and cause chaos, the signing will have to be good." (Runcorn and Widnes Route 2 & 3 group)

2.4.6 Option 2 was expected to have a negative effect on residential areas on both sides of the river, particularly during construction. Concerns were particularly high regarding the proximity of the junction in Widnes to residential areas. Worries expressed included health (air and noise pollution), safety (children in the vicinity of heavy traffic) and accidents, which in turn could cause traffic congestion in the local area.

"They would have to put some sort of barrier up to stop children who are playing from going near to Ashley Way as it would become far too busy." (Runcorn and Widnes Route 2 & 3 group)

2.4.7 There were also concerns about the junction types on both sides of the river causing traffic queuing.

"The traffic can't just go straight on, it has to stop at junctions and that causes accidents and then congestion." (Runcorn Route 1 group)

2.5 Option 3

2.5.1 Advantages of Option 3, prior to the communication of the impact factors, included:

- Low effect on residential areas;
• Keeps traffic away from residential areas and the town centre;

• Local traffic could use the Silver Jubilee Bridge without through traffic on the new bridge affecting them;

• Junction already exists at Astmoor, just needs to be expanded;

• Aids businesses with direct access to Astmoor;

• Takes traffic near to town centre, helping town centre shops;

• Uses main road in Widnes, which is already a dual carriageway (Ashley Way);

• Easy access to both M62 and M56;

• Suitable for heavy traffic; and

• Traffic could use Junction 11 on M56 as well as Junction 12.

2.5.2 When the impact factors were communicated to respondents, no further advantages were identified.

2.5.3 Disadvantages of Option 3, prior to the communication of the impact factors, included:

• Junction on the Widnes side of the Mersey is already a problem, an increase in traffic in an area that’s already busy;

• Some relocation necessary for businesses on Astmoor industrial estate, and may involve job losses;

• Liverpool traffic may still use the Silver Jubilee Bridge;

• During construction heavy loads would be using Widnes town centre;

• Heavy traffic for West Bank Docks and Ditton Road would still use Silver Jubilee Bridge;

• Widnes Waterfront will already put increasing pressure on traffic in this area;

• Crosses Wigg Island;

• Central Expressway in Runcorn unable to cope with increase in traffic, and would need improving; and

• Close to Castlefields in Runcorn, and therefore could affect house prices.

2.5.4 After communication of the impact factors, a few respondents also mentioned the effect on the saltmarshes as a disadvantage of this option.

2.5.5 The main benefit of this option was thought to be the junction at Runcorn. This is expected to allow easy access to the M56 either via junction 11 or 12.

2.5.6 It is also further away from residential areas than Options 1 or 2. However, there was expected to be some increase in noise and air pollution for the residents in the Castlefields area of Runcorn, as traffic on the Central Expressway increased.
2.5.7 The main concern for Option 3 was its' junction in Widnes. This is already perceived to be a complicated and busy junction, with high accident levels. The effect of extra traffic, even with a change in traffic light priorities, was expected to cause extra congestion and an increase in accidents. Furthermore, the additional traffic expected from the Widnes Waterfront development was expected to increase problems further.

"People are always getting in the wrong lane and so switching all the time." (Other Widnes group)

"Most of the accidents are caused by people going through green on the first set of traffic lights and not realising that there's a second set on red." (Runcorn and Widnes Route 2 & 3 group)

"It's already very difficult to cross (for pedestrians)." (Other Widnes group)

2.6 Option 3A

2.6.1 Advantages of Option 3A, prior to the communication of the impact factors, included:

- Low impact on residential areas;
- Links to main routes of traffic flow;
- Good flow to encourage traffic to use the new bridge rather than the SJB;
- Easy to re-route traffic if one bridge has to be shut;
- Widnes junction allows for good traffic flow, turn off for town centre, straight over for Liverpool;
- Keeps traffic away from the town centre;
- Easy access to Astmoor;
- Serves both Junction 11 & 12 of M56;
- Lowest impact during construction due to its location in industrial and unused areas away from town centres;
- Encourages industrial investment via easy access to Astmoor and direct road link with Liverpool; and
- Makes use of unused land in Widnes.

2.6.2 No further advantages of this option were identified after communication of the impact factors.

2.6.3 Disadvantages of Option 3A, prior to the communication of impact factors, included:

- Approach road to bridges closer together on Widnes side than for Option 3;
- Slightly closer to residential areas in Widnes than Option 3;
- Close to Castiefields in Runcorn, and therefore could affect house prices;
Focus Groups with Residents

- Close to Spike Island; and
- Some relocation necessary for businesses on Astmoor industrial estate, and may involve job losses.

2.6.4 Both the expense and the impact on the saltmarshes were mentioned as disadvantages when impact factors and cost were communicated to the respondents.

2.6.5 This option was positively received by the respondents. In general only positive comments were offered. Drawbacks of the route, other than expense, had to be prompted.

"It has all the good points of the others, put into one bridge." ( Widnes Route 1 group)

"This is definitely the best." ( Runcorn Route 1 group)

2.6.6 There were some concerns about the junction on the Widnes side of the river, as this appeared to be complicated to some of the respondents. However, when it was made clear that the bridge traffic would flow over the junction and not have to stop, it was not thought to be an issue.

2.6.7 The junction on the Runcorn side of the river was thought to have more advantages than Option 2. These were: direct connection to the Central Expressway; direct access to Astmoor; the distance from the Silver Jubilee Bridge; and the opportunity to attract traffic both to and from Junctions 11 and 12 on the M56.

"Some traffic already uses Junction 11, this would make that easier. Plus you can get to the M56 via the Central Expressway, traffic from the old bridge would still use the Western Expressway, this would spread the traffic around and there'd be less congestion." ( Runcorn and Widnes Routes 2 & 3 group)

2.6.8 The junction on the Widnes side was also viewed more positively than for Option 2. The junctions are in similar positions; however, on the detailed map it can be seen that Option 2 brings the bridge traffic closer to residential areas in Widnes than Option 3A. Respondents also thought that most of the traffic would be driving straight across the junction without having to stop at traffic lights or a roundabout and therefore there would be less standing traffic causing problems in residential areas.

"Traffic would just drive straight onto the bridge and straight off, no fiddly junctions to negotiate." ( Widnes Route 2 group)

2.6.9 This option was also expected to stop through traffic between Liverpool and the M56 from using the Silver Jubilee Bridge, as the junctions would make it easier for the traffic to flow onto the new bridge.

"You can see how the traffic coming from Speke Road would just go onto the new bridge, without even realising that they'd missed the SJB. They'd have to make an effort to use the SJBR rather than vice versa." ( Widnes Route 1 group)

2.6.10 Option 3A, along with Option 3, was thought by the majority of the respondents to offer the best opportunity for an attractive crossing. A new bridge in this area was expected to entice tourists to the region and particularly to Wigg Island Community Park.
"People would take along a picnic and look out at the bridge. Look at how many people stop to look at the Dee Crossing in Flint." (Other Runcorn group)

2.7 Preferred Option

2.7.1 Generally it was believed that the new bridge should be kept away from residential areas of Halton whilst remaining near enough to still be a local crossing and beneficial to the borough.

2.7.2 Three-quarters of respondents (thirty-five) preferred option 3A.

"It's like they've taken the best bits of all the other options and made them into Option 3A." (Other Runcorn group)

"Option 3A looks like it has been designed by listening to what people said in the first public consultation." (Other Widnes group)

2.7.3 Reasons for this choice included:

- Less impact on residential areas/communities;
- Less disruptive during construction;
- Keeps heavy traffic away from the Silver Jubilee Bridge;
- Less impact on areas going through regeneration;
- Best traffic flow between Liverpool and M56;
- With appropriate bridge design would be the most aesthetically pleasing;
- Links main industrial areas; and
- Allows a number of options for traffic flow at Runcorn.

2.7.4 The next most preferred route was Option 3, which was preferred by seven of the respondents. This was preferred mainly because it was expected to have little effect on residential areas and would allow for better traffic flow at the Runcorn junction when compared to Option 2. Respondents who selected this option believed that its junction at Widnes was further away from residential areas than Option 3A. They also thought that the junction for Option 3A was difficult to negotiate, possibly believing that all traffic from the bridge had to negotiate the roundabout.

2.7.5 Of the remaining respondents, those who selected Option 2 (4 people) stated the link to main roads on both sides of the Mersey, the low impact on the saltmarshes and cost as reasons for their choice. Respondents preferring Option 1 (2 people), thought that although it would present difficulties during construction, once built it would be the most convenient for local people.

2.8 Costs

2.8.1 Cost was not considered the most important factor when selecting a route for the new crossing. None of the respondents changed their preference for an option after receiving the cost estimates. Respondents did not think that the difference in costs between the options was large enough to be a deciding factor and if the selection for the bridge was based on cost then it was expected to end up being the least effective.
"You need to pay more to get a viable option, it'll be better value for money in the long term." (Widnes Route 1 group)

"The higher costing option will have a lower cost on businesses during construction." (Runcorn and Widnes Route 2 & 3 group)

"It's not just about cost in monetary value, but also the cost to the community." (Runcorn Route 1 group)

2.9 Impact Factors

2.9.1 Participants viewed the impact of a new crossing on local communities of most importance. They believe that the best option for a new crossing would be the one that caused the least impact to residential areas. Noise and air pollution in residential areas was of primary concern.

2.9.2 The impact of a new crossing on traffic congestion was also considered important. A road and bridge network that encourages traffic flow, minimises standing traffic and keeps heavy traffic away from the town centres was considered ideal. Respondents stated that the increase in traffic in the future also needs to be taken into account when selecting a route.

2.9.3 It was recognised that some impact would be caused to industrial areas. However, this was believed to be reasonably straightforward and easy to recover from. It was also thought that in the longer term the effect on businesses could be beneficial.

2.9.4 Although respondents believed that impact to wildlife should be minimised, only a very small number (two) thought that this was of primary concern. Wherever the bridge is built respondents expect it to have an impact on the environment. Although this should be minimised where possible and solutions implemented for recovery, it was not believed to be as important as the impact on local communities.

"The environment does matter, of course it does. But we need to improve Runcorn Old Town, there are fewer children being born, less people moving into the area and we have to turn this around. We need to improve job prospects and market it as a nice place to live, open up new businesses and attract young families." (Runcorn Route 1)

"Wildlife will recover in time." (Other Runcorn group)

"Birds will be disrupted during construction, but they will return once the bridge is built." (Widnes Route 2 group)

"It's not like demolishing houses, a community can't come back from that." (Widnes Route 1 group)

2.10 Differences between the Groups

2.10.1 These discussions highlighted the importance of talking to people across the borough of Halton, as each of the groups had a different perspective on the options. Participants from some areas recognised problems that those from others were unable to, through lack of familiarity or local knowledge.

2.10.2 In general, differences between the groups tended to be about traffic junctions. This was apparent for some of the respondents in the Other Runcorn and Runcorn/Widnes 2 & 3 group. They all selected Option 3 rather than option 3A
because of the Widnes junction. From the maps, they thought that Option 3 had a more direct junction for the M62 and St Helens traffic, and were concerned about the junction for 3A being too close to the Silver Jubilee Bridge. However, respondents who knew the area well, thought that the Option 3 junction would cause traffic problems, as it already has traffic lights and is difficult to negotiate. Also that the junction for Option 3A would have better traffic flow and therefore cause less congestion.

2.10.3 All of the respondents, no matter how close they lived to the areas, were able to recognise the social impact of Option 1 on the communities of Runcorn Old Town and West Bank. In addition, all groups stated that it was of prime importance to make sure that the new crossing had the least possible impact on residential areas.

2.11 General Issues

2.11.1 The new crossing is considered to be an opportunity to improve the noise and air pollution of communities near to the Silver Jubilee Bridge and to bring new business to Halton. It was also thought that it might even improve tourism in the area, if the bridge design was appropriate.

2.11.2 It was recognised that a new bridge could increase the number of people crossing the Mersey in this area and therefore traffic pollution could increase rather than decrease if the option chosen did not keep the traffic flowing.

2.11.3 Respondents were very keen to either restrict or encourage the use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge for local traffic only. Various ideas were put forward to make sure that heavy goods traffic and through traffic used the new bridge. These included: a toll for non-local users; weight restrictions; and road signage on motorways to direct traffic onto the new bridge.
3 Business Workshops

3.1 Format of Workshops

3.1.1 The business workshops were introduced with a presentation by a representative of Gifford and Partners.

3.1.2 The presentation commenced with a brief history of river crossings in Halton, prior to the Silver Jubilee Bridge. The problems associated with the current bridge were outlined and it was explained why a new Mersey crossing is needed.

3.1.3 The main objectives of a new Mersey Crossing were explained and factors that were used to identify route options. Each of the proposed route options in turn were then presented alongside a list of their expected impacts. Previous options that have since been rejected were also shown.

3.1.4 Finally, the design of the new crossing was briefly discussed, with some thoughts on what a new crossing could look like.

3.1.5 A question and answer session followed the presentation. Participants were then randomly divided into two smaller groups to discuss issues in more detail.

3.1.6 The output of each of the workshops can be found in Appendix H.

3.2 The Silver Jubilee Bridge

3.2.1 All of the respondents that attended the business workshops were in agreement that a new crossing in Halton was vital. Traffic congestion on the bridge has a high impact on local businesses, employees are often late and many businesses have to plan their deliveries around peak traffic times. The bridge also acts as a barrier to businesses on opposite sides of the river, making it difficult for them to work together.

"There comes a point when you’re not going to be competitive, you can’t build problems on the bridge into your prices. The customer is not going to pay because you’ve got to cross the Runcorn Bridge; you chose where you’re located so that’s your problem. Businesses are considering moving out of Widnes."

"Poor road access does not attract new business. Halton should be in an ideal position as it is close to the motorways, it is just crossing the Mersey that is the problem."

3.3 Option 1

3.3.1 Whilst participants accepted that there would be some disruption during the construction of a new crossing, Option 1 was expected to cause too much disruption to make this a viable alternative.

"Construction would cause chaos in both towns for 2 years."

"Horrendous in terms of congestion. Congestion is bad now. It doesn’t need an accident, it there’s a breakdown or even bad weather the whole area grinds to a halt. If you’ve got massive earth moving equipment or loads coming in, the turmoil over those years will be difficult to recover from."

"The implication of 3 years of construction is impossible, you should keep it away from the communities, they’ve put up with enough."

3.3.2 In addition, congestion problems were expected to remain if Option 1 was selected, and an incident on one bridge was expected to cause chaos on the other.
"It's not just about the capacity of the bridge, it's the access roads to it. This would put everybody in the same bottleneck."

"Focuses all the traffic in one place."

"It only addresses a small part of the problem, the roads on either end remain and so it will only give a small benefit."

3.3.3 Some of the smaller local businesses, particularly those based in Runcorn Old Town, even debated whether their businesses would survive the construction.

"It's not just families that live in the old town, it's the relatives that visit them and all the passing trade for businesses in the old town. It doesn't matter whether it's a kid walking down the street wanting a lollipop or someone wanting a three-piece suite - it's all trade."

"Would I still have a business?"

3.4 Option 2

3.4.1 Respondents identified a number of problems associated with Option 2. Firstly, the nature of the junctions in Runcorn and Widnes were expected to cause traffic build-up on the bridge and its approaches.

"It's not an efficient junction, it's only small and in essence a T-junction, it will lead to traffic back-up along the route."

"Too many roundabouts in Widnes, that will just create congestion on the bridge, so people will just go onto the old bridge instead."

3.4.2 Furthermore, the congestion problems were expected to be exacerbated due to the proximity of the junction in Runcorn to the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

3.4.3 The lack of direct access to Astmoor Industrial Estate was also seen as a disadvantage of this option. Therefore, some traffic was expected to continue to use the existing bridge rather than Option 2.

"Limited access to Astmoor is a problem. People might tend to use the existing bridge so there would be an increase in heavy traffic."

"You would have to put a weight restriction on the old bridge if you wanted industrial traffic to use the new one."

3.5 Option 3

3.5.1 Respondents were positive about the junction in Runcorn for Option 3, as it allows access to the M56 via the Central Expressway and possibly Junction 11.

"I like this because you could improve the Central Expressway to be able to take traffic coming off the M56 this way onto the new bridge. You could also come off at Junction 11 and it would be straightforward as well. It would separate the traffic."

"There are more options for traffic to go different routes to get to the bridge."

3.5.2 However, they were concerned about congestion build-up at the junction in Widnes.
"The Widnes junction is already a problem, it needs to be re-designed already."

"In Widnes there are junctions and roundabouts where the traffic has to slow and stop."

"There will be lots of changing lanes still, this causes accidents."

3.5.3 This option was also expected to take traffic away from Runcorn town centre, improving trade for local businesses in this area.

3.5.4 However, there were concerns about the effect of this option on businesses based at the Astmoor Industrial Estate.

"I’ve only just relocated from London and I will need to be relocated again."

"It will take the heart out of Astmoor."

**Option 3A**

3.5.5 Overall, the respondents were positive about Option 3A. It was thought to have good road links in Runcorn, directly connecting to the Central Expressway. In addition, the road link to Liverpool in Widnes via Speke Road was also thought to be ideal, keeping the main traffic flowing straight on and off the bridge.

"It’s a through route and so will stop people using the old bridge."

"Looks like thought has been given to feeder routes to it, it links up with dual carriageways."

"I think this will suit more users, route 3 is the best for people going to Warrington, this one you can either go to Warrington or Liverpool."

3.5.6 Option 3A was also thought to have good links for industrial traffic, with access to Astmoor Industrial Estate, Ditton Road and West Bank Docks, keeping heavy loads away from town centres and residential areas.

3.5.7 In addition, Option 3A was expected to cause the least disruption during construction.

"Would only affect scrap/derelict land in Widnes, there’s nothing there to knock down."

"It’s going over the Astmoor so won’t involve that much demolition."

3.5.8 However, respondents did acknowledge that there would be some disruption to Astmoor Industrial Estate. They stressed the importance of being kept informed regarding plans for the new crossing, in order to make plans in advance.

"But who wants to work underneath during construction."

3.5.9 Respondents also thought that part of the Daresbury Expressway and Junction 12 of the M56 at Preston Brook would need improving, otherwise traffic congestion problems were expected to just move elsewhere.
3.6 Preferred Option

3.6.1 The majority of business representatives preferred Option 3A. This was expected to allow for good traffic flow on both sides of the river. In addition, it was expected to have less impact during construction, particularly in residential areas.

3.6.2 Although respondents recognised that Option 3A was the most expensive option, they believed that the capital costs were not the only costs to consider and that the benefit of the route outweighed the cost.

3.6.3 A small number of the respondents preferred Option 3 as they thought that it offered more opportunity to improve Widnes town centre and was better for traffic flow to the M62. They also believed that this option would keep the traffic using the bridges further apart, thereby avoiding congestion problems. However, they were concerned about the nature of the junction in Widnes and believed that modifications would be required if congestion was to be avoided.

3.7 Impact Factors

3.7.1 In general, respondents thought that traffic flow was the most important factor to consider when selecting a preferred route. The flow of traffic into and out of Halton has a major impact on the businesses represented and therefore in turn on the economy of the Borough.

3.7.2 They stressed how important it was to consider the traffic network for the whole region when planning a new crossing. They believe that improvements will need to be made to the link roads between the new bridge and the motorways (M56 and M62), if congestion in the area is to be avoided.

3.7.3 Respondents also felt that, where possible, disruption to residents should be avoided.

3.8 Communication of Plans

3.8.1 Some of the businesses represented at these workshops would be severely affected by the construction of a new crossing, particularly by Options 3 and 3A. They stressed how important it was for Halton Borough Council to keep them informed about the project, and that as soon as information was available, the Council shared it with them. Larger businesses in particular will require adequate planning time to prepare for any necessary relocation.

"It is important for us to know how much disruption there will be on industries in the area during construction."

3.8.2 Although respondents accepted that some business relocation would probably be necessary, they were concerned that the Council needed to give the process due importance and provide adequate support and monetary aid.
Local Stakeholder Groups Workshop

4.1 Overview of Presentation

4.1.1 New Mersey Crossing Project Manager, Pedr Roberts of Gifford and Partners introduced the stakeholder workshop with a presentation.

4.1.2 The presentation covered the objectives of the new crossing, route options that have been rejected and details of the four proposed options and their expected impacts.

4.2 Question and Answer Session

4.2.1 Following the presentation, respondents were given the opportunity to ask questions and raise queries before the group discussions started.

4.2.2 The questions asked and the answers given are provided below:

- **Question:** Do your plans show costs for long span bridges? And if so, are short spans now not being considered?

- **Answer:** Short spans are cheaper, however, our models show that the effect of a large number of spans on sand channel movement is too large.

- **Question:** Are there plans to improve other link roads in the region, for example Junction 12 on the M56? Otherwise congestion will just be moved from one place to another.

- **Answer:** Improvements may be required to other roads, however, this project cannot address the problems on the M56. That would need to be another project.

- **Question:** Won’t a new bridge just be for people from outside Halton? They’re the ones using the current bridge and even more will be attracted to use the new one. Will it really help those who live here?

- **Answer:** Our traffic figures show that 20% of users of the bridge are going to or from Runcorn to Widnes, 40% are going from Halton to elsewhere or from elsewhere to Halton, and 20% is through traffic. Therefore, 60% of traffic using the Silver Jubilee Bridge has some sort of connection to Halton. That is one of the reasons why the government will not class it as a trunk road.

- **Question:** Wouldn’t congestion charging be one way of taking some of the traffic off the roads?

