# TfL confirms twin bored tunnel approach for Docklands Light Railway extension to Thamesmead



Transport for London (TfL) has confirmed its preferred method for extending the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) to Thamesmead, opting for a twin-bored tunnel beneath the River Thames. This major infrastructure project, now entering its second public consultation phase, is anticipated to unlock significant regeneration opportunities, supporting up to 30,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs, and stimulating an economic boost valued at £15.6 billion. The extension forms a critical part of the government’s broader economic growth and housing delivery ambitions.

The new DLR route will originate from Beckton Riverside, with a station planned opposite Gallions Reach Shopping Park, integrating with residential, community, and retail spaces as part of a developing town centre. From there, a tunnel bored using tunnel boring machines (TBMs) will traverse beneath the Thames to a new station at Thamesmead Waterfront. This site is embedded within a proposed 100-hectare regeneration area owned by Peabody, envisaged to deliver new homes, jobs, and an expanded town centre. Journey times are expected to be competitive, offering around 25 minutes to Stratford, 30 minutes to London Bridge, and 35 minutes to Tottenham Court Road, vastly improving commuter access to key London hubs.

TfL emphasises that twin bored tunnelling is a well-understood construction technique in East London, with precedents including the DLR Lewisham Extension and Crossrail tunnels at Woolwich, underpinning confidence in the project's engineering and safety approach. The route presents geotechnical and environmental challenges such as contamination from former industrial use, unexploded ordnance, and buried obstructions, but comprehensive surveys and risk mitigation plans are underway to address these issues without environmental or safety compromises. Construction will be phased to minimise disruption to existing DLR services and local communities, with detailed plans still in development.

Complementing the tunnelling, the project will include shaft structures on either riverbank to provide emergency access, maintenance, and ventilation, topped by sensitively designed two-storey head houses that fit local surroundings. TfL is working closely with local authorities, including Newham and Greenwich Councils, and developers such as Lendlease and Peabody, aligning the DLR extension with land use policies in the London Plan and Opportunity Area Planning Frameworks. These frameworks support the large-scale housing and commercial growth envisaged, embedding sustainability goals around carbon reduction, biodiversity net gain, and climate adaptation into the project’s delivery.

Public response has been strongly favourable, with surveys indicating that 75% of respondents believe the extension will improve connectivity and speed journeys into southeast London, while local polling showed 85% support in Beckton, Gallions Reach, Thamesmead, and Abbey Wood. Despite ongoing debate about whether alternative transport options like the Elizabeth line or London Overground might serve Thamesmead, the DLR extension remains the Mayor’s highest priority infrastructure project for unlocking housing and regeneration on this scale. Estimated to cost around £1.7 billion, it is expected to begin construction in the late 2020s, with an opening targeted for the early 2030s.

Alex Williams, TfL’s chief customer and strategy officer, underscores the project’s potential to transform transport and regeneration, highlighting the complementary plans for a new bus transit scheme enhancing connections between Thamesmead and key transport hubs at Woolwich and Abbey Wood. This multimodal approach aims to support new homes, town centres, and job growth by improving overall accessibility and reliability.

The government’s recent Spending Review allocated £2.2 billion for TfL over four years and expressed intent to collaborate on funding options for the Thamesmead DLR extension, though business leaders have called for clearer funding commitments to expedite construction. Local authorities in Greenwich have been vocal about the transformative potential for Thamesmead, currently the only London postcode without a direct train link, emphasising that improved rail connections would unlock thousands of homes, jobs, and public spaces.

