KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

HIGHWAYS ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the Highways Advisory Board held on Tuesday, 14 November 2006 at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.

PRESENT: Mr R F Manning (Chairman), Mr T J Birkett (substitute for Mr K Sansum), Mr J R Bullock, MBE, Miss S J Carey, Mr A R Chell (substitute for Mrs P A V Stockell), Mr D S Daley, Mr C G Findlay, Mr W A Hayton, Mr C J Law, Mr T A Maddison (substitute for Mr R J E Parker), Mr J I Muckle, Mr R A Pascoe, Mr A R Poole, Mr R Tolputt and Mrs E M Tweed (substitute for Mr R A Marsh).

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Mrs T Dean.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Harrison-Mee, Director, Kent Highway Services; Mr D Hall, County Transportation Manager; Mr R White, Head of Major Projects; Mr J Calder, Public Realm Implementation Manager; Mr N Johannsen, Director Kent Downs AONB; Mr L Holliday, Network Operations Manager & Traffic Manager; and the Head of Democratic Services (represented by Mrs K Mannering).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes
(Item 2)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2006 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

2. Ashford Ring Road
(Item 3 – Report by Head of Major Projects)

(1) Further to Minute 4 of 11 July 2006, the report detailed progress since outline scheme approval, along with feedback from the two-way Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation exercise. It also presented the scheme layout, examined funding sources and outlined a project delivery timetable.

(2) The Board was asked to support the Phase 1 detailed scheme layout presented to convert the current one-way A292 Ashford Ring Road into two-way operation together with the introduction of a high quality, shared space, public realm environment along Elwick Road, West Street, Forge Lane and Bank Street; and recommend to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Supporting Independence that the Phase 1 scheme be approved and progressed to contract tender, appointment of a suitable contractor and subsequent scheme construction.

(3) The scheme was an innovative, cutting edge transformational project which aspired to be an exemplar, benchmark project and market leader across the UK which would put Ashford firmly on the map in the national context. It offered considerably more to the town's fabric than a standard highway scheme by incorporating a number of key shared space, urban design and artistic features. A high quality public realm would be created by the use of quality materials, landscaping, aesthetically pleasing yet functional street furniture together with the integral use of art and street lighting to bring out the scheme identity and distinctiveness.

(4) Whilst the ultimate aspiration was to provide a quality, shared space environment around the entire Ring Road, the current funding available would not stretch that far. It would enable all of the Ring Road to be converted to two-way working and Elwick Road to be radically changed to a high quality, shared space environment enforced by a new 20 mph speed limit. Subject to the return of acceptable contract tender prices, it was also planned that the high quality, shared space environment would be extended into West Street/Forge Lane.

(5) However, funding constraints dictated though that improvements to Somerset Road, Mace Lane, Wellesley Road and Station Road would be more conventional in form at this stage although with unnecessary street clutter removed and a 30mph speed limit. A new Victoria Road/Romney Marsh Road/Beaver Road traffic signal controlled junction would also be incorporated into the Phase 1 contract providing that the necessary Victoria Road Stopping-Up Order had been secured and scheme funding of £1 million was available via a S106 private developer contribution. Finally, street scene improvements to Bank Street, a scheme that was previously being promoted by Ashford Borough Council, were also being included within the Phase 1 contract, drawing together funding from a number of sources.

(6) The outline design scheme had been progressed to a detailed design layout by the Integrated Design Team of engineers, traffic planners, urban designers, landscape architects, artists and lighting specialists in parallel with further consultation with a range of interested parties to ensure that the final layout provided a high quality environment which catered for the needs of all road users. The overall Phase 1 scheme layout was presented and discussed in detail in Appendix A - Overall Phase 1 Scheme Layout, of the report. Further drawings and artist's impressions of the scheme proposals were presented at Appendices B – F of the report.

(7) It was acknowledged that the re-configuration of the existing traffic dominated, one-way ring road layout to a series of two-way, high quality streets with less traffic lanes would lead to a reduction in overall highway capacity. However, one of the overarching aims of the transport strategy was to minimise traffic in the town centre area by a series of transport measures and car park re-location policy. Indeed, the ultimate success of the Ring Road re-configuration relied upon a host of other transport schemes coming forward in future years.

(8) A comparison of the before/after morning peak hour (0800 - 0900) traffic flows around the Ring Road was presented at Appendix G - Traffic Flows of the report, for the Phase 1 scheme along with further details on the modelling results. In overall terms, the traffic modelling predicted that reversion of the Ring Road to a two-way, partly shared use scheme was viable in traffic terms and any additional congestion would be tolerable and a necessary consequence of providing a sustainable growth agenda for the town.

(9) There had been a total of 48 personal injury accidents around the Ashford Ring Road in the 3 year period up to October 2005. A qualitative road safety analysis had also been carried out based upon the existing accident history which took into account the reduction in traffic speed and change in highway environment which would increase driver awareness and care.

(10) The assessment predicted that personal injury accidents would reduce by around 30% as a result of the changes to the Ring Road layout, a figure which compared favourably with the 44% reduction in personal injury accidents over three years which had been achieved following the implementation of a similar type of scheme along Kensington High Street in London. The reversion of the Ring Road from a fast moving, one way traffic dominated environment to a slower, two-way, partly shared surface environment was

therefore predicted to improve road safety around the Ring Road as well as providing greater accessibility in terms of crossing and accessibility options.

(11) The Ring Road scheme formed part of a broad transport strategy for the town which aimed to reduce reliance on the private car and promote other more environmentally friendly and sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and use of passenger transport. With the reduction in vehicle speeds and regularisation of traffic flows using the Ring Road, traffic noise levels were also predicted to fall slightly and this would provide some environmental benefits.

(12) Whilst the overall traffic related impact on air quality was forecast to be broadly neutral, there were some moderately beneficial improvements in terms of reducing the production of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide. The existing landscape along the Ring Road was poor and the proposed introduction of landscaping, public open space and use of quality materials would provide notable benefits to the street scene environment.

