

From: Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment & Transport

To: Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste

Decision No: 18/00026

Subject: **A249 Bearsted Road Maidstone Major Infrastructure Improvement – Kent Medical Campus.**

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.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste is asked to agree the proposed decision as follows and indicated on the proposed decision sheet attached at Appendix A.

- i) give approval to the outline design scheme for the A249 Bearsted Road Maidstone Major Infrastructure Improvement – Kent Medical Campus (including M20 J7 signalisation) in North East Maidstone for development control and land charge disclosures, drawing number **70040984-GA-0101, 70040984-GA-0102, 70040984-GA-0103, 70040984-GA-0104, 70040984-GA-0105;**
- ii) give approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme, drawing number **70040984-GA-0101, 70040984-GA-0102, 70040984-GA-0103, 70040984-GA-0104, 70040984-GA-0105;**
- iii) give approval to enter into land agreements with third parties as necessary;
- 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, and
- v) give approval to undertake engagement with all relevant stakeholders as identified in the communication plan.

1. Introduction

1.1 The A249 forms a strategic link between the M2 and M20 motorways with Maidstone. The corridor is used by commuters to access Maidstone for employment and in the peak hours, this places considerable pressure on the A249, and the M20 J7, restricting access into the town centre. It is recognised that delivering capacity improvements will ease existing congestion and support growth, and the use of technology to provide services into vehicles will help to smooth traffic flow, reducing crashes and enabling drivers to make better informed decisions.

1.2 The scheme proposes to significantly upgrade two junctions and widen the link between them on the Local Road Network close to M20 Junction 7 in Maidstone and install Smart Technology on the A249 Bearsted Road, a local strategic link into Maidstone. Capacity and traffic flow will be improved so that the increased

traffic volume from the Kent Medical Campus Enterprise Zone can be accommodated. This is a key employment site for the county and will create 3,000 highly skilled jobs, including specialised research and development – an area key to boosting productivity. The scheme has been designed to also cater for housing growth in the town of 1500 homes and will support the redevelopment of the adjacent Newnham Court Shopping Village. The scheme will also include the enhancement and part signalisation to the M20 J7, which is fully funded by developer contributions.

1.3 The recently announced award from the Government's National Productivity Investment Fund is very welcome news and, together with a Maidstone Borough Council contribution and local developer contributions, will now allow the scheme to proceed. Construction is anticipated to commence in 2019/20.

1.4 The trigger points for the developer contributions for the M20 J7 elements of the scheme will not be reached for several years so a bid submission has been made to the Growth and Housing Fund (GHF) through Highways England (HE) for funding forwarding. This will allow the full scheme to be implemented in the same construction period and via one construction contract giving increased value for money, earlier benefit realisation and reduced overall disruption to the travelling public during construction. The bid has successfully passed to Stage 2 and it is anticipated that a decision will be announced in the autumn of 2018.

1.5 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 estimated cost of the A249 Bearsted Road elements of the scheme is **£11.4m**; the allocation from the National Productivity Investment Fund is **£9.4m**, Developer Contribution of **£1.5m** and Maidstone Borough Council Contribution of **£500k**.

2.2 The estimated cost of the M20 J7 element of the scheme is **£4.667m** which will increase the total cost of the scheme to **£16.067m**, a significant investment in the local area. GHF is being sought on a forward funding basis for **£4.667m** to be repaid by three separate S106 agreements, all of which have already been agreed.

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

3. Policy Framework

3.1 The scheme supports policy 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 modelling exercise has recently been undertaken, using traffic data collected in 2018, to update the baseline situation and confirm the proposed scheme continues to demonstrate operational and capacity benefits

to the local and strategic network. The results have demonstrated benefits with a noticeable reduction in overall delays and queues, particularly on the A249 southern approach to M20 J7 and A249 Bearsted Road roundabout.

- 4.2 The majority of the scheme can be delivered within the highway curtilage of the A249. Land to the north west and north east of the Newcutt roundabout will be 'gifted' to allow the enlargement of this junction. An agreement in principal with the land owner has already been reached. Planning consent is not required, no other 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 Substantial investigatory works have been carried out in the early stages of the design process. The details of which are being used to positively inform the outline design and provide a more robust cost estimate. Ecology surveys, geotechnical surveys, drainage surveys, core testing and arboricultural surveys have all been completed. The remaining geotechnical and topographical surveys on the M20 J7 are to be completed using lane closures at night in the near future.
- 4.4 Air quality and noise assessments are also being progressed to ensure the scheme does not have a negative impact on these elements. The base data will then be utilised to inform the post scheme review.
- 4.5 It is recognised this will have a significant impact on the local area, particularly during construction, and as such initial meetings have been undertaken with Maidstone Borough Council and the HE and a steering group formed which continually updates and feeds back progress and concerns. Specific engagements sessions will be arranged in a locally convenient location to outline the schemes advantages and address concerns of the local community. The use of social media will play an important role in the dissemination of information. A dedicated email address and 'Twitter' account will be operational for this purpose. Newsletters will be delivered prior to, and during construction and will offer details of specific operations, progress and key dates.
- 4.6 More detailed liaison and coordination with HE has been carried out to minimise the risk of roadspace conflicts. Initial meetings in relation to their projects for the M20 Smart Motorway, M2 J5 and Operation Brock have indicated KCC's current programme can be achieved. This communication will continue and be closely monitored to ensure this key infrastructure improvement is delivered on time.
- 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, under European procurement rules. Delivery will also be dependent on the cost and affordability. Cost estimates will continue to be refined throughout the detailed design by an independent cost consultant.
- 4.8 On the basis that the design and procurement proceed satisfactorily and road space permits to carry out the works affecting the A249/M20 J7 being granted by Kent County Council, a start of construction in the summer of 2019 is anticipated.

5. Conclusion

This is a significant investment in Maidstone and is an important scheme to help reduce congestion on the A249 strategic route, whilst supporting housing development, job creation and growth in the local area. The inclusion of smart technology and signalisation of M20 J7 will greatly improve congestion on the whole A249 corridor. Considerable investigatory and preliminary work has been carried out and there is confidence that a construction date of summer 2019 can be achieved.

6. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste is asked to agree the proposed decision as follows and indicated on the proposed decision sheet attached at Appendix A.

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7. Background Documents

- General Arrangement Drawing Numbers **70040984-GA-0101, 70040984-GA-0102, 70040984-GA-0103, 70040984-GA-0104, 70040984-GA-0105**
- WSP EqIA Screening Kent Medical Campus

8. Contact details

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