- **Answer:** Congestion charging is not being considered as part of this initiative. People are waiting to see if congestion charging is effective in London in the longer term. Traffic doesn’t just disappear from the roads, it tends to go elsewhere. In this area that has a fragile economy the use of congestion charging could have a severe impact.

- **Question:** A project with as great an impact as this one can’t be rushed through and decisions made quickly.

- **Answer:** This is not a sudden plan, discussions regarding a new Mersey Crossing have been taking place since the early 1990’s. The reason we are pushing the programme towards a decision is because of the urgency due to the state of the current bridge.
• **Question:** What capacity is planned for the new bridge?

• **Answer:** It will be a four-lane bridge with hard shoulders. It will easily take the current levels of traffic crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge with room for future growth. In addition, the hard shoulders could be used as third lanes, plus you also have the capacity of the Silver Jubilee Bridge for local traffic.

• **Question:** A tunnel was rejected because it wasn’t expected to attract enough of the traffic, what level of traffic was it expected to attract?

• **Answer:** 38% of traffic was expected to be attracted to a tunnel in that position, plus it is a very expensive option.

• **Question:** Are there major excavations planned for the new bridge?

• **Answer:** Most of the bridge structure will be above ground and the only planned excavations are for the piers, there are no plans for any major cuttings.

• **Question:** I realise that improvements to public transport can’t replace the need for a new bridge, but are there any plans?

• **Answer:** Improvements to public transport are separate to this initiative, but should go alongside it.

• **Question:** Do you have any idea about the effects of a new crossing on economy and jobs in the area?

• **Answer:** Our economic consultant is looking at this now and will assess employment potential and it will be part of the report for the Council.

• **Question:** What height will the towers need to be?

• **Answer:** We are limited due to the approach to Liverpool airport, they will be 120 metres.

• **Question:** What will the clearance under the bridge be?

• **Answer:** For Option 1 it is 77ft across the whole river, for Option 2 it is 90ft reducing to 18ft near the end on the north side, for Option 3 it is 92ft on the south side reducing to 77ft on the north side, and for Option 3A it is 77ft on the south side reducing to 43 ft on the last stretch of the north side. All these heights are based on high water spring tides.

• **Question:** Will there be an opportunity for the bridge to run an LRT?

• **Answer:** Yes, each deck has a lower deck that could fit an LRT. However, this project does not include the addition of an LRT but there is potential to have an LRT under one or both of the decks.

• **Question:** I thought that there was plans for an LRT, is this an about turn?

• **Answer:** I must stress that there were never plans to include an LRT in this initiative, however, Halton Council do not want to preclude the potential for an LRT and this is still the case.
4.3 Group Discussion - Group One

4.3.1 There were six stakeholders in Group One, representing the following organisations:

- Halton Friends of the Earth
- Fiddler’s Ferry Sailing Club
- Warrington Agenda 21
- Disability and Access Forum
- Halton Taxi Drivers and Owners Association.

4.3.2 Respondents initially discussed and questioned the route of the majority of traffic using the Silver Jubilee Bridge, believing that this impacts upon where the new bridge should be sited.

"You need to choose a route that goes where the main flow of traffic wants to go."

4.3.3 It was stated that whatever route was selected, it was important to improve the roads that link the new crossing to the Motorways and main traffic destination points.

"The approach roads need to have a bias towards the main flow of traffic. It has to have a priority if you’re going to stop traffic build-up."

"There needs to be a dual carriageway all the way from the M56 onto the bridge and off the bridge."

"Roundabouts just don’t work, it slows traffic causing build-ups in busy areas. You need to have flyovers for the through traffic."

"You can’t just move the traffic from one place to another. You just transfer the hold-up to somewhere else."

Option 3

4.3.4 One respondent stated that Option 3 was his preferred option, as it did not affect the headroom required for sailing under the new bridge.

4.3.5 Furthermore, the Runcorn approach for this option was thought to be advantageous. It is expected to allow for a number of routes to the M56, via the Western, Central or Daresbury Expressways, hence dispersing the traffic.

"People come off the M56 via the Western Expressway now. If you give them an easy alternative and signpost the Western Expressway as ‘Local traffic only’, then they’ll use the Central Expressway directly onto the new bridge at Astmoor. People using the old bridge would then still use the Western Expressway."

4.3.6 However, the junction at Widnes was expected to cause some problems. It is already thought to be a difficult junction to negotiate, the addition of the extra traffic that a new bridge would attract adding to the problems. The group stated that as a large portion of the traffic goes to and from Liverpool via Speke Road, the Widnes approach roads to the bridge must be easy for this traffic to negotiate.
"Can you change the junction, rather than a roundabout, a flyover? It then separates the local and the through traffic.

"It needs modifications at the junctions in Widnes. Not stop and start like it is."

"The Liverpool traffic needs to be able to flow straight onto the bridge in Widnes."

4.3.7 Respondents discussed changing the Widnes junction design from a roundabout to a flyover. However, the land in the area was thought to be prime retail land and therefore this would prove difficult.

"There's lots of sets of traffic lights. The whole area has been developed and it's an absolute bottleneck."

4.3.8 One of the respondents pointed out that the Widnes end of this option was near to the railway line and therefore would be suitable for a possible LRT system.

4.3.9 In addition, another respondent commented on the fact that plans for a fast-track rail link between Liverpool and Manchester Airports would run along this track and therefore could also be integrated.

**Option 3A**

4.3.10 For the majority of the group, this option was thought to have the benefits of Option 3, but without the expected traffic problems on the Widnes Junction, thereby offering the best traffic flow.

"That is exactly what we are saying. It's like 3 with modifications to the junction in Widnes."

"There's no roundabout, the traffic can flow straight through."

"It's the same access in Runcorn, but much better traffic flow in Widnes (than 3). And it's away from prime retail land."

4.3.11 However, it was thought that if the new crossing attracts increased levels of traffic, the junction in the centre of Widnes would still be an issue for traffic going to St Heens or the M62.

"Morrison's junction may still have problems, if traffic using the bridge increases."

4.3.12 Although it was recognised that this option was not in close proximity to residential areas, there was a worry that noise levels in residential areas would increase. Therefore, screening or some other method of noise reduction would be required.

"It would be noisier, the cheap road surfaces don't help, and then if the road is at high level there is even more noise."

4.3.13 The Daresbury Expressway was expected to offer alternative access for traffic to the M56 via Junction 11. However, towards the end of the Expressway it turns into a single carriageway and therefore if traffic levels increase this would need to be improved.

4.3.14 A drawback of Option 3A was identified as the restricted height over the River Mersey on the North side. This would restrict sailing on the North side of the river in an area that is currently used by Fiddler's Ferry Sailing Club.
4.3.15 One respondent highlighted problems regarding drilling near to Wigg Island, due to possible toxic materials underground. Pedr Roberts of Gifford and Partners stated that tests were being conducted in the area and that this would be taken into account when designing the bridge and the positions of the piers.

**Option 1**

4.3.16 Respondents only identified one advantage for Option 1 and that was cost.

4.3.17 This option was expected to cause the most traffic pollution in residential areas. Having a high impact on the communities of West Bank and Runcorn Old Town.

"This is the worst for traffic pollution."

"Environmentally for West Bank it’s a nightmare."

"If you live there now, you’ve got traffic sat there every night, week in week out it’s sat solid on that bridge above your house."

"I don’t think that it’ll do Runcorn any good at all."

"The 40% through traffic is still disturbing Runcorn and Widnes."

4.3.18 Furthermore, the compulsory relocation of people in the area was not thought to be acceptable.

"Displacing people from their homes is a very bad thing."

"It’s a community, you can’t just move people."

4.3.19 Respondents also expected severe congestion problems during construction. Even when the bridge was completed, the group did not think that the traffic problems would have been solved.

"Focuses all the traffic in one place and you will still have the backup on the feeder roads."

**Option 2**

4.3.20 The use of roundabouts for the junctions in Runcorn and Widnes for Option 2 was expected to cause traffic congestion.

"It’s a bottleneck in Runcorn, just missing the Central Expressway. Roundabouts again, no through route."

"Even in Widnes there’s no through route."

4.3.21 Option 2 was not thought to have any advantages over Options 3 or 3A.

4.3.22 Again, this route would restrict headroom over the Mersey on the North Bank, in an area that is currently used by Fiddler’s Ferry Sailing Club.

**Preferred Option**

4.3.23 One member of this group preferred Option 3 because it did not restrict height over the river and therefore would allow continued access for sailing vessels.
However, he did think that the junctions for this route in Widnes would need to be modified to ease traffic flow.

4.3.24 All the other members of the group preferred Option 3A. This option was thought to have the best traffic flow on both sides of the River Mersey. However, it was acknowledged that this option limits headroom on the river.

**Impact Factors**

4.3.25 Taking traffic away from the Silver Jubilee Bridge was thought to be very important. Therefore, the group thought that it was important to encourage through traffic to use the new bridge. This would require proper signing and clear road markings.

4.3.26 Job creation is also seen as of high importance to Halton. Congestion free access routes into Runcorn and Widnes were expected to encourage new business into the area.

4.3.27 The importance of noise pollution was also mentioned. A screen is required near to residential areas to reduce the problems.

4.3.28 Participants of this group requested copies of more detailed maps than those available on the brochure.

**4.4 Group Discussion - Group Two**

4.4.1 There were eight stakeholders in Group 2, representing the following organisations:

- Mersey Estuary Conservation Group
- Runcorn Residents Association
- Runcorn Soroptimists
- Halton Friends of the Earth
- North British Housing Association - Tenant Group
- Groundwork Mersey Valley
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- Transport Training Services.

**Option 1**

4.4.2 Respondents thought that Option 1 would not relieve the congestion on the approach roads to the current bridge.

"The bridge would be that close that everyone would hit the same spot, you'd just move congestion further down the road."

"People would have a look and see which bridge had less traffic and so they would be switching lanes, and this in turn would cause more congestion."

4.4.3 Furthermore, they were concerned about the effects of this option on the communities of West Bank and Runcorn Old Town.
"West Bank is a community that’s already quite isolated and to demolish a school would increase this."

"Traffic levels will increase in the areas adjacent to the bridge and so pollution would increase too."

4.4.4 Construction was expected to cause major disruptions and there were some concerns about safety, with two bridges so close together.

"People could jump from one bridge onto the other."

4.4.5 There was some discussion about how big an impact this option would have on the environment. The impact on flora and fauna was expected to be lower for this option, however, there was expected to be some impact on the estuarine flow and the ecology further down the River Mersey.

**Option 2**

4.4.6 This option was expected to cause less disruption to residents due to its distance from residential areas. However, it was thought that some residential areas would be affected by increases in noise and air pollution.

"Less disruption to residents as less people live close to either junction."

4.4.7 There were some concerns that a high percentage of traffic would continue to use the Silver Jubilee Bridge and that traffic would have to be directed onto the new bridge.

"Clear road markings for through and local traffic."

"You need to actually direct the traffic."

4.4.8 The proximity of the bridge to Spike Island was also raised as a concern as well as limited access to Astmoor.

"One of the nice things about Spike Island is that sense of space and although a bridge can be an attractive structure, it will affect this. It will cut you off from the river. It’s a little bit too close."

4.4.9 Respondents did not think that is was clear where the public transport routes were on the map. In turn, they could not tell how well linked this option could be to public transport.

**Option 3**

4.4.10 Option 3 was viewed as having good links to the current road system and possibly to the bus system in Runcorn. Allowing for an LRT crossing the bridge to link up with other methods of public transport.

4.4.11 This option was also expected to have less impact on residential areas.

4.4.12 However, the bridge approach and exit roads in Widnes were expected to cause problems.

"You’d have traffic crawl in Widnes, and pollution density will increase."
“In Widnes you’d almost get a crossing over effect. Almost a figure of eight. Local traffic from Runcorn going into Widnes or St Helens or towards M62 will cross traffic coming over the new bridge going towards Liverpool.”

“You would have to improve the highways. The junction at Morrisons is already a bad junction. Everyone gets in the wrong lane.”

4.4.13 The group also questioned the impact on Widnes Waterfront Development and asked whether the Mersey Crossing Group were in discussions with the Waterfront Development Group. This was confirmed.

Option 3A

4.4.14 This option was thought to link in well with other road systems. With free flowing junctions on both sides of the river.

“If traffic flows it will decrease problems.”

4.4.15 This option was also thought to be well located to link in with public transport.

“Close to a railway line, is there somewhere close that could be used for park and ride. Use of the brownfield site for a park and ride?” (In Widnes)

4.4.16 Respondents thought that there were fewer drawbacks for this route. In addition, although it was closer to Spike Island than Option 3, it was not thought to be as restrictive as Option 2. This option was also expected to be built quite high over Wigg Island and therefore was not expected to have too much impact, and could even compliment the landscape, possibly attracting people to the area.

General Issues

4.4.17 The number of piers in the river was a concern for the group. The believe that building and drilling in the areas around Wigg Island should be limited.

4.4.18 The group felt strongly that an LRT system needs to be built into the bridge, whichever option is selected. Some respondents even thought that this was necessary to attract government funding.

“Needs to be built into the bridge from the beginning to get the people of Halton wholly behind the new crossing.”

“Provision for a LRT system has to be included in the bridge.”

“Cheap, rapid, and subsidised. Even if it was just for local use.”

“It would need to be two way system, double track.”

“Look at the success of Manchester Metro Link, basically people just have to turn up and go, they don’t even publish timetables.”

“There’s a feasibility study to look at having a Park and Ride to Liverpool airport from Junction 11, with an LRT to the airport. There could be possibilities to link in with this.”

4.4.19 As well as stressing the importance of public transport links for the new bridge, the group also stressed the need for improving transport in the Borough in general, if congestion is to be minimised.
“Need a sustainable public transport system for local people.”

“Runcorn doesn’t have an integrated system.”

“Widnes and Runcorn (with all respect to Daresbury and Hale) are like two separate places. Any way of joining Halton together, which in my view it could be a sustainable, cheap, turn-up and go public transport system, they ought to be doing.”

4.4.20 Respondents also believe that cycling and pedestrian links need to be improved. If Halton wish to encourage people to cycle and walk across the Silver Jubilee Bridge, access on the bridge link roads will need to be improved.

“Cycling and pedestrian links need to be better. Some parts of Widnes and Runcorn are impossible to get to.”

“Improve pavements, cycle lanes, crossing ways.”

“If I live in Widnes and want to cycle or walk to Runcorn, even with a new bridge I’ve still got to go through that nightmare to get to the Silver Jubilee Bridge.”

Preferred Option

4.4.21 All of the members of the group preferred Option 3A; it was thought to have better links with road networks and public transport. The impact of this route in residential areas was also expected to be quite low. However, it was noted that if traffic was intended to use the Central Expressway from Junction 12, then road improvements were required.

4.5 Summary

4.5.1 It was acknowledged that some of the options (2 and 3A) have limited height over the River Mersey, affecting navigation rights on the river. This area is currently used by Fiddler’s Ferry Sailing Club.

4.5.2 Respondents stressed how important it was to improve the roads and junctions that would link any new crossing to the motorways and main traffic destination points. To achieve this it was considered imperative to identify the main traffic flow across the Silver Jubilee Bridge and areas where new traffic may be attracted from.

4.5.3 In addition, respondents stressed the importance of considering the links with public transport when selecting a route option. Furthermore, a number of the stakeholders believe that an LRT system should be included in the bridge plans.

4.5.4 Respondents thought that it was important to free the Silver Jubilee Bridge from high levels of traffic, allowing it to be used to get from one side of the borough to the other and to encourage walking and cycling.

4.5.5 The importance of the impact of a new crossing on residential areas in the proximity was also stressed. Noise and air pollution levels in these areas were of particular concern.

4.5.6 The expected levels of disruption during construction for Option 1 was thought to be unacceptable. For these reasons, Option 1, was not considered by the group to be a feasible option.
4.5.7 The group thought that Option 2 would not improve congestion due to the nature of the proposed junction.

4.5.8 There were concerns about the junction in Widnes for Option 3. This junction is already thought to be a difficult junction to negotiate, with the addition of extra traffic that a new bridge would attract expected to add to the problems.

4.5.9 The majority of the respondents thought that Option 3A had the benefits of Option 3 and in addition offered better traffic flow in Widnes. It was also thought to link in well with other road systems and could have good links with public transport.

4.5.10 All but one of the stakeholders preferred Option 3A. This was expected to have the best road links for through traffic and the best public transport links for Halton traffic. Junctions on the approach and exit roads of this option were expected to allow through traffic to flow freely, thereby limiting congestion in the town centres.
5 Postal Survey

5.1 Aim of Survey

5.1.1 A postal survey was conducted in order to determine the level of support for a new Mersey crossing and to identify a preferred option across a larger sample of respondents.

5.2 Postal Mailout

5.2.1 On Monday 24th February, survey questionnaires, brochures and reply paid envelopes were mailed out to the following members of the public:

- 7762 households residing in areas adjacent to the proposed routes;
- 867 businesses situated in areas adjacent to the proposed routes;
- 1061 members of Halton Citizen’s Panel not included in main residential mailout (total of 1,400 on panel);
- 64 representatives of local interest groups;
- 136 respondents from the on-street survey of the wider travelling public identified in Stage One (who indicated that they wished to take part in any further consultation); and
- 89 businesses contacts from the region (Runcorn, Widnes, Merseyside, Warrington and Cheshire) identified in Stage One (who indicated that they wished to take part in any further consultation).

5.2.2 A list of the postcodes used to identify residents and businesses in areas adjacent to the proposed route crossings can be found in Appendix G.

5.2.3 In addition, 5,000 questionnaires and brochures were made available to Gifford and Partners for distribution via planned exhibitions and central locations in Halton (e.g. libraries). A copy of the questionnaire was also available for completion on the New Mersey Crossing Website (www.merseycrossing.co.uk).

5.2.4 Respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire and return it in the reply paid envelope by Friday 14th March.

5.2.5 A helpline telephone number was printed on the questionnaire and a total of 25 telephone calls were received. The majority of these telephone calls were requesting further information regarding the route options, or enquiring about the exhibition dates or venues.

5.3 Response

5.3.1 A total of 1545 questionnaires were returned from the mail-out by Friday 21st March. An additional 35 questionnaires were returned after the analysis deadline and therefore have not been included in the analysis. The responses for different groups of respondents is shown in Table 5.1.
Table 5.1  Response numbers by respondent group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Respondents to Survey No.</th>
<th>% of total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents in areas adjacent to route options</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses in areas adjacent to route options</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of Halton’s Citizen’s Panel</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives of local interest groups (Note: also consulted via a workshop)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase I on-street survey</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase I business survey</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires supplied to Halton Council</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed via New Mersey Crossing Website</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitions, libraries etc.</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1545</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4  Profile of Respondents

5.4.1  A profile of the respondents showed that 60.3% were male and 39.7% female. In addition, the majority of respondents were aged between 25 and 74, with a small percentage of the sample younger or older. Full details can be found in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2  Age of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 – 24 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 44 years</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 59 years</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 74 years</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1528</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.2  Respondents were also requested to indicate their frequency of use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge. Nearly three in ten respondents use the current bridge at least five times a week, and less than one in a hundred never use the bridge. Table 5.3 shows these data.

Table 5.3  Frequency of Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5+ days a week</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 days a week</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 days a week</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a fortnight</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less often</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1526</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.3  The majority of respondents were from the Borough of Halton, with less than one in ten from surrounding areas. In addition, as a result of the method of
distribution, nearly six in ten respondents were from areas directly affected by the proposed routes. This information is shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4  Respondents' area of residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of residence</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent to Route 1 in Runcorn</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent to Route 1 in Widnes</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent to Route 2 in Runcorn</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent to Route 2 in Widnes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent to Route 3 in Runcorn</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent to Route 3 in Widnes</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other areas in Halton</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrounding areas</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1530</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.4 Finally, in order to understand respondents responses to the survey, they were asked to indicate which of the following groups they belonged to:

- Resident of Runcorn/Widnes;
- Manage business premises in Runcorn/Widnes;
- Use the current bridge;
- Work in Runcorn/Widnes; and
- Member of local interest/voluntary group.

5.4.5 As can be seen in Table 5.5, over nine in ten respondents indicated that they were residents of Runcorn or Widnes and over 7% manage business premises in the area.

5.4.6 This was a multiple response question; however, it should be noted that only 8% of respondents indicated that they use the current bridge. This is probably due to respondents indicating that they are residents in the area and not reading the remaining options available. A more accurate assessment of numbers of respondents using the bridge can be found in Table 5.3, which shows frequency of use of the bridge.

Table 5.5  Type of respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident of Runcorn/Widnes</td>
<td>1409</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business premises in Runcorn/Widnes</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the current bridge</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in Runcorn/Widnes</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of local interest/voluntary group</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5  Analysis of Survey

5.5.1 Frequencies were undertaken for each question on the questionnaire. Furthermore, where the number of respondents has permitted, additional crosstabulation analysis has been carried out to determine if there were any
differences in the results between gender, age, frequency of use of the bridge, area of residence, and respondent type. Where there were notable differences, these have been reported.

5.6 Overall Findings

*Level of agreement with the need for a New Mersey Crossing*

5.6.1 Of the respondents that completed the question, over nine in ten (96.5%) indicated that they agreed that a new Mersey crossing was needed. This information is shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Is a New Mersey Crossing needed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A new Mersey crossing is needed</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1336</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1532</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.2 There was general agreement that a new crossing was needed, with very little differences depending on sex, age, frequency of use of current bridge or type of respondent. In all cases, over 90% of respondents agreed that a new crossing was needed.