(13) The scheme itself also provided an opportunity to stimulate appropriate development opportunities and would therefore provide moderate benefits for social, cultural, physical and visual connection. In overall terms, whilst a comprehensive Environmental Assessment was not needed to fully assess the environmental impact of the scheme, an initial assessment suggested that the scheme provided a number of environmental benefits.

(14) The vast majority of the land-take associated with the scheme was already classified as public highway and works could be undertaken using the County Council's statutory powers as a Highway Authority. However, there were two small parcels of third party land at Elwick Square and West Square which were required and negotiations were underway to secure the necessary land by mutual agreement.

(15) Officers from both the County Council and Ashford Borough Council had been involved in a number of project groups specially set-up to discuss the progression of the project over the past year. The current scheme that was tabled for approval had been subjected to considerable discussion and had the support of officers from both Authorities together with a number of experts in the field.

(16) All of the emergency services had been contacted regarding the scheme and as part of the Traffic Regulation Order process. All were relatively supportive of the scheme benefits and the increased route choice that reverting the Ring Road to two-way flow offered. However, certain concerns had been raised to ensure that the narrowed carriageway along Elwick Road had adequate breakdown run-off areas and accessibility to building frontages for emergency vehicles. These issues had been taken into account during the design process.

(17) A Public Exhibition of the scheme concepts was held in the Lower High Street, Ashford on 9 and 10 June 2006. The feedback from the exhibition was fairly positive in that there were few objections to the fundamental principles of the scheme and the majority of comments were in support of the scheme. The most common issues raised were cycling provision, parking, rat runs, traffic congestion and road safety implications, all of which had been thoroughly explored through the detailed design process.

(18) The scheme now presented to Members for approval was being vetted through a safety audit process so that it offered a safe and accessible layout for all. A further public consultation exercise would also be carried out following scheme approval and prior to scheme construction to inform the local community of the final scheme layout and implementation programme. Due to the innovative nature of the shared space concept, it was also acknowledged that a comprehensive educational and publicity programme also

needed to be taken forward over the coming months to inform all potential users of the scheme of the changes proposed.

(19) As well as the broader public consultation exercise carried out in June 2006, there had been a pro-active effort to engage a number of other community and business groups in the town. For example, the West Street Community Association was involved in a consultation exercise on the evening of 14 September 2006 at the Oranges public house to debate options for use of the central public realm along West Street. Presentations had also been made to the Central Ashford Community Forum, Ashford Business Community and Town Centre Partnership to inform the groups regarding the scheme proposals and also to answer questions and address concerns.

(20) Following all the consultation carried out throughout the scheme concept and design work, one of the main concerns appeared to centre around the introduction of a shared space philosophy along Elwick Road within a busy traffic environment and its implications for road safety, particularly for the mobility impaired.

(21) In its role as a Strategic Authority, KCC needed to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by ensuring that the disabled community were not purposely excluded from access to goods or services which included the public highway. Similarly, the Disability Equality Duty (DED) applied to KCC and all agencies that undertook work for us by integrating disability equality into the business culture and processes of the County Council.

(22) In terms of KCC Transport Policy, there were two relevant policies in the current Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011. Policy ACC 1, Accessibility Strategy, stated that KCC would work with partners to improve access to all goods, services and opportunities for all sections of Kent's communities. Policy ACC2, Mobility Impairment, stated that KCC would improve access to, and safety of the transport network for people with mobility impairments.

(23) The aspirations of the Ashford Ring Road project were to meet both policy requirements and encourage the use of the transformed Ring Road by all, including the mobility impaired, within a safer highway environment. All scheme proposals were also vetted through the safety audit process to ensure that the needs of all users were thoroughly considered. It was also important to understand that a shared use culture around the entire Ring Road was not being put forward as part of the Phase 1 proposals. The Ring Road would revert to two-way operation with reduced capacity throughout although around two-thirds of the scheme would retain the more traditional highway environment with clearly demarcated carriageways, footways and formal crossing points. However, a shared use approach was being progressed along Elwick Road, West Street and Bank Street in order to provide a much higher quality public realm and user friendly environment.

(24) However, the whole accessibility issue was of great concern to mobility impaired groups and as a result, a specific 'Accessibility Working Group' was covened to address the issues in detail. Representatives from both the Ashford & Tunbridge Wells Access Groups, Wheelchair Users Group, Guide Dogs for the Blind and Kent association for the Blind were involved in a constructive series of meetings and the scheme design had been adapted to address various concerns. For example, vehicles would be guided to use specific areas of the carriageway by the incorporation of landscaping, kerb delineation and colour contrast. Guidance paving was being introduced such that cane users could negotiate the space. Informal crossing points had been incorporated with tactile paving on the approaches to steer pedestrians towards particular crossing areas. Whilst there were certain issues still to resolve, the scheme layout incorporated a number of specific design features to aid the visually and mobility impaired community and encourage them to use

the new public realm. Following further discussions with representatives of accessibility groups the inclusion of a controlled crossing in the vicinity of Elwick Square was being considered.

(25) In overall terms, the scheme attempted to create a much more user friendly environment which reduced the dominance of the motor vehicle although this was not being pursued without due consideration for all users including drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and people with mobility impairments. Best endeavours had been made to involve and consult widely on the project with all affected parties and provide a scheme that was accessible for all. It was also worth noting that the current fast moving, traffic dominated one-way Ring Road environment was a barrier for both disabled and non-disabled people alike and the intention was to remove those barriers and allow other road users to reclaim the street.

(26) In order to promote reversion of the Ring Road from one-way to two-way flow and to formally restrict vehicles to 20 mph and prevent unnecessary parking through the shared space environment, a number of Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) needed to be promoted. The fundamental overarching TRO required to enable the scheme to proceed was the revocation of the existing one-way TRO to allow traffic to travel in both directions around the Ring Road. Due to the importance of this particular TRO, it was decided to promote this Order in association with the public consultation exercise carried out in June 2006.

