

Appendix to Item D2

APPLICATION TH/05/964 – PROVISION OF A NEW STRATEGIC DUAL CARRIAGEWAY TO IMPROVE LINKS BETWEEN THANET, DOVER AND THE KEY HIGHWAYS OF KENT – EAST KENT ACCESS PHASE 2

NOTES of a Planning Applications Committee Members' site tour of the proposed East Kent Access route on Monday, 30 January 2006.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr A R Bassam (Vice-Chairman), Mrs V J Dagger, Mr J A Davies, Mr J B O Fullarton, Mr T Gates, Mrs E Green, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr T A Maddison, Mr J I Muckle, Mr W V Newman, Mr A R Poole, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mr F Wood-Brignall.

OFFICERS: Mr J Crossley and Mr M Funnell (Planning) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services).

THE APPLICANT: Kent Highways represented by Mr G Cripps and Mr G Perera (Babtie).

OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES: Cliffsend P C (Cllrs Mrs B Harrison and Mrs M Fiander), Minster PC (Cllrs D Fuller and D Neville), Worth PC (Cllr I Martin), Sandwich TC (Cllrs Trussler, Kingsland, Rook and B Scott).

ALSO PRESENT were Messrs James and Shepherd representing St Augustine's Golf Club.

- (1) Members met at the offices of Sandwich Town Council before setting off on the tour. The Chairman welcomed everyone and explained Members of the Committee had come to see the application site and to listen to the views of interested parties.
- (2) Mr Funnell explained that the proposal was for a new strategic dual carriageway linking the A256 at Richborough Power Station, the A299 at Minster Roundabout and the Lord of the Manor Junction on the outskirts of Ramsgate. This represented the second phase of the East Kent Access.
- (3) Mr Funnell briefly outlined the progress of the East Kent Access transport development. Parts 1 A, B and C had already been constructed involving a two-way single carriageway north of Sandwich between the Ramsgate Road and the A256 Sandwich Bypass; the dualling of the A256 Sandwich Bypass; the dualling of the A256 from the Ramsgate Road roundabout north of Sandwich to Richborough Power Station.
- (4) Mr Funnell then said that the proposed works would incorporate new roads (including 8km of dual carriageway, four new roundabouts, a new junction at

Lord of the Manor, links to the local network and new service roads); structures at two level crossings (including Cottington Road Bridge and Cliffsend Underpass); improvements to cycleways and footways with two new "Toucan" crossings; earthworks (including infilling and landraising of land near to the Lord of the Manor Junction); drainage works (including a positive surface water drainage system for the entire route, drainage lagoons and a drainage outfall into Pegwell Bay); streetlighting for safety reasons at all the new roundabouts; various utility diversions; noise mitigation (including noise barriers, low noise surfacing for all on-line sections of the new road and noise insulation for eligible properties; ecological mitigation works and landscape planting; and archaeological investigations to be carried out in advance.

- (5) Mr Funnell continued by saying that construction would be expected to take about two years, with the excavation of 500,000m³ of material and the reuse of 300,000m³ in forming the raised embankments of the road.
- (6) Mr Funnell then informed the meeting that the applicant aimed to acquire the land needed for the scheme by use of a Compulsory Purchase Order and a Side Roads Order. The proposed dual carriageway would pass across land currently owned by some 26 landowners. It would pass near to properties in and around Minster and Cliffsend, Stonelees and St Augustine's golf courses, Weatherlees Hill WWTW as well as other properties and businesses.
- (7) Mr Funnell concluded by saying that the County Council, in considering this application, would have to examine it in the light of both national guidance and the appropriate Development Plan Policies which applied to the site, its impact on businesses and properties, and any other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
- (8) Mrs Harrison (Cliffsend Parish Council) asked why the roundabout onto the A299 had been moved nearer to residential properties in Cliffs End rather than its original proposed location further west along Thorne Hill. She said that there had been no consultation with local residents before the plans had been revised although the owner of Thorne Farm had said he would ask them. She suggested that the original proposed alignment should be followed as the current proposal affected the St Augustine's Golf Course and the beach area as well as Cliffs End.
- (9) Mr Cripps (Kent Highways) said that during the initial consultation period in 2000, local people had been given a choice of 2 conceptual options. The first of these involved improving the existing A256 and A299 roads. The second involved an offline route. At a well-attended public meeting, 80% of Cliffsend residents had supported the off-line concept. English Nature had also taken this view because of the likely impact on the SSSI and Pegwell Bay. The owner of Thorn Farm had suggested various alternatives in consultation with a number of local people. Kent Highways had then reviewed the scheme and

agreed that these ideas were valid and justified. Consequently, they had decided to run the road scheme due north to the A299 before turning left into the A299. This scheme had been agreed by elected Members of the County Council. The scheme had then undergone minor tweaking except in the Cottington Road area where Members had chosen a route through the barn at Stonelees in preference to through ST Augustine's Golf Course.