5.6.3 However, when one compares levels of agreement by area of residence, one can see some minor differences. Over nine in ten respondents residing adjacent to Options 2 and 3 in Widnes and parts of Halton outside the catchment areas strongly agreed that a new crossing is needed. In comparison, only seven in ten respondents residing adjacent to Option 1 in Widnes strongly agreed with the statement. This information is displayed in Figure 5.1.
Figure 5.1  The need for a new crossing by area

Factors presented for each Option

5.6.4 Respondents were requested to comment on the impact factors presented in the brochure for each of the options identified.

5.6.5 The impact factors identified in the brochure for Option 1 were as follows:

- Attracts over 90% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge but traffic would continue to be focused on a single crossing point with no alternative route in the event of an accident on the bridge or its approaches;
- Requires the demolition of at least 70 houses, a school and other community facilities;
- Affects the West Bank Conservation area and impacts on the setting of the Silver Jubilee and railway bridges (Grade 2 Listed Buildings);
- High visual impact on surrounding communities;
- Additional piers in the river would add to the constriction of flow at Runcorn Gap;
- Potentially the least impact on ecology but the closeness of this option to the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area is a major risk;
• Construction would disrupt nearby communities and severely affect local and through traffic;
• Potential adverse impact on the regeneration of Runcorn old town;
• Least land take; and
• Least perceived benefit to local businesses because of increased pressure on existing feeder roads to the bridge.

5.6.6 The impact factors identified in the brochure for Option 2 were as follows:
• Attracts about 70% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge but would have limited access to Astmoor Industrial estate;
• Affects a large area of inter-tidal habitat;
• Impacts on views from West Bank and Runcorn Old Town;
• Headroom over the River Mersey would be reduced near the north bank;
• Medium-longer term benefits for development in Halton and the wider sub-region but likely to have short term negative effect on Widnes Waterfront; and
• Links prime employment opportunities in Halton.

5.6.7 The impact factors identified in the brochure for Option 3 were as follows:
• Attracts nearly 80% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and has a better connection to the Central Expressway than Option 2;
• Affects a large area of inter-tidal habitat;
• Affects more of the saltmarsh than the other options;
• Bridge approach viaduct crosses Wigg Island Community Park;
• The scale and location of the new bridge would complement and enhance the existing landscape;
• Medium-longer term benefits for development in Halton and the wider sub-region but likely to have short-term negative effect on Widnes Waterfront; and
• Links prime employment opportunities in Halton.

5.6.8 The impact factors identified in the brochure for Option 3A were as follows:
• Attracts nearly 90% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and has a better connection to the Central Expressway than Option 2;
• Affects a large area of inter-tidal habitat;
• Affects less saltmarsh than Option 3;
• Bridge approach viaduct crosses Wigg Island Community Park;
Postal Survey

- The scale and location of the new bridge would complement and enhance the existing landscape;
- Headroom over the River Mersey would be reduced near the north bank;
- Medium-longer term benefits for development in Halton and the wider sub-region but likely to have short-term negative effect on Widnes Waterfront; and
- Links prime employment opportunities in Halton.

5.6.9 The majority of comments regarding Option 1 were related to the fact that it was not expected to relieve the congestion problems, that there was expected to be a high impact on communities and that its’ proximity to the current bridge was expected to cause congestion. All topics with more than ten comments are listed in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 Comments regarding Option 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>No. of comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would not relieve congestion, traffic problems would remain.</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High impact on local communities (disruption, demolition of houses, impact on house prices, loss of jobs, only school in West Bank).</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to Silver Jubilee Bridge.</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General negative comment (I do not like etc.).</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General positive comment (Good, I have selected etc.).</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative environmental comment (noise, pollution, wildlife).</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/funding comments.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides alternative route, would relieve congestion, aid traffic flow.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive environmental comment.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.10 The majority of comments relating to Option 2 were related to the fact that it wouldn’t relieve the existing congestion problems, there were also a number of general positive and general negative comments as well as concerns regarding the environmental impact. All topics with more than ten comments are listed in Table 5.8.
Table 5.8  Comments regarding Option 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>No. of comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would not relieve congestion, traffic problems would remain.</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General positive comment (Good, I have selected etc.).</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative environmental comment (noise, pollution, wildlife).</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General negative comment (I do not like etc.).</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on local communities.</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to Silver Jubilee Bridge.</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor access.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides alternative route, would relieve congestion, aid traffic flow.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further improvements required for junctions (particularly Ditton roundabout).</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves employment opportunities.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less impact on residents/local communities.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive comment regarding position of bridge related to main road links.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/funding comments</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.11 Comments that were made regarding Option 3 were generally positive in nature. However, there were some concerns regarding the environmental impact. All topics with more than 10 comments are listed in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9  Comments regarding Option 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>No. of comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General positive comment (Good, I have selected etc.).</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides alternative route, would relieve congestion, aid traffic flow.</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive comment regarding position of bridge related to main road links.</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative environmental comment (noise, pollution, wildlife).</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not relieve congestion, traffic problems would remain.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less impact on residents/local communities.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps traffic away from residential areas.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/funding comments</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves employment opportunities.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on local communities.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further improvements required for junctions.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General negative comment (I do not like etc.).</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive environmental comment.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to Silver Jubilee Bridge.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor access.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.12 The main comments made regarding Option 3A included general positive comments, cost or funding issues and concerns about remaining congestion, particularly at Ditton roundabout. All topics with more than ten comments are listed in Table 5.10.
Table 5.10 Comments regarding Option 3A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>No. of comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General positive comment (Good, I have selected etc.).</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/funding comments.</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not relieve congestion, traffic problems would remain (particularly concerned about Ditton roundabout).</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides alternative route, would relieve congestion, aid traffic flow.</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive comment regarding position of bridge related to main road links.</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative environmental comment (noise, pollution, wildlife).</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General negative comment (I do not like etc.).</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less impact on residents/local communities.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive environmental comment.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further improvements required for junctions (particularly Ditton roundabout).</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves employment opportunities.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on local communities.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to Silver Jubilee Bridge.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps traffic away from residential areas.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design of bridge/longest span over river/number of piers.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Importance of Impact Factors

5.6.13 Respondents were requested to state which of the impact factors that were presented in the brochure they believed to be the most important when selecting the best route for a new crossing. However, as this question was open-ended respondents included factors that were not necessarily included in the brochure. Only respondents’ first comment was included in the analysis.

5.6.14 Over three in ten respondents stated that improving the level of congestion was the most important factor. In addition, the amount of traffic the new crossing would attract from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and minimum disruption to local communities were identified as important factors. Table 5.11 details all the factors identified as being important by respondents.
Table 5.11 Most Important Impact Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Factor</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congestion relieved/lowered.</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of traffic attracted from current bridge.</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low impact on residential areas/minimum disruption to local communities.</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best use of existing road networks/links to main expressways/motorways.</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term cost/benefit considerations.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect on environment.</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links areas of employment/improves employment opportunities.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety for vehicles and pedestrians.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote public transport/cycling/walking.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance landscape/scenery.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy alternative route when one bridge is closed.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve site.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortest route/length of bridge.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to existing bridge.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1123</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.15 The following three impact factors were considered to be the most important regardless of area or type of respondent:

- Reduction in levels of congestion;
- Amount of traffic attracted from Silver Jubilee Bridge; and
- Minimising the disruption and impact to local communities.

**Additional Impact Factors**

5.6.16 Respondents were asked to list any other impact factors that they believe should have been considered for the proposed route options.

5.6.17 Respondents listed the following additional impact factors that they believe should have been considered for Option 1:

- Demolition of school/housing/destruction of community (24 comments);
- Design of bridge (16 comments);
- Safety implications for people living and working in vicinity e.g. air pollution (13 comments); and
- Disruption during construction (11 comments).

5.6.18 Respondents listed the following additional impact factors that they believe should have been considered for Option 2:

- Design of bridge (15 comments);
- Additional work planned to improve road junctions and connections (14 comments); and
• Demolition of school/housing/destruction of community (11 comments).

5.6.19 Respondents listed the following additional impact factors that they believe should have been considered for Option 3:

• Additional work planned to improve road junctions and connections (22 comments);

• Provisions for the recovery of wildlife/environment (22 comments); and

• Design of bridge (12 comments).

5.6.20 Respondents listed the following additional impact factors that they believe should have been considered for Option 3A:

• Provisions for the recovery of wildlife/environment (18 comments);

• Design of bridge (14 comments); and

• Additional work planned to improve road junctions and connections (12 comments).

Request for additional information

5.6.21 Participants in the survey were asked to state any further information that they would like to know about any of the route options. The majority of requests were for more precise plans of the routes, in either map or model form, detailing the road junctions and showing exactly which buildings would be affected.

5.6.22 In addition, respondents wished to know more about where the funding would come from for the new bridge, if toll charges would be introduced and if Council tax increases would be used to fund the build. Respondents also asked about compensation for falling house prices, the timescale of the build, what sort of levels of disruption could be expected for the different routes, the environmental impact of the routes and provisions for environmental recovery. A list of all requests for further information can be seen in Table 5.12.
Table 5.12  Requests for additional information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Number of comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Precise plans of routes, road junctions and areas to be affected.</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding/Monetary questions (where will money come from, will there be toll charges, increases in Council tax, compensation for failing house prices).</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels and length of expected disruption, what is planned timescale, when will the build start.</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected environmental impact and provisions made for recovery.</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/structure of bridge for each of the options.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected increases in traffic in the future, improvement plans for roads to cope with increased traffic.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence to support figures provided in brochure.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisions for cyclists and pedestrians.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General updates on progress/further consultation/meetings.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of headroom on river, will it affect future river traffic?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty/truth</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why discontinue with Tunnel option?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans for public transport.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect on Widnes Waterfront.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope to improve Silver Jubilee Bridge.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution emissions/effects on residential areas.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other locations for a bridge.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geological information.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety measures to reduce number of suicides.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building procedure/health and safety (e.g. airborne asbestos).</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of traffic catered for.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Options

5.6.23 The respondents were also asked to list any comments they had regarding the other options that were suggested in the brochure. Those respondents that did comment mainly questioned why a Tunnel or Option 4 were no longer being considered and offered support for these options.

- Tunnel (71 comments);
- Option 4 (41 comments);
- Whatever the decision it must be started soon (12 comments);
- Separate crossing for commercial traffic or restrictions on one of the bridges (8 comments);
- The need to integrate with an improved public transport system (9 comments);
- Positive comments regarding Option 2A (2 comments);
- Use of Moss Bank ICI site (1 comment);
- Use of Sandymoor site (1 comment); and
- Use of Park and Ride schemes (1 comment).
5.6.24 As can be seen in Figure 5.2, when asked which option they preferred, over four in ten respondents selected Option 3, and three in ten selected Option 3A.

**Figure 5.2 Preferred Option**

5.6.25 Options 3 and 3A were the most preferred route options independent of gender, age, frequency of use of the current bridge, area of residence, and respondent type. Figure 5.3 compares the results by residents of Widnes, residents of Runcorn and respondents who reside outside Halton.
5.6.26 There are some small differences in preference when one compares the results by age. As can be seen in Figure 5.4 respondents in the 16-24 age group had equal preference for Option 3 and 3A, in all other groups, a higher percentage of respondents preferred Option 3, however, in some of the groups this difference was very small.
Figure 5.4  Preferred Option by age

5.6.27  Less than one in ten respondents selected the ‘other’ category as their preferred option. Of these, the majority who completed the question (47.6%) preferred a tunnel, followed by 25.4% who preferred Option 4. Small numbers of respondents preferred other route options and these are all listed in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13  Other Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route Option</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tunnel</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 3 and 3A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want a new crossing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated public transport crossing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J14 on M56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd tier on railway bridge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2 and 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West of current bridge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toll on existing bridge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve/extend current bridge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Reasons for Option Preference**

5.6.28 The 111 respondents who indicated that they preferred Option 1, and completed the question, gave the following reasons for their choice:

- Cost (19 respondents);
- Improvement in traffic flow/will ease congestion (17 respondents);
- Good road connections (16 respondents);
- Less disruption to wildlife (13 respondents);
- General positive reason e.g. "it's the best" (12 respondents);
- Avoids town centre (5 respondents);
- Central location close to existing facilities (4 respondents);
- Convenient for me personally (4 respondents);
- Employment development (3 respondents); and
- Will improve area/landscape (2 respondents).

5.6.29 The 161 respondents who indicated that they preferred Option 2, and completed the question, gave the following reasons for their choice:

- Avoids residential areas/less impact on local communities (41 respondents);
- Improvement in traffic flow/will ease congestion (30 respondents);
- Has good road connections/easy access to motorway (23 respondents);
- Less disruption to wildlife (19 respondents);
- General positive reason e.g. "it's the best" (18 respondents);
- Cost (15 respondents);
- Position/distance from current bridge (11 respondents);
- Links industrial areas (5 respondents);
- Convenient for me personally (3 respondents);
- Impact factors listed in brochure (2 respondents);
- Will improve area/landscape (2 respondents); and
- Value for money (1 respondent).

5.6.30 The 677 respondents who indicated that they preferred Option 3, and completed the question, gave the following reasons for their choice:

- Improvement in traffic flow/will ease congestion (203 respondents);
- Has good road connections/easy access to motorway (181 respondents);
- Avoids residential areas/less impact on local communities (167 respondents);
- General positive reason e.g. "It's the best" (87 respondents);
- Links industrial areas (48 respondents);
- Position/distance from current bridge (36 respondents);
- Cost (22 respondents);
- Will improve area/landscape (22 respondents);
- Less disruption to wildlife and therefore it will recover (17 respondents);
- Value for money/long-term benefits (10 respondents);
- Less disruption during construction (8 respondents);
- Impact factors listed in brochure (5 respondents);
- Convenient for me personally (4 respondents);
- Good for breakdown/accident access (4 respondents);
- Safest (3 respondents);
- Could connect with Trans Pennine Rail or other links with public transport (1 respondent); and
- Length of bridge (1 respondent).

5.6.31 The 472 respondents who indicated that they preferred Option 3A, and completed the question, gave the following reasons for their choice:

- Improvement in traffic flow/will ease congestion (167 respondents);
- Has good road connections/easy access to motorway (100 respondents);
- Avoids residential areas/less impact on local communities (95 respondents);
- General positive reason e.g. "It's the best" (63 respondents);
- Less disruption to wildlife and therefore it will recover (59 respondents);
- Links industrial areas (34 respondents);
- Position/distance from current bridge (22 respondents);
- Will improve area/landscape (19 respondents);
- Value for money/long-term benefits (13 respondents);
- Cost (10 respondents);
- Less disruption during construction (7 respondents);
- Good for breakdown/accident access (5 respondents);
- Convenient for me personally (3 respondents);
- Impact factors listed in brochure (3 respondents);
- Safest (1 respondent);
- Could link with public transport (1 respondent); and
- Length of bridge (1 respondent).

5.6.32 The main reasons for selection of the “other” option were:
- avoids residential areas;
- would ease congestion;
- less disruption to wildlife;
- better road connections/access to motorways;
- cost;
- distance from existing bridge;
- would improve area/landscape;
- safest; and
- benefits from using existing solid structure.

5.7 Results for Residents’ Mailout

5.7.1 In total, 7762 questionnaires were distributed to residents living in areas adjacent to the proposed route options. Figure 5.5 shows a map detailing these areas.
5.7.2 The postcodes used to identify residential addresses in these areas can be found in Appendix G.

5.7.3 Although questionnaires were addressed to 'The Occupier', all envelopes were printed with a New Mersey Crossing logo to draw residents attention to the subject matter in an attempt to generate a good response rate. However, as shown in Table 5.14, only 893 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of
11.5%. This low response may be attributed to the length of time that discussions regarding a New Mersey Crossing have been taking place, the attitude that public opinion will not count, or general apathy towards a new Mersey crossing. However, it may be that residents are interested in the proposal, but that a postal survey is not the best method of consulting with them. As focus groups have been conducted with residents recruited from face-to-face interviews at their homes, the postal survey is not the only method of consultation that has taken place. In addition, residents were given an opportunity to find out more about the plans for a new crossing via the exhibitions.

5.7.4 Table 5.14 details the response rate in each of the catchment areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catchment area</th>
<th>Questionnaires delivered No.</th>
<th>Questionnaire returned No.</th>
<th>Questionnaire returned %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Route 1 Runcorn</td>
<td>2209</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 1 Widnes</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 2 Runcorn</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 2 Widnes</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3 Runcorn</td>
<td>1330</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3 Widnes</td>
<td>2401</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7762</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7.5 The general findings for this sample were similar to the total survey sample. Over nine in ten (96.5%) respondents agreed that a new crossing was needed and Option 3 was the most preferred option. Table 5.15 shows these data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The need for a New Mersey Crossing</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred Route Option</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Route 1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 2</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3A</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7.6 In addition, respondents from the residents’ mailout, also identified the reduction of congestion, attraction of a high percentage of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and minimum disruption and impact for local communities as the most important impact factors.

Results of resident’s survey by area

5.7.7 As can be seen in Table 5.16, there is little difference in levels of support for a new crossing by area.
Table 5.16  Level of support for a new crossing by area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Route 1 Runcorn</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 1 Widnes</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 2 Runcorn</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 2 Widnes</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3 Runcorn</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3 Widnes</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7.8 However, there are some differences in Option preference. In general, respondents prefer Option 3 independent of area, the exception is for respondents residing adjacent to Route 2 in Widnes, in this case, Option 3A is preferred.

5.7.9 In addition, a higher percentage (17.7%) of respondents residing adjacent to Route 1 in Widnes (West Bank) prefer Option 1, when compared to the sample as a whole. This may be due to some respondents in these areas wishing to be relocated in the event of this route being selected. This information is presented in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6  Preferred Option by area of residence – Residents
5.7.10 The main reasons that respondents prefer one route option over the others is generally independent of area of residence.

5.7.11 When selecting a preferred route option respondents appear to have considered all of the impact factors rather than just those that just affect them personally.

5.8 Results for Business Mailout

5.8.1 In total 867 questionnaires were distributed to business addresses in the areas adjacent to the proposed route options. Again, although the questionnaires were generally addressed, all envelopes were printed with a New Mersey Crossing logo to draw people's attention to the subject matter in an attempt to generate a good response rate. A 7.6% response rate was achieved, considering the amount of mail received at company addresses, this response rate was not unexpected.

5.8.2 Table 5.17 details the response rate in each of the catchment areas.

**Table 5.17  Business Mailout Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catchment area</th>
<th>Questionnaires delivered No.</th>
<th>Questionnaire returned No.</th>
<th>Questionnaire returned %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Route 1 Runcorn</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 1 Widnes</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 2 Runcorn</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 2 Widnes</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3 Runcorn</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3 Widnes</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catchment area</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questionnaires delivered No.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questionnaire returned No.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questionnaire returned %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8.3 The general findings for this sample were similar to the total survey sample. Over nine in ten (98.5%) respondents agreed that a new crossing was needed and over four in ten respondents preferred Option 3. Table 5.18 shows these data.

**Table 5.18  Results for Business Mailout**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The need for a New Mersey Crossing</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred Route Option</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Route 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route 3A</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8.4 Again, respondents from the business mailout, identified the reduction of congestion, attraction of a high percentage of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and minimum disruption and impact for local communities as the most important impact factors.

5.9 **Results for Halton’s Citizen’s Panel**

5.9.1 The questionnaire was also distributed to members of Halton’s Citizen’s Panel in order to obtain views from a wider cross-section of Halton residents.

5.9.2 Members of the panel that were already sent a questionnaire due to residing in areas adjacent to the proposed routes were excluded from this distribution. Therefore, questionnaire and brochures were mailed to 1061 members. A total of 442 questionnaire were returned by the deadline, giving a response rate of 41.7%.

5.9.3 As can be seen in Table 5.19, once again, the results are in line with the total sample. Over nine in ten (91.4%) respondents strongly agree that a new crossing is needed, and over four in ten (45.2%) prefer Option 3.

**Table 5.19  Results for Halton’s Citizen’s Panel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The need for a New Mersey Crossing</th>
<th>Respondents No.</th>
<th>Respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need for a New Mersey Crossing</td>
<td>Respondents No.</td>
<td>Respondents %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Route Option</td>
<td>Respondents No.</td>
<td>Respondents %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 3</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 3A</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.9.4 In addition, panel members thought that the reduction of congestion, attraction of a high percentage of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and minimum disruption and impact for local communities were the most important impact factors.
Appendix A

Impact Factors of Route Options
Appendix A

Option 1

A new bridge between West Bank and Runcorn Old Town alongside the existing bridge.

Capital Cost: £169m

1. Attracts over 90% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge but traffic would continue to be focussed on a single crossing point with no alternative route in the event of an accident on the bridge or its approaches.

2. Requires the demolition of at least 70 houses, a school and other community facilities.

3. Affects the West Bank Conservation area and impacts on the setting of the Silver Jubilee and railway bridges (Grade 2 Listed Buildings).

4. High visual impact on surrounding communities.

5. Additional piers in the river would add to the constriction of flow at Runcorn Gap.

6. Potentially the least impact on ecology but the closeness of this option to the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area is a major risk.

