EQIA Submission – ID Number
Section A

EQIA Title
Bearsted Road Improvement Maidstone

Responsible Officer
Emma Palmer - GT TRA

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)
Tim Read - 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
Colin Shorter - GT TRA
Responsible Head of Service
Tim Read - GT TRA
Responsible Director
Haroona Chughtai - GT TRA

Aims and Objectives

Project Overview and Background:

The scheme involves the signalisation of the A249 Bearsted Road roundabout and the enlargement and signalisation of Bearsted Road/New Cut Road roundabout. Smart technology will be employed to ease congestion, improve traffic flow and accommodate traffic associated with the Kent Medical Campus Enterprise Zone and growth in the town centre and Borough of Maidstone (Kent County Council, 2017). Additionally, to improve pedestrian experiences and safety improved footways will be provided with enhanced tactile crossing points.

The Kent Medical Campus Maidstone, A249 Bearsted Road roundabout and Bearsted Road/New Cut Road roundabout junction improvement was submitted as one of two priority schemes in Kent for funding support through the Department for Transport (DfT) National Productivity Investment Fund (Kent County Council, 2017a). An allocation of £4.0M towards the scheme was announced on the 19th October 2017 (Kent County Council, 2017b), this was combined with £5.4M National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) allocated to KCC in financial year 2017 and Developer Contributions of £1.92M (inclusive of £420k in-kind land gift) (Kent County Council, 2017).

The main objectives and anticipated benefits of the scheme comprise:

- Upgrade two junctions on the A249 Bearsted Road and New Cut Road roundabouts;
- 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 walking and crossing facilities;
- Improve air quality and/or reduce CO2 emissions; and
- Incentivising skills and apprentices.

The scheme proposes to significantly upgrade two junctions on the Local Road Network close to M20 J7 in Maidstone and install Smart Technology on the A249 Bearsted Road, a local strategic link into Maidstone.

The Kent Medical Campus Maidstone, situated on the northern arm of the Bearsted Road/New Cut Road roundabout, is a centre for care, health, science and education. It offers 1,000,000 ft2 of flexible accommodation and has the potential to create over 4,000 jobs. By 2027, it is expected to contribute £147 million annual Gross Value Added to the Kent and Medway economy. This makes it a key employment site for the county and promotes specialised research and development, which is crucial for boosting productivity (Kent County Council, 2017). The space is already being occupied by various businesses, including KIMS Hospital, Cygnet Healthcare and Care UK, with four plots still available for development. The scheme will improve capacity and traffic flow so that the increased volume from the Kent Medical Campus can be accommodated.

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 (Kent County Council, 2017).

Traffic modelling has identified the need to mitigate the traffic generated from housing growth in the town centre and to the south of the Borough. The scheme has been designed to support the planned housing growth in Maidstone and the redevelopment of the adjacent Newnham Court Shopping Village. The proposal is continued to be fully supported by the Local Transport Plan 5: Striking the Balance 2024. The plan emphasises improvements to Bearsted Road junctions as a priority for Maidstone Town Centre.

EQIA Overview:

In addition to the benefits that all users will gain from this scheme, individuals with certain protected characteristics should also experience additional advantages. The protected characteristics expected to see improvements include:

- Age (increased connectivity for individuals with reduced mobility and greater confidence in both walking and cycling options)
- Disability (inclusive facilities to increase accessibility to services and confidence in both walking and cycling routes)
- Pregnancy and maternity (improved pedestrian environment and safety)
- Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race and Religion (improvements to public realm could reduce fear

of hate crimes for vulnerable groups)

In the construction phase some protected characteristics may experience some negative impacts. These protected characteristics include:

- Age (construction works may cause confusion and anxiety due to temporary service changes and diversion routes)
- Disability (noise from construction could cause anxiety for some disabled individuals, and unfamiliar diversion routes may be challenging for visually impaired users)
- Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race and Religion (diversion routes with inadequate lighting might affect a users' sense of safety)
- Pregnancy and Maternity (temporary footpath closures could be challenging for pregnant individuals and people with young children, increasing the likelihood of tripping)

The appropriate mitigation actions are outlined in the below sections.

Section B – Evidence

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

No

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?