- (10) Mrs Harrison said that that there had been a petition in favour of the currently proposed route but that nobody in Cliffs End had been aware of it. Local people in the village felt that the decision to alter the route had been crazy. The route ought to be diverted to the west of Ebbsfleet Cottage. The barn residents had bought it in order to live there for the rest of their lives. She believed that the owner of Thorne Farm had simply asked for the road to be moved eastwards so that his own property would not be affected. She added that the local residents would be affected healthwise by fumes as a result of heavy lorries driving in the vicinity of the village under a layer of mist (which was a frequent local weather condition).
- (11) The Chairman expressed surprise at Mrs Harrison's views since they did not reflect the written comments of the Parish Council. These had made no observations on the amended proposal but had expressed surprise that the opportunity had not been taken to introduce traffic calming measures on the section of the A259 going the upper part of the village.
- (12) Mrs Green said that the previous phases of East Kent Access had encountered problems with the chalk structure. Pipes had needed to be laid beneath the land before being raised over the top of the chalk layer. She asked whether this would happen on this occasion. Mr Perera (Babtie) said that to date no such problems had been identified, although further details were still awaited.
- (13) Following the initial discussion, Members took the coach along the A256 to the Lord of the Manor Junction. On the way, they noted the area of International Conservation along Pegwell Bay, where birds fed during the winter months. The RAMSAR site and Nature Reserve were also pointed out. They were also shown the 60 houses along the eastern boundary of Cliffs End where one option had been to widen the existing road. This could also have affected the local environmental designations.
- (14) Members were then shown the Lord of the Manor Roundabout, which would be lead to the Cliffs End underpass for both road and rail.
- (15) Members were then taken through northern Cliffs End, which had at one stage been part of the proposed route. Now, it was proposed that the route would go further to the south, through the underpass in the centre of Cliffs End.

- (16) The coach then followed the road alongside the Kent International Airport. The gap between the new road and the existing A299 would be widened as it got nearer Minster Roundabout. The current proposal took the road further to the south, away from the Airport but closer to a number of residential properties.
- (17) Mrs Harrison said that the original plan had been to run the scheme along the A299 all the way to the Lord of the Manor Roundabout and then straight down to Ebbsfleet Lane. There would have been no impact on the houses in northern Cliffs End. She asked Members to note how close the new route passed to the reservoir along the farm track and how close it would come to Beech Grove and Cottington. She also asked Members to note that the southern realignment of the scheme near Minster Roundabout would affect Laundry Road and Wayborough Hill.
- (18) Mr Crossley informed Members that direct access onto the A299 would be prevented from Laundry Road, Wayborough Hill, Ivy Cottage Hill and Thorne Hill.
- (19) Members then travelled down Thorne Hill Road, noting the site of the proposed Sevenscore Roundabout. Mr Crossley explained that the new road (which would run parallel to the housing in Cliffs End) would have bunding to screen it. It would be inappropriate to do this extensively as the landscape was relatively flat.
- (20) Mr Hibberd asked Members to note that houses along the A299 were well shielded from the Airport by trees and shrubbery. The new road would, however, pass much closer to the garden boundaries. He asked whether it would be possible to allow the engineers to build a noise protection embankment. The problem might be the safety requirements of the airport.
- (21) The coach then made its way to Cliffs End Road, stopping at the point where the spur of the new road leading to the Lord of the Manor Junction would be located. Mr Crossley explained that the road would be in a cutting leading into the underpass. Construction of the cutting and underpass would generate material, which could be partly used for the improvements to the Lord of the Manor Junction. Lighting would be needed at this point and in the underpass itself. There would be 2m bunding to shield properties on the north side and a drainage pipeline through to Pegwell Bay. English Nature had expressed concerns about this particular aspect of the proposed development as the laying of the pipeline would disturb the ground and bird feeding area in the SSSI.
- (22) The coach then travelled into Earlsmead Crescent which the new road would run parallel to. From there it went into Beach Grove to see houses that

would be affected by the development, then past St Augustine's Golf Course and St Augustine's Cross, arriving at the point where the new road would cross over the railway at Cottington Bridge. It was noted that the road would be close to the golf club house. Mitigation measures here would include a false cutting with raised ground on top of the embankment alongside the road.

