

From: David Brazier, Cabinet Member, Highways and Transport
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environmental and Transport Cabinet Committee - 19 January 2023

Subject: Thames Way Scheme – Kent Thameside Strategic Infrastructure Programme

Decision Number: 22/000110

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: For Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division:

Northfleet and Gravesend West – Cllr Conrad Broadley and Cllr Dr Lauren Sullivan
Swanscombe and Greenhithe – Cllr Peter Harman

Summary: This report seeks Member approval to progress to detailed design stage the Thames Way Scheme in Ebbsfleet, as a project within the Kent Strategic Transport Infrastructure Programme (STIP).

The Thames Way Scheme (formerly known as Thames Way Dualling) is a proposed junction upgrade and infrastructure improvement scheme which is a strategic priority for the local highway network within the Ebbsfleet area (Dartford and Gravesham border).

The available funding for the project is £5.5m. This will be fully funded through Developer Contributions into the STIP funding pot of which £3.385m is already received. This budget, for the preferred scheme, is considered healthy with a significant contingency and risk provision. There is no expectation that KCC will be required to forward fund this scheme. An additional paper will be presented to ETCC at detailed design stage to determine whether the scheme can progress to delivery.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed decision to give approval to progress the Thames Way scheme through the stages of development and delivery as indicated below and specifically for:

I. Approval to delegate the scope change decision, required to allow the scheme to proceed through to detailed design and for the Ebbsfleet Central Application to be determined, to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member.

II. Approval to delegate the decisions to enter into the appropriate land, development and funding agreements, and all other acts, consents and any

subsidiary contracts required to allow the scheme to be progressed to the appropriate Corporate Director.

III. Approval to carry out any public engagement or consultation required for the Thames Way scheme;

IV. Approval for any further decisions required to allow the scheme to proceed through to detailed design to be taken by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member

as shown at Appendix D.

1. Introduction

1.1 Two previous reports (Decision No. 07/01108 and 12/01953) to Cabinet Committees gave a wide range of authorities to allow the Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Infrastructure Programme (STIP), and projects within this programme, to proceed. However, considering the substantial time that has elapsed since the previous decisions and scale of development which has taken place during this time, it is proposed to seek a further Key Decision from the Cabinet Member relating specifically to the Thames Way Scheme.

2. The report

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The STIP is a package of transport improvements that was conceived in 2005 in response to the anticipated impact of planned development across Dartford, Gravesham and Ebbsfleet. The broad aim of the programme is to deliver improvements at key locations across the transport network that would enable the planned level of development to be realised and to support the growth agenda.

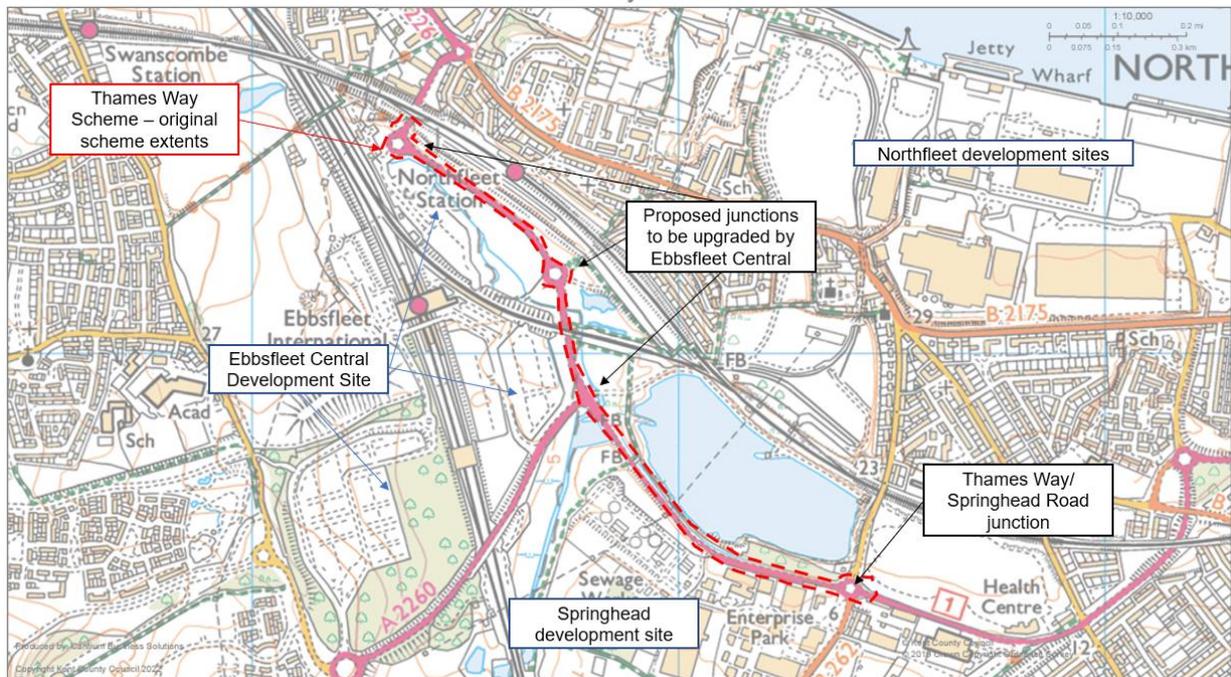
2.1.2 Two previous reports to Cabinet Committees gave a wide range of authorities to allow the programme, and projects within this programme, to proceed. The previous two decisions were taken on 21st February 2008 (Decision No. 07/01108) and 20th September 2012 (Decision No. 12/01953). Considering the substantial time that has elapsed since the previous decisions and scale of development which has taken place during this time, it is proposed to seek a further Key Decision from Cabinet relating specifically to the Thames Way Scheme.

