

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

M20 Junction 7 Improvement

Responsible Officer

Christopher Bennett - GT TRA

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

Commissioning/Procurement

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Highways

Responsible Head of Service

Tim Read - GT TRA

Responsible Director

Haroona Chughtai - GT TRA

Aims and Objectives

☐ The M20 Junction 7 scheme proposes the signalisation of the junction and rerouting of shared use paths to improve traffic flow and increase active travel infrastructure.

☐ The M20 Junction 7 is predicted at a construction price of £8.3M. As of 2022, £1.1M in S106 contributions have been secured. External funding worth £7.3M is currently being applied for, though the scheme will not go ahead until this funding can be secured.

The objectives and anticipated benefits of the scheme comprise:

- Accommodate increased traffic volume from Kent Medical Campus.
- Support the redevelopment of the nearby Newnham Court Shopping Village.
- Ease congestion.
- Improve traffic flow into Maidstone.
- Unlock economic growth and job creation opportunities.
- Enable the delivery of housing development.
- Improve air quality and/or reduce CO2 emissions.
- Incentivising skills and apprentices.

Kent Medical Campus will create up to 48 new businesses, up to 3,300 by 2027 and adding £147m annual Gross Value Added (GVA) to the Kent and Medway economy by 2027. As well as bringing forward the

Enterprise Zone and its outputs by 3-5 years, traffic modelling has also identified the need to mitigate the traffic generated from housing growth in the town centre and to the south of the Borough, which this scheme will deliver.

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership's (SELEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) explicitly refers to the role of Kent Medical Campus in attracting businesses of all sizes in the medical technology industry to the region. Both the life sciences and healthcare sectors are central to SELEP achieving its objectives to increase productivity and innovation, create private sector jobs, increase the number of knowledge-based workers, and raise skills levels. Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) adopted Economic Development Strategy (EDS), sets out how future growth and prosperity of the borough will be supported. Working in partnership with MBC, KCC is determined to see local people benefit from new jobs, increasing prosperity and sustainable growth.

The proposed M20 Junction 7 scheme will implement traffic signals at the junction roundabout and improve the walking and cycling infrastructure through the junction, mitigating the current barrier from north-south between Maidstone and Swale Districts through providing 4 new toucan crossings and a re-aligned shared use pedestrian/cycle path to connect with the existing infrastructure.

To the north of the junction, the A249 provides a strategic link to the M2 at Junction 5 and then into Swale. To the south, it provides access to Maidstone and the A20. Immediately south of the junction, the A249 connects to Bearsted Road, providing access to the Newnham Court Shopping Village, the developing Kent Medical Campus, and the Eclipse Park office, retail and hotel business park.

The benefits from improved capacity will be shorter, more reliable journey times and reduced queues for all road users. Reduction in queuing will also reduce the production of carbon emissions and health and well-being benefits will be provided by increasing active travel.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Consultations were completed in October 2018

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

No

Staff

No

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

In addition to the positive impacts identified for all residents and users of the scheme, specific positive impacts have been identified for the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Pregnancy & maternity

Age:

Walking routes are used frequently by older people and young people (particularly to and from school) and improvements to access and facilities will increase confidence in both walking and cycling and therefore, increase its use for learning, education, leisure, and health.

Improvements in infrastructure such as improved pedestrian crossings will significantly improve the user experience, leading to increased use, improved traffic safety, reduced fear of crime and increased confidence to make independent journeys for school, social, recreation and travel to essential services. Clear, signed routes help avoid confusion in new areas often experienced by young or older people.

Disability:

The design will incorporate inclusive facilities accessible to disabled users. Works will include improvements to pavements and highway surfaces. Cycle routes are often infrequently used by disabled people with mild to moderate disabilities due to a lack of accessible facilities. Improvements to access and facilities will increase confidence in the routes and use for learning, education, leisure, and health.

Pedestrian crossings will also be upgraded. Improvements in infrastructure such as improved pedestrian crossings will significantly improve the user experience, leading to increased use, improved traffic safety, reduced fear of crime and increased confidence to make independent journeys for school, social, recreation and travel to essential services.

Clear, signed routes help avoid uncertainty in new areas often experienced by disabled people.

Pregnancy and maternity:

Schemes will include improvements to pavements, pedestrian crossings, and highway surfaces. Therefore, there will be a decreased risk of falls or injury, that may disproportionately impact pregnant women. Widening footways will also benefit parents with prams and pushchairs.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

Construction could result in temporary closure, & diversion of footpaths for users, this may result in uneven footway surfaces which could affect young and older pedestrians.

Pedestrians and road users may have to find alternative and more lengthy routes to access services (such as hospital, schools, public transport etc.).

Noise disruption from the construction works could cause anxiety and confusion for some people. If access to services and access to transport is disrupted it could disproportionately impact elderly people's health and wellbeing as they may stop attending social groups, being active or attending health appointments

Mitigating Actions for Age

Safety audits will be completed at the design and construction stage. NMU audits will be undertaken to ensure due consideration is given to all road users.

The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.

Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.

Access to services kept clear with ramps where required

Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulation

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Colin Shorter

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Construction will result in temporary closures of footpaths, for road users including pedestrians & cyclists. This may temporarily disrupt access to essential services for disability groups meaning alternative routes may be required. Construction works can cause major obstructions on key walking routes and unexpected changes to the 'landscape' for blind and partially sighted people. Construction works can be noisy – causing confusion and anxiety for some disabled people

Mitigating actions for Disability

Safety audits will be completed at the design and construction stage. NMU audits will be undertaken to ensure due consideration is given to all road users.

The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.

Ensure designs are carried out in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), which gives guidance based on current legislation for non-motorised users (NMU) and those with disabilities.

The design will meet recommended guidance from the Department for Transport on inclusive mobility, the Kent Design Guide and associated standard details.

The need for the schemes have been identified through assessment by KCC in partnership with local District development and transport strategies.

Risk assessment to be completed for affected groups prior to construction.

Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.

Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulations with access to services kept

clear with ramps where required
Responsible Officer for Disability
Colin Shorter
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
Yes
Details of negative impacts for Sex
During construction, disruptions to strategic road network will more likely increase the average time commuting time for men. Likewise, men are more likely to experience increased commutes disruption as a result of closures of shared use paths.
Women commuting to educational facilities could experience disruption as a result of road improvements.
Mitigating actions for Sex
Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings, where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure users can access and use the highway safely during the construction works. Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.
Responsible Officer for Sex
Colin Shorter
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Yes
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
There is a possible increased risk of falls during work if pregnant women are walking unfamiliar routes.
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulations. Diversion routes to be lit, as necessary, and well signed with ramped access to services as required
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Colin Shorter
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Yes
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Diversions and major construction works may impact on travel plans if works are not known about in advance. Construction works and changes to the site area could affect planning for independent travel with client groups.
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Colin Shorter