

A251 Ashford Road and A2 Canterbury Road, Faversham– Junction Improvements Scheme

To: **Swale Joint Transportation Board, 1 March 2021**

Main Portfolio Area: **KCC – Growth Environment and Transport**

By: **Tim Read, Head of Transportation**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **Watling**

Division: **Faversham**

Summary: The report is a summary of the actions and results of a consultation carried out between August and September 2020 and outlines the proposed highway junction improvements on the A251 Ashford Road and the A2 Canterbury Road, Faversham. The Board is asked to recommend progressing to construction.

For Recommendation

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In Spring 2014, Kent County Council (KCC) consulted with residents and the wider community on proposals to improve the junctions on the A251 Ashford Road and A2 Canterbury Road in Faversham. Two options were presented, a roundabout and a signalised junction. The outcome of the consultation showed a preference for the signalised junction.
- 1.2 A signalised junction compared to a roundabout would require the least amount of land from Kent Fire Brigade and the Abbey school and would appear to deliver the best improvements to congestion on the A251. A recommendation was made to the Swale Joint Transportation Board on 9 June 2014 for this option to be progressed to the detailed design stage.
- 1.3 Several designs have been investigated in the intervening period and fresh funding bids progressed. An updated report was provided to the JTB in March 2019 and a further update given in June 2019. The JTB have recommended that KCC proceed with the scheme.
- 1.4 On 4 August 2020 a detailed design was sent to residents and stakeholders on the proposals to:
- Widen the existing carriageway on the A251 and the A2 to accommodate new left-hand turning lanes
 - Introduce traffic signals
 - Introduce a pedestrian crossing facility
 - Road surface improvements within the area of the scheme

2.0 The Proposal

- 2.1 The current proposals have been designed to reduce queuing and alleviate congestion that is currently occurring on the A251, especially at peak times.
- 2.2 We are proposing to widen the existing carriageway on the A251 Ashford Road to accommodate an additional traffic lane. This lane would filter traffic turning left onto A2 Canterbury Road. To create the new filter some of the existing grass verge and trees that are located on the western kerb line currently owned by The Abbey School and the Fire Station would need to be removed. We are currently in the final stages of acquiring this land in order to be able to implement the new lane.
- 2.3 The scheme will also involve widening the southern side of the A2 Canterbury Road to provide an additional lane on the approach to the proposed signals from both directions. This would allow traffic to turn left onto the A251 Ashford Road or continue straight ahead along the A2 Canterbury Road.
- 2.4 It is also proposed that three sets of signal heads will be installed within this scheme. Two sets on the A2 Canterbury Road. One set heading eastbound, this would include a filter signal that will run separately for those vehicles turning right onto the A251 Ashford Road. The second set heading westbound would have both lanes controlled at the same time. On the A251 Ashford Road, there would be one set of traffic lights with a filter signal running separately for traffic turning left. The introduction of the signals would allow traffic to flow left or right from the junction, easing the current congestion issues.
- 2.5 A new push button pedestrian crossing is also proposed on the A2 to allow pedestrians to cross safely. This type of crossing will incorporate technology that will cancel the pedestrians request if they move away from the crossing to minimise delay to traffic.
- 2.6 As well as introducing new features we will also be looking to improve the current road surface, the proposal also included the resurfacing of the entire junction, with localised repairs taking place on the A2 Canterbury Road where required. Grey high friction surfacing will be introduced at all three approaches to the signals to increase skid resistance of approaching traffic. These works are expected to take place during off-peak periods to ensure that there is minimal impact to the network.

3.0 Consultation

- 3.1 The County Council carried out a full public consultation exercise during the summer of 2020.
- 3.2 Consultation leaflets were distributed to local residents and businesses as well as parish, town and district councils and other interested parties. Posters and A-boards were also displayed at the junction asking road users for their comments on the scheme.
- 3.3 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic no public exhibitions were held. However any questions that were received by the public separate to those comments submitted within the questionnaire were answered within the consultation period.