7. Construction would disrupt nearby communities and severely affect local and through traffic.

8. Potential adverse impact on the regeneration of Runcorn Old town.

9. Least land take.

10. Least perceived benefit to local businesses because of increased pressure on existing feeder roads to the bridge.
Option 2

Astmoor interchange to Ditton roundabout (passing to the West of the Rhodia works)

**Capital Cost: £174m**

1. Attracts about 70% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge but would have limited access to Astmoor Industrial estate.

2. Affects a large area of inter-tidal habitat.

3. Impacts on views from West Bank and Runcorn Old Town.

4. Headroom over the River Mersey would be reduced near the north bank.

5. Medium-longer term benefits for development in Halton and the wider sub-region but likely to have short term negative effect on Widnes Waterfront.

Appendix A

Option 3

Central Expressway to Widnes Eastern by-pass (passing to the East of the Rhodia works)

Capital Cost: £186m

1. Attracts nearly 80% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and has a better connection to the Central Expressway than Option 2.
2. Affects a large area of inter-tidal habitat.
3. Affects more of the saltmarsh than the other options.
4. Bridge approach viaduct crosses Wigg Island Community Park.
5. The scale and location of the new bridge would complement and enhance the existing landscape.
6. Medium-longer term benefits for development in Halton and the wider sub-region but likely to have short-term negative effect on Widnes Waterfront.
7. Links prime employment opportunities in Halton.
Appendix A

Option 3A

Central Expressway to Ditton roundabout (passing West of the Rhodia works)

Capital Cost: £209m

1. Attracts nearly 90% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and has a better connection to the Central Expressway than Option 2.

2. Affects a large area of inter-tidal habitat.

3. Affects less saltmarsh than Option 3.

4. Bridge approach viaduct crosses Wigg Island Community Park.

5. The scale and location of the new bridge would complement and enhance the existing landscape.

6. Headroom over the River Mersey would be reduced near the north bank.

7. Medium-longer term benefits for development in Halton and the wider sub-region but likely to have short-term negative effect on Widnes Waterfront.

8. Links prime employment opportunities in Halton.
Appendix B
Discussion Guide
Appendix B

Introduction

Good evening, my name is ............ from MVA, we are carrying out consultation on the new Mersey crossing for Halton Borough Council and their engineering consultants on this project, Gifford and Partners, with local residents and businesses. This is ............ from Gifford and Partners, they are here to give you some information about the proposed new crossing and answer any questions you may have. The aim of the discussion tonight is to investigate your opinions and expectations of a number of proposed routes for the new crossing.

Explain format of discussion, purpose of tape recorder, confidentiality issues etc.

Icebreaker

Ask respondents to introduce themselves, and sum up (in a few words) their experiences of the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

Progress to-date

Gifford to present findings from Phase I, current problems/issues, the consultation process, rejected options.

Next Steps.

Route Options (not including costs)

I would now like to show you in detail the proposed routes for the new crossing, taking each route in turn.

Route 1

Map of route - Initial thoughts/opinions. What are the main benefits of this route? What are the main drawbacks? Who would benefit most from this route? What impact will this route have? (prompt if necessary social, economic, environmental, transport ....)

List of impact factors - Agree/disagree with the factors. Now what are main benefits and drawbacks of route? Who would benefit? Who/what would it have a negative impact upon?

I want you to imagine that the new crossing is under construction. How will this impact on you? How will it impact on the surrounding area? Residents? Local Businesses?

Now imagine that this crossing exists and how it has changed the surrounding area. What does the surrounding area look like? How has it impacted on you? How has it impacted on others? How has it impacted on the existing bridge?

Route 2

Map of route - Initial thoughts/opinions. What are the main benefits of this route? What are the main drawbacks? Who would benefit most from this route? What impact will this route have? (prompt if necessary social, economic, environmental, transport ....)

List of impact factors - Agree/disagree with the factors. Now what are main benefits and drawbacks of route? Who would benefit? Who/what would it have a negative impact upon?

I want you to imagine that the new crossing is under construction. How will this impact on you? How will it impact on the surrounding area? Residents? Local Businesses?

Now imagine that this crossing exists and how it has changed the surrounding area. What does the surrounding area look like? How has it impacted on you? How has it impacted on others? How has it impacted on the existing bridge?
Appendix B

Route 3

Map of route - Initial thoughts/opinions. What are the main benefits of this route? What are the main drawbacks? Who would benefit most from this route? What impact will this route have? (prompt if necessary social, economic, environmental, transport ....)

List of impact factors - Agree/disagree with the factors. Now what are main benefits and drawbacks of route? Who would benefit? Who/what would it have a negative impact upon?

I want you to imagine that the new crossing is under construction. How will this impact on you? How will it impact on the surrounding area? Residents? Local Businesses?

Now imagine that this crossing exists and how it has changed the surrounding area. What does the surrounding area look like? How has it impacted on you? How has it impacted on others? How has it impacted on the existing bridge?

Route 3A

Map of route - Initial thoughts/opinions. What are the main benefits of this route? What are the main drawbacks? Who would benefit most from this route? What impact will this route have? (prompt if necessary social, economic, environmental, transport ....)

List of impact factors - Agree/disagree with the factors. Now what are main benefits and drawbacks of route? Who would benefit? Who/what would it have a negative impact upon?

I want you to imagine that the new crossing is under construction. How will this impact on you? How will it impact on the surrounding area? Residents? Local Businesses?

Now imagine that this crossing exists and how it has changed the surrounding area. What does the surrounding area look like? How has it impacted on you? How has it impacted on others? How has it impacted on the existing bridge?

Impact Factors – All Routes

What do you think are the most important factors in determining the preferred route? Why? Are there other important factors that we have not taken into account? Which proposed route do you think would be of most benefit to the people of Halton? Who would it be most beneficial to? Who might it have a negative impact on?

Preferred Route (with & without costs)

I want you to take a few minutes to write down your preferred route, 1/2/3 or3A, briefly state why and then share this with the group.

Which is your preferred route? Why? How would your preferred crossing change your life? How would it change other people’s lives? How would it affect the surrounding area?

I am now going to hand out a table showing the costs of the different option. Without discussing these costs with the others, please once again write down your preferred route and reasons why (this may of course remain the same) and then share this with the group.

Did cost have an influence on your preferences? How important is cost compared to other factors? Where do you think the money will come from to fund the new crossing? Where do you think the money should come from to fund the new crossing?

Decision Process (do not include if there is general agreement on preferred route)

I’m now going to split you into two groups and I want you to imagine that you are representing Halton Borough Council and you have to weigh up the benefits and drawbacks
of all the routes and then decide which route should be taken forward, listing your reasons for this choice. You have fifteen minutes to come to a decision, use the paper and pens provided. You have to come to an agreement, so you may have to vote. I suggest that you start by prioritising the factors.

Conclusions

If time - What are the main things to be considered in developing a new bridge (e.g. appearance, cost, location, who pays for it, how big it is - sufficient capacity)?

Thank and inform of next steps

Inform of survey. Thank you all for giving up your time to help with this consultation process. Gifford and partners will shortly be reporting the findings of environmental and other studies to the Mersey Crossing Group. The findings of this consultation will be carefully considered alongside these and will assist the Mersey Crossing Group in the selection of the preferred option. An application to Government for funding for the project will then be made. A Public Inquiry will almost certainly be required. Given a positive response by Government and allowing a reasonable time for the Public Inquiry process, it should be possible for work to commence on a new crossing in 2005. Allowing 2 to 3 years for construction, the new crossing would be open to traffic by the end of 2007.
Appendix C

Summaries of Group Discussions
**RESPONDENTS RESIDING IN AREAS ADJACENT TO OPTION 1 IN RUNCORN**

**RESPONDENT DETAILS**

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**Experiences of the Silver Jubilee Bridge**

All of the group use the bridge at least once a week and the majority use it more often. The congestion on the bridge is thought to be very bad, causing problems on an almost daily basis. However, one of the respondents mentioned that the traffic on the bridge has improved with the introduction of traffic lights on the expressway and an improvement in road markings.

"I can see the traffic queuing for the bridge from my house and it is very busy, all the accidents are terrible. I often get stuck on it."

Respondents said that they worry about making appointments that involve them crossing the bridge, as they cannot rely on their journey time.

"I have to leave an hour early for hospital appointments in Liverpool because of the bridge, you just can't trust it."

Traffic congestion was thought to occur in other areas of Runcorn, due to people trying to avoid queuing for the bridge. This is further aggravated by the number of drivers, particularly HGVs that lose their way on the approaches to the bridge, due to bad road signage.

"What used to be a nice quiet road in Runcorn, Pickow Farm Road, is now a very busy, because people use it to avoid a back queue onto the bridge, because people let them in the queue further up."

Many of the group questioned why the Silver Jubilee Bridge was in such a bad state of disrepair and why there were so many accidents on it. In addition, they questioned whether a new bridge would be an improvement or just have the same problems.

Using the Silver Jubilee Bridge for local traffic was thought to be a good idea. This would ease the noise and air pollution for communities near to the bridge. It would also mean that local people could cross the River Mersey without worrying about their journey back.

"If you want to go over and see relatives on the other side you don't want to be panicking like you would at the moment about are you going to get back to pick the children up from school."

"It's a constant worry, even before you go across you worry about whether you'd get back. So the SJB for local traffic is a good idea."

"The new bridge will take so much trouble away from the old town and maybe give a chance to develop it."

"I used to go to Morrisons to shop but that means crossing the bridge and it's so bad, especially at weekends, that I now go to Asda (without crossing the bridge), but I prefer Morrisons."
However, the group felt that through traffic would have to be encouraged to use the new bridge in some way. One person mentioned the use of a toll, on the current bridge, for any traffic other than local using it.

In terms of the new bridge, the group felt that it was important, not just where the bridge was located, but how the approach roads would be improved and how traffic would be guided onto the crossing.

**Route Options**

The routes where presented to the respondents in a random order. The findings below are presented in the order discussed in the groups. Initially only maps of the options were shown, with details of link roads. After initial discussions, the probable impacts of the option were communicated to the respondents followed by further discussion. Where the impact factors have influenced views regarding advantages and disadvantages or preferences of route options it will be indicated, at all other times the views expressed are those prior to receiving information.

**Option 3**

**Advantages**

Option 3 was thought to make use of an existing major road in Runcorn (Central Expressway), and link directly to Astmoor Industrial Estate. It was expected to take traffic away from Runcorn town centre, improving the air and noise pollution in these areas.

"It’s a major road anyway and it takes traffic out of the town centre."

"It would take the traffic away from the existing bridge and away from the old town."

Respondents thought that it offered traffic a direct route to the M56 on one side of the Mersey and the M62 on the other. It also links two industrial/commercial sites. Therefore, the route was expected to attract a high proportion of the traffic using the current bridge.

"I think it would be more popular than the existing bridge."

"Local people will still use the SJB but it will be easier to use, safer to use and quieter for those living close."

Respondents believe that people currently bypass Runcorn due to traffic congestion and thought that the introduction of a new bridge would bring more people to the area and, in the long term, more industry and thus jobs. Easy access for locals was also expected to improve employment prospects.

"At the moment if you live north of the river you worry about getting a job south of the river, because you worry about getting to it, this would open up more employment opportunities."

As Option 3 is based away from residential areas, it is not expected to be very disruptive to local communities, even during construction.

"Impact during construction would be low because it mainly effects industrial areas it’s not on the doorsteps of the local community."

**Disadvantages**

There were concerns that this option would cause traffic build-up at the Astmoor Junction.
Appendix C

It was thought that some Liverpool traffic might still use the Silver Jubilee Bridge, as it is more direct.

"You’d have to route the Liverpool traffic onto the new bridge and make it more difficult to get onto the SJB."

The junction in Runcorn may cause queues at the Astmoor roundabout.

Respondents said that the Widnes junction was already quite busy and may become an accident blackspot.

"You would need to improve the roads on the Widnes side leading to the start of the new bridge."

This was expected to be an expensive option.

The group did question whether there would be an impact on the local wildlife, however they were unsure about this.

Once the impact factors were shared with the group, they did have concern about the impact on conservation areas and wildlife, however, this was mainly limited to the construction phase, and was expected to recover.

"Nature is strong, and it comes back again and you have the same wildlife as before."

Option 1

Advantages

The only advantage that we identified for Option 1 was cost; this was expected to be the shortest and therefore the cheapest option.

Disadvantages

Respondents had major concerns about the affect of this crossing on the community of Runcorn Old Town.

"People would have to have their houses knocked down!"

"It would destroy the old town."

"What would it be doing to me, breathing in all those traffic fumes."

"Runcorn old town already needs a lot of work to be done to bring it back to life and building bridge approaches and bridge supports right through part of the town will destroy it."

"I don't think it's worth talking about that route."

"Everything in the area of the old town has already been built on, so you'd be moving communities, it's not acceptable."

Option 1 was also expected to cause major disruptions during construction, involving road closures and limited access on the approach areas to the current bridge.

"This would be absolute chaos."
"It would be murderous while the bridge was under construction – absolute nightmare."

This option was not expected to cure congestion problems in the area, in fact, respondents thought that congestion may even increase. More approach roads in the area were expected to add to the already confusing road system, with increasing opportunity for through traffic to take the wrong exit and get lost.

"You still need to use the same roads to approach the bridge and these roads are currently congested already."

"Wouldn’t the link roads off still come off on the dual carriageway, so you’d still have a tailback."

"I think that a shorter bridge will lead to more congestion than a shorter bridge – it acts as more of a bottleneck."

"People get lost already, there’s too much messing around through the old town trying to get onto the bridge as it is. People can see the bridge but can’t get onto it!"

Businesses in Halton, particularly in Runcorn, were expected to be negatively affected by this option, as people would not be inclined to visit and area suffering from major congestion.

"People won’t want to come to the old town because it would be so difficult to get to and back from."

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

**Option 2**

**Advantages**

The Widnes junction was not expected to cause any traffic problems.

Some of the respondents didn’t expect this option to cause major disruption during construction as it requires little change to the road network leading up to the bridge approaches.

"It’s away from the main residential areas."

**Disadvantages**

The group were concerned about the Runcorn junction for Option 2. This junction was not thought to be adequate for the bridge traffic and congestion problems were expected. They were also worried about the lack of direct access to Astmoor.

"The traffic can’t just go straight on, it has to stop at junctions and that causes accidents and then congestion."

In general, the group thought that this option was feasible. However, it was not expected to resolve congestion issues as well as Option 3.

"It has some of the benefits of route 3, but not as many benefits as route 3."

"It’s okay but could be better."
When the impact factors were shared with respondents, they raised concerns about the impact of this option on the environment.

**Option 3A**

**Advantages**

Option 3A was expected to give easy access to the motorway (M56). Allowing traffic access from either Junction 11 or 12.

"It’s straight off the motorway and onto the bridge – very easy."

Respondents said that the Widnes junction did not interrupt traffic flow. Furthermore, it was expected to encourage people to use the new bridge, helping to keep the Silver Jubilee Bridge for local traffic.

"This is definitely the best."

Respondents felt that this option would not have a major affect on any residential areas.

"It mainly affects old industrial areas."

**Disadvantages**

Option 3A was expected to be expensive due to its length.

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

**Preferred Route**

Two-thirds of the group preferred Option 3A. It was expected to be less disruptive to the local community, particularly to Runcorn Old Town.

Once the bridge was complete, it was expected to improve pollution levels in Runcorn, giving a higher standard of living to communities directly adjacent to the current bridge. Furthermore, this option was also expected to take the maximum amount of traffic away from the current bridge.

Option 3A was also thought to have, along with Option 3, the best junction in Runcorn, with good links to the M55. It is also expected to provide easy access to the M6 and M62.

"It allows for a good flow of traffic, straightforward, least confusing for through traffic, you come to that roundabout from the North and it's straightforward."

Although it was accepted that businesses in the area might suffer in the short term, this option was expected to encourage industrial investment in the longer term.

Three respondents selected Option 2 as their preferred option. They thought that the junction at Runcorn was superior to Option 3A, it was cheaper than Option 3A and that it makes use of existing roads.

**Impact Factors**

The new crossing should have as little impact on residential areas as possible, although the environment was mentioned, impact on residents was of prime concern.
“The environment does matter, of course it does. But we need to improve Runcorn Old Town, there are fewer children being born, less people moving into the area and we have to turn this around. We need to improve job prospects and market it as a nice place to live, open up new businesses and attract young families.”

“It’s most important not to affect the people in Runcorn.”

Respondents believe that it is most important that the new crossing reduced congestion, taking traffic away from Runcorn Old Town. It is important to them that air and noise pollution is reduced in this area.

The group understood that there would be some impact to Halton residents during construction, however, if this was kept to a minimum in residential areas, then it was acceptable.

“We don’t mind putting up with some disruption, noise, dust, road closures etc. as long as it’s for a purpose and will have a benefit. To put up with some inconvenience to get it right – we don’t mind that.”

They thought that how the bridge looked was important. In addition, that it should be suitable for pedestrians and cyclists.

Respondents even thought that new bridge could be a tourist attraction.

**COST**

Cost was not thought to be of prime consideration when selecting a crossing option. The impact on the local community was thought to be of most importance.

“If it’s going to make it better for all areas then you should ignore cost.”

“It’s not just about cost in monetary value, but also the cost to the community.”

Respondents had some concerns about how the bridge will be funded. Even so, they thought it was acceptable to select the most expensive option if it was the best option and had clear benefits over the others.

“We should spend more now and get it right. In the longer term, it will be more cost effective, with an improvement in employment. This will pay back the costs of building the bridge.”

None of the respondents changed their preferred option because of cost.

**General**

The group were keen to know the timescales involved it the project.

They stressed how important it was to distribute the information to the local community, so that they can see the plans and have an input to the process.
RESPONDENTS RESIDING IN AREAS ADJACENT TO OPTION 1 IN WIDNES

RESPONDENT DETAILS

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Experiences of the Silver Jubilee Bridge

All of the respondents use the Silver Jubilee Bridge, either on a daily or weekly basis. Congestion on the Silver Jubilee Bridge and its feeder roads is thought to be severe and unable to cope with the current levels of traffic.

The bridge is thought to effect people’s lives in many ways, from what shops are used, to how often one visits friends or family, people aren’t keen to cross the bridge. The bridge is also seen as a barrier to employment. Some people who live in Runcorn do not seek employment in Widnes and vice versa, because they cannot rely on their journey time. The smallest incident on the bridge is perceived to cause major chaos.

“You can’t just pop across the bridge, although it should only take a few minutes, because you don’t know for sure what time you’ll be able to get back for.”

It is believed that the Silver Jubilee Bridge was built according to cost rather than needs and this is a mistake that they hope will not be repeated. The bridge is recognised as being in serious need of repair.

“They need to spend some money this time and get it right.”

A number of respondents thought that a weight restriction should be placed on the Silver Jubilee Bridge, once the new bridge is built.

“It would stop all the HGV’s that go flying over my house.”

“It's the big trucks that cause the accidents, they're just too big for the bridge, they need to stop them using it.”

Route Options

The routes where presented to the respondents in a random order. The findings below are presented in the order discussed in the groups. Initially only maps of the options were shown, with details of link roads. After initial discussions, the probable impacts of the option were communicated to the respondents followed by further discussion. Where the impact factors have influenced views regarding advantages and disadvantages or preferences of route options it will be indicated, at all other times the views expressed are those prior to receiving information.
Option 1

Advantages

Respondents believed that this option would be a cheaper bridge to build. However, although asked, they were unable to identify any further advantages for this option.

Disadvantages

This option was expected to have a major negative impact on the community in West Bank. It was thought to involve some people relocating to a different area and high levels of noise and air pollution for those that remain.

"People are happy here (West Bank), they’ve lived here all their lives, you can’t just move them somewhere else. They’d have to start all over again."

"It would split the community."

"People are happy where they are – it’s a nice little community."

"It will annihilate West Bank. People would be living right underneath it."

There were members in the group who live directly next to the Silver Jubilee Bridge and expected to have to be relocated. These people were extremely concerned about where they would be moved to and the level of compensation they would get.

"It’s a nice community – where will they shove you if they take you out of there."

"So what will I actually get in compensation? They say I’ll get the value – but what value, the value it should have been, or the value it is now because of the bridge? That’s not compensation. Halton won’t give me what it should be worth."

"Compulsory purchase orders don’t give a fair amount of money."

"I wouldn’t have any say in what they offered me. I love my home, I’d never get the same."

This option was also expected to cause problems for those that remained in West Bank. As well as an expected increase in noise and air pollution due to the higher levels of traffic that two bridges together were expected to attract, people living in the West Bank area expected this option to affect house prices. Many of the respondents stated that they would not want to remain in the area if a second bridge was erected. However, they expected to have difficulties selling their homes and so may have to stay in the area.

"There’s a big problem for the people that remain in West Bank, it’s not going to be an area that anyone would want to live in – and yet we wouldn’t be able to sell our houses either because no one else would want them. So we’d be stuck in a dying community with high levels of noise and air pollution."

"The current bridge has depressed houses in West Bank already, my home is worth 28K for some reason, yet a Barratt house down the road is worth 40K and they’re just wooden shacks."

"It’s okay for those that get compensation. But I’d have to stay, I wouldn’t want to live in an area with two bridges over my head, but I wouldn’t be able to sell my house and be able to afford to buy somewhere else."
"I live right besides this bridge now and in my vestibule I get grit from the bridge – so if you get grit you get fumes. So I don't want two bridges."

"The dirt in my hall is already terrible from one bridge. What would it be like from two?"

