

From: David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director Growth, Environment & Transport

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 14 January 2015

Subject: 14/00162 Maidstone Bridges Gyratory – Construction of two new northbound lanes & traffic controlled junctions

Key decision: Major Scheme with cost over £1m

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: Maidstone Central

Summary: Approval to take the highway improvement through the next stages of development and delivery including authority to progress statutory approvals and to enter into funding and construction contracts.

Recommendations: The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport on the proposed decision as follows and indicated on the proposed decision sheet attached at Appendix 1:

- i) give approval to the outline design scheme for Maidstone Bridges Gyratory on the eastern side of the river Medway for development control and land charge disclosures shown in principle on Drg. No. 4300066/000/05 attached at Appendix 2;
- ii) give approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme shown in principle on Drg. No. 4300066/000/05;
- iii) give approval to enter into Single Local Growth Fund funding agreement subject to the approval of the Corporate Director of Finance & Procurement; and
- iv) give approval to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme subject to the approval of the Procurement Board to the recommended procurement strategy.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Maidstone Gyratory is a recognised congestion and air quality hotspot within Maidstone Town Centre, lying at the point where the A20, A26, A229 and A249 primary routes converge and cross the River Medway.

1.2 The scheme involves the construction of two additional northbound lanes on the eastern side of the River Medway, with new junctions controlled by traffic signals. This would enable northbound traffic on the A229 to avoid the existing Gyratory system, thereby reducing journey distances and travel times and enabling the regeneration of the western riverside.

1.3 The recently announced award from the Single Local Growth Fund is very welcome news and, together with Maidstone Borough Council New Homes Bonus and Kent County Council LTP contributions, will now allow the scheme to proceed.

1.4 This report provides an overview of the project and recommendations for the required decisions to allow the scheme to be progressed.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 The overall estimated scheme cost is £5.74m. The allocation from the Single Local Growth Fund is £4.6m. The remaining £1.14m is available from Maidstone Borough Council.

2.2 Costs of developing the scheme are included within the estimate.

2.3 A suitable contingency and risk allowance has been included in the cost estimate which will be reviewed and refined as the scheme progresses through the design stages. Delivery will of course be dependent on the cost and affordability and this will only be clear after the detailed design has been completed and in particular fully costed details of utility diversions have been provided by the statutory undertakers. A scheme specific business case also needs to be submitted to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) for approval before the £4.6m indicative funding will be released.

2.4 In the event of any potential cost overruns value engineering will be applied to the design both during the pre-tender and construction phases. However, as with all projects of this nature, there is an inherent risk of a cost overrun due to unforeseen circumstances; it is understood that there is scope to use any corresponding underspend from other Single Local Growth Schemes within the Kent programme to ensure the benefits of the scheme are delivered. Should this facility not be available any cost overruns would require to be met by the County Council and its partners.

2.4 Within the SELEP, Essex County Council has been appointed the accountable body for the region's Single Local Growth Funding. There will be a requirement to monitor the spend of the Single Local Growth Fund and within Kent this will be done through Kent & Medway Economic Partnership. A grant offer from Government is awaited. However, in order to provide oversight of the use of Local Growth Fund monies, the county and unitary authorities in the SE LEP (including Kent County Council) are discussing the establishment of an Accountability Board, constituted as a Joint Committee and supported by the s.151 officers of the participating councils. In addition, comprehensive monitoring and project oversight will take place locally within Kent and Medway by the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership and a proposed Joint Committee arrangement between Medway Council and KCC.

3. Policy Framework

The scheme supports the BS4K objectives of supporting existing businesses and encouraging economic activity with housing growth and job creation by reducing congestion and improving infrastructure and accessibility.

4. Scheme Update

4.1 A preliminary traffic modelling exercise has recently been undertaken, using Linsig and 2013 traffic data, to update the baseline situation and confirm the proposed scheme continues to demonstrate operational and capacity benefits to the local network. The results have demonstrated similar benefits to the previous

modelling exercise (undertaken by Jacobs) with a notable reduction in overall junction delays and queues, particularly on the northbound A229 approach.

4.2 The scheme is totally within the highway curtilage of the A229. Planning consent is not required, no land needs to be acquired and it is unlikely that any other statutory approvals or consents will be required but is included in the decision recommendation as a contingency safeguard.

4.3 In connection with previous work undertaken by Jacobs, as part of the Kent County Council Professional Services Contract, some data such as engineering details, traffic modelling and a topographical survey have already been obtained.

4.4 The proposal is well established within the context of major development consents but is probably not well known to the local community. The scheme has been raised at the local Joint Transportation Committee (JTB) with a favourable response. Kent County Council are working closely with the consultant of the Powerhub development in relation to the planning condition of an additional vehicular lane on the northern bridge, which Maidstone Borough Council have concerns relating to the reduction in footway/cycleway facilities. It is recognised this will have a significant impact on the local area and as such initial meetings have been undertaken with Maidstone Borough Council and a steering group formed to continually update and feedback progress and concerns. This includes incorporating landscaping of the central islands and grassed areas that will be altered as part of the scheme. Public meetings will be arranged in the MBC offices to outline the schemes advantages and address concerns of the local community. An information letter drop will be carried out when the scheme programme has been developed in more detail with further communication, as would be done for any highway scheme, when appropriate.

4.5 Delivery of the scheme in practical terms will be dependent on completing the detailed design of the scheme and procuring a contractor through a competitive tender process - probably under European procurement rules. Delivery will also be dependent on the cost and affordability and this will be clearer after the detailed design has been completed and a more robust estimate prepared. A scheme specific business case needs to be submitted to the Department of Transport for approval before the £4.6m Single Local Growth funding is confirmed.

4.6 On the basis of the Single Local Growth funding being confirmed, design and procurement proceeding satisfactorily and road space permits to carry out works affecting the A299 being granted by Kent County Council, a start of construction in early 2016 is anticipated.

5. Conclusions

This is an important scheme to help reduce congestion on the Maidstone Bridges Gyratory, of the A229 strategic route and support housing development, job creation and general economic activity. The recent announcement of Single Local Growth funding that will allow the scheme to proceed is very welcome news. The programme has been developed and some preliminary work has already been done and there is confidence that a construction start date of early 2016 can be achieved.

6. Recommendations:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport on the proposed decision as follows and indicated on the proposed decision sheet attached at Appendix 1:

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- ii) give approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme shown in principle on Drg. No. 4300066/000/05;
- iii) give approval to enter into Single Local Growth Fund funding agreement subject to the approval of the Corporate Director of Finance & Procurement; and
- iv) give approval to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme subject to the approval of the Procurement Board to the recommended procurement strategy.

7. Background Documents

None.

8. Contact details

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