(27) A plan of the streets affected together with a statement of reasons and the traffic order advertisement itself was included at Appendix I - Ashford Ring Road Two-Way TRO of the report. The advertisement was placed in the local press on 9 June 2006 and reference was made to the Order in the public consultation exercise carried out above. Statutory consultees were approached both during a pre-consultation exercise together with formal notification by letter during the consultation period. No objections were received and the Order was duly considered and approved at the Ashford Joint Transportation Board (JTB) on 2 November 2006.

(28) Further TRO's would be prepared and advertised in due course to deal with detailed issues of downgrading Elwick Road/West Street in the road hierarchy, traffic speed, turning bans, parking, loading and other restrictions at specific locations during the final development of the detailed design. The Orders would be reported to the JTB or this Board as appropriate in due course although there were no outstanding Orders which jeopardised or compromised the ultimate delivery of the scheme.

(29) The current scheme delivery programme including the completion of a detailed design package would be completed by the end of December 2006. Ringway, the County Council's term contractors would commence advance works to revert Station Road to two-way flow from January - June 2006. The main construction contract would be tendered in February 2007 with the intention to appoint a main scheme contractor in April 2007 with a start-date on-site of July 2007 once Ringway had completed their advance works. The main contract would take around 12 months with the scheme completed in July 2008.

(30) One of the key considerations during the scheme works was to ensure adequate traffic management measures were put in place to keep traffic flowing as best as possible and a high priority would be given to ensuring that traffic queues and congestion were kept to a minimum. However, Members needed to acknowledge that there would be a certain degree of disruption to traffic flow during the works in order to complete the bulk of the works within the Growth Area funding constraint of the end of March 2008.

(31) A second phase of the project would hopefully be progressed as a natural successor to the scheme whereby a similar public realm led improvement scheme would

be delivered along Somerset Road, Wellesley Road and Station Road. The ultimate aim was that the entire Ring Road would be transformed in terms of its design, appearance and functionality to support and assist with the future growth of the town centre area over the coming years.

(32) The original Phase 1 scheme was estimated to cost £14.5 million. As a result and following discussions with Ashford Borough Council, the following construction priority was recommended :-

1. Conversion of the Ring Road to two-way traffic working throughout
2. Completion of Bank Street and Elwick Square
3. Reconstruction of Victoria Road / Beaver Road junction
4. Completion of the remainder of Elwick Road from Church Road to West Street, and the start of the 'Ashford Arc' to New Street
5. Completion of the 'Ashford Arc' New Street Square (New Rents Square)
6. Completion of the 'Ashford Arc' to North Street (Somerset Road)

(33) As well as the design fees and construction costs, there were financial implications for future scheme maintenance since high quality, public realm schemes needed to be maintained to a higher standard than the traditional highway environment. A specialist working group of Officers had been set-up to assess maintenance costs and the available budget would be top-sliced to ensure that adequate funding was available for scheme maintenance over the first 3-5 years. After that, it was hoped that a suitable developer tariff system could be adopted by the County Council that would be imposed on town centre development to cover the ongoing maintenance costs of the scheme. The current funding available would allow priorities 1-4 to be progressed to construction although the high quality element of priorities 5-6 would need to be deferred to a future phase.

(34) The total cost of the Phase 1 scheme including fees, works and other ancillary costs was estimated to be £11.3 million although the cost of the works could not be confirmed until scheme tenders were returned. Available funding towards the scheme was also estimated at around £11.3 million as listed in the report. As a result, sufficient scheme funding was available to design, implement and maintain the scheme for an initial period and the report did not seek additional funding approval for the project. Scheme costs would also be actively managed to ensure they did not exceed the available budget. It was also anticipated that further funding bids would be made to central government in future years to complete the entire Ring Road transformation project.

(35) Following publication of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) Sustainable Communities Plan 2003, Ashford was now identified as one of the major growth areas in the South-East with a total of 31,000 homes and 28,000 jobs envisaged by 2031. Detailed masterplanning studies followed which had now led to the development of mutually supporting land use and transport strategies to ensure that the town's future growth was well planned and sustainable.

(36 A Transport Strategy for Ashford had been developed by the County Council in line with central government and County Council transport policy which would also support and stimulate town centre development. One of the key schemes listed in the plan was the need to re-configure the current one-way, traffic dominated environment to a series of two-way quality streets. An early 'mend before extend' approach to the town centre would be crucial, even before significant growth took place, and the transformation of the Ring Road would play a key part in realising the future growth potential.

(37) Ultimately, the scheme would need to secure a better balance between the needs of car users, pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, radically improve the environment of the town centre, create a quality of environment that encouraged further investment in the town and strengthen the town centre's economy by making the centre easily accessible for all.

(38) Being a major transformational project, the scheme was likely to have implications for the town in general. As a result, County Council local and Ashford ward Members were invited to attend a series of Special Policy Advisory Group (PAG) evening meetings to discuss the scheme concept and evolution of the scheme design. Members, in the absence of a vote, appeared supportive of the need for the scheme and the innovative layout. All local Ashford members were also invited on a study tour to Holland from 19-21 June 2006 where there were a number of examples of similar concepts currently being proposed for the ring road. The feedback from the tour was very positive.

(39) A report was submitted to the Joint Transportation Board and Ashford Borough Council Executive for consideration on 2 November 2006 seeking support for the scheme layout with reversion of the Ring Road to two-way flow. The recommendation from both the JTB and subsequently the Ashford Executive was unanimous in its support of the detailed scheme layout and progression to on-site construction.

(40) The Board supported the proposal for recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Supporting Independence and/or the Cabinet Member for Highways that the Phase 1 scheme to convert the A292 Ashford Ring Road into a series of two-way streets be progressed to contract tender and on-site construction during 2007/8.

