

From: Michael Payne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment & Transport

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 19 January 2021

Subject: **Maidstone Integrated Transport - A229 Loose Road Corridor Junction Improvements.**

Decision Number: 21/00004

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: For Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Maidstone South & Maidstone Central

Summary: This report provides an update on the A229 Loose Corridor Junction Improvement schemes, which form part of the Maidstone Integrated Transport Programme (MITP).

KCC has secured funding from the Local Growth Fund to deliver these schemes and this report seeks approval to proceed through the next stages of development and delivery including authority to progress statutory approvals and to enter into funding, land and construction contracts.

Recommendation(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport on the proposed decision attached at Appendix A and specifically for:

- i) Approval to undertake the design and surveys for the schemes, including development control and land charge disclosures,
- ii) Approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the schemes,
- iii) Approval to enter into land agreements with third parties as necessary,
- iv) Approval to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme subject to the approval of the recommended procurement strategy, and
- v) Approval to undertake engagement with all relevant stakeholders as identified in the communication plan.
- vi) Approval for any further decisions required to allow the schemes to proceed through to delivery to be taken by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP) relates to a number of road network corridors or junction locations in and around Maidstone which were identified for improvement within the adopted Maidstone Local Plan. The MITP aims to reduce congestion and ease traffic movements through the town, while fulfilling the strategic aims of delivering the housing and employment growth targets.

1.2. The package is made up of a number of key corridor/junction locations which are forecast to suffer from congestion and delay and have been identified for improvement. This report represents Phase 3 of the overall MITP and is comprised of the following component schemes:

- A229 Loose Road junction with A274 Sutton Road (Wheatsheaf junction)
- A229 Loose Road junction with Plains Avenue
- A229 Loose Road junction with Armstrong Road
- A229 Loose Road junction with Sheals Crescent
- A229 Loose Road junction with Cripple Street/Boughton Lane

1.3 Maidstone Borough Council is supportive of the junction improvements which accord with their objectives around traffic management in their forthcoming local plan.

1.4 The junctions included in this scheme are located between approximately 1km and 2km to the south Maidstone town centre. It is at the Wheatsheaf junction that the A229 converges with another major route, the A274, to head north into the town centre. The locations of the junctions are shown in the figure below:

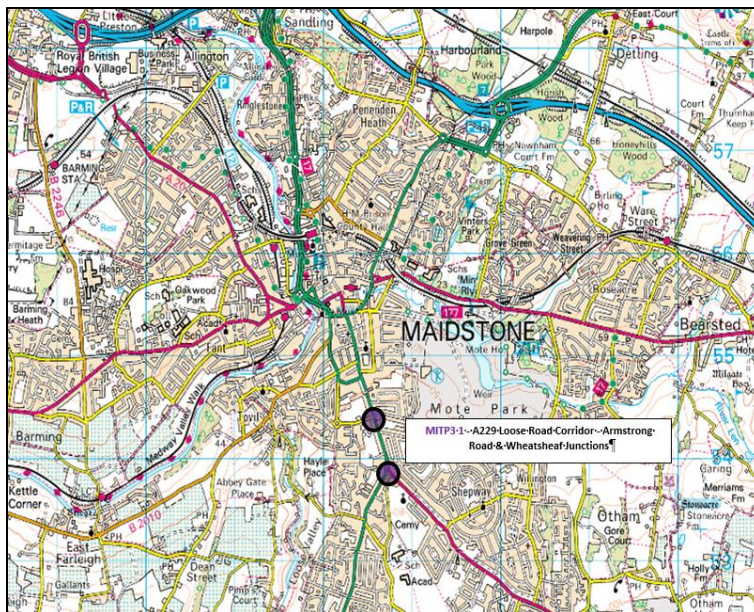


Figure 1: A229 Component Scheme Location Plan

1.5 The highway network in Maidstone is operating at or over capacity during peak periods. Delays are prone to rapid escalation when problems arise at hotspots and from any other interruption to traffic flow. This is exacerbated by incidents

on the M20 which rapidly affects the whole town. Traffic searches out alternative routes in such cases, often using inappropriate roads.

- 1.6 The road network to the south of Maidstone town centre, in particular, currently experiences severe peak hour congestion and delay which is anticipated to be exacerbated by planned growth in the area as part of the adopted Local Plan up to 2031.
- 1.7 Largely as a result of the traffic congestion issues in the town, the entire urban conurbation of Maidstone is covered by an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), which incorporates the two junctions on the A229 corridor which are identified for improvement as part of the MITP Phase 3. The AQMA was declared in 2008 following a review of air quality in the town which identified that the A229 Loose Rd/A274 Sutton Rd (Wheatsheaf) junction specifically had exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulates (PM₁₀) annual mean objectives due to emissions from road traffic. The scheme will see more free flowing traffic and therefore reducing the emissions along the corridor.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1. The estimated cost of the A229 Loose Road Corridor improvements is **£6.04m**; the allocation from the Local Growth Fund is **£4.11m** and Developer Contribution of **£1.93m**.

£m	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
LGF Contribution	1.0	2	1.11	4.11
Developer Contributions S106's		1.3	0.6	1.93
Total		3.3	2.71	6.04

Table 1: Financial Contributions for the A229 Loose Road Corridor improvement schemes

- 2.2. The costs of developing and delivering the schemes are included within the estimate and includes all KCC staff time that will be capitalised. Feasibility design work was funded via a previously endorsed SELEP Business Case.