It was mentioned that there was a school adjacent to the bridge and that this was the only school in West Bank. When informed that this school would have to be demolished, a number of the group were extremely unhappy. If the school was demolished, a new school would need to be built in the area prior to demolition. However, respondents were concerned that there was not enough land in West Bank to build a new school, or at least not near enough to the current one. A high proportion of the group (over half) did not have access to a car and this was stated to be common in the area. A school that was not within easy walking distance was not thought to be adequate.

"I can't think of anywhere within walking distance where you could put a school. Would you want a school near two bridges with heavy traffic flow?"

The lack of a school in the area was in turn expected to cause further problems to the community.

"People with young families wouldn't move into the area – it would just die."

"The school would go and houses would go – they're not going to build a school for the remaining houses, so once again no young families will settle in the area."

"They're thinking about everyone and everything else except the community that's living there. Pulling houses down should only be done as a last resort."

Construction of the bridge was also a major concern for the group. Both in terms of traffic congestion and impact on the community. Trucks carrying heavy loads were expected to need access through residential areas with narrow roads.

"It would make things on the bridge even worse."

"There'd be big trucks coming down Mersey Road during construction – it would be impossible."

Worries about safety during construction were also of concern. With young children needing to cross busy roads and possible damage to housing.

"I'm worried about the safety during construction – there's lots of young kids that live in this area."

"I don't want to stay in West Bank whilst all this building work is going on. What options will I have?"

This option was also expected to cause rather than alleviate traffic problems. Respondents thought that the fact that both bridges would use the same approach roads meant traffic would flow on the bridge, but queue to get on and off.

"It'll just cause a bottleneck."

"There would still be traffic problems."

Option 1 was not viewed as being particularly useful for local people and was thought to be designed for through traffic rather than residents of Halton.
"This route only benefits the people of Warrington, St Helens and Liverpool, there's no benefit for the local people."

"It doesn't encourage industrial investment in the area."

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Option 2

Advantages

Compared to Option 1, this was not expected to have as big an affect on residential areas. Any buildings requiring demolition were thought to be industrial.

"It's easier to move a few business units than move a community."

Even during construction, respondents did not think that there would be major disturbances for the people of Halton.

"It's away from residential areas and so wouldn't have too big an effect on communities."

Respondents thought that option 2 was also well connected to major roads on both sides of the river.

Disadvantages

The group thought that the main disadvantage of this option was its proximity to a housing estate in Widnes. Although there is not direct access from the bridge access road it is situated close to a new residential area and respondents thought that noise and air pollution would increase in this area, as well as having safety concerns for children living nearby.

"They'd have to put up some sort of safety barrier."

This option was also thought to cross the bridge at a wide point and therefore may affect wildlife in the area. However, this was not of major concern as was only expected to have a temporary impact.

"It would affect wildlife, but this would recover."

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Option 3

Advantages

The main advantage of this option was identified as its low impact on residential areas.

It was also expected to encourage industrial investment, as the traffic is directed to industrial areas.
Disadvantages

Some traffic might still be tempted to use the SJB.

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Option 3A

Advantages

This option was expected to encourage traffic flow, with easy to negotiate junctions and main traffic routed straight on and off the bridge.

"It has all the good points of the others, put into one bridge."

Respondents also believed that Option 3A would encourage Liverpool traffic to use the new bridge rather than the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"You can see how the traffic coming from Speke Road would just go onto the new bridge, without even realising that they'd missed the SJB. They'd have to make an effort to use the SJB rather than vice versa."

In general, the bridge was thought to be away from residential areas and therefore would not have a high affect on the community, even during construction.

The fact that bridge exits were next to industrial areas was expected to encourage industrial investment.

Disadvantages

This option was thought to be slightly closer to houses than option 3.

It was also expected to impact on salt marshes and Wigg Island. Concerns were also raised about whether it would affect Spike Island.

"There could be problems with the marsh, but it's still the best route."

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Preference

The majority of the respondents in the group (4) preferred Option 3A. This option was expected to have a low impact on communities, not affecting any residential areas. During construction, this route was not expected to cause excessive noise or disturbance, as opposed to other options (1 and 2). Furthermore, option 3A was thought to have good traffic connections with a clear flow for Liverpool traffic onto the bridge.

"It has less impact on housing, with a low affect on factories and they can be relocated without major problems, they'll be compensated."

"It allows for better traffic flow in Widnes, compared with option 3."
One of the respondents chose Option 2 as their preferred crossing route. This was because it spans a shorter length of the river than the other options (apart from Option 1 and this was considered to be too disruptive to the local community.) and therefore would have a lesser effect on the tidal floor and sandbanks.

The final respondent in the group selected Option 3. They believed that this option has little impact on residential areas and will impact on some industrial land that is currently unused. Their preference for this option over option 3A is its distance from residential areas.

**Impact Factors**

The group believed that the most important impacts to consider was the effect on residential areas followed by the effect on traffic congestion.

"Knocking down 80 houses and re-building them somewhere else just doesn't make sense, I'll never understand that."

"Housing is the main impact. Option 1 is a waste of time; you're going to rip apart an area again a second time."

The group stressed that when selecting an option consideration must be given to traffic needs in the future, not just current needs. This was believed to be an error made when the Silver Jubilee Bridge was built and not something that should be repeated, making the new crossing only a temporary solution.

"I don't want to be sitting here in 10 years time talking about a third bridge!"

The effect of a new crossing on the salt marshes was also thought to be important and should be minimised, however, in their view, the wildlife would recover, and this was not the main impact to consider.

"It's not like demolishing houses, a community can't come back from that."

**Costs**

None of the respondents altered their views regarding the best option based on cost. They were insistent that, although option 1 was the cheapest, it was not the best option.

"It may be cheaper to build, but what about the hidden costs in moving people, the cost to the community."

"We need to be looking towards the future, don't go for the cheaper option that doesn't last as long or do as good a job."

"They did it on the cheap last time and look at the mess we are in. They can't go down that road again."

"You need to pay more to get a viable option, it'll be better value for money in the long term."

Furthermore, the difference in costs was not thought to be that large and therefore not of great significance when selecting the best option.
RESPONDENTS RESIDING IN AREAS ADJACENT TO OPTIONS 2 & 3 IN RUNCORN AND WIDNES

RESPONDENT DETAILS

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The Silver Jubilee Bridge

The group thought that the bridge caused road congestion in Widnes and Runcorn, often making life difficult for local people.

"It’s often chaotic traffic wise in both towns."

There only needs to be a minor incident on the bridge causing it to close for a short period and traffic can be cueing right down the approach roads and into the town centres.

"There only needs to be a small incident closing the road for 10-15 minutes and it can back up 7 miles, it can block Warrington because people try to go that way, it’s madness."

"You can be stuck in traffic for an hour, an hour and a half – even without an accident using the bridge is difficult."

Respondents in this group thought that once the new bridge was open, the Silver Jubilee Bridge should only be used for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

"It really holds up public transport, there’s always some hold-up on the bridge and the bus is never on time."

"It means that we can’t have a reliable (public transport) system."

Respondents think that the Silver Jubilee Bridge is unable to cope with current traffic levels and has been unable to cope for some time.

"A new crossing is really needed and has been needed for years."

Route Options

The routes where presented to the respondents in a random order. The findings below are presented in the order discussed in the groups. Initially only maps of the options were shown, with details of link roads. After initial discussions, the probable impacts of the option were communicated to the respondents followed by further discussion. Where the impact factors have influenced views regarding advantages and disadvantages or preferences of route options it will be indicated, at all other times the views expressed are those prior to receiving information.

Option 3

Advantages

Option 3 was expected to be suitable for heavy goods traffic, going onto an industrial estate in Runcorn and a main carriageway in Widnes. This would take large vehicles away from residential areas.
Appendix C

Some respondents thought that this option did not take traffic too close to residential areas and therefore would not cause major disruption even during construction.

This option was also expected to improve employment prospects in the Borough, as it allows easy access for industrial traffic to the motorways and industrial areas.

"Unemployment in Runcorn and Widnes is high. If the new bridge goes straight into industrial areas, it will help encourage new business. You'll get the money back from new business."

Disadvantages

One respondent raised a concern regarding how close the traffic was to Castlefields in Runcorn. They thought that noise and fumes might increase in this area due to heavier traffic on the Central Expressway. This was especially worrying if the Central Expressway needed to be widened.

Some respondents thought that there would be congestion at the Widnes junction. Furthermore, this could affect residential areas near to Ashley Way.

"It could increase the traffic on Ashley Way and that's near to residential areas."

The group thought that this option might have an affect on the Widnes Waterfront development and Wigg Island.

Respondents thought that Liverpool traffic might tend to continue using the Silver Jubilee Bridge, due to the distance of the bridge access junction in Widnes.

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Option 3A

Advantages

The majority of the respondents thought that this option had all the advantages of Option 3 with the addition of better traffic flow to and from Liverpool. They thought that the junction in Widnes was more suitable for through traffic and therefore would not cause problems with congestion.

"This allows for the traffic to easily get on and off the bridge."

"This would be great for Liverpool traffic, and that's where most of it goes to or from."

It was also thought to be easier to re-route traffic if there was an accident on one of the bridges.

"People could just be re-directed onto the other road, it wouldn't even require a detour."

Disadvantages

Concerns were raised about the proximity of the bridge to Spike Island in Widnes.

A small number of respondents thought that the approach roads for the two bridges were too close together at Widnes and this could cause congestion.
Appendix C

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Option 2

Advantages

The main advantage identified for this option is that it does not require the demolition of any residential or community buildings.

Disadvantages

Respondents thought that Option 2 would affect residential areas on both sides of the River Mersey. It would result in an increase in levels of noise and fumes, as well as accidents in the vicinity. This was thought to be particularly important in an area where children were living.

Both junctions were expected to cause standing traffic with “stop and start junctions”.

Lack of access to Astmoor was also raised as an issue. With concerns that large vehicles may end up driving around residential areas trying to get onto the industrial estate.

In Runcorn, there were concerns that the junction was too close to the Silver Jubilee Bridge and that traffic congestion might continue to occur in this area. This was expected to be particularly bad during construction.

“If there was traffic build-up on one bridge, it would soon affect the other.”

“There’d be two queues of traffic in the area.”

The option was thought to be near to important environmental areas.

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Option 1

Advantages

This is the shortest route and therefore was expected to be the cheapest.

Disadvantages

Respondents had major concerns about the health and safety risks of having two bridges so close to residential areas. The affect of this option on the communities of West Bank and Runcorn Old Town was expected to be too large.

“Noise and air pollution would be doubled.”

“Houses would be demolished in West Bank and Runcorn like with the Silver Jubilee Bridge.”

“The people in West Bank have been through it once, you can’t make them go through it again.”

“Shouldn’t even be considered. It shouldn’t even be open to discussion.”
**Appendix C**

Moving people out of their homes was thought to be unacceptable.

"Where would you build the new houses?"

"People have been brought up in those houses."

"It would split families."

*This option was also expected to cause major disruption during construction. The Silver Jubilee Bridge was expected to be closed or at least require lane reductions for long periods of time.*

"It's a nightmare now, could you imagine, Warrington would be chaotic."

Even after construction respondents thought that there would be traffic problems for this option. With increased pressure on the approach road to the bridges.

"The traffic would still meet and cause problems at the junctions."

"This keeps the heavy traffic in the built up areas."

*Due to the proximity of the bridges, a problem on one was expected to effect the other.*

*Finally, Option 1 was expected to have negative impact on local businesses.*

"No one would go near the local shops, not with all that traffic."

"People wouldn't want to visit businesses in the area, it would take them too long."

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

**Preferred Option**

The majority of respondents preferred option 3A (seven respondents). This route was not expected to impact on communities, allowed for maximum traffic flow, gives direct access to Astmoor and easy access to the motorways on both sides of the Mersey.

"It means there won't be any houses knocked down."

"The traffic can get from the motorway to Liverpool or wherever it wants to go."

"Industrial traffic can get straight onto Astmoor."

"The junction in Widnes is far better than the one for Option 3."

The remaining two respondents selected Option 3 as their preferred choice. They rejected option 3A because they thought that the Widnes junction was too close to the current bridge and could cause congestion. They thought that the Widnes junction for Option 3 was ideal, bringing traffic to the town centre where it wants to go. They did not think that there would be any problems with congestion in this area.

**Impact Factors**

Respondents identified two main impact factors: people and traffic flow. With noise and air pollution in residential areas being seen as the most important.
"Disruption in residential areas should be avoided."

Construction of the bridge was expected to impact upon the environment, however this was thought to be irrespective of which option was chosen.

**Cost**

Respondents did not think that cost should be the major factor when selecting a route option.

Money spent now was expected to offer benefits in the longer term.

"The cheapest is not necessarily the best."

"You’d get it back, businesses would do better."

None of the respondents changed their preferred choice based on cost.
RESPONDENTS RESIDING IN AREAS ADJACENT TO OPTION 2 IN WIDNES

RESPONDENT DETAILS

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Experiences of the Silver Jubilee Bridge

The majority of the respondents in the group use the Silver Jubilee Bridge frequently; however, two of them avoid using the bridge, only using it when necessary. The reason for this is that they use the bridge for pedestrian access and find the experience difficult and uncomfortable.

"It’s really scary, you sort of dangling over the edge, so I hardly ever cross it."

The group talked about the bridge being difficult to use and chaos at peak times. They also think that the bridge affects everyone’s lives in the area, because when congestion is high, due to an accident for instance, it causes traffic cues into the centre of Widnes and residential areas.

"If there’s an accident the traffic is so far back I can’t get across my road and lately it’s been once a week."

Respondents do not think that the bridge can cope with the amounts of traffic crossing it, making it unsafe to use, and that a new bridge is a necessity.

"It’s a nuisance, too much traffic and too many accidents."

Route Options

The routes were introduced to the respondents in a random order. The findings below are presented in the order discussed in the groups. Initially only maps of the routes were shown, with details of link roads. After initial discussions the probable impacts of the route option was communicated to the respondents followed by further discussions. Where the impact factors have influence views regarding advantages and disadvantages of options, it will be indicated, at all other times the views expressed are those prior to receiving information on probable impacts.

Option 3

Advantages

Respondents focused on the problems they could foresee at the junction on the Widnes side of this option. They could not see beyond these problems and therefore did not mention any advantages for this route, even when asked.

Disadvantages

The main discussions regarding this option focused on the Widnes junction. There were major concerns about traffic build-up in this area, and the effect that it would have on
access to residential estates. The actual junction is already perceived to be dangerous and to cause traffic build-up.

"It’s busy by B&Q already, there’s a lot of traffic and it’s very difficult to cross the road."

"I live on Lugsdale road near Ashleigh Way. It would be chaotic in this area."

"Too many lights at this junction already."

"It affects a large housing estate."

Respondents are already concerned about an expected increase in traffic in this area due to the proposed construction of a supermarket (Asda’s).

"So all the traffic would be centred in the centre of town."

"Traffic will meet from current bridge and new bridge at the junction in Widnes. Traffic from all directions will meet up in one area."

These concerns were increased regarding the construction phase of the new crossing. Construction was expected to have a large impact on businesses in the town centres and it would be difficult to recover. The lives of people living in the area were expected to suffer, as it would be difficult for them to get to work, shop or see friends and family. The increase in heavy loads in the area was also thought to bring safety and health problems.

"During construction you would have heavy wagons going up Lugsdale to get to the construction area, plus you have a new Asda’s being built Roads will be shut, wagons will be coming in, organised chaos as they call it."

"There’d be more accidents with big lorries, and the dust and dirt, terrible."

There were also worries about the impact on the wildlife that is perceived to be returning to the residential areas.

"We’ve got foxes and rabbits coming back into the area – it’s just recovering from all the building work."

Concerns were also raised about bridge workers needing temporary accommodation.

"Where would the builders stay? There’s not a lot of accommodation in Widnes."

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Option 3A

Advantages

This was thought to be a sensible and straightforward option in terms of traffic flow. It was thought to link main roads on both sides of the bridge.

"You can either turn off for the town centre or carry straight onto the bridge."

"Traffic from St Helens would be able to go straight onto the bridge. Same for Liverpool traffic."
Appendix C

"Traffic would just drive straight onto the bridge and straight off, no fiddly junctions to negotiate."

Another advantage identified was that it does not affect any residential areas and takes traffic away from the town centre in Widnes.

This option was also thought to keep the traffic in industrial areas, where it needs to go.

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Drawbacks

The only drawback identified for this option was its affect on wildlife. One respondent believed that the affect on wildlife was particularly important.

"I don't think we should bother the wildlife."

Option 1

Advantages

The advantages identified for this option was that it crossed the narrowest stretch of river and was therefore probably the cheapest option.

In addition, this option was expected to have less impact on wildlife.

Drawbacks

The affect of this option of the community in West Bank was of main concern for the group.

"You'd have to knock down part of West Bank."

"You can't do that - it would ruin the community at West Bank."

"People have been living there for years - they won't want to move."

It was also thought that during construction there would be congestion problems in the area, as it is so close to the current bridge.

"Traffic during construction would be chaotic."

When the impacts were shared with the group, they were even more concerned about the social impact of this route. The demolition of the school was of particular importance to them.

"There's only one school left in West Bank, so anyone with children would have to go into Widnes."

"Would there be room to build a new school in West Bank and would you want a school so near to two busy bridges."

"People want to take their kids to a local school."
RESPONDENTS RESIDING IN OTHER AREAS OF RUNCORN

**RESPONDENT DETAILS**

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**Experiences of the Silver Jubilee Bridge**

All of the respondents use the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) frequently with most using it daily. It is most often used to go to work, to go to the shops in Widnes or to visit friends and family.

The congestion on the bridge is perceived as horrendous “It’s terrible travelling to and from work every day” and getting even more so “It’s getting worse and worse, tend to be stuck in queues every night”. It is viewed as difficult to use the bridge even outside of busy/rush hours.

“Today I arranged a meeting in Widnes to start at 10:00am, allowing people time to get there, two people were still late due to traffic on the bridge!”

People do not trust the bridge and journeys involving its use are perceived as unpredictable.

“The bridge affects everyone who lives in Halton one way or another. You can never trust the bridge, even outside of peak hours”.

“Once there’s an accident you may as well forget getting to Widnes, work understands if you’re going to be late, but it’s an ongoing problem.”

**General comments about a new bridge**

Respondents thought that the new bridge should be sited outside of the town centre (Runcorn Old Town) as most of the traffic causing the problems on the current bridge is travelling through and not to the town. A number of respondents suggested that it should be nearer to Warrington and kept away from the green belt sites in Runcorn. However, another respondent mentioned that if the bridge was too near Warrington it would not help local businesses.

“You wouldn’t want the bridge to be too near to Warrington or it wouldn’t help the economy of Runcorn, it needs to be fairly local but not too local.”

There were concerns about a new bridge situated near to the town centre affecting property values in the old town. Furthermore, it was believed that building the bridge away from the town centre would offer more opportunities to widen roads and link up with the motorways encouraging heavy traffic to bypass Runcorn.

Mention was also made of constructing the bridge upstream of the SJB.

“I don’t understand why bird life comes before communities. It would be more direct to Chester and that’s where most of the traffic is going to.”

One respondent was also concerned about the effect of the new bridge on Widnes Waterfront.
Appendix C

Route Options

The routes were introduced to the respondents in a random order. The findings below are presented in the order discussed in the groups. Initially, only maps of the routes were shown with details of link roads.

After initial discussions, the probably impacts of the route were communicated to the respondents followed by further discussions. In general, the impacts communicated did not affect the respondents’ views of the route and had little influence on the continued discussions. Where the impact factors have influenced views regarding advantages and disadvantages it will be indicated, at all other time the views expressed are those prior to receiving information on probably impacts.

Option 3

Advantages

A number of benefits were identified for this route. Firstly, that it does not have a great effect on any residential areas. Furthermore, it makes use of road junctions that already exist and just requires expansion.

"The junction at Astmoor is already there and used by traffic, it’s links straight onto the Central Expressway."

It is expected to take traffic into Widnes, helping the economy in this area by encouraging people to use the town centre shops.

During construction, this route was not expected to cause any major disruptions, as most building work would be centred on industrial areas.

A further benefit of this route was that it would keep heavy traffic out of the old town (Runcorn), allowing for further regeneration.

Disadvantages

The main concerns about this route were centred upon traffic congestion at the junction on the Widnes side of the river.

"It is already a bad junction, already has a lot of congestion, this would get worse."

"You’d have traffic coming over both bridges meeting up."

"You’d have build-up of traffic from Chester and Wales coming over the bridge wanting the M62, people wanting Warrington, all the people coming in from Frodsham, the blockage on the Thelwall coming down and all in all Widnes town centre would be a nightmare."

It was also mentioned that there might be traffic congestion problems on the Runcorn side of the river.

"It’s just shifting a traffic problem 200 yards further down and so you’ll still have congestion."

A number of industrial units and factories on the Runcorn side requiring demolitions were identified and concerns raised over job loses. However, impact on industrial areas was generally thought to be of lesser importance than impact on residential areas.

"I work right there in the NHS building. So I’d lose my job, great hey.”
"Factory units will just be relocated, there're not going to care about being moved further elsewhere, they'll get compensation anyway."

Although it was agreed that there was little major impact on residential areas, some problems were foreseen. The house prices in Castlefield and Windmill Hill were expected to be affected.

"I already live on a direct flightpath from Liverpool Airport, I've got that noise to contend with and now I would have the noise of HGVs as well. It would only be about 300 yards from my house."