3. A2 Slip Roads, Canterbury

(Item 4 – Report by Head of Major Projects)

(1) Congestion in Canterbury City was now significant. Queuing traffic occurred for substantial parts of the day and journey delays on all the major routes into and across the City were commonplace. Proposals had been brought forward through the Local Transport Plan and the Canterbury Transport Action Plan to address congestion and provide better travel choice for people accessing the City. The core elements of the strategy were additional Park and Ride capacity for the City coupled with the strategic implementation of Bus Priority Measures.

(2) However, to fully realise the benefits of the approach, a limited amount of new road building would be necessary to make the best use of road infrastructure. In particular, making more effective use of the A2 Trunk which bypasses Canterbury to the Southeast was an opportunity not to be missed. Currently, in contrast to the local roads, the A2 had no congestion and was lightly loaded with traffic. Its function in the Trunk Road network was of "regional significance" rather than national importance and providing access to a regional hub (ie., Canterbury) was a key objective for a Trunk road of this type.

(3) Investigations had concentrated on making better use of the A2 bypassing Canterbury, providing congestion relief to the City without compromising the strategic function that the A2 performed. Trunk Roads were the responsibility of the Highways Agency and could only be affected with their consent. To advance the project a consortium had been formed comprising the County Council, Canterbury City Council, the Highways Agency, Canterbury for Business (private sector) and SEEDA (via East Kent Partnership). The Regeneration and Economy Division had led the consortium study work.

(4) The most obvious way to make best use of the A2 was to improve the three junctions serving the City – at Wincheap, Harbledown and Bridge. All three junctions only

had partial traffic movements and did not allow the full flexibility for traffic that was normal for major road interchanges. Accessing destinations within Canterbury, such as the University campus to the north, could be difficult: for instance, traffic from the A2 Dover direction was forced to use either Bridge or Wincheap and then travel via the City Centre, rather than continue to Harbledown before leaving the A2 and avoiding the City Centre. Initial studies had shown that if all three junctions were improved to allow all movements to take place, substantial re-routing of traffic patterns could occur and provide significant congestion relief in the City Centre.

(5) Technical work had focused on the junction layouts at the three locations to see if additional slip roads could be added to the existing junctions easily. At Wincheap and Harbledown this appeared to be possible, but at Bridge because of the existing junction layout this was more difficult and required the complete rebuilding of the existing junction. In developing designs for the three junctions, cost effectiveness had been a key objective and it had emerged that the new slip roads at Wincheap were likely to be the easiest and cheapest to construct. Design work had therefore focused on Wincheap and the Northwest-facing London-bound on slip had been brought forward for detailed work. This slip improvement represented the best in cost benefit terms.

(6) The slip road had been designed to take minimal land and fit in with the existing junction on the A28 (traffic signals). All the land required was controlled by either the County Council, the City Council or the Highways Agency – all of whom were signed up to the project as part of the study consortium. The estimated cost of the slip road was some £1.2 million, which had been provisionally allocated from the Integrated Transport Schemes package through the LTP. With the detailed design under way, it would be necessary to consult local people, enter into formal agreements with the Highways Agency and carry out the formal legal processes to construct a new road. It was estimated that this could be achieved to enable scheme opening by September 2009.

(7) The key procedural issues were to obtain ministerial approval in principal to the provision of improved junctions on the A2 Trunk Road and to develop the technical details of the scheme sufficiently to engage with local people and submit a planning application. It was proposed that the construction work would be carried out under the new Kent Highway Services Alliance contracts. The on-slip at Wincheap had been submitted to the Highways Agency for technical approval and safety audit purposes, which had been agreed.

(8) The preparatory work for the Dover-bound off-slip at Wincheap was linked to the regeneration of the Wincheap Industrial Estate which was being promoted by the City Council. In partnership working with them, efforts were being made to try and bring forward design and traffic options for the road. Development of possible slip roads at Harbledown was linked to the potential for a fourth Park and Ride site for Canterbury and also required partnership working. At Bridge, the need to serve development allocations in the Local Plan (Little Barton Farm) would require significant additional work.

(9) Once preparatory work on the design and transport impact of the proposals was completed further reports could be brought to Members for discussion. At present costs were expected to be significant and developer contributions would be required to enable the elements of the project to be procured. It was proposed to continue work in the Regeneration and Economy Division to bring forward the remainder of the A2 Slips Project.

(10) Promotion of the overall project had been carried out so far through partnership funding from all the consortium partners, with the County Council element being met initially from the Regeneration Fund and subsequently from the Major Schemes forward design allocation. Further design work to be funded by the County Council would need to

be subject to a bid for funding from the forward design budget. It should be noted that until ministerial approval had been obtained to the overall project, any work carried out on the scheme was at the County Council's risk.

(11) The views of Mr G Gibbens, local Member, were circulated at the meeting.

(12) The Board supported the proposal for recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence that in respect of the Wincheap London-bound on-slip at Canterbury approval be given to:-

(a) the scheme shown in Drawing No. 13782/21RevA for development control and land charge disclosures;

(b) carry out appropriate consultations with the public and statutory bodies;

(c) seek all necessary consents; and

(d) arrange for the making of all necessary Orders to construct the scheme.

4. Eurokent Business Park and Access Road, Thanet
(Item 5 – Report by Head of Major Projects)

(1) Eurokent Business Park lay adjacent to the A256 Haine Road, immediately to the south of Westwood Cross. It was designated for employment use in the current Thanet District Council (TDC) local plan but little development had taken place to date, except at the northern end. Marlowe Academy lay immediately to the east of the site. It was accessed from Stirling Way, as was the existing school that it replaced. Stirling Way was a traffic calmed residential road and was not considered suitable as the long term access for the Academy.

(2) There was also planning consent for business innovation units on KCC owned land at the SE corner of the Eurokent site, bounded by Marlowe Academy to the east and Eurokent to the west. The innovation units would also be accessed from Stirling Way.

