

SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD	
Meeting Date	2 nd October 2023
Report Title	LCWIP – Rural Highways Review – Borden & Grove Park Ward
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Adrian Oliver, Active Travel Coordinator
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The works at Junction 5 and the Key Street roundabout will obviously eventually improve the flow of traffic on the M2, A249 and A2, encouraging more drivers to use these strategic routes rather than less appropriate rural lanes. The new Western Link road should also divert traffic away from rural lanes. It is proposed that a multi-agency task force holistically monitors the wider road network to ensure that the current programme of works delivers these mitigations, allowing the regeneration of the shared space rural lanes and, if necessary, implement interventions where and when appropriate. 2. The Task Force also encompass Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch Ward and Bobbing Iwade & Lower Halstow Ward, that experience similar problems, that these works (and those at Grovehurst) should alleviate. 3. A separate group to design, implement and monitor traffic management during the Key Street roundabout works to ensure the continued flow of traffic on the A2 through Sittingbourne and not rely on dispersion through residential streets and rural lanes. 4. This group to also lead liaison with large employers, logistics companies, public transport providers, Medway Council, utilities and other organisations, including schools, to reduce the impact of congestion during the works. 5. This group to also manage publicity to help drivers to avoid and reduce the congestion.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of a Briefing Paper (Annex A) analysing the rural road network in Borden & Grove Park Ward as part of the Swale Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan. During the course of the research, it became apparent that National Highways and KCC works on the M2, A249 and A2 are exacerbating the situation on the rural roads, however, none of these agencies appear to be collaborating to understand their impact of their works on the wider road network.
- 1.2 This situation and the questions raised in the Briefing Paper are repeated in rural Wards across the borough, where the growth in private car use, home deliveries, use of Satellite Navigation and size of vehicles, has made the shared spaces of our rural lanes inhospitable to residents and non-motorised users.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Swale Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is split into four areas, Faversham (complete), Sittingbourne, Sheppey Towns and Rural (Swale is 60% rural). The aim of the rural section of the LCWIP is to plan walking, wheeling and cycling networks that connect rural settlements with the key conurbations and strengthen rural clusters in an intuitive way. The aim is to provide people with safe environments, to walk, wheel and cycle, enabling them to have the choice to undertake activities (like dog walking) and everyday trips (shopping, commutes & leisure) under their own steam. As well as providing urban residents and visitors the opportunity to actively explore our rural landscapes.
- 2.2 The examination of the roads and PROW in the Borden & Grove Park Ward was the first of a series of rural Ward exercises to gain a deeper understanding of the issues.
- 2.3 The issues in this Ward are wider than the immediate infrastructure. The position of the Ward, south and west of Sittingbourne, bounded by the A2, A249 (Key Street roundabout) and M2 (Junction 5) along with the presence of the Kent Science Park, means that there is considerable motor traffic passing through the rural lane shared space.
- 2.4 The ongoing National Highways works on Junction 5 and the imminent works on Key Street roundabout, plus the Wises Lane development will all exacerbate the situation. All these appear to be operating in silos with little appreciation of the impact on the wider road network.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The works at Junction 5 and the Key Street roundabout will obviously eventually improve the flow of traffic on the M2, A249 and A2, encouraging more drivers to use these strategic routes rather than less appropriate rural lanes. The new Western Link road should also divert traffic away from rural lanes. It is proposed that a multi-agency task force holistically monitors the wider road network to ensure that the current programme of works delivers these mitigations, allowing the regeneration of the shared space rural lanes and, if necessary, implement interventions where and when appropriate.
- 3.1.1 The Task Force also encompass Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch Ward and Bobbing Iwade & Lower Halstow Ward, that experience similar problems, that these works (and those at Grovehurst) should alleviate.
- 3.2 A separate group to design, implement and monitor traffic management during the Key Street roundabout works to ensure the continued flow of traffic on the A2 through Sittingbourne and not rely on dispersion through residential streets and rural lanes.
- 3.2.1 This group to also lead liaison with large employers, logistics companies, public transport providers, Medway Council, utilities and other organisations, including schools, to reduce the impact of congestion during the works.
- 3.2.2 This group to also manage publicity to help drivers to avoid and reduce the congestion.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 An alternative option would be to continue the haphazard approach to traffic management through the rural road network around the A2, M2 and A249. This will continue the hodgepodge of traffic interventions and a plethora of signage clutter, which has not worked.
- 4.2 A site-specific approach to traffic management at Key Street. This will have an economic and environmental impact on Sittingbourne.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 An LCWIP consultation took place in 2022 and residents have been contributing comments on [Widenmypath.com/Swale](https://www.widenmypath.com/Swale).
- 5.2 Discussions and correspondence have been had with Highway Officers at Kent County Council, but this needs a multi-agency response.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Improving Community Safety through safer Highways.
Financial, Resource and Property	Cost of operating and funding the groups should be within the works project budgets.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None at this stage
Crime and Disorder	Irresponsible driving, particularly speeding
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Poor air quality & noise pollution along the built-up areas of the A2 caused by additional congestion. Rural lane through traffic increases carbon emissions, particulate matter (PM1 and PM2.5), noise pollution and ecological harm.
Health and Wellbeing	Half of Swale residents live in rural areas, and are dependent on the private car for transport, due to the dominance of rural lane motorised traffic, which in itself creates a downward spiral. This produces an inactive population, with the only activity being the walk to and from the car. Rural traffic fear and noise is also impacting people's mental health.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality & Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Annex A – Copy of Borden & Grove Park Ward LCWIP Rural Lane Review Briefing Paper

8 Background Papers

None