LONDON CHAMBER of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

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Transport for London

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16 July 2026

Extending the DLR to Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Transport for London's consultation on the proposed extension of the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) to Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead. LCCI represents a business network of over 12,000 firms across the capital. Our response focuses on the business implications of the proposed extension, including its role in supporting growth, improving access to jobs, enabling housing delivery, strengthening cross-river connectivity and maintaining London's long-term competitiveness.

LCCI supports the proposed extension. We previously wrote in support of the scheme in March 2024, recognising its potential to unlock additional housing capacity, provide reliable public transport for future residents and support business travel across the city. This position aligns with LCCI's wider public calls for government to back large-scale London infrastructure projects that can support job creation, investment and growth. As the proposals have developed, the case for delivery has become stronger.

Infrastructure, confidence and London's competitiveness

London's business environment remains challenging. LCCI's latest Quarterly Economic Survey found that firms faced persistent inflationary pressures, rising operating costs and subdued investment, leaving many concerned about growth prospects amid a difficult economic and political backdrop. Around six in ten London businesses expected the UK economy to deteriorate over the next 12 months. Sustained pressure is also affecting recruitment, with hiring intentions remaining subdued across the capital: just 7% of London firms expected to expand their workforce over the next three months. Investment intentions remain similarly constrained, with only 7% of firms reporting increased plans to invest in plant and equipment. Against this backdrop, growth-enabling infrastructure plays an important role in strengthening confidence, improving access to labour, and supporting long-term investment.

The DLR extension should therefore be seen as part of London's wider economic infrastructure. It can support new homes, new jobs, more sustainable travel, and stronger commercial links between east and southeast London. Delivered effectively, the scheme would contribute to the conditions businesses need to invest, recruit and grow.

Housing, labour mobility and access to opportunity

LCCI welcomes the scheme's role in supporting up to 30,000 new homes and 10,000 jobs in Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead Waterfront. London's housing shortage remains a major economic constraint, affecting recruitment, staff retention, wage pressures and businesses' ability to attract talent to the capital. New housing must therefore be matched by reliable, high-capacity public transport if growth areas are to become successful places to live, work and do business.

For businesses, the labour market benefits are particularly important. Improved connections between Thamesmead, Beckton Riverside, Canary Wharf, Stratford, the City and the wider DLR network would increase residents' access to jobs and widen the potential workforce for employers. This is especially relevant given the continued recruitment difficulties reported by London firms.

Delivery and local business impact

The benefits of the extension will depend not only on the scheme being delivered, but also on how it is delivered. LCCI encourages TfL to engage local businesses early and clearly as plans progress, particularly where construction, access changes, road layout changes, or station works could affect footfall, servicing, deliveries or staff travel. This will be especially important for small businesses, which often have limited capacity to absorb prolonged disruption while wider cost pressures remain high. As the scheme develops, TfL, the Greater London Authority, boroughs, landowners and developers should also ensure that the extension is integrated with wider housing, town centre, retail and employment plans, so that transport investment translates into clear commercial and community benefits.

Funding certainty and delivery momentum

LCCI welcomes the progress since the previous consultation, including the government's commitment to the scheme and the ongoing development of funding arrangements. Major infrastructure schemes require long-term certainty. Businesses, investors, developers and local communities need confidence that projects of this importance will move from consultation to delivery.

We therefore encourage TfL, the Mayor of London and the government to maintain momentum towards the Transport and Works Act Order application and to provide as much clarity as possible on funding, delivery timetable and key milestones. The scheme should be delivered affordably and with proper scrutiny, but uncertainty or delay would weaken confidence and risk slowing wider regeneration.

London's economy is central to the UK's prosperity. Infrastructure investment in the capital should be seen as a national growth investment, particularly where it unlocks housing, jobs, productivity and tax revenues. The DLR extension is a clear example of a project that can support both local regeneration and wider economic returns.

Future-proofing wider connectivity

In our 2024 response, LCCI encouraged TfL to keep future links to Bexley and wider east London under consideration. We continue to support that principle. Further connections could unlock additional growth, improve access to employment and support sustainable transport across a wider area of east and southeast London.

However, this should not delay delivery of the core extension to Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead. The priority should be to progress the current scheme while ensuring that, where practical and affordable, design choices do not close off future extension opportunities.

Conclusion

LCCI supports the proposed DLR extension to Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead. From a London competitiveness perspective, the scheme would improve public transport access, unlock housing and jobs, support regeneration, strengthen cross-river connectivity and improve access to employment centres across the capital.

At a time when London firms face weak confidence, high operating costs and constrained investment, major infrastructure projects that support growth should be progressed with urgency and care. LCCI looks forward to continuing to engage constructively with TfL, the Mayor of London, government and local partners as the scheme develops.

We would be happy to discuss our submission in more detail. If you have any questions, please contact Igor Bartkiv, Policy and Research Manager at LCCI, at ibartkiv@londonchamber.co.uk.