(3) A key aspect of the site was that a new spine road running north/south was proposed which would open up the site for development. It would also provide a much improved access for the Marlowe Academy and for the innovation units and bring relief to Haine Road, which was not designed to current standards and carried an increasing volume of traffic. A section of the new road had been built with development at the north end but the majority was still to be built.

(4) SEEDA were now to develop a 3.85 acre plot at the southern end of the site for employment use. To do this they had to provide access and so need to construct at least a short section of the new road. SEEDA had European funding towards this development but this had to be spent next year.

(5) Thanet DC had recently ended a joint venture that it had with Rose Farm Estates (RFE) for the development of the site. RFE now controlled the northern half of the site and TDC owned the southern half of the site. RFE were obliged to complete the roundabout at the northern end of the new road and the short section of road to the north of it at their expense.

(6) Thus there were a number of aspects coming together which point to the best solution being to build the whole of the remainder of the road to bring the benefits of better access to the Marlowe Academy and the innovation units, access to the SEEDA development, access to the RFE development and relief to Haine Road and helping to bring forward employment at the Eurokent site.

(7) The estimated cost of the road was £4.5m. Part of the cost would be met by SEEDA and RFE but there would remain a gap in the funding. Discussions were being held with TDC about how KCC might help to bring forward the construction of the road. At this stage therefore it was not possible to commit to the construction of the road. However, if the road was to be built next year to a timetable to enable SEEDA to use the European funding, then it was required to make progress with the design and the statutory procedures.

(8) To help meet the programme, KCC had commissioned the design of the road with SEEDA contributing 50% of the costs. An outline planning consent was granted last year but it was necessary to seek approval for the reserved matters. The purpose of the report was to seek approval to the plan for the road shown on Drawing No. 233600/8 and for the seeking of consents to take the scheme forward. Another report would be presented to the Board when the scheme was ready to move to the construction phase, if the funding arrangements had been resolved.

(9) There was an opportunity to bring forward a valuable scheme that would bring many benefits. To enable the opportunity to be seized, subject to the funding arrangements being resolved, the scheme needed to be progressed through design and statutory procedures.

(10) The Board supported the proposal for recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence that approval be given to:-

(a) the scheme shown on Drawing No. 233600/8 for development control and land charge disclosures; and

(b) the seeking of all necessary consents.

5. Delivering a 21st Century Highway Service
(Item 6 – Report by Director, Kent Highway Services)

(1) Kent Highway Services faced difficult financial challenges in the coming years together with a desire to deliver improved satisfaction of the service in Kent. The report described a way forward to minimise the impact of the budgetary pressures on frontline services and a radical transformation of the management of the service through restructuring and deployment of smart information technology.

(2) On 16 January 2006, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste approved a capital accommodation investment of £17.7m (net) to develop three super depots/offices based in West Kent (Wrotham), Mid Kent (Ashford) and East Kent (Whitfield, Dover), and two satellite depots at Preston (Faversham) and Hayesden (Tonbridge).

(3) Since taking up post in August 2006, the Director of Kent Highway Services had reviewed the plans and worked with the Managing Director - Environment & Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste to develop a new accommodation proposal that met operational needs, with no degradation of service, whilst reducing the capital investment required. The new proposal was to:-

- Develop two super depots/offices based in West Kent (Wrotham) and Mid Kent (Ashford) – subject to planning permission - to create two divisional offices from the current three – West Kent incorporating Gravesham, Dartford, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge & Malling and Maidstone, and East Kent incorporating Swale, Ashford, Dover, Shepway, Canterbury and Thanet.

- Develop the two satellite depots at Preston and Haysden and an additional satellite depot in East Kent.

(4) Office accommodation would be built around a model of flexible and mobile working and would require investment in technology. The operational service, for example routine maintenance, emergency response and winter maintenance, would be maintained, without a reduction in service standards, and delivered from the network of super depots and satellite depots. It was anticipated that net capital savings from the revised programme were in the order of £3.4m. There would also be reduced future running costs of £0.53m.

(5) As a result of not proceeding with Whitfield there would be an unallocated budget and it was intended that this should be used to invest in a technology programme. This would focus on reshaping existing operational processes to deliver business efficiencies and would:-

- significantly improve the process from fault identification to completion of repair;
- demonstrate lower costs in running the service;
- improve levels of public satisfaction through faster response times and improved communication;
- increase the number of enquiries resolved at first point of contact by the Contact Centre or through web-enabled self-service.

(6) Significant investment was required in mobile technology and business systems to deliver the benefits and this was estimated to be £3.4m. Only by making the investment would KHS be able to operate from two divisions with resultant staff savings.

(7) Kent Highway Services was currently structured by three divisions and a strategic headquarters. The accommodation proposals outlined in the report would necessitate a restructure of the service from three to two divisions. Investment in technology would also involve a review of how activities were delivered to ensure operation in the most efficient way possible and this would inevitably affect how staff worked across the KHS Alliance.

(8) Preliminary discussions had taken place with staff and UNISON to ensure that they were aware of the proposals. It was intended that KHS would work closely with UNISON and Personnel & Development during the restructure process to minimise the impact on staff as much as possible.

(9) On 16 October 2006 Cabinet agreed that:-

(a) The Council would not proceed with the acquisition and development of a site at Whitfield and agreed that KHS would deliver the operational service from two divisions based in super depots/offices at Wrotham and Ashford – subject to planning permission - and three satellite depots.

(b) As a result of not proceeding with Whitfield there would be an unallocated budget and that this should now be used to invest in a technology programme.

(c) As a result of the investment in technology, and economies of scale arising from reducing to two divisional offices, KHS should be restructured to create staff efficiencies.

(d) The Managing Director for Environment and Regeneration be given delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste to take forward and implement the management actions arising from the decisions.

(e) Subsequently the decision was debated at Cabinet Scrutiny who had referred the decision back to Cabinet.

(10) The Board:-

(a) supported the Director of Kent Highway Services on the proposals outlined in paragraph (9) above; and

(b) agreed that a site visit to the proposed super depot in Wrotham be arranged as soon as possible.