2.2 Thames Way Scheme

2.2.1 The Thames Way Scheme (formerly known as Thames Way Dualling) is a proposed junction upgrade and dualling scheme that is a strategic priority for the local highway network within the Ebbsfleet area (Dartford and Gravesham border).

2.2.2 The scheme as currently approved within the STIP programme would upgrade 1600m of single carriageway to dual carriageway from Stonebridge Road to Springhead Road with improvements to four key junctions on this route.

Figure 1: Site location



2.2.3 A previous study, undertaken by WSP in 2019, investigated the feasibility of dualling Thames Way. The report recommended the provision of a two-lane dual carriageway with all lanes available to all lanes of traffic and an associated upgrade to all junctions within the site. The majority of capacity benefit for this scheme was derived from the junction upgrades and not from dualling the route. This scheme was costed at £14.4m.

2.2.4 Since the production of the report, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) have continued to build out in the surrounding area with a strong focus on modal shift. Trip rates previously forecasted across the area have not materialised. Further to this, the SSSI designation of a large portion of the area is likely to result in a reduced expected trip rate.

2.3 Proposed scheme scope change

2.3.1 The Thames Way Scheme area is due to be developed by EDC, who have now submitted plans for Ebbsfleet Central. These plans include upgrading three of the four junctions within the scheme area but it should be noted that this will not include the dualling of Thames Way or upgrade the Thames Way Springhead Road junction.

2.3.2 KCC have commissioned further modelling work to determine whether the updated trip data supports the dualling of Thames Way. The results of this modelling highlight that dualling of Thames Way east of the A2260/Thames Way junction is not required and the junction upgrades alone, as proposed in the Ebbsfleet Central application, will be sufficient to realise the required

additional network capacity. However, the Thames Way Springhead Road junction requires improvement to accommodate future traffic flows. Full results of this commission are included within Appendix A.

- 2.3.3 The modelling commission shows that the capacity of the Thames Way/Springhead Road junction still requires improvement. This is evidenced by significant queues in both the AM and PM peak on the 'Do Nothing' modelling scenario. The junction upgrade, as proposed in the initial Thames Way scheme, reduces this queue length, however, there are still residual queues at the junction. During the detailed design stage, further junction upgrade options will be explored to reduce the journey time delay further.
- 2.3.4 The scope change options to progress Thames Way are subsequently discussed:
- 2.3.5 **Option 1** (progress with the Thames Way scheme as previously proposed i.e. dualling and junction upgrades) - least preferred option.
- 2.3.5.1 The dualling and junction improvements along Thames Way will increase the capacity of Thames Way. The dualling will likely have up to a moderate adverse effect on local species and adverse effects on landcover due to the destruction of local vegetation.
- 2.3.5.2 Plans for the development of Ebbsfleet Central will not be able to progress in their current form, delaying housing build out for Dartford and Gravesham. The cost for this scheme, without considering current inflation rates, is estimated at £14.4m. This exceeds the funding available within STIPS.
- 2.3.5.3 Additionally, there are wider implications of progressing this option, including the negative impact on housing growth and the environmental costs of the scheme.
- 2.3.6 **Option 2** (Halt the scheme)
- 2.3.6.1 Given the level of development in the area, by 2036, it is expected that the Thames Way Springhead Road junction will be unable to function effectively during both the AM and PM peak.
- 2.3.6.2 Presuming Ebbsfleet Central receives planning permission, three of the four junctions within the original scheme will be upgraded by this development improving the capacity across the western end of Thames Way.
- 2.3.6.3 The cost of not proceeding with the scheme is less than Option 1, however, the consequence of pollution caused by carbon emissions of queuing vehicles should also be considered. Additionally, abortive costs of work undertaken to date (VISSIM model creation and ecological reports) created by this option are estimated at £300k. Further to this, the developer funding is restricted to schemes within the STIP programme, most of which are complete or under construction.