Option 3A

Advantages

The position of the road junctions on the Widnes side of this option were perceived as beneficial in terms of encouraging the flow of traffic from Liverpool to use the new bridge rather than the old one.

"It would be just as easy for them to use the new one, leaving the old one for local traffic."

The junction on the Widnes side was also thought to be beneficial if one of the bridges had to close or had a large build-up of traffic, as it would be easy for traffic to divert to the other bridge.

Respondents thought that, as a lot of the traffic using the bridge travelled between Liverpool and the M56, the position of this option would allow for the most direct traffic flow.

"It misses most of Widnes town centre and you can still bypass towards the M62 or you can go into Liverpool along route 7 without it really effecting the town centre, so it has that advantage over route 3."

Again, this route was expected to have little impact on residential areas, and a limited effect on industrial units.

"It wouldn't impact on too much on either side of the river."

Disadvantages

There were concerns about traffic congestion on the Widnes side of the river for this option.

"It practically meets up with the old one (bridge) and would cause a bottleneck at the Widnes end."

The junctions of the two bridges on the Widnes side were thought to be very close and this was expected to have an impact on traffic flow.

"If you had a problem with either bridge on the Widnes side then it would impact on the other."

"On the Widnes side traffic would be emerging from both bridges and cause a big hold-up."

It was also mentioned that this option was close to Widnes town centre.

"There would be too much traffic using the route to put it on the shoulders of local residents in Widnes."
Furthermore, the roads on this side of the crossing were not believed to be wide enough to cope with the increased flow of traffic without causing congestion.

"There aren't many places on the Widnes side where you could put wide access roads."

**Option 1**

**Advantages**

This option was thought to be the most direct route for traffic crossing the Mersey and would not have a great impact on Widnes town centre.

It was expected to be the cheapest option and once built it was thought by some of the respondents to be the most viable.

**Disadvantages**

Option 1 was expected to have an immense negative impact on Runcorn Old Town, both during construction and once in use.

"Whilst they're building it there would be chaos."

"I think it's a terrible idea."

"Runcorn would suffer dreadfully."

It was recognised that a number of houses on both the Runcorn and Widnes side of the bridge would require demolition. Compensation to homeowners was discussed, however relocation was not viewed as a viable option.

"You can't just relocate these people - they're part of a community."

Another drawback of this option was the effect on the area around the Silver Jubilee Bridge during construction. This was expected to involve major road closures, causing increased congestion.

"Having it that close to the SJB means that during construction there will be times they'll have to close the SJB."

"During the years of construction, I'd have to add another 2 hours to my journey time every day."

Local people were expected to be affected during construction, with life in the local communities disrupted.

"It'll cause too much hardship on the people of Runcorn and West Bank."

Concerns were also voiced regarding congestion on the link roads.

"There's already too much congestion on the expressway you don't want another bridge using the same junctions and that's probably what would happen."

"Imagine the traffic at peak times if we had another bridge next to the SJB. Where would all the traffic go? I think this route should be totally out."

"There's terrible congestion going down onto the M56 every evening, that's not going to alter, so the traffic will still be backed up."
Appendix C

Having two bridges close together generated concerns regarding both safety and aesthetics.

"It's going to look a bit of a mess, so close to the SJB."

Option 2

Advantages

The only advantage identified for this option was the fact that it links the expressways on both sides of the River Mersey.

Disadvantages

For this option, the junction on the Runcorn side of the crossing is expected to cause traffic problems.

"There would be bottlenecks at Astmoor."

"This junction is quite a small junction even when improved will it be able to cope."

"It's just using existing roads, there's no thought about how bad the congestion would be."

The noise levels for people living by the canal at Runcorn was also raised as an issue. As well as concerns about how the bridge would look, as it would be in view of residential estates in Runcorn.

"It would have to look nice."

This option was also expected to be an expensive choice.

Preferred Option

When questioned, options 3 and 3A were the most preferred.

Respondents choosing option 3A (4 people) preferred this route as it would be less disruptive to the local community, keeping heavy traffic away from the SJB and have little impact on regeneration areas during and after construction.

They also believed that this route would create the best traffic flow with little congestion problems being foreseen. Option 3A was predicted to cause less congestion on the Widnes side of the river than option 3. These respondents also thought that this option would be the most aesthetically pleasing and if the correct bridge design was chosen could become a tourist attraction.

"It's like they've taken the best bits of all the other options and made them into option 3A."

Respondents preferring option 3 (3 people) based their decision on the belief that this option had better road connections. They believed that it would have less impact during construction and was a more direct route, having easy access on the Runcorn side and clearing industrial estates to join the Widnes expressway.

Respondents selecting option 3 thought that the junction on the Widnes side of the river was ideal, taking traffic towards the M62 and St Helens. They were concerned that the Widnes junction for Option 3A was too close to the SJB.
The final two respondents in this group preferred option 1. Although they recognised other peoples concerns that this option would be the most disruptive during construction, they believed that upon completion it would be the most convenient for the people living in Runcorn. They also thought that option 1 was a more direct route for the heavy traffic going onto the motorway (M56).

**Costs**

The predicted costs of the various options were shared with the respondents to see if this influenced their views regarding their preferred crossing. All of the respondents agreed that although cost was important it was just one of the things to consider when choosing a site for the new crossing and should not be the most important consideration. Impact on residential property was seen as the essential factor was deciding on a route.

None of the respondents changed their views regarding their preferred route options when asked to consider costs as part of their decision.

**Impact Factors**

Respondents in this group were extremely concerned about the impact of the new crossing on local communities. Concerns regarding traffic congestion were also common. However, other issues generated by Gifford & Partners, although brought to their attention, in their view were not seen to be as important. Although they thought that impact on local wildlife should be minimised where possible, it should not be used as the deciding factor on a route option.

"Wildlife will recover in time."

Respondents did not alter their opinions of the options based on the impact factors.

**General**

Although respondents did consider the design of the bridge to be important, its location was their main interest.

"Where route 2, 3, & 3A would go is a beautiful area to look out upon at the moment and a good bridge structure could add to that view."

"I don't really care what it looks like, as long as we get one!"

Respondents were also concerned about safety level on the new bridge, particularly making it safe for cyclists and pedestrians to cross.

"Need something to buffer the wind on prevailing side for cyclists and pedestrians."

The new crossing is viewed as an opportunity to help ease congestion in the residential areas of West Bank and Old Runcorn Town helping to regenerate these areas. In addition, a new bridge in the right location was expected to encourage new business to the area. Moreover, alongside the Widnes Waterfront development a new bridge of good design is expected to help tourist interest in the Halton.

"People would take along a picnic and look out at the bridge. Look at how many people stop to look at the Dee Crossing in Flint."

All of the respondents stated that using the Silver Jubilee Bridge for local traffic was a good idea, although there were some concerns about reducing it to two lanes, especially during peak times.
RESPONDENTS RESIDING IN OTHER AREAS OF WIDNES

**RESPONDENT DETAILS**

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**The Silver Jubilee Bridge**

The Silver Jubilee Bridge is considered by the entire group to be a problem. It is perceived to be very slow and unpredictable, causing people to worry whenever they have an appointment to keep.

"You don’t know until you’re on the slip-road, but it’s too late then, you’re committed, you can’t get off."

The respondents also think that the current bridge is unsafe, with narrow lanes and no hard shoulders. This is added to by the need to change lanes on the bridge and respondents believe a better signage system would be beneficial.

Use of the current bridge exclusively for local traffic was suggested. This was expected to have a positive impact on Public Transport in the Borough.

The group thought that the Silver Jubilee Bridge needed to made safer and more user friendly for cyclists and pedestrians, perhaps with a covered walkway.

"It’s a landmark, we should be able to enjoy it."

Weight restrictions on the bridge was also mentioned as a possible improvement, stopping heavy goods vehicles from using it.

"Whatever option selected could there be weight restrictions on the SJB to make sure that HGV’s use the new one? That would make things better for local people."

If there was a new bridge then respondents thought that people would be more interested in working on the opposite side of the bridge than they live and it would generally "make life easier".

A new bridge was also expected to increase communication between the two sides of Halton. Encouraging local people to cross the River Mersey more frequently.

"It’s very Widnes and Runcorn rather than Halton people – the bridge is a barrier in the community."

Furthermore, a new bridge may encourage investment in Halton.

**Route Options**

The routes where presented to the respondents in a random order. The findings below are presented in the order discussed in the groups. Initially only maps of the options were shown, with details of link roads. After initial discussions, the probable impacts of the option were communicated to the respondents followed by further discussion. Where the
Appendix C

impact factors have influenced views regarding advantages and disadvantages or preferences of route options it will be indicated, at all other times the views expressed are those prior to receiving information.

**Option 3**

**Advantages**

Option 3 was not thought to have a large affect on any residential areas. Although close to housing estates on both sides of the River Mersey, it was not expected to be close enough to cause any major problems.

The Runcorn junction of Option 3 was thought to offer easy access to Junction 11 as well as Junction 12 of the M56. Traffic was also expected to approach Junction 12 via the Central Expressway for the new bridge and the Western Expressway for the current bridge, easing congestion in these areas. In addition, this junction was thought to be ideal for industrial traffic going to Astmoor.

Option 3 was also thought to offer easy access to the M62.

Use of the Silver Jubilee Bridge for local traffic only was received positively. And was expected to have a positive impact on air and noise pollution in residential areas adjacent to the bridge.

"Locals could use the bridge easily, without heavy traffic bothering them."

**Disadvantages**

With this option there were some concerns that heavy traffic would continue to use the Silver Jubilee Bridge as it would be easier for them to access when coming from Liverpool or going to West Bank Docks or Ditton Road.

The junction at Widnes was also expected to cause problems. This is already thought to be a bad junction that is not well signposted and causes problems. The addition of extra traffic in the area was expected to cause congestion and the junction would need major improvement.

"There's lots of traffic lights and lots of changing lanes."

"People are always getting in the wrong lane and so switching all the time."

"It's already very difficult to cross." (for pedestrians)

In addition, the Widnes Waterfront development was already expected to increase traffic in the area and that would make the junction even busier.

When the impact factors were shared with the group, they raised concerns about the route crossing Wigg Island. Although this was mainly because it meant that there would be environmental opposition to the crossing and it was not expected to get through a public enquiry.
Appendix C

Option 2

Advantages

This option was expected to have less impact on the salt marshes.

Its junction at Widnes was not expected to cause as many problems as the junction for Option 3.

Disadvantages

Option 2 was thought to be too close to residential areas in Widnes, causing an increase in traffic in these areas to an unacceptable level.

"I wouldn't want that on my doorstep, that junction."

"It's already quite a busy road, very noisy."

Because of its proximity to the Silver Jubilee Bridge, there was also expected to be congestion problems in Widnes. In addition, traffic may continue to use the current bridge.

During construction, this option was expected to be difficult for local residents.

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.

Option 1

Advantages

Option 1 was expected to have less environmental impact than the other options seen so far, particularly less impact on the salt marshes.

This option also offers an immediate diversion onto another bridge when necessary.

In addition, this option was expected to be cheaper.

Disadvantages

Respondents thought that this option would cause major discomfort for local people and would have a high impact on stress levels and in turn, on health. This was particularly worrying during construction.

"It would cause bedlam."

"The fumes would be too great."

Although recognising that construction of this option would cause the demolition of houses, one respondent thought that the houses were old anyway.

No further advantages or disadvantages were identified after communication of the expected impacts.
Option 3A

Advantages

This option was expected to have a low impact on residential areas and this was thought to be of particular importance during construction.

"No residential areas are too close. It won't interfere much with people’s lives."

It was thought to have a better junction at Widnes than Option 2 & 3. With a straight route into Liverpool allowing for better traffic flow.

The Runcorn junction was expected to be able to serve both Junction 11 and 12 of the M56, thus reducing congestion.

In addition, respondents thought that Option 3A has easy access to Astmoor Industrial Estate.

Disadvantages

Option 3A was expected to have some impact on businesses based at Astmoor Industrial Estate.

When the impact factors were discussed, respondents mentioned concerns regarding the effect on the saltmarsh.

Preferred Option

All of the respondents in this group preferred Option 3A. It was perceived to be less disruptive to residential areas, to have better junctions than the other routes and allow for better traffic flow to and from Liverpool.

"Option 3A looks like it has been designed by listening to what people said in the first public consultation."

One respondent said that if the Widnes junction for Option 3 was improved, this option would also be acceptable.

The respondents in this group believed that none of the other options were acceptable.

Impacts

The most important factor to consider was believed to be the impact on residents.

Impact on the environment was also thought to be important, however it was expected to recover.

"The birds may be disrupted during construction, but they will come back."

"It's not like demolishing houses, a community of people cannot come back from that."

"There'll be opposition to what ever you do. Groups will kick up a fuss about the birds without thinking about other impacts."
Appendix C

Any route was expected to cause an impact during construction, due to all the heavy loads being delivered. However, this was something that respondents realised was necessary to achieve the benefit of a new crossing.

Costs

Cost was not thought to be the main consideration when selecting a preferred option.

"If you go for the cheapest, you end up with the least effective."

"The higher costing bridge will have a lower cost on business during construction."

None of the respondents changed their preferred option because of cost.

General

Respondents thought that it was important to keep any green areas that remain in the area.

They also think that how the new bridge looks will be important, as it will be viewed from many residential areas.

There was also some discussion about a name for the new bridge. With the suggestion of calling it, Halton Bridge.
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Appendix E

New Mersey Crossing Brochure
A New Mersey Crossing for Halton

Why do we need another Mersey Crossing?

Halton Borough and the Merseyside region are heavily dependent on the existing Runcorn - Widnes (Silver Jubilee) road bridge but it can no longer cope with the heavy traffic flows which cause:

- an unacceptable number of personal injury accidents;
- congestion during peak periods;
- regular gridlock over a wide area.

As traffic levels continue to increase, congestion will get worse and essential maintenance will become more and more disruptive.

The effect will be that:
- development of the area will be discouraged and regeneration endangered;
- air quality will continue to decline;
- public transport will become increasingly unreliable;
- the operations of the emergency services will be seriously impaired;
- conditions for cyclist and pedestrians will become even more hazardous.

Halton Borough Council and the Mersey Crossing Group believe that a new Mersey crossing in Halton is essential as a solution to the problems of the existing bridge. The Mersey Crossing Group was formed to promote a New Mersey Crossing and to guide the development of the project. The Group comprises Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, the Metropolitan Borough Councils of Knowsley, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral, Warrington Borough Council, Merseytravel, English Partnerships, Halton Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise, other local Chambers of Commerce and Peel Holdings.

The main objectives of a New Mersey Crossing are:

1. to relieve the Silver Jubilee Bridge;
2. to maximise development opportunities;
3. to improve public transport links across the river, and;
4. to encourage the increased use of cycling and walking.

A new crossing would provide a total of six traffic lanes across the river with the facility to provide additional capacity for the future or when the Silver Jubilee bridge is closed for maintenance. There would also be facilities for cyclists and provision for a possible extension of Merseytravel’s Light Rail Transit system. The new crossing would become the strategic route for through traffic across the river, allowing the old bridge to be retained for local use.

If you have any difficulty reading this leaflet and would like a larger print version or alternative format, please contact 0800 085 3384
Where Should the new crossing go?

Consulting Engineers and Environmentalists have looked at a number of options, some of which have been suggested during earlier consultation. The options have been numbered from West to East, this does not signify any preference. Some of the options considered did not satisfactorily meet the objectives or were too expensive and these have been rejected. The options that are being put forward for consultation:

- provide sufficient relief to the Silver Jubilee Bridge;
- remove congestion and delay;
- improve road safety;
- provide the opportunity to improve public transport, cycling and walking;
- improve accessibility to employment;
- provide opportunities for development;
- benefit existing businesses.

This page sets out the main benefits and dis-benefits of those options that are affordable and best meet the objectives set.

Option: 1

A new bridge between West Bank and Runcorn Old Town alongside the existing bridge.

Capital Cost: £169 million

1. Attracts over 90% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge but traffic would continue to be focussed on a single crossing point with no alternative route in the event of an accident on the bridge or its approaches.
2. Requires the demolition of at least 70 houses, a school and other community facilities.
3. Affects the West Bank Conservation area and impacts on the setting of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and railway bridges (Grade 2 Listed Buildings).
4. High visual impact on surrounding communities.
5. Additional piers in the river would add to the constriction of flow at Runcorn Gap.
6. Potentially the least impact on ecology but the closeness of this option to the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area is a major risk.
7. Construction would disrupt nearby communities and severely affect local and through traffic.
8. Potential adverse impact on the regeneration of Runcorn old town.
9. Least land take, supports development opportunities in Halton and adds impetus to opportunities elsewhere, particularly South Liverpool.
10. Least perceived benefit to local businesses because of increased pressure on existing feed roads to the bridge.
Option: 2

Astmoor interchange to Ditton roundabout (passing to the West of the Rhodia works).

Capital Cost: £174 million

1. Attracts about 70% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge but would have limited access to Astmoor Industrial estate.
2. Affects a large area of inter-tidal habitat.
3. Impacts on views from West Bank and Runcorn Old Town.
4. Headroom over the River Mersey would be reduced near the north bank.
5. Medium-longer term benefits for development in Halton and the wider sub-region but likely to have short term negative effect on Widnes Waterfront.
Option: 3

Central Expressway to Widnes Eastern by-pass (passing to the East of the Rhodia works).

Capital Cost: £186 million

1. Attracts nearly 90% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and has a better connection to the Central Expressway than Option 2.
2. Affects a large area of inter-tidal habitat.
3. Affects more of the saltmarsh than the other options.
4. Bridge approach viaduct crosses Wigg Island Community Park.
5. The scale and location of the new bridge would complement and enhance the existing landscape.
6. Medium-longer term benefits for development in Halton and the wider sub-region but likely to have short term negative effect on Widnes Waterfront.
7. Links prime employment opportunities in Halton.

Option: 4

Central Expressway to Ditton roundabout (passing to the West of the Rhodia works).

Capital Cost: £209 million

1. Attracts nearly 90% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and has better connection to Central Expressway than Option 2.
2. Affects a large area of inter-tidal habitat.
3. Affects less saltmarsh than Option 3.
4. Bridge approach viaduct crosses Wigg Island Community Park.
5. The scale and location of the new bridge would complement and enhance the existing landscape.
6. Headroom over the River Mersey would be reduced near the north bank.
7. Medium-longer term benefits for development in Halton and the wider sub-region but likely to have short term negative effect on Widnes Waterfront.
8. Links prime employment opportunities in Halton.

Details of other options can be found overleaf.
What other options have been considered?

1. Option 2A has no advantages over Options 2, 3 and 3A but would provide significantly less relief to the Silver Jubilee bridge.

2. Although the cheapest of the options considered, Option 4 only attracts about 30% of traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge and therefore does not meet the objectives of the scheme.

3. The best route for a tunnel would be west of the existing bridges but this would be the most expensive of all the options and it would attract only about 40% of the traffic from the Silver Jubilee Bridge, and does not meet the objectives of the scheme.

4. Rail improvements including new stations, re-opened lines and new services, improved bus services and a Park & Ride scheme to Liverpool have been considered as possible public transport improvements. None of these improvements, either individually or taken together meet the objectives of the scheme.

5. The public transport improvements referred to above could be implemented independently of a new crossing.

What if we do nothing?

1. Increasing traffic and more frequent disruptions as a result of accidents and maintenance works will lead to worsening congestion, severely affecting travellers, public transport and the operation of the emergency services.

2. Worsening congestion could hinder the strengthening of community services and social networks in deprived areas of Halton.

3. Noise and air pollution will continue to be a major issue in the areas of the bridge and its approaches.

4. There would be no opportunity for improving public transport or encouraging cycling and walking.

5. Worsening congestion will discourage inward investment and endanger economic regeneration in Halton and the wider sub-region.

Public Consultation

The views of the people of Halton are vital to this project. The New Mersey Crossing can be so much more than just a bridge linking two sides of the river if the community is closely involved in its development.

Consultation on the proposals will include:

- A postal survey of all residents in the areas of the route options;
- Workshops with local businesses and stakeholders;
- Focus groups with Halton residents;
- Halton 2000 consultation panel.

Also, public exhibitions, providing more details, will be held in Halton Direct Link offices in both Runcorn and Widnes. Members of the design team will be present to answer questions on the dates and times shown on the back page. At all other times, Halton Borough Council staff will be available to take a note of any queries and pass them to the designers.
### EXHIBITION DATES

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**Runcorn**

Halton Direct Link  
Concourse Level  
Rutland House  
Halton Lea

**Widnes**

Halton Direct Link  
(Near the Market)

This leaflet will also be available in Libraries and the information included in the next edition of Inside Halton.

**We want to know your views**

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and hand it in at the exhibition or post it in the envelope provided by Friday 14th March 2003 to MVA Limited, 26th Floor, Sunley Tower, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester, M1 9TR.

If you have any queries, please write to Gifford & Partners, 20 Nicholas Street, Chester; CH1 2NX. Alternatively, you can find a copy of the questionnaire on www.merseycrossing.co.uk or www.halton.gov.uk.

**What happens next?**

The Mersey Crossing Group will:

- Receive the Consultant's report of their studies and the Public Consultation into the options;
- Select the preferred option;
- Apply for planning permission for the preferred option;
- Seek government funding to construct the new crossing.

The Government will give its decision on the request for funding in December 2003 and there will most probably be a Public Inquiry. When the statutory procedures are complete and funding has been provided, it could take up to 3 years to construct the new crossing.
Appendix F

Postal Survey Questionnaire
A NEW RIVER MERSEY CROSSING.