6. Provision of 20mph Zones Outside Schools in Kent
(Item 7 – Report by County Transportation Manager)

(1) Following the publication of the Government's road casualty target in March 2000, KCC developed an assessment framework for the selection of 20mph zones and limits. This was approved by Members in September 2000. The framework was designed to ensure that areas where crashes involving child pedestrians and cyclists had been reported or could occur in the future would be identified and prioritised. The framework also included other factors such as the socio-economic background of an area along with the presence of local shops and schools. Specific priority was not given to roads outside schools.

(2) A priority system had been established and a programme of work developed which was funded from the small improvements fund or for larger schemes, the Local Transport Plan. Predominantly, the schemes covered urban areas, typically sections of estates where particular problems had been identified. As 20mph zones and limits would normally include traffic calming measures to ensure "self enforcement", "A" class roads and routes regularly used by the emergency services and buses could not be included.

(3) Annually KCC used the criteria and crash remedial methods to identify further areas where crashes to child pedestrians and cyclists could benefit from the introduction of 20mph zones. If a village or community wished to be considered for a 20mph scheme then they should contact the appropriate Divisional Office. At the present time, there were some 50 schemes in Kent.

(4) The issue of 20 mph zones generally in Kent was now well established and, as a concept, speed limits of 20mph or less outside schools would appear to be beneficial. However before concluding this, a number of issues needed to be considered.

(5) Most activity outside schools took place at the start and finish of the school day with some further movement at lunch times, so logically the limit should mirror those times. The limit would not be required at weekends or school holidays and the lower speed limit should be in place only at those times to be self-enforcing and understood by the motorist. Under the heading "Variable Speed" limits in the DETR Circular 05/99 "20mph Speed Limits" it stated that "Local traffic authorities can make variable mandatory 20mph speed limits under section 84 of the road traffic regulation act 1984. These are limits that change between 20 mph and 30 mph depending on the time of day as specified in the speed limit order. It should be noted that when these variable limits were monitored in trials outside schools very little reduction in speed was observed". In the newly published guidance on speed limits (circular roads 1/2006) the government signals its support for 20mph limits and zones in residential areas, but it made no specific mention of schools or part time limits.

(6) The current view of the Kent Police was that 20mph zones and limits should be self-enforcing. This meant that the majority of limits and zones would require traffic

calming features. Not only would this be restrictively expensive but with many schools on "A" and "B" class roads, such features, particularly road humps could not be used. In addition, traffic calming features would be permanent and drivers might resent having their speed physically reduced when the requirement for slower speed existed only at start and finish of the school day. It was interesting to note that outside most schools, the congestion caused by parents picking up or dropping off children combined with large numbers of pedestrians and cyclists created a slowing of traffic at the very time that it was most needed. Members had also recently considered that physical traffic calming measures should be seen as a last resort to specific crash and speed problems.

(7) There was not a consistently recorded crash problem outside schools. Where a crash record was identified, the current council criteria for 20mph site selection based on reported personal injury crashes remained robust and should continue.

(8) If Members took the view that all schools in Kent should have a permanent 20mph limit or zone, this would involve significant funds being made available. Each site would require the making of a traffic regulation order (TRO) the current cost for making such an order was approximately £1,000. In Kent there were 611 schools (not including independents).

(9) New 20 mph limits or zones would require signs and possibly road markings. The cost of such signing and marking could be around £0.75m (£250 x 4 signs per site = £1000 plus fixing £200 giving a gross figure of £1200) and this would be in addition to any traffic calming which might be required to make the limit self enforcing.

(10) However if variable 20mph limits were to be considered, the cost of each installation would rise considerably. Each site would require a minimum of 4 signs per site (£250 x 4), each sign would need flashing lights to inform drivers that the lower limit was in place (£135 x 4), timers to switch the lights on and off (£300 x 4), an electricity supply to each sign (£550 x 4) and an installation cost of £400 per school. The estimated cost of this would be some £3.6m. In addition there would be an annual running cost for electricity and maintenance.

(11) In agreeing that a school should have a 20mph limit or zone then further questions needed to be considered:-

(a) How far should the limit extend beyond the school? 200m, 400m, 800m.

(b) How many roads leading to the school should be included in the limit and again how far?

(c) With many schools having more than one entrance/exit this could mean that a much wider 20mph zone could be required.

(12) It was known that many children were injured close to their home. If residential areas remained at 30mph whilst the limits outside schools were cut to 20mph, it might be argued that such a policy increased the risk to children near home as speeds would be higher. It certainly did not support the commitment to a data led approach to the work.

(13) Some local authorities faced with the enforcement problems, the need to have the lower limit only at school start and finish times and the potential requirement for traffic calming had opted for part time advisory 20mph limits. Several trial schemes had been implemented in Scotland. The Scottish office report (SEDD circular No. 6/2001) found that: -

- The sites selected for the pilot projects were only in self-enclosed residential areas used mainly by local residents with little or no through traffic. In general, roads which carried through traffic, bus routes or roads which had a

significant volume of non-resident traffic were unlikely to be suitable because of the difficulty in obtaining widespread public support.

- Advisory 20mph speed limits were most likely to be effective in areas where before 85th percentile speeds were in the range 25 to 30mph.
- The length of road covered by an advisory limit should not exceed 600m.

(14) It should also be noted that similar signs to those used on variable speed limits with flashing amber lights to indicate to drivers that an advisory limit was in force would be needed. Although the cost of a traffic order would be saved, the cost of installation would be similar to the variable 20mph limit signs described above.

(15) Members had already signalled their concern about the amount of signing particularly in rural areas. The introduction of 20mph limits or zones would significantly increase the number of signs. In particular the introduction of a 20mph speed limit on a single section of lit 30mph road would also require regular 20mph repeater signs to be used.

