

From: Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste

Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment & Transport

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 15 June 2017

Decision No: 17/00050

Subject: Westwood Relief Strategy Thanet – Tesco Link Road, construction of a strategic link road and associated roundabouts linking the A256 and A254.

Key decision Major Scheme with costs over £1m

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: Broadstairs

Summary: This paper is seeking approval to take the Westwood Relief Strategy highway improvement scheme through the next stages of development and delivery including authority to progress statutory approvals and to enter into funding and construction contracts.

Recommendation(s):

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

- 1) give approval to the outline design scheme for the Tesco Link Road, Thanet for development control and land charge disclosures Drg No 4300248/000/14 Rev0;
- ii) give approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme;
- iii) give approval to enter into National Productivity Investment Fund agreement subject to the approval of the Corporate Director of Finance & Procurement, and
- vi) give approval to acquire land and enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme subject to the approval of the Strategic Commissioning Board to the recommended procurement strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Thanet District Councils' Local Plan has a vision for the Westwood area for its development and consolidation into a mixed use hub with an excellent range of homes, schools, leisure, sports, shops and other facilities in a pleasant and convenient environment.
- 1.2 The existing Westwood Roundabout is significantly over operational capacity, which in turn leads to delays and unreliable journey times. On some arms traffic is currently experiencing severe delays of more than 161 seconds per vehicle; as a result the local stakeholders continue to be concerned about their quality of life and business interests.
- 1.3 Transport modelling forecasts indicate that if proactive mitigation is not realised, existing congestion situation will continue to worsen and that gridlock situation will arise by 2018.
- 1.4 The Westwood Relief Strategy combines the creation of a circular route around the core area of Westwood, with improvements to the central roundabout, promoting increased pedestrian, cycle and public transport permeability, subsequently facilitating improved accessibility at peak times to reduce congestion. This strategy also unlocks the ability to redesign Westwood as a more integrated town centre with improved relationships between existing retail land uses.
- 1.5 The proposed scheme will upgrade, realign and reconstruct an existing access road which connects the A256 and A254 major road network. This will enable it to be used as a strategic distributor route, in turn realising a comprehensive relief route for the Westwood roundabout. This scheme will offer enhanced public transport opportunities, with direct bus access to retail frontages and enhanced footway/cycleway facilities, which will encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport.
- 1.6 The Westwood Relief Strategy Scheme has been allocated £5.339m National Productivity Investment Funding for spend in 2017/18 financial year.
- 1.7 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 £5.2m. The allocation from the National Productivity Investment Fund is £5.339m.
- 2.2 The costs of developing the scheme are included within the estimate.

3. Policy Framework

- 3.1 The scheme supports the Strategic Statement 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 Westwood is a focal point for retail shopping and leisure within the district of Thanet. It also attracts customers from adjacent districts in towns, such as Herne Bay and Sandwich. Given the strong level of services and amenities already available in Westwood, further development sites are currently being earmarked within the emerging Thanet Local Plan. The Local Plan seeks to guide planning decisions and investment on development and regeneration to the year 2031.
- 4.2 Within the recently published Local Plan - preferred options document, the area around Westwood has been identified as an area which has the potential to accommodate necessary growth,. This document is now in the process of being reviewed, following public consultation and also to reflect more recently identified housing targets.
- 4.3 Traffic congestion and subsequent journey time reliability issues within Westwood have a disproportionate impact on Thanet's popular network of bus services and as such the attractiveness of the service. The Thanet Loop (a well-established and utilised bus service, operating in two directions every 7/8 minutes and linking the main Thanet settlements) has been affected greatly in terms of disruptions to services and journey time reliability.
- 4.4 The Westwood relief strategy is currently in a partially implemented state, following the successful completion of the 'Pinch Point' funded Poorhole Lane widening scheme and development negotiations. The proposed scheme outlined within this report represents the final and most critical element of the new alternative orbital route, which in turn enables the full benefits of previous investment to be realised. It will complete the opportunity for road users to travel around the Westwood area and not be forced to converge with other major routes into the middle at Westwood Roundabout, providing a much more flexible and resilient highway network for all road users.
- 4.5 The 'link road' follows the route of the existing access road which is currently in private ownership. The land, currently owned by Tesco, will be gifted to the Authority through negotiation, this will continue throughout the design process.
- 4.6 It is recognised there will be a 'minimum-medium' impact on the local area and as such initial meetings have been undertaken with Thanet District Council and Tesco and a steering group formed to continually update and feedback progress and concerns. Engagement will be arranged 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, to follow.
- 4.7 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. 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.

4.8 On the basis of the design and procurement proceeding satisfactorily and road space permits to carry out works affecting the A254 & A256 being granted, a construction start in late 2017 is anticipated.

4.9 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQiA) will be completed and updated throughout the process as required. Kent County Council Legal Services will be consulted and appointed when necessary.

5. Conclusions

This is an important scheme to help reduce congestion in the Westwood area and on both the A254 and A256 strategic routes. The allocation of National Productivity Investment Fund to the scheme is very welcome news in enabling the scheme to proceed. The programme has been developed and some preliminary work has already been done and there is confidence that a construction start date of late 2017 can be achieved.

6. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste on the proposed decision as follows and indicated on the proposed decision sheet attached at Appendix A.

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- ii) give approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme;
- iii) give approval to enter into National Productivity Investment Fund agreement subject to the approval of the Corporate Director of Finance & Procurement, and
- vi) give approval to acquire land and enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme subject to the approval of the Strategic Commissioning Board to the recommended procurement strategy.

7. Background Documents

- Appendix A Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B Tesco Link Road, Thanet – Indicative Layout Option D – Drg No 4300248/000/14 Rev0

8. Contact details

Lead Officer:
Russell Boorman - Major Capital
Programme Project Manager
03000 413538
russell.boorman@kent.gov.uk

Lead Director:
Roger Wilkin - Director of Highways,
Transportation & Waste
03000 413479
roger.wilkin@kent.gov.uk