2.3.7 **Option 3 preferred option** (Descopse the scheme to upgrade the Thames Way Springhead Road junction only)

- 2.3.7.1 The junction improvement will improve capacity at the Thames Way Springhead Road junction. Thames Way will remain single carriageway across the majority of the route. Dualling will be required on the immediate approach to the junction.
- 2.3.7.2 Presuming Ebbsfleet Central receives planning permission, the remaining junctions will be upgraded by this development improving the capacity across the western end of Thames Way.
- 2.3.7.3 The descoped scheme will likely result in a reduced impact on the local species and landscape. There is also a reduced need for land acquisition.
- 2.3.7.4 The cost of this Option falls within the available funding for the scheme.

3. **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The available funding for the Thames Way Scheme is £5.5m. This will be fully funded through Developer Contributions into the STIP funding pot. The STIP funding banked for the Thames Way scheme currently totals £3.385m, the remaining £2.115m is secured through S106 agreements with the following development sites:
 - £2.1m Northfleet Cement Works 16/0004 (Expected trigger date: 2026)
 - £150k Northfleet Embankment East (Expected trigger date: 2023)
- 3.2 Should, for any reason, one or more of the identified S106 contributions not come forward, there are a number of additional development sites within the vicinity of Thames Way. The developer contributions from these sites could be used to replace any funding shortfall.
- 3.3 All KCC costs will be capitalised and covered by the Developer Contributions, including any feasibility to date.
- 3.4 The budget, for the preferred scheme, is considered healthy with a significant contingency and risk provision. There is no expectation that KCC will be required to forward fund this scheme. However, given the added financial pressures of high inflation and market unpredictability, an additional paper will be presented to ETCC following completion of the detailed design to determine whether the scheme can progress to delivery. This paper will present a detailed breakdown of the cost of the fully designed scheme and the associated risks. The project will not proceed to construction until the funding for this scheme is banked.

4. **Policy Framework**

- 4.1 Delivery of the Thames Way junction improvements supports the first three priorities of Framing Kent's Future 2022-2026 as follows:

- 4.1.1 Levelling Up Kent - The scheme will improve travel conditions, reducing journey time delays and queues and provide necessary connectivity to local housing developments in the Ebbsfleet area. In so doing, the Thames Way junction improvements will increase opportunities to access more skilled and better paid employment opportunities, and reduce unproductive time spent in traffic congestion. The scheme output of reduced congestion will make public transport trips more reliable.
- 4.1.2 Infrastructure for Communities – The descopeing of the scheme will provide the necessary junctions improvements to support road loads as developments continue.
- 4.1.3 Environmental Step Change - Improvements to Thames Way junction aims to reduce congestion for traffic, thereby reducing NO2 emissions. The descopeing of the scheme will have a reduced adverse impact on local environment and species.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this scheme. The Section 106 Agreements associated with the scheme are signed, with 50% of the funding already banked.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for this scheme is appended to this report (Appendix B).

7. Other corporate implications

- 7.1 No other KCC corporate implications of this report have been identified. However, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation Planning are required to decide on the Ebbsfleet Central development application. It has been determined that a key decision is required on the Thames Way scheme before the application can be decided.

8. Governance

- 8.1 Delegated authority for scope and scheme decisions will be provided to Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member. Decisions relating directly to Finance or Land Acquisition will be delegated to the relevant director.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The Thames Way Scheme is a strategic priority for the local highway network within the Ebbsfleet area (Dartford and Gravesham border). The scheme will provide the necessary capacity improvements on the highway network to accommodate additional vehicular traffic associated with housing developments within Ebbsfleet and the surrounding area.

9.2 The scheme, as originally envisioned is no longer required and is not affordable within the secured funding. It is recommended that the scope be reduced to include the upgrade of the Thames Way/Springhead Road junction only with the approaches to the junction widened to two lanes. Presuming Ebbsfleet Central receives planning permission, the remaining three junctions within the scheme will be upgraded by the developer.

9.3 The scheme will be fully funded by developer contributions and no additional KCC funding will be required. A further paper will be presented to ETCC when the detailed design is complete. This paper will include a detailed cost breakdown of the final scheme.

10. Recommendation(s):

10.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport on the proposed decision to give approval to progress the Thames Way scheme through the stages of development and delivery as indicated below and specifically for:

I. Approval to delegate the scope change decision, required to allow the scheme to proceed through to detailed design and for the Ebbsfleet Central Application to be determined, to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member.

II. Approval to delegate the decisions to enter into the appropriate land, development and funding agreements, and all other acts, consents and any subsidiary contracts required to allow the scheme to be progressed to the appropriate Corporate Director.

III. Approval to carry out any public engagement or consultation required for the Thames Way scheme;

IV. Approval for any further decisions required to allow the scheme to proceed through to detailed design to be taken by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member

As shown at Appendix D.

10. Background Documents

- Appendix A – WSP Modelling Report:
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s115769/Thamesway%20Network%20Information.pdf> and
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s115766/MCT.pdf>
- Appendix B – EqlA:
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s115768/Thames%20Way%20Scheme%20-%20EqlA.pdf>
- Appendix C – Risk Register:
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s115767/Risk%20Register%20Thames%20Way%20-%20Dec%202022.pdf>

- Appendix D - Proposed Record of Decision

10. Contact details

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