(16) It was clear from the information above that if members wished to fully consider a policy of 20mph limits or zones outside all Kent schools a detailed report to Members would be needed providing the following information: -

(a) A full assessment of the likely cost implications along with a recommendation of suitable annual investment and as a result indicate how long it would take to implement the policy.

(b) An assessment of the reduction in child crashes that might result to see if there were justifiable cost benefits to the proposal given that such a policy would inevitably divert funds from other resources.

(c) Open a dialogue with the Kent police to consider the issue of enforcement. If their position remained unaltered then the high cost of traffic calming might become inevitable. As the measures would only be needed for say 2 hours a day then this would be very unpopular with the emergency services, bus operators and the motorist. Consultation with the groups regarding the policy should be carried out.

(d) Clearly if such a policy were accepted then a priority rating system would need to be developed. Crash levels would play a part but speed of traffic, levels of traffic and HGV flow might all need to be taken into account. Such a process would require a very considerable amount of work and would, it was believed be challenged as schools discovered how far down the list they were.

(17) The outcome of various studies showed that effective speed reduction was only likely in specific areas and that in many places reductions in speed were unlikely unless either traffic calming or changes to enforcement were included. Consequently a policy to implement 20mph limits outside every Kent school would seem costly and inappropriate. Rather it was better to target specific schools where problems could be identified and suitable solutions considered. However a more simple solution could be for Government to establish a rule that stated that when the flashing lights outside a school were on then the speed limit was 20mph. With many schools already having flashing lights for school crossing patrols the cost of equipping all schools would be reduced. No traffic orders would be needed and no additional signing.

(18) Mr R A Pascoe moved, Mr W A Hayton seconded that paragraph 20 of the report be amended to read as follows:-

(a) recognising that safety outside schools is paramount, Kent County Council should have specific guidelines for speed limits outside each Kent school, and that Joint Transportation Boards should consider, and recommend to the County Council, requirements for individual schools at their meetings; and

(b) KCC will lobby government for a change in the rules to allow for 20mph limits outside schools by virtue of flashing lights.

Carried

7. Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Highways Design Handbook
(Item 8 – Report by Director, Kent Downs AONB Unit)

(1) The statutory Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan, adopted by Kent County Council, identified the design and maintenance of highways in the AONB as a key issue for action. Issues such as sign clutter, creeping urbanisation and traffic speeds and volume were key issues. The agreed action was to produce a Highways Design Handbook for the AONB.

(2) The Kent Downs AONB unit, working with Kent County Council highway officers, had recruited and appointed consultants, Halcrow, to produce a draft Highways Design Handbook for the AONB. A first draft was on display at the meeting. The report was to make the Highways Advisory Board aware of work currently being undertaken to produce a Kent Downs AONB Highways Design Handbook, share the early draft and to seek early comments and support for the identified next stages including establishing the Design Handbook as policy.

(3) The Kent Downs AONB was a nationally protected landscape – given legal equivalence to the National Parks. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 placed a 'Duty of Regard' for the purposes of the AONB on all local authorities and public bodies when carrying out their activities. The scope of this duty included the design and maintenance of highway infrastructure. The primary purpose of AONBs was to 'conserve and enhance natural beauty'.

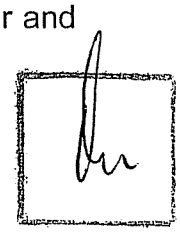
- The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan was produced and submitted to Secretary of State by the AONB Unit on behalf of the AONB partnership in April 2004, the AONB partnership included Kent County Council. Each of the local authorities in the partnership had formally adopted the Plan, its policies and actions.

(4) Adopted sustainable development and travel policies from the Plan included:-

SDT1 Ensure that the need to conserve and enhance the fundamental and special characteristics of the AONB was reflected within the new Regional Spatial Strategy, Local Development Frameworks, Area Action Plans Supplementary Planning Guidance and Local Transport Plans.

SDT5 Measures to reduce the long-term impact of major transportation infrastructure on the natural beauty, amenity and tranquillity of the AONB would be supported.

SDT6 A strategic approach would be taken to the use of road signage, furniture, design and maintenance that promoted or enhanced the local character and distinctiveness of the AONB, and promoted better route management.



SDT8 Seek sustainable and effective solutions to identified problems or rural traffic density, speed and type of traffic particularly in rural settlements or where there was a conflict with walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

(5) A series of actions were adopted to respond to the policies, the key action with regard to the report was Action SDT 8 ..'produce environmental and landscape guidelines for the management of Kent Downs roads'.

(6) The aim of the Highways Design Handbook was to encourage a more appropriate approach to the design of existing and new highways (streetscapes) in the Kent Downs. The Handbook was intended to reverse the trend towards generality and restore the distinctive quality and character of the highways or streetscapes in the Downs but would be subject to signing legislation and guidance.

(7) The audience for the Handbook was wide and would include:-

- Highway and transportation engineers.
- Developers, architects, planners, urban designers and surveyors.
- Local planning authorities, elected members of local and parish councils, environmental organisations and local heritage groups.
- Public utilities, telecommunication providers, local businesses, farmers, landowners and farm contractors.

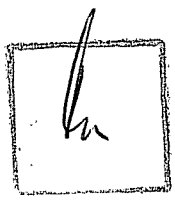
(8) The objectives of the Handbook were:-

- To identify the special characteristics and features of the rural roads network that contributed to the distinctive character and quality of the AONB.
- To provide high quality detailed guidance for consideration in the development of new highway treatments and improvements.
- To ensure the conservation and maintenance of the key characteristics and features.
- To raise awareness and understanding of the importance of the rural roads network, including its historic/heritage, landscape and biodiversity importance.
- To do so in a way which increased safety and was practical and cost effective.

(9) The Handbook would draw on best practice examples of similar work from across the UK and Europe. Case studies from the Kent Downs were being developed for the Handbook. Two consultation workshops had already been held for local authority officers, highways engineers, parish councils and other stakeholders. We had also met twice with KCC Highways Engineers and the Kent police.