Public Consultation took place for residents in October/November 2018. The sessions were well attended and the feedback received was recorded and minor alterations to the design were made to reflect those comments. Delays caused by COVID & various funding challenges allowed the design to undergo a full review, with the outcome being the current, more robust layout providing the dual carriageway & greatly improved pedestrian links.

Discussions with the KCC Diversity Team confirmed that an EQIA would be required and which protected groups should be considered in the EQI Screening. The KCC Diversity Team reviewed the EQI Screening document and agreed the content of this EQIA.

There has been on-going reports and discussions at the Maidstone Joint Transport Board meetings. In between the Joint Transport Board meetings responses to queries from members of public and local members have been responded accordingly. Newsletters, including the most recent August 2025 edition, are distributed to the public to provide updates on the scheme.

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

Yes

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
- Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race and Religion

Age:

The scheme will widen and enhance pavement and crossing points. Since these walking routes are frequently used by older and younger people, especially for school commutes, the improvements to access and facilities will boost confidence in walking and cycling. This, in turn, will encourage greater use of these routes for learning, education , leisure and health.

Enhancements in the infrastructure, such as improved pedestrian crossings, will greatly enhance user experience. This will lead to increased usage, improved traffic safety, reduced fear of crime and greater confidence in making independent journeys for school, social activities, recreation and travel to essential services. The clear and well-signed routes will help prevent confusion in new areas, which is often experienced by both young and older people.

The schemes will improve connections to The Crematorium, Shopping Village & KIMS, meaning that those with decreased mobility will be able to travel more directly and easily. This will increase access to the service and subsequently increase access to vital hub locations.

Disability:

The design will incorporate inclusive facilities accessible to disabled users. The scheme will enhance connections to The Crematorium, Shopping Village & KIMS allowing those with limited mobility to travel more directly and easily. Additionally, widening of the pavement will improve accessibility for individuals in wheelchairs. This will increase access to the service and subsequently increase access to vital hub locations. The clear and well-signed routes will help uncertainty in new areas often experienced by disabled people.

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.

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.

Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race and Religion:

The schemes would provide public realm improvements through enhanced footways and lighting which could improve feeling of safety for women, transgender and non-binary individuals, ethnic minorities and people of different faiths who could be subject to hate crimes

Pregnancy and maternity:

The 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 increase the chance of tripping in young and older pedestrians.

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

Noise disruption from the construction works could cause anxiety and confusion for some older and younger people.

Mitigating Actions for Age

- A safety audit was completed at the design and construction stage in August 2019. 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.
- The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.
- 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

The construction phase 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, lengthier

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.

Noise disruption from the construction works could cause anxiety and confusion for some disabled people.

Mitigating actions for Disability

- A safety audit was completed at the design and construction stage in August 2019. NMU audits will be undertaken to ensure due consideration is given to all road users.
- 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 has 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.
- 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.
- The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.
- Access to services kept clear with ramps where required.
- Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulation.

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, women may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes or waiting in temporary structures or adjacent to construction sites due to fear of crime.

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

Yes

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

During construction, individuals that identify as women may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes due to fear of crime.

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

- 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 residents can access and use the walkway safely during the construction works.

- Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Colin Shorter

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

Are there negative impacts for Race

Yes

Negative impacts for Race

During construction, communication barriers could cause confusion and anxiety for different ethnic groups in relation to the construction works due to the potential for a language barrier. Ethnic minority individuals may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes due to fear of crime.

Mitigating actions for Race

- Public engagement materials during construction to be available in alternative languages on request.
- Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race

Colin Shorter

24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief

Yes

Negative impacts for Religion and belief

Individuals of different faiths may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes sites due to fear of crime.

Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

- 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 residents can access and use the walkway safely during the construction works.

- Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief

Colin Shorter

25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Yes

Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Individuals from a sexual orientation minority may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes sites due to fear of crime.

Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

- 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 residents can access and use the walkway safely during the construction works.

- Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Colin Shorter
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
During construction there is an increased risk of falls if pregnant women are walking unfamiliar routes and increased walking distances. Unfamiliar routes could prove difficult for individuals travelling with young children or pushchairs.
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulations. Diversion routes to be appropriately lit 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
During construction, diversion and major construction work could impact on travel plans if works are not known in advance. Additionally, 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