3. Policy Framework

- 3.1. The schemes have a strong fit with the objectives of 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)'.
- 3.2. The scheme supports the policy objectives of supporting existing businesses and implementation will support the Council in meeting its Strategic outcome for "Kent Communities to feel the benefits of economic growth by being in work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life". This will be achieved through the scheme improving the operation of key transport networks in Maidstone, as well as helping support growth by enabling new residential and commercial development.
- 3.3. The key priorities set out in the County Council's Integrated Transport Strategy 'Delivering Growth without Gridlock' in terms of providing additional highway

capacity, improving accessibility and reducing congestion will also benefit. The scheme will set out to provide improved growth and economic prosperity through having an efficient highway and transport infrastructure.

4. The Report

- 4.1. Traffic modelling has been carried out utilising traffic data collected in 2018 to shape the scheme designs and confirm that the proposals continue to demonstrate operational and capacity benefits to the local and strategic network. The results have demonstrated significant benefits with a noticeable reduction in overall delays and queues on the A229 Loose Road corridor Maidstone.
- 4.2. The interventions can be mainly delivered within the highway boundary. However, to deliver the A229 Loose Road junction with A274 Sutton Road improvement ('Wheatsheaf' junction), it was necessary for KCC to pre-purchase the Wheatsheaf Public House in advance as the footprint is required to successfully deliver the project.
- 4.3. Substantial investigatory works have been carried out in the early stages of the design process. The details of which are being used to inform the detailed design and provide a more robust cost estimate.
- 4.4. Air quality and noise assessments have been undertaken and demonstrate a positive impact of the scheme on these elements. The base data will then be utilised to inform the post scheme review.
- 4.5. It is recognised that delivery of the schemes will have a significant impact on the local area, particularly during construction, and as such initial meetings have been undertaken with Maidstone Borough Council and a steering group formed including Local Members, which continually updates and feeds back progress and concerns. A Consultation was completed in March 2020, and the results were reported at the October meeting of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board, where the recommendations were endorsed to proceed to the next stage of construction. Slight alterations to the configuration of the schemes has been carried out based on the feedback from the consultation. The use of social media will play an important role in the dissemination of information and therefore a dedicated email address and 'Twitter' account will be created for this purpose. Newsletters will be delivered prior to, and during construction and will offer details of specific operations, progress, and key dates.
- 4.6. Delivery of the scheme in practical terms will be dependent on completing the procurement process. Delivery will also be dependent on the cost and affordability. Cost estimates have been developed with a pre-tender estimate being completed by an independent cost consultant.
- 4.7. On the basis the procurement proceeds satisfactorily and road space permits to carry out the works affecting the A229 Loose Road corridor being granted by Kent County Council, a start of construction in Summer 2021 is anticipated with completion by Summer 2022.

5. Risks

- 5.1. A scheme Risk Register has been prepared Should you pull out the key risks with the associated mitigations i.e. This register identifies the likelihood and mitigation measures of any such risks. An uncontrollable risk remains around the uncertainty of the EU transition at the end of December 2020, which could have an implication on the project costs and or deliverability. KCC remain confident that the estimates, undertaken by an independent Cost Consultant, has a significant contingency allowance for any fluctuation in market prices. Liaison will also continue with the KCC Streetworks team to ensure road space remains available to deliver the scheme in the timescales identified. There does remain a risk in delivering beyond the Growth Deal, however, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) have been made fully aware of the delivery and spend programme and a construction contract will be entered into prior to the end of the growth deal in March 2021.

6. Equality and data protection implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this project, see background documents. This has concluded that none of the Protected Characteristics are affected by the proposed schemes and therefore KCC will periodically review this document whilst keeping all the relevant groups informed and updated.
- 6.2 No personal data will be collected to deliver this scheme.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Wheatsheaf Public House has already been purchased by KCC's Property Team and there are no legal implications anticipated with the delivery of this scheme.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 This is a significant investment in Maidstone which benefits a wide geographical area and is an important scheme to help reduce congestion on the A229 Loose Road corridor, whilst supporting housing development, job creation and growth in the local area. Considerable investigatory and preliminary work has been carried out and there is confidence that a construction start date of Summer 2021 can be achieved.

9. Recommendations(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport on the proposed decision sheet attached at Appendix A and specifically for:

- i) Approval to undertake the design and surveys for the schemes, including development control and land charge disclosures,

- ii) Approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the schemes,
- iii) Approval to enter into land agreements with third parties, as necessary.
- iv) Approval to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the schemes subject to the approval of the recommended procurement strategy, and
- v) Approval to undertake engagement with all relevant stakeholders as identified in the communication plan.
- vi) Approval for any further decisions required to allow the schemes to proceed through to delivery to be taken by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member.

10. Background Documents

Appendix A Proposed Record of Decision
Appendix B EqlA
Appendix C General Arrangement Drawing Numbers:

- 70043445-DD-034-0100-003
- 70043445-DD-034-0100-004
- 70043445-DD-034-0100-001
- 70043445-DD-034-0100-002
- 70043445-DD-033-0100-001
- 70043445-DD-032-0100-001
- 70043445-DD-032-0100-002
- 70043445-DD-032-0100-003
- 70043445-DD-035-0100-001.

11. Contact details

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