This extension is integral to meeting London’s urgent housing needs, contributing significantly to the 880,000 homes target over the next decade. TfL continues to seek community feedback until mid-August ahead of submitting a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application in autumn 2026, which will set the foundation for progressing this landmark transport and regeneration scheme.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-prefers-twin-bored-tunnel-for-dlr-extension-as-second-consultation-starts-26-06-2025/), [[7]](https://www.railmagazine.com/news/2024/08/02/tfl-to-push-forward-with-dlr-extension-after-consultation-shows-support)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-prefers-twin-bored-tunnel-for-dlr-extension-as-second-consultation-starts-26-06-2025/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/dlr-extension-beckton-riverside-thamesmead-plans-sadiq-khan-2026-b1074999.html), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/tfl-dlr-extension-thamesmead-consultation-beckton-riverside-belvedere-london-docklands-light-railway-b1137123.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-prefers-twin-bored-tunnel-for-dlr-extension-as-second-consultation-starts-26-06-2025/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-prefers-twin-bored-tunnel-for-dlr-extension-as-second-consultation-starts-26-06-2025/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-prefers-twin-bored-tunnel-for-dlr-extension-as-second-consultation-starts-26-06-2025/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.railtechnologymagazine.com/articles/public-gives-green-light-cross-river-dlr-extension), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-dlr-extension-thamesmead-elizabeth-line-london-overground-b1174393.html), [[7]](https://www.railmagazine.com/news/2024/08/02/tfl-to-push-forward-with-dlr-extension-after-consultation-shows-support)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-prefers-twin-bored-tunnel-for-dlr-extension-as-second-consultation-starts-26-06-2025/), [[7]](https://www.railmagazine.com/news/2024/08/02/tfl-to-push-forward-with-dlr-extension-after-consultation-shows-support)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-prefers-twin-bored-tunnel-for-dlr-extension-as-second-consultation-starts-26-06-2025/), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/dlr-thamesmead-docklands-light-railway-beckton-riverside-sadiq-khan-london-b1088301.html)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-prefers-twin-bored-tunnel-for-dlr-extension-as-second-consultation-starts-26-06-2025/), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/dlr-thamesmead-docklands-light-railway-beckton-riverside-sadiq-khan-london-b1088301.html), [[7]](https://www.railmagazine.com/news/2024/08/02/tfl-to-push-forward-with-dlr-extension-after-consultation-shows-support)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-prefers-twin-bored-tunnel-for-dlr-extension-as-second-consultation-starts-26-06-2025/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/dlr-extension-beckton-riverside-thamesmead-plans-sadiq-khan-2026-b1074999.html> - Plans are progressing for a new Docklands Light Railway (DLR) extension to reach Thamesmead, a currently underserved area in southeast London. The extension would involve a new tunnel under the Thames, with plans aimed for submission in 2026. The project is expected to support the construction of between 20,000 and 30,000 new homes in both Thamesmead and Beckton Riverside. The DLR branch would split off from the existing route near Gallions Reach, with a new station created at Beckton Riverside, and then cross the Thames via a new tunnel to reach Thamesmead.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/tfl-dlr-extension-thamesmead-consultation-beckton-riverside-belvedere-london-docklands-light-railway-b1137123.html> - Transport for London (TfL) has launched a consultation on extending the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) to Thamesmead, including a new station at Beckton Riverside. The proposed route would cross the Thames via a new tunnel to reach Thamesmead. TfL believes the project would enable the creation of between 25,000 and 30,000 new homes across four development sites on both sides of the river. While potential onward extensions to areas like Belvedere were considered, they are not being progressed at this time due to cost and existing rail network coverage.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-dlr-extension-thamesmead-elizabeth-line-london-overground-b1174393.html> - Transport for London (TfL) is moving forward with plans to extend the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) to Thamesmead, despite calls to extend the Elizabeth line or London Overground instead. The DLR extension, currently unfunded and estimated to cost up to £1.7 billion, is unlikely to open for at least a decade. During a consultation, 58% of respondents stated the extension would improve local journey times, and 75% believed it would enhance connectivity to wider London. However, many suggested extending the London Overground or Elizabeth line instead.
5. <https://www.railtechnologymagazine.com/articles/public-gives-green-light-cross-river-dlr-extension> - Public support for the proposed Docklands Light Railway (DLR) extension from Gallions Reach to Thamesmead has been substantial, with 58% of respondents stating it would improve local journey times and 75% believing it would enhance connectivity to wider London. The extension aims to support the development of over 25,000 new homes and 10,000 jobs, with two new stations at Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead, linked by a tunnel under the River Thames. The project is seen as a crucial step in addressing London’s housing crisis and boosting the local economy.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/dlr-thamesmead-docklands-light-railway-beckton-riverside-sadiq-khan-london-b1088301.html> - Plans to extend the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) to Thamesmead have progressed with the submission of the business case to the Government for approval. The scheme, which would see the DLR extended from Gallions Reach to Thamesmead via Beckton Riverside, is estimated to help unlock up to 10,000 new jobs and 30,000 new homes. The area, currently unserved by Tube, DLR, Overground, and National Rail services, would benefit from improved connectivity and economic growth through this extension.
7. <https://www.railmagazine.com/news/2024/08/02/tfl-to-push-forward-with-dlr-extension-after-consultation-shows-support> - Transport for London (TfL) has announced plans to move forward with a Docklands Light Railway extension from Gallions Reach to Thamesmead, via Beckton Riverside, following overwhelming public support for the project. The proposed extension, which will include two new DLR stations and a tunnel under the River Thames, aims to unlock the development of up to 30,000 new homes and create thousands of jobs in the area. The project is seen as a crucial step in addressing London’s housing crisis and boosting the local economy.