

Policy and Resources Committee	
Meeting Date	29 th November 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. That a Multi-Agency Task Force be formed and monitors the wider road network to ensure that the current programme of works and any future planned works, delivers the mitigations to allow for the regeneration of the shared space rural lanes and implement the interventions where and when appropriate. 2. That the Task Force encompasses Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch Ward and Bobbing Iwade & Lower Halstow Ward. 3. That the group assists Kent Highways and National Highways with traffic management plans by providing local knowledge, during the Key Street and Grovehurst roundabout works to endeavour to maintain the flow of traffic. 4. That the group liaises 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. That the group to manage publicity to help drivers avoid and reduce congestion

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask the Policy & Resources Committee to consider and agree the recommendations unanimously passed by Members of the Joint Transport Board.
- 1.2 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. The existing Kent Corridor meetings between National Highways and Kent Highways are not keeping the traffic moving expeditiously on the strategic network, nor minimising the impact on the wider road network.
- 1.3 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 vulnerable road users.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Rural section of the Swale Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is to develop 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. There has been issues with diversion routes causing gridlock in the borough. There is now an expectation that better coordination is needed to prevent gridlocks.
- 2.5 Reported peak journey times between Sheppey towns and Sittingbourne are now approaching an hour, queues are over the bridge and back to Minster, drivers are becoming stuck for long periods on narrow country lanes, traffic is noticeably increasing on rural lanes and school buses are arriving late. This situation is impacting the borough's economy and environment, as well as drivers and residents' health & well-being.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Establish a Task Force to endeavour to maintain the continued flow of traffic on the A2, especially through Sittingbourne, the A249, and other key corridors, not relying on dispersion through residential streets and rural lanes.
- 3.2 The Task Force to be made up of officers and Members from Swale Borough Council – including the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Joint Transport Board – as well as representatives from Kent County Council Highways, National Highways, business and education.
- 3.3 Consideration to be given to the involvement of Utility Companies, Bus Operators and large logistics businesses.
- 3.4 Communications representatives from National Highways, KCC and Swale Borough Council to be closely involved.
- 3.5 The Task Force to be a roundtable, bringing local knowledge and feedback, to assist Kent Highways and National Highways in their duty to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on the Highway network through Swale.
- 3.6 The initial Task Force meeting will consider the Terms of Reference and meeting frequency, which could be as often as every two weeks to enable actions to be taken to the Kent Corridor meeting.
- 3.7 The Task Force to continually assess its effectiveness. It is envisaged to operate during the works at Junction 5 of the M2, Key Street roundabout and Grovehurst roundabout. Continued operation after these works to be considered by the Task Force at the time.
- 3.8 The Task Force to direct 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.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 An alternative option would be to continue the current approach to traffic management which is leading to considerable delays, lack of local input on proposed diversions and heavy traffic using and damaging inappropriate rural lanes.

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.
- 5.3 As part of the Task Force's work, on going feedback from drivers and businesses will be sought.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Improving Community Safety through safer Highways.
Financial, Resource and Property	Cost of operating and funding the Task Force should be within the works project budgets held by Kent County Council and National Highways.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None at this stage
Crime and Disorder	Irresponsible/aggressive driving, particularly speeding, ignoring TROs
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	The congestion along the strategic network (A2 & A249) is impacting the health & wellbeing of drivers, passengers and residents with issues including stress, air pollution & noise pollution.
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	Congestion has a greater impact on those who often have no choice but to drive. The residents most impacted by noise and particulate pollution are those in the homes closest to the roads.
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