We would be grateful for your views on the options for a new Mersey crossing. Please consider the information provided in the leaflet carefully and then answer the questions as fully as possible. This should be done by ticking the appropriate boxes or writing your answers in the spaces provided. Please return your questionnaire by 14th March in the pre-paid envelope provided. If you require any assistance completing this questionnaire, please telephone 0800 085 3384. ALL INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 1: YOUR VIEWS

1. How strongly do you agree or disagree that a new Mersey crossing is needed? (Please ✓ one box only)

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PLEASE CONSIDER EACH OPTION FOR RELIEVING THE BRIDGE DETAILED IN THE LEAFLET

2. Do you have any comments to make about the factors presented for each of the options identified? (Write in comments)
   - Route 1
   - Route 2
   - Route 3
   - Route 3A

3. Which of the factors presented do you think is the most important when selecting the best route for a new crossing? (Write in comments – if necessary continue on separate sheet)

4. Are there any other factors that should be considered for the options identified? (Write in comments)
   - Route 1
   - Route 2
   - Route 3
   - Route 3A

5. Is there any other information you would like to know about any of these options? (Write in comments)
6. Are there any comments you would like to make on the other options that are suggested in the leaflet? (Write in comments – if necessary continue on separate sheet)

7. Overall, which option do you prefer? (Please ✓ one box only)
   Route 1 1 Route 3A 4
   Route 2 2 Other (please specify) 5
   Route 3 3

8. Why do you prefer this option? (Write in comments – if necessary continue on separate sheet)

SECTION 2: ABOUT YOU

9. Which of the following groups do you belong to: (Please ✓ all boxes that apply)
   Resident of Runcorn/Widnes 1 Use the current bridge 4
   Manage business premises in Runcorn/Widnes 2 Work in Runcorn/Widnes 5
   Member of a local interest/voluntary group (write in) 3 None of the above 6

10. On average how often do you use the Silver Jubilee Bridge? (Please ✓ one box only)
    5+ days a week 1 Once a fortnight 4
    3 – 4 days a week 2 Less often 5
    1 – 2 days a week 3 Never 6

11. Which of the following age categories are you in? (Please ✓ one box only)
    16-24 years 1 60-74 years 4
    25-44 years 2 75 years and above 5
    45-59 years 3

12. Are you? (Please ✓ one box only)
    Male 1 Female 2

13. Where do you live? (Write in NAME of area and POSTCODE)

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.
Please return your completed form in the reply paid envelope provided by Friday 14th March 2003
Appendix G

Postcodes of areas adjacent to route options
## Appendix G

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Appendix H

Summaries of Business Workshop Discussions
Appendix H

Workshop 1

Twenty-five people attended the workshop representing eighteen different businesses based in Runcorn and Widnes.

The respondents were given the opportunity to ask questions and raise queries before the group discussions started.

The questions asked and the answers given are provided below:

- **Question:** For Options 3 & 3A what happens to the buildings directly underneath the bridge at Astmoor?
  - **Answer:** In some cases, they can be saved. In other cases, they would probably have to be relocated.

- **Question:** We look as though we would be directly under the bridge, and I for one definitely wouldn’t want to be working underneath a road that’s carrying that much traffic. Will anything be done in this case?
  - **Answer:** It’s a little bit early to say exactly what would happen, but I think it is more likely that people will be relocated.

- **Question:** We have just built a new factory and it would be a big expense for us to actually face moving the whole factory again. You are looking at £2.3 million.
  - **Answer:** The compensation process would have to deal with that.

- **Question:** It is not the compensation that worries me. It is if we were not relocated and the bridge went over the top with us. Being right underneath it from an employee’s environmental point of view.
  - **Answer:** That would have to be considered as part of the compensation package.

- **Question:** At present a tremendous amount of traffic comes down from the motorway and from Warrington via the Daresbury single carriageway. Any increase in traffic using a new bridge will increase the traffic using this carriageway, and this is already vastly overloaded. Has anyone considered the implications of this?
  - **Answer:** That length of road is built into our traffic model and these options from the Central Expressway westwards are not expected to increase the traffic significantly on that length. Most of the traffic would end up going down the Central Expressway or remaining on the Western Expressway.

- **Question:** But there’s no exit from the motorway onto the Central Expressway.
  - **Answer:** The Central Expressway will lead eventually via the other expressways back to the Clifton Junction 12. (The motorway connections were shown on a map).

- **Question:** The links from the Central Expressway to the M56 are already vastly overloaded especially at peak hours. It is solid now and even more traffic will be attracted to this new bridge. You need to increase the single carriageway part of the Daresbury Expressway so that all the traffic coming from the M6
and M56 can have easy access onto any of your routes east of the existing bridge. Junction 12 is dangerous.

- **Answer:** I cannot disagree that Junction 12 is congested. That is another problem we cannot say that we will not make improvements to the crossing because junction 12 is congested.

- **Question:** You cannot say that it’s somebody else’s problem. All you have to do is dual that short stretch of the Daresbury Expressway.

- **Answer:** The cost of doing that would have to be compared with the cost of improving Junction 12.

- **Question:** It needs to be done as part of the costing for this bridge because you have a knock on affect.

- **Answer:** You could end up taking on the problems of the whole area.

- **Question:** To relieve that bridge you’ve got to think of people travelling to it, sometimes it’s quicker to go round through the Mersey Tunnel. If you are going to construct a bridge east of the Silver Jubilee Bridge then as my colleague pointed out you need to do something about the Daresbury Expressway and Junction 12.

- **Answer:** We will take your view back to Halton and it will need to go to the Highways Agency as well.

- **Question:** Your other alternative is to build another Junction to the M56 off the Central Expressway at Preston Brook, instead of using Junction 12.

- **Answer:** It is certainly a point that we will have to take forward.

- **Question:** We’ve seen the projected costs and they seem quite cheap, but at the end of the day it’s public money and I’m wondering what suggestions have been made regarding tolling either the new bridge or the old bridge and the new bridge. This is particularly relevant with the congestion charging in London and the Mersey Tunnel Tolls.

- **Answer:** Let us just take the situation as it is now, currently, congestion charging doesn’t exist in this area. Tolling was considered at one time as a possible way of funding the project, but the Council decided that tolling would be its lowest priority. And that first of all they would ask the government to fund it directly. Secondly they would ask the government to assist them with funding in some form, possibly a PFI (shadow tolling as it’s known) and tolling itself would be a last resort. If tolling was necessary you would have to toll both bridges or the traffic would just use the free one. If congestion charging was taken forward as a policy in this region then that would be a different matter.

- **Question:** What concerns me is that if tolling is introduced it will affect business, negating the benefits of a new bridge by charging people to cross the river.

- **Answer:** That is a serious consideration. The economy in the area is not robust and something like that could tip it the wrong way. Halton Council will have to consider these issues if tolling is ever on the agenda.

- **Question:** Do you have a preferred crossing yourself?
• **Answer**: I always try to take an even hand on this. Our studies will be
investigated and scrutinised very carefully by a whole range of people,
conservationists for example, and we must be scrupulous in our fairness to
each of the options and that is how I present them.

• **Question**: The cost of maintaining the current bridge is borne by Halton. Is the
cost of the maintenance of the new bridge and the old bridge going to be
borne by Halton rate payers or will the cost of maintaining the old bridge be
taken off the Council.

• **Answer**: Both the new bridge and the old bridge will remain the responsibility of
Halton.

• **Question**: So Halton will be paying for the benefits of Liverpool and everybody
else using the bridge.

• **Answer**: Yes, and that is a very powerful argument that Halton will put to the
government.

• **Question**: I am interested in the volume of traffic that is going to be on it. You
are talking about seven years away. When the SJB was built, it was out of
date before it opened. Is the same thing going to happen with this new one
because of the increased volume of traffic?

• **Answer**: We are proposing a four lane dual carriageway with hard shoulders and
together with the old bridge it will easily cope with the traffic levels that we
have now. Many of the problems with the Silver Jubilee Bridge are related to
the network itself. The new bridge plus the old bridge will easily be able to
cope with current levels and a fair bit of growth in the next 15-20 years.
Beyond that, the hard shoulders could be used as a third lane giving a life of
about 30 years or more.

• **Question**: When the new bridge is opened, what will happen to the old bridge?

• **Answer**: I would imagine that once the new bridge is opened the SJB would be
temporarily closed for major repairs. It cannot be maintained properly now,
to maintain it properly it has to be closed down to two lanes or less. This
happens now at weekends but is a very expensive process, overnight
working, weekend working, it is an inefficient way to maintain it.

• **Question**: Will the bridge still have two decks?

• **Answer**: Yes, it is a feature of the design. The lower deck could be used for
some purpose and we are talking to emergency services regarding access to
the lower deck.

• **Question**: Will the hard shoulder on the upper deck be outslung?

• **Answer**: No, it will be internal.

• **Question**: My favourite route is option 4 for various reasons. If the Daresbury
Expressway was improved, to what extent would that skew the traffic model
to make option 4 more acceptable, given that traffic modelling is not a
precise science? And, to what extent would that draw the traffic up to option
4 which presently does not attract enough traffic?
• **Answer:** There is one very simple form of traffic model which is based on distance and relates back to our own perceptions of time, distance and cost, it's proved to be very accurate over the years. The further you have to go the less attractive it is, particularly if it takes you a long time. That route is so far to the east for a lot of the traffic from Cheshire, North Wales and Halton itself that it is not attractive enough.

• **Question:** Given that the approach system from Junction 12 is not trouble free anyway, would the additional mileage of route 4 be acceptable as long as traffic kept moving and people could get across without being delayed?

• **Answer:** It is a question of how big that time penalty is, and in this case, it exceeds the need of traffic.

• **Question:** Has it been realised that this new bridge would potentially offer a relief link between the M62 and the M6? Instead of using Thelwall, traffic would have quite a nice straight run.

• **Answer:** Yes, it has been noted, however I am not sure what you can do about that. If people see it as an attractive route, they will take it.

Following the question and answer session the participants were split into two smaller groups for further discussions.

**Group 1**

**Option 1**

The group thought that if Option 1 was selected the same traffic congestion problems would remain. They did not believe that Option 1 was a viable route and therefore saw no point in discussing it further.

"It's not just about the capacity of the bridge, it's the access roads to it. This would put everybody in the same bottleneck."

"People can't find us as it is, a second bridge and its approach roads would make the situation even worse."

"This cannot even be considered."

**Option 2**

Respondents thought that there were a number of problems associated with Option 2. The nature of the junction in Runcorn was expected to cause traffic to build-up on the bridge and its approaches. The same problems were foreseen in Widnes. Furthermore, the congestion problems were expected to be exacerbated due to the proximity of the junction in Runcorn to the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"The roundabouts are slowing traffic down, rather than keeping it flowing."

"The junction in Runcorn would have confusing traffic flow, people in wrong lanes. You need to separate the traffic early on and not let them switch lanes."

"The junction in Runcorn is still a bit close to the existing problems at the Silver Jubilee Bridge."
The lack of direct access to the Astmoor Industrial Estate was also seen as a disadvantage of this option.

In addition, the majority of traffic using Option 2 was expected to approach via Junction 12 of the M56 and therefore the problems of congestion at Junction 12 would remain.

**Option 3**

Option 3 was thought to have an advantageous junction on the Runcorn side of the River Mersey, allowing both the approaching and exiting traffic to keep flowing. However, it was noted that although the traffic would flow off the bridge in Runcorn it may just be moving the congestion elsewhere.

"The bridge comes over straight onto the Central Expressway, you don’t stop the flow of traffic with a roundabout. But will you still end up with problems at the Roundabout at Preston Brooke?"

A further advantage of this route was the expected increase in traffic use of Junction 11 of the M56, improving congestion problems at Junction 12. However, for this to be a viable option the Daresbury Expressway is expected to need improving.

"Heavy lorries already use Junction 11 to avoid the climb out from Junction 12, this will encourage more people to use it, alleviating Junction 12."

Furthermore, Option 3 was expected to take heavy traffic away from Runcorn town centre, improving trade for local businesses in the area.

On the negative side, there were concerns about what would happen to the industrial buildings close to the proposed bridge at Astmoor. Respondents questioned what height the bridge would be over the buildings and how many and which buildings would be affected. There was also discussion about how disruptive the construction of the bridge would be to businesses in the area. The respondents accepted that some disruption was necessary and they were in agreement that a new bridge needed to be built, however, it is vital that they are kept informed of developments and therefore able to make any necessary plans.

"We’ve just built a new building here (points to Astmoor where route 3 & 3A goes over), we’ve just invested 1.2 million in new plant and equipment and now it looks like we’re going to have to move. One thing is for sure; I do not want to be working under that bridge. What options do we have?"

"I don’t care where you build that bridge, because it will help bring our employees in on time, currently we lose about 12 man-hours a week from people being held-up over the bridge. But we need to know what is happening to the industrial units affected at Astmoor. I think that the ones going from the Central Expressway at Astmoor (3 and 3A) are the better routes, but from a business point of view, it would be of major impact to us. I need to know detailed information about what will happen. This looks to me like a sensible route and therefore may well be selected, I need to know what the affect will be on my factory."

"It will impact on some people and we need to know as soon as possible exact details of the construction plans."

One further disadvantage of Option 3 was the Junction at Ashley Way in Widnes. This junction is already thought to cause congestion and accidents, an increase in traffic using it would increase the problems.

**Option 3A**
Appendix H

Option 3A was thought to have all the benefits of Option 3, good traffic flow in Runcorn and easy access to Junction 11 of the M56.

Overall, the respondents were positive about Option 3A. However, they believe that the Daresbury Expressway (where it is single carriageway) and Junction 12 of the M56 at Preston Brook will need improving, otherwise the traffic problems will just have moved elsewhere.

Preferred Option

One of the respondents in the group thought that Option 3 was the best option, however this was subject to improvements on the Daresbury Expressway and the connection of the Central Expressway to Junction 12 of the M56.

All of the other respondents preferred Option 3A. Their reasons are that the Widnes junction for Option 3 is already congested and that Option 3A allows for better traffic flow on that side of the river.

Impact Factors

Traffic flow was considered the most important impact when selecting a route option.

"The people matter around here and we are fed up of queuing for that bridge and the economic impact that is has on the area. People do matter. Just get it built."

Respondents discussed the need to improve public transport in the Borough, however, they believe that this needs to be done alongside a new bridge rather than as an alternative.

"You’ve got to have a new bridge, but it should be part of a package for improving public transport, re-opening the Halton to Frodsham junction railway line, park and ride into Liverpool etc. But we still need a new bridge, we still need a new link."

Although impacts on ecology were recognised, the group did not believe that these would be particularly severe or permanent.

"I live south of the river and do lots of work north of the river, yesterday morning I had to be in Liverpool for 9:00, how did I go, I went through the tunnel because it’s quicker. Now we need the bridge, and therefore as far as I’m concerned impacts on flora and fauna and that sort of thing, 100 years ago it wouldn’t have stopped them, it shouldn’t stop us now."

"It has been shown by the Channel Tunnel that flora and fauna very quickly recover."

"The flow of an estuary that wide with a series of one or two individually sited piers, I can’t believe that it will have a major impact."

"We are talking about a thin strip of a highway which affects how many thousands of people who are in this area economically and viably who are stuck by a thing called the River Mersey? If this is an issue environmentally then put your hands in your pockets and dig underneath it. Pay the extra for a tunnel."

Other Issues

It was pointed out that for Option 2, 3 or 3A traffic to and from Liverpool could be routed onto the Silver Jubilee Bridge and traffic to and from Warrington onto the new bridge via the use of a road signing system.
A number of respondents in the group were concerned about the increase in traffic using the new bridge as it could create a transport corridor link between the M56 and the M62 and that therefore causing an increase in traffic around Widnes town centre.

"People don’t use it now because of the congestion; they know it will be blocked. But if the congestion was eased then whichever bridge route is chosen you could have a major problem with people using this to get to the M62. I hope that the predicted traffic figures have reflected this."

These respondents believed that Option 4, situated further east of the other options, which has been rejected by the New Mersey Crossing Group, would negate this problem.

"Whichever route you chose, you will encourage more traffic due to the lack of congestion, and what you need is an Eastern relief to Halton and a Western relief to Warrington, and 4 gives you that."

One respondent even suggested limiting the traffic using the Silver Jubilee Bridge, thereby forcing traffic onto the new bridge at Option 4. However, another respondent thought that this would make crossing the river more difficult for residents of Halton.

"If you limit what goes over the SJB then route 4 is still an option. It doesn’t matter that it doesn’t attract as much traffic; the traffic wouldn’t have a choice."

"It would be really difficult to police the use of SJB for local traffic only and you can’t expect local users to go all the way to route 4 just to get from one side of Halton to the other."

The group highlighted the importance of considering the effects of a new crossing on the whole road network.

"You can’t just look at the crossing, you’ve got to look at the knock on affects, you’ve got to look at that link at Daresbury, you’ve got to look at the bottom of Central Expressway and you’ve got to look at Junction 12. You’ve got to look at the regional traffic problems."

"It’s not a Halton Borough Council problem; it should be a central government issue."

"It’s not just a local traffic problem."

**Group 2**

**Silver Jubilee Bridge**

Participants stressed the impact of the current bridge on businesses in Halton, and stated how strongly they felt that a new crossing was needed as soon as possible.

"It isolates the two towns. When people come for a job one of the main reasons they want to work for us in Widnes is because they currently work in Runcorn and live in Widnes and they don’t want to have to drive over the bridge. We are getting repeatedly in interview the main reason we want to work here is that we do not want to go over the bridge."

"We plan our deliveries around that bridge. We deliver over the bridge in the morning and in the afternoon we do local, we do not go anywhere near it."

"Something has to be done, there cannot be another 20 years talking about it. There will be consequences for putting a bridge somewhere, but they will be smaller than the overall benefit that will be gained by the wider population."
Option 3A

This option was thought to have good road links in Runcorn, directly connecting to the Central Expressway. In addition, the road links to Liverpool in Widnes via Speke Road were also thought to be ideal, keeping traffic flowing straight on and off the bridge. This option was therefore expected to take most of the traffic off the Silver Jubilee Bridge, freeing it for local use.

"It will help my local delivery business because I would still use the old bridge, but it would be clear for me to use it."

It was also thought to have good links for industrial traffic, with access at Astmoor, Ditton Road and West Bank Docks, keeping heavy loads away from the town centres.

Another perceived advantage of Option 3A was the use of wasteland in Widnes. It was also expected to cause less disruption during construction to both the residential and industrial communities of Halton.

"The land in Widnes where it would be built is not residential and not prime retail/industrial either."

"There are fewer negatives for this option."

However, there were concerns about the road link to the M62 and the proximity of the junction in Widnes to the current bridge.

"It does not connect well to the M62, does not erase that awful junction at B&Q in Widnes."

"You would still need to improve the junction at B&Q."

"On the north side, the access to the bridges are too close to each other, there is not enough separation."

In addition, respondents were concerned about the affect on Astmoor.

"Would it be high enough over Astmoor and would businesses want to be based right underneath it."

"I would not want to work underneath all those lorries coming off the M56 onto the bridge at Astmoor. It would be made safe, but the pollution would increase."

"What would happen to Astmoor in the longer term? Would it be split apart by the new approach to the bridge?"

"We use solvent based processes, so there are environmental issues that we already have to look at and having a bridge and a road system so close will add to the issues. We may not even be allowed to stay there because part of our land is on your road network so I suspect we would be in the way. The cost of relocation would be quite large and may be sufficient that rather than being relocated we would be closed down."

Option 3

Some of the respondents thought that this route would be the best option with modifications to the junction in Widnes. However, there was some discussion about whether there was room to modify the junction.
"I prefer this one because it deals with traffic flow from South Liverpool and the M62 better, it separates the junctions for the two bridges on the North side much better and is the same on the south side."

"The junction at B&G is being turned into a roundabout with traffic lights. To help clear the traffic north onto the M62 then a flyover would be needed instead. Traffic lights and roundabouts will cause stop/start junctions and congestion in the rest of the town. A flyover by Morrisons like it is designed on the south side."

"The key is when you do have the traffic over the bridge on the north side, how you disperse the traffic. If you have it how it is now with traffic lights and/or roundabouts, I think you are going to back the traffic up along the bridge."

"It is not on the plan, but it would seem better to have a straight through access route for the M62. Give through traffic a good clear unrestricted flow through."

"Is there room to construct that between the retail units that are already there?"

A further perceived benefit of this option over option 3A is that it has better separation of the bridge access roads and therefore problems on one bridge would be less likely to affect the other. It is also thought to use wasteland in Widnes that is in need of development.

**Option 2**

This option is still expected to cause congestion in Widnes, due to the roundabout on the bridge exit.

Furthermore, the Runcorn junction at Astmoor is expected to be less efficient than the junction for Options 3 and 3A. It is thought to be too small and not adequate for the traffic levels, even if it was improved. There were also concerns about the proximity of this junction to the current bridge approach roads and therefore the possibility of congestion.

"It's not an efficient junction, it's only small and it's in essence a T-junction, it will lead to traffic back up along the route."

It was also mentioned that new houses are being constructed close to the junction in Runcorn.

**Option 1**

The group thought that Option 1 was not a viable option and negates the purpose of a new crossing. The congestion problems are expected to remain and an incident on one bridge is expected to cause chaos on the other.

"With all the others you have two choices, with this one you do not, it is effectively one bridge."

"Focuses all the traffic in one place."

"It is just too close to the other one."