- 3.4 The Consultation booklet was also available to view on the County Council's website, where respondents could complete an online version of the questionnaire. Hard copies were also available on request.
- 3.5 The Consultation period lasted from 4 August 2020 until 14 September 2020, an extended consultation period of 6 weeks was given.
- 3.2. The Public Consultation sought people's views on the scheme as a whole and not on separate components.
- 3.3 By the close of the consultation Kent County Council had received 195 responses. A summary of the responses is provided in the Consultation Report which is attached as **Annex 1** and the responses in **Annex 2**.

4.0 Discussion

- 4.1 A total of 837 properties were hand delivered a leaflet. At the end of the consultation 195 responses were received. This is a 23% response rate of which the majority were in favour of the proposals. 59% agreed or tended to agree, 36% disagreed or tended to disagree and 5% neither agreed or disagreed.
- 4.2 It was noted when reading the consultation responses that most of the comments raised were on the lack of cycle and pedestrian provisions within the scheme. There were concerns that not all user groups were considered at the design stage.
- 4.3 Other concerns related to vehicles using Preston Road, Preston Lane and Nelson Street as a "rat run" to avoid the A2 as well as increased congestion at The Mews, as traffic would build up at this point moving along the A2.
- 4.4 All comments received have been reviewed and where practical, amendments to the design have been made.
- 4.5 Discussions also took place with the local Faversham Councillors and KCC Member to see if there was an option to provide a footway to the south side of A2 between the new development access to the east of A251 and to Abbey school entrance to the west of A251. In addition, provision of pedestrian crossings on all approaches leading up to the new signals was also discussed. The design team investigated further and have been able to provide the southern footway (and looking further at levels to see if a shared footway/cycleway is possible) but at the expense of the removal of the mature Ash tree and the vegetation opposite the properties overlooking Abbey school playing fields (the hedge removal was needed for the initial designs presented as part of the consultation). The controlled crossings have also been accommodated. The amended designs can be seen in **Annex 3**
- 4.6 There are underground utility services that need to be diverted.
- 4.7 There are potential ecology and archaeology issues to be dealt with which will affect the timing of removal of vegetation and excavation of A2. Initially it was planned to remove the vegetation before November as reptiles start to hibernate from November to March. This would have allowed the utility companies to divert their services. Unfortunately, this proved not to be possible due to the many other roadworks taking place on the network. Road space has now been booked for the summer period in 2021 but the vegetation needs to be removed in February so every effort is being made to undertake this work to allow the project to progress.

5.0 Financial

- 5.1 The scheme will cost approximately £1.72 million. Funding for the scheme has been secured from developer contributions under a S106 agreement (£920,550), the Governments Local Growth Fund (£500,000) and KCC's Highway Innovation Fund (£300,000).

6.0 Legal

- 6.1 Temporary licences have been agreed between all parties for KCC to work on private land. Dedication of permanent land for highway purposes is progressing between all parties and the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transportation has given approval to proceed to the stages of development and delivery and specifically:
- i) approval to enter into the Local Growth Fund funding agreement subject to the approval of the Corporate Director of Finance & Procurement
 - ii) approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme;
 - iii) approval to progress with the necessary land acquisitions required to deliver the scheme;
 - iv) approval to carry out consultation on the scheme;
 - v) approval to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme

7.0 Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and will continue to be reviewed throughout the project. A copy is available on request.

8.0 Recommendation and Next Steps

- 8.1 The Board is asked to recommend progressing the scheme to construction.
- 8.2 If the recommendation is to progress to construction then the project will follow in various phases:
- Phase1 – February - Vegetation removal to 0.5m above ground level – this has already taken place due to the timing of the JTB and the need to remove the vegetation prior to the bird nesting period from March to September.
- Phase 2 – April/May – return to remove the remaining vegetation to ground level and excavate to required level to allow Utilities to alter their services.
- Phase 3 – April to July – Utility companies alter their services.
- Phase 4 – July to November – Main work starts on installing the traffic signals, footways and main carriageway realignment.

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Annex List

<i>Annex 1</i>	<i>Consultation Report summary</i>
<i>Annex 2</i>	<i>List of Consultation responses</i>
<i>Annex 3</i>	<i>Proposed design to be progressed to construction</i>