(10) Comments from initial consultations with the police, highways engineers and this board would be included in the Design Handbook before it was released as a consultation draft (Jan 2007).

(11) Subject to wider consultation, the Board supported the proposal for recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that the Kent Downs AONB Highways Design Handbook be approved and adopted as policy in summer 2007.



8. Prewet Salting for Kent

(Item 10 – Report by Director, Kent Highway Services)

(1) Prewet was the name given to the process developed in Europe, and used Worldwide, for introducing brine solution to solid salt for precautionary Winter Service activities. The paper described the prewet process, where prewetting was used and the benefits and cost of using Prewet for precautionary Winter Service. The opportunity to commence the use of prewet in Kent was very timely due to the KHS accommodation project, which would result in new facilities from 2007 with a long life expectancy and the introduction of new winter service fleet of vehicles for winter 2006-07.

(2) Prewet required brine-saturating facilities for the brine solution in each depot. The winter service spreader fleet required the addition of side tank, pump and control systems for prewet. These were ideally fitted during the construction of the vehicles, although these could be fitted retrospectively to the existing spreader fleet, if they were modern units with suitable computer spreader control systems.

(3) The vehicle operated the route in a similar manner to a conventional spreader although road speed during treatment could be at slightly higher speeds than the typical 38mph, to speeds of 50mph, where conditions permitted. The solid, dry salt was brought to the spinner, but as the salt reached the chute to the spinner, or in the spinner itself, a solution of brine was sprayed to coat the solid salt.

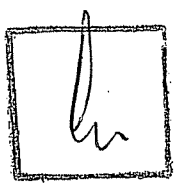
(4) The solution improved the trajectory of the salt and more actively adhered to the road surface. This had been proven to reduce secondary bounce and scatter of spread materials improving performance on the carriageway and reducing environmental effects on soft verges. There was also a longer-term reduction in the quantity of salt used due to the accuracy of application and the increased residual presence of the salt.

(5) Typical salt spreading rates would be reduced by up to approximately 25% using prewet salt as opposed to traditional solid salt. The proposal for Kent would be to use 6mm rocksalt for the dry salt element of the prewet process. This would result in financial savings compared to using the 3mm pure salt.

(6) Europe and North America had used the system for many years with the majority of countries adopting the technique. Back in the late 1990's and early 2000's the system was adopted by a number of Local Authorities in England and following various successful trials prewet had now started to become more prevalent on the road network in England, Scotland and Wales.

(7) The adoption of prewet and the ultimate creation of the new depots would require the re-optimisation of the Network. This could lead to the reduction of the number of spreading vehicles required, which in turn would lead to a reduction of crews required to carry out the treatment. This would have no effect on the number of qualified drivers maintained within the Alliance, but would permit longer periods between winter service shifts. The operation of the vehicle was no different to that of a dry salting technique. However, a short induction in the use of the saturator and brine storage unit would be required for staff.

(8) The principal risk with the adoption of prewet would be the acceptance of those responsible for instructing and undertaking the treatment of the lower salting rates required. The custom to apply excess amounts of salt to ensure that the appropriate coverage was achieved across the full width of carriageway would need to be challenged. There would be reduced risk in the following areas:-



- Reduction in third party insurance claims. Vehicles fitted with GPS would provide robust information on when, how and where treatment was undertaken
- Reduction in environmental risk due to lower salt usage and lower stock requirement
- Potential efficiency gains

(9) The principal benefits were improved Winter Service performance through: -

- Materials more readily adhere to the carriageway
- More effective spread pattern to the carriageway
- Reduced verge environmental effects
- Reduced salt usage without performance reduction due to reduced spread rate
- Elongated active window of retained solution on the carriageway
- Increased application speeds introducing increased route lengths and route optimisation
- Prewetted materials begin going in to solution immediately
- Potential reduction in third party insurance claims from the reduction of secondary bounce
- Reduced salt storage capacity in Depots

(10) GPS, satellite navigation and route planning could be combined to guide the driver through the route and plot the vehicle movement and the treatment of all routes. Systems were currently available that would allow the central control of the spreading vehicle settings, linked to the forecast and thermal mapping. This would result in the driver of the spreader to be simply responsible for following the route, with any changes to the rate of spread of material being sent to the vehicle by GPS.

(11) The following capital expenditure would be required:-

- A saturator, pure salt store and storage tank was required in each depot. Estimated cost of £23k per depot
- Spreader increased specification at £2.8k per spreader

(12) Other associated costs:-

- The salt required to produce the brine had to be free from impurities, in order that the filters on the saturator were not damaged.
- Additional cost of pure salt over 6mm rock salt. Estimated cost of £15 per tonne.

(13) The report detailed the comparison in the cost of salt, based on a typical winter similar to the 2005/06 season, where 20,000 tonnes was used. In addition to the environmental savings there were potential financial savings. The decrease in the amount of salt used in any season offered the opportunity to reduce the size of salt barn in each depot. Estimated cost savings of £24,000. The optimisation of routes and the increased length and treatment speed capability with the lower rate of spread might result in a reduction in the number of spreading vehicles required. Estimated cost savings of £12,500 per spreader per year. For a reduction of every spreader, there would also be a saving in the operation of the vehicle. The cost was built up from standby and shift

payments. Estimated cost savings of £5,000 per operative per year. The filtering of grey water from the wash down areas would reduce the quantity of clean water required. Estimated cost savings of £1,500 per year.

(14) A summary of the estimated savings expected to be achieved was set out in the report. Savings would also be realised beyond the term of the new contract. *i.e beyond 2016.*

(15) The Board supported the proposal for recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that approval be given to implement the use of the prewet de-icing technique in Kent following the establishment of the new depots.

The Chairman informed the Board that, due to the Members' visit to the Traffic Management Centre following the meeting, he had decided to defer Items 9, 11 and 12 to the Board's next meeting in January.

06/exe/hab/111406/Minutes

Chairman .....

Date 9th January 2007