"With bridges so close together would there be safety problems?"

The disruption caused during construction was also expected to be severe.

"Construction could cause chaos in both towns for 2 years."
It was recognised that Option 1 was the cheapest option, however this was the only advantage the group identified.

**Preferred Option**

Initially the group was split in terms of their preferred option, with half selecting Option 3 and half Option 3A. Both of these were expected to help the traffic flowing to and from the motorways. However, there was still some debate about which of the routes offered the best traffic flow, particularly for through traffic. Option 3A was thought to be the best if the majority of through traffic uses Spoke Road and Option 3 if the majority of through traffic heads towards the M62. With further discussions about the junction of 3A in Widnes, the majority of the group agreed that this was the best option. It was expected to allow for the best traffic flow on and off the bridge.

_"The roadways must lend themselves to the two motorways (M56 & M62) for through traffic."

_"If you clear your traffic, that's trying to make a connection between the two motorways (M56 & M62) then that will clear the congestion better and therefore it would be the best route."

However, some of the participants still thought that Option 3 offered more opportunity to improve Widnes town centre and was better for traffic flow to the M62. They also believed that this option would keep the junctions of the two bridges further apart thereby avoiding congestion problems.

Furthermore, it was pointed out that Option 3 takes traffic near to the bus terminal at Morrisons and therefore may be a better solution for public transport.

Both Options 3 and 3A would present a problem for a number of businesses represented in this group as they are based at Astmoor Industrial Estate. However, respondents believed that they were the best route options and accepted that the building of a new crossing would disrupt someone. They all agreed that there would be less long-term impact if the new bridge was built near to industrial areas than residential areas.

_"As long as we got a bridge almost any bridge would do. Certainly route 3; it has easy access in Runcorn. And with the development going on in Widnes with Morrisons and the new Asaa and the industrial areas where route 3 hits Widnes, it would allow more development around the area. And if the whole emphasis is to regenerate the town, and the town to get some benefit out of it. If you can get easy access into that shopping area and then allow building on the chemical land you could create quite an attractive entrance to the town in that way and attract business to it."

Their only concern about these routes (3 and 3A) was the possibility of opposition, regarding their affect on the saltmarshes, stopping the building from going ahead.

**Impact Factors**

Traffic flow and the need to maintain it was thought to be the most important factor for this group.

_"Traffic is time and money."

Other factors were discussed, and impact on residential areas was also thought to be important, however, traffic flow, including the period during construction, was felt to be the most important factor for businesses in the area.
"There are other issues to consider: is it the best for the locals, for ecology, for industry in Halton, It all needs to be taken into account."

"We need to have the least impact during construction, I know that there will be some, but businesses can't be affected too strongly or they won't survive."

"We are expecting to put up with some disruption, it will be worth it. We just need to be kept informed."

Respondents thought that the design of the bridge was important. It must take account of the needs of emergency services and all the different users as well as be an attractive structure.

"Like the Dee Bridge in Flint, that's nice."

"What about a lane just for heavy goods vehicles."

"Pedestrian lanes and cycle lanes on the current bridge would be good."

"Maybe even lanes for public transport."

The group also stressed the importance of keeping them informed of any decisions that the Council makes.

**Workshop 2**

Five people attended the workshop representing four different businesses based in Runcorn and Widnes.

Due to the small number of participants the presentation and discussions about the route options took place at the same time and there was no separate question and answer session.

**Option 1**

The majority of the businesses represented were based in Runcorn Old Town and therefore expected to be severely affected by this option. They questioned exactly which areas would require demolition and were concerned about the impact on the local community and on businesses in the area.

"It's not just the families that live in the old town, it's the relatives that visit them, and it's all passing trade for businesses in the old town. It doesn't matter whether it's a kid walking down the street wanting a lollipop or someone wanting a three-piece suite – it's all trade."

"If those people are moved out of the area their business will go to another shopping area."

"Would I still have a business?"

"It's far too residential. Long term it will have a tremendous affect on the communities near the bridge. There's enough pollution now."

"This route will suit the through traffic, people who don't live or work in the area. It doesn't help the people of Halton."

The participants were particularly concerned about living and working in the area during construction.
"Horrendous in terms of congestion. Congestion is bad now. It doesn’t need an accident, if there’s a breakdown or even bad weather the whole area grinds to a halt. If you’ve got massive earth moving equipment or loads coming in, the turmoil over those three years will be difficult to recover from."

"During construction it will be impossible to live in."

"The implication of 3 years of construction is impossible, you should keep it away from the communities they’ve put up with enough."

Even when construction was complete and the new bridge opened, respondents did not expect the congestion in the area to clear due to the use of the same approach roads. In addition, they were concerned that so many approach roads would confuse people trying to cross the bridge and they would be even less likely to want to visit Runcorn Old Town.

"It won’t alleviate the queuing problems getting onto the bridge."

"The Western point expressway isn’t big enough for all the traffic, even if there are two bridges at the end of it."

"It’s a bottleneck on both sides, the Expressway is not big enough to cope."

"Strangers already get lost finding their way around Runcorn, this would make it worse."

**Option 2**

Option 2 was thought to be less disruptive than Option 1, particularly during construction. With very little impact on Runcorn Old Town.

However, respondents were concerned about the fact that this option did not allow for direct access to Astmoor.

"Limited access to Astmoor is a problem. People might tend to either use the existing bridge or some of the smaller roads around."

"A lot of the heavy traffic is going to Astmoor. Astmoor is getting bigger and bigger so there’s an increase in heavy traffic."

Furthermore, some traffic was expected to continue to use the Silver Jubilee Bridge rather than Option 2.

"You would have to put a weight restriction on the old bridge if you wanted industrial traffic to use the new one."

**Option 3**

Option 3 was expected to provide a route via the Central Expressway for traffic using the M56, avoiding congestion. In addition, Junction 11 via the Daresbury Expressway was also thought to offer a further alternative for M56 traffic.

"By the Shopping City, if you improved the infrastructure there, you’re straight off the M56."

"I like this because you could improve the Central Expressway to be able to take the traffic coming off the M56 this way onto the new bridge. You could also come off at Junction 11 and it would be straightforward as well. It would separate the traffic."
"There are more options for traffic to go different routes to get to the bridge."

This option was expected to cause less disruption during construction and possibly increase trade in the Old Town in the longer term.

"If it makes it easier for Halton people to use the Silver Jubilee Bridge they may just call in."

However, the junction in Widnes was expected to cause congestion problems unless there were major improvements. As this junction does not allow for continuous traffic flow on and off the bridge, respondents thought that people would avoid the congestion in the area by using the old bridge, particularly traffic from Liverpool.

"The Widnes junction is already a problem, it needs to be re-designed already."

In addition, there were concerns about the environmental impact of this option, particularly the impact on Wigg Island.

**Option 3A**

Option 3A has the same junction in Runcorn and therefore was expected to offer the same benefits as Option 3.

In addition, the junction in Widnes is thought to be better for traffic flow. Allowing Liverpool traffic to continue straight over the bridge and onto Speke Road.

This option is also expected to cause less disruption than Option 3 during construction.

"Would only affect scrap/derelict land in Widnes, there’s nothing there to knock down."

Although it was recognised that this was the most expensive route, respondents believed that it offered the most benefits.

"You always pay for extra benefits."

**Preferred Option**

All of the respondents thought that 3A was the best route. It was expected to have less impact during construction and allowed for the best traffic flow once in use. It was not expected to have a big impact on local residents, and uses land in Widnes that needs regenerating.

**Impact Factors**

When asked about the different impacts that the new crossing would have, respondents thought that easing traffic congestion, particularly near to residential areas, was the most important factor.

"It’s been a problem for 30 odd years. The day they opened it the bridge was out of date, there was twice as much traffic as they thought. We have to get the right one this time."

"You need to minimise disruption to residents particularly during construction."

**Cost**
When asked about cost, the respondents thought that although it did not affect their decision making process, it would be important to the government. They thought that Halton would have to justify the extra costs of Option 3A.

"Option 3A is worth the extra costs, because in the long-term there will be more benefits. The bridge will be free from congestion and Halton will be a more attractive place to live in and to set up business in."

Workshop 3

A total of twenty people attended the workshop, representing fifteen different businesses based in Runcorn and Widnes.

Following the presentation, respondents were given the opportunity to ask questions and raise queries before the group discussions started.

The questions asked and the answers given are provided below:

- **Question:** Will there be any road improvements for the existing bridge?
  - **Answer:** Not for Options 2, 3 or 3A, however a high proportion of the traffic currently using the Silver Jubilee Bridge is expected to be attracted to the new bridge and therefore road improvements may not be needed.

- **Question:** How do you know the percentage of traffic that will use the new bridge?
  - **Answer:** A tried and tested system that involves measuring the length of the journey time. As drivers we tend to go for the quickest route, it gives a fairly accurate figure of how much traffic it will attract.

- **Question:** Is there a problem with subsidence of the bridge for Option 2, 3 or 3A.
  - **Answer:** The foundations will be taken through the silts and the sands into the competent sandstone underneath.

- **Question:** How far is the distance between the current bridge and Option 3 in Runcorn?
  - **Answer:** Approximately three and a half kilometres.

- **Question:** Will all of the options for a new bridge be for two-way traffic?
  - **Answer:** Yes.

- **Question:** If you improved the public transport, you would remove traffic from the road system.
  - **Answer:** You would remove traffic, but not enough. We are talking about 80,000 vehicles a day crossing the bridge. If we can remove 10% via public transport that is a huge shift. However, there are still 70,000 vehicles on the bridge. That is still over capacity. Nevertheless, public transport does need to be considered as there are people in the Borough who do not have access to a car.
• **Question:** What is the expected traffic flow by the time the new bridge is built. Will it be able to cope?

• **Answer:** In theory, in the next 25-30 years traffic could grow to 130,000 per day, based on experience of the past. The capacity of the new bridge will be 130,000 but that is using the hard shoulders as lanes, and so we would be back to where we are now.

• **Question:** Have you considered a tram system on any of the bridges?

• **Answer:** Merseytravel have a proposal to bring a tram system down as far as Widnes, they do not have a plan to bring it into Runcorn yet. But Halton would like to make it possible to bring it into Runcorn in the future. We will be making it possible with this bridge.

• **Question:** Who is ultimately going to pay for it?

• **Answer:** Halton’s priority is to get the government to fund it. Although tolling has been discussed in the past, it is way down the Council’s priority list. They recognise the impact it would have on local business particularly in an area like this where development is a bit fragile. It is their lowest priority. The government could fund it in a number of ways; they could give a direct grant. or they could fund it through a PFI scheme whereby a contractor comes in and builds it and the government pays over say 30 years based on the numbers of traffic crossing. It is called shadow tolling, the motorists do not actually pay but the contractor is paid based on the amount of traffic using it. This was used to build the A55 in Anglesey. It does offset the cost for the government over a period of 30 years. That is the way that we expect it to go.

**Group 1**

**Option 1**

The group thought that Option 1 would have a severe negative impact on businesses in the area. Many even questioned whether their business would survive the disruption during construction. They were concerned about how the decision on a route option would be taken and what pressures would be put upon Halton Borough Council by environmental agencies.

"Three years of going absolutely nowhere, the roads would be absolutely solid, we may as well pack up our businesses and go home."

"I don’t know if as a business we would still be here after it."

"It will cost jobs."

"We’ll kill businesses but save the little birds."

Respondents also thought that this option would not solve the congestion problems. They may even be made worse if extra traffic is attracted to the route.

"The problem with the Silver Jubilee Bridge is all the feeder roads coming onto it, there are four or five going onto two carriageways and a new bridge won’t improve this. You’ll still have the problem with the feeder roads."
"People use all the back streets possible to try and avoid the hold-up on the feeder roads, and that would get worse. If you build a bridge there it will cause devastation."

"People will try and see which bridge has the least traffic on it and so will change lanes all the time, that in turn causes congestion."

They also recognised the impact that this route would have on communities close to the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"I wouldn't like to see so many houses demolished and I think it would be an eyesore looking at it from Runcorn old town."

"It would take the guts out of Runcorn."

The only advantage identified was the cost.

Option 2

Option 2 was expected to cause congestion problems in both Runcorn and Widnes. Respondents thought that there would be congestion in Runcorn from traffic trying to get onto the bridge from the M56. In addition, congestion in Widnes from traffic trying to get off the bridge and negotiate their exits to either Speke Road or Ashley Way.

"Too many roundabouts in Widnes, that will just create congestion on the bridge, so people will just go onto the old bridge instead."

The limited access to Astmoor also concerned the group. They questioned where the heavy goods vehicles would get onto the industrial estate. With the expected problems of limited access to Astmoor and congestion on the bridge approaches, the group thought that traffic would continue to use the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

Respondents also mentioned the fact that the route crossed Wigg Island and questioned whether a bridge would be able to be built in this area.

On the positive side, this option was not expected to be too disruptive on the Runcorn side of the River Mersey during construction.

Option 3

The junction in Runcorn for Option 3, unlike Option 2, was not expected to cause major congestion. However, although this junction was thought to be good for traffic flow, it was also expected to have a large negative impact on the Astmoor Industrial Estate.

"I've only just relocated from London and I will need to be relocated again."

"Big impact on the Astmoor Industrial Estate and this area is supposed to be being regenerated."

"It will take the heart out of Astmoor."

Respondents thought that this option would allow the use of the Central Expressway as an access route to the M56. However, this link would need improving.

The junction in Widnes was not expected to help traffic flow. Respondents already believe that this junction is congested and prone to accidents. The addition of more traffic would increase these problems. Furthermore, they expected the nature of the junction to cause confusion and lane changing due to traffic trying to negotiate the junction for Liverpool and
others trying to negotiate the junction for the M62 and St Helens. This in turn was expected to encourage people to continue using the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"Roundabout at Morrisons is already causing stand-still traffic."

"There will be lots of changing lanes still, this causes accidents."

"The roundabout at Widnes will cause congestion."

**Option 3A**

Option 3A was expected to keep the traffic flowing, particularly to and from Liverpool, thereby decreasing congestion on the bridge exits.

"I think this will suit more users, route 3 is the best for people going to Warrington, this one you can either go to Warrington or Liverpool."

"Has better logistics in Widnes."

However, again it was expected to have a negative impact on Astmoor Industrial Estate. The size of this impact was difficult for the respondents to estimate. They questioned how high the bridge would be over the estate, and which buildings would require demolition. They stressed how important it was for them to know exactly what impact the bridge would have on Astmoor, so that they could calculate the impact on their businesses.

"It is going over the Astmoor so won't involve that much demolition."

"But who wants to work underneath during construction."

"It is important for us to know how much disruption there will be on industries in the area during construction."

**Preferred Option**

All of the respondents agreed that Option 3A was the best route when all impacts had been taken into account. Their main concerns are that the new bridge solves the congestion problems in the area, and Option 3A is expected to allow for the best traffic flow on both sides of the river, thereby alleviating congestion.

**Other Issues**

The group did have concerns about toll charges being introduced for local businesses and the negative effect that this would have on the economy in the area.

They also stressed how important it was for Halton Borough Council to keep them informed of developments and involve them in the planning process.

Although the group recognised that there would be some negative affects of any route option chosen, they were concerned about the process for compensation. One of the respondents mentioned that his firm had already been relocated by Halton Council and that the Council did not give him adequate support. The group stressed how important it was for Halton Borough Council to strongly support any businesses affected by the bridge construction for the good of the economy of the Borough.

The group had one final point to raise, and that was their concerns about the Silver Jubilee Bridge. They questioned whether it would be safe to use for the next five years, whilst the
new crossing was being planned and built. Therefore, they stressed how important it was for a new crossing to be available as soon as possible.

"What will happen to the Silver Jubilee Bridge in the next 5 years while we’re waiting for the new bridge, it’s in a bad state now? Is it safe to use now?"

**Group 2**

**Silver Jubilee Bridge – Current Problems**

Respondents discussed how the problems associated with the current bridge impact on their business. Employees are often late, because of being held-up on the bridge and the bridge acts as a barrier for businesses on opposite sides of the river, making it difficult for them to work together.

"Poor road access will not attract new business. Halton should be in an ideal position as it is close to the motorways, it is just crossing the Mersey that is the problem."

"Widnes does not appear to be attracting new businesses recently. It does restrict your choice of where you would site your offices and businesses. It acts as a barrier; businesses from Cheshire will only look as far as Runcorn for business premises and not across the river and vice versa."

"People won’t be prepared to move into the Widnes area if things don’t improve. We are already thinking about it because of staff being late and congestion on the bridge affecting our deliveries. We have timed delivery, a shelf life of 2 hours in the back of the vehicle. Many times we’re left sitting on that bridge so long that we have to throw the product away."

"There comes a point when you’re not going to be competitive you can’t build problems on the bridge into your prices. The customer is not going to pay because you’ve got to cross Runcorn Bridge; you chose where you’re located so that’s your problem. Businesses are considering moving out of Widnes."

A number of respondents in this group were particularly interested in the affect that the new crossing plans would have on the Widnes Waterfront Development. Their businesses were involved in this development and the money that has been allocated to the Waterfront has to be used within a certain timescale. They are concerned that any delay regarding a decision of the preferred option for the new bridge may delay plans for the Waterfront Development.

**Option 1**

Option 1 was not expected to relieve the congestion on the approaches to the Silver Jubilee Bridge. The respondents thought that it should not therefore be considered as an option for the new crossing.

"The problem is not the bridge itself, it’s coming onto the bridge, it flows okay over; it’s the getting on and off."

"It keeps all the traffic in the same place, congestion will remain."

"It only addresses a small part of the problem, the roads on either end remain and so it will only give a small benefit."
A further disadvantage of Option 1 was the expected affect on residents in the area. The impact on the local community was expected to be severe, especially during construction. Construction was also expected to have a severe negative impact on businesses in Halton.

"There'll be more traffic through residential areas."

"Disruption in the construction phase would be enormous."

"Although it is the cheapest, it is the worst."

"There would be vastly increased levels of noise and traffic. The other routes split it up and take it into industrial areas that aren't occupied at night."

"Could you put a cost on the increased disruption of this route for 2 years?"

**Option 3A**

Option 3A was thought to be particularly suitable for through traffic, allowing it to remain moving rather than stopping at roundabouts. This option was also thought to be well connected to the main feeder roads of the bridge, thereby attracting most of the traffic currently using the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

"It's a through route and so will stop people using the old bridge."

"Looks like thought has been given to feeder routes to it, it links up with dual carriageways."

This option was also expected to have little impact on Widnes, as the bridge access road is in a mainly derelict area, which is part of the economic development site.

Further advantages of this option were the possibility of easing the congestion at Junction 12 via use of Junction 11 and low levels of disruption during construction.

"Least construction congestion, it's well away from the existing bridge."

The group identified one disadvantage of Option 3A, and that was its impact on Astmoor Industrial Estate.

"It will be disruptive to Astmoor, businesses will have to be relocated."

**Option 2**

Option 2 was expected to cause congestion problems in both Runcorn and Widnes.

"Not such a good through route. It will cause problems at the junction in Runcorn as all the traffic has to come off the route."

"There's a roundabout in Widnes, so you duplicate the problem."

"A natural place for congestion and accidents."

"Traffic can't run as smoothly."

This option was not thought to have any advantages over Option 3A. In addition, respondents were concerned about the fact that it crosses Wigg Island at the point where it has just been opened to the public.
Option 3

Respondents were positive about the junction in Runcorn for Option 3. However, they were concerned about congestion build-up on the junction in Widnes.

"In Widnes there are junctions and roundabouts where the traffic has to slow and stop."

"Can the junction in Widnes be improved?"

"The through traffic needs to be kept flowing, you don’t want that stopping."

A number of respondents in the group were also concerned about the affects during construction on the Widnes Waterfront Development.

"This may have an adverse affect on Widnes Waterfront, the land has to be used in a certain number of years. You want to link the Waterfront into Widnes town and this would stop this. You need to make sure that too much time is not lost."

Preferred Option

All of the respondents in this group preferred Option 3A. Although the group recognised that this was the most expensive option, they thought that the capital costs were not the only costs to consider and that the benefit of the route outweighed the cost.

"It’s not just construction costs, there’s disruption costs, costs on lives and the life of the bridge."

"Capital cost isn’t the only thing."

"Air quality would improve in West Bank and old town. They should only have 20% of traffic now."

Impact Factors

The group believed that the most important impacts to consider were the social impacts and the impact on traffic flow. In particular, the impact on local communities and businesses during construction should to be considered.

"Option 1 will have the worst impact on business during construction, the others will be nothing like as bad. And at the end you still have the traffic problems."

"Main consideration is traffic flow and less social disruption."

"It would be a big selling point for new business to the area if you have a good transport infrastructure."

Respondents did question the impact on the environment, particularly the flow of the river. However, they were unsure of the size of these impacts and how permanent their affects would be.

"Will the river flow be affected?"

"The bridge will take away small areas of the habitat and form a barrier dividing parts of it up."

"During construction, there will be disruption, but it won’t remain."
"What affects have other bridges that have been built across estuaries had on the environment?"

"The wildlife does adapt."

**Cost**

Finally, the group were concerned that Halton would be forced to select the cheapest option. In their view this would cause major disruption to the current bridge during construction, in turn having a large negative impact on local businesses.

"Will there be pressure from the government to go for a cheaper option?"

"Halton have to have a strong argument for the more expensive option."

"Short term disruption on the Silver Jubilee Bridge can be coped with, say for 6 months. But if it takes longer, like for route 1, then we'd have to think about moving the business."