- (23) The next stop was at the level crossing in Foads Hill. Mr Crossley explained that this was on the busy railway line that connected Thanet to Canterbury, which ran pretty well east to west at this point and eventually passed into a deep cutting. It was at this point that the 135m long underpass would be 17m below the railway line. As the road returned to ground level, there would be 10m high lamp columns along the spur road. The development would also require the diversion of Public Footpath TR32 (which ran parallel to the houses along Foads Hill) to enable it to cross the railway line at another point.
- (24) Mrs Harrison asked why the decision had been taken to not build a tunnel under the middle of Cliffs End or else to revert back to the original route to the north, which would be far less inconvenient and ensure that the route would not have to skirt the reservoir.
- (25) Mr Cripps replied to Mrs Harrison by saying that the idea of running the scheme to the north of Cliffs End had been the original intention in the 1990s. The reason for changing the alignment had been firstly that the airport's Instrument Landing Systems required protection zones that would make it impossible to run the route along the present A299. The second reason was that if they built a tunnel to the north, it would be in the path of water that ran away from its source at Lord of the Manor. For these reasons, they had been forced to consider the middle of Cliffs End, where the construction of a tunnel would avoid the need to demolish a number of properties. The other reason that the old scheme had been abandoned was that widening Sandwich Road to the east would have made protection of the Pegwell Bay Nature Reserve extremely problematic. The proposed route represented a compromise between affecting the rural development at Thorne Hill and the built environment at Cliffs End. Also, there would be no impact from the scheme south of the railway until it reached St Augustine's Golf Course.
- (26) Mr Cripps continued that the decision not to build a tunnel under Cliffs End was due to the long term financial liability that would be incurred if it was done. He agreed that a tunnel would be a far better environmental option if cost was not an issue, but that it would make the scheme prohibitively expensive. As it was, there would be some impact on Cliffs End during the construction period but the road scheme itself would have no physical effect.
- (27) In response to a question from Mr Davies, Mr Cripps explained that the Civil Aviation Authority wanted to upgrade the Instrument Landing System to

Category 1 so that it could cater for planes up to 250m from the ground. Failure to achieve this would be untenable for the Airport, which had previously been Category 3 (where planes could land blind). To operate a Category 1 system, the Airport needed 210m clearance from the centre of the runway. Following negotiations, a compromise had been achieved between the needs of road and rail whereby the road scheme along the airport boundary would have a sinuous alignment. Further discussions with Kent International Airport and the Civil Aviation Authority were taking place to see if there was scope for further improvement.

- (28) Mr Fullarton asked whether the Civil Aviation Authority had problems with the scheme because of the lighting it would require. Mr Cripps replied that they had not commented on this point to date. The MoD (who had previously been the responsible authority) had been concerned about lighting and the distance of the road scheme from the boundary. Now that the scheme was realigned, the Civil Aviation Authority was more concerned about the straightness of the route than its distance from the boundary.
- (29) Mr Fuller (Minster PC) said that there was a concern about the access point from Tothill Street in Minster onto the Mount Pleasant Roundabout. Large lorries would be joining and exiting the A299 at this point. This was a matter that would need addressing through good signage.
- (30) Mr Fuller also asked how Cottington Road would be fitted into the scheme as it linked into the proposed Sevenscore Roundabout. It was essential to provide good access both in and out. Mr Cripps replied that planning permission existed for roadside development. This had resulted in modifications to the proposal which now stood as it was shown in the plans. A Stage 1 Safety Audit had been undertaken. Further safety modifications would be undertaken if practicable.
- (31) Mr Cripps went on to say that there would be a link road onto Cottington Road for local access. This was shown on the larger more detailed map. Access would be maintained in both directions. The road to the south (Ebbsfleet Lane) would be closed up.
- (32) The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. The notes of this meeting would be appended to the Head of Planning Applications Group's formal report to the Committee.