

From: Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways,
Transport and Waste

Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment
and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 28th
November 2018

Subject: Key Street and Grovehurst Road Junction Improvements,
A249

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All Swale Districts

Summary: This report provides an update on the Swale Transport Infrastructure proposals identified in a paper to this Committee on the Housing Infrastructure Fund in May 2018

Further works have been commissioned to develop the full business case which is due for submission on 1st March 2019 and this report is an update on progress on both the bid process and supporting design work.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the progress made to date on the preparation of the full business case for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid process.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Expression of Interest submitted in September 2017 to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) sought £40 million for improvements to two key junctions on the A249 in Swale, namely Key Street and Grovehurst Road, which would enable the delivery of over 6,000 homes in the period 2022 – 2031.
- 1.2 On 21st March 2018, the County Council received confirmation from MHCLG that it was one of 44 areas shortlisted with the next stage being the submission of a full business case by 1st March 2019.

1.3 As a result of this announcement, the Major Capital Programme Team commissioned the following pieces of work to build on the feasibility study undertaken by Amey in 2015:

- Review of the feasibility design
- Full topographical survey
- New pedestrian, cyclist and traffic counts
- Assessment of crash data over the previous 10-year period

1.4 A commission was also raised earlier in the year with Transport Consultants, Steer, to develop and take forward the Business Case to submission. Systra has been engaged to investigate design options for Grovehurst Road and to take forward the outline design for both this junction and Key Street. The current focus is to support and provide information to Steer for inclusion in the Business Case.

1.5 A Project Working Group has been set up that meets regularly to discuss the progression of the bid and includes representatives from:

- KCC Major Projects and Development Planning
- Swale Borough Council – Planning
- Highways England
- A249 Route Management (Design, Build, Finance and Operate)
- Consultants from Steer, Sweco and Systra

1.6 In addition to the above working group, Homes England have provided a collaborative support network to assist with the development of the Business Case and the information required to ensure that it has the best possible outcome. As part of this collaborative network, officers from MHCLG, their consultants, DfT, Homes England and Highways England partake in monthly conference calls to discuss progress and have the role of “critical friend” providing us with comment/guidance on the development of the Business Case.

1.7 Comments from MHCLG have been positive to date and indications are that a strong case is being developed.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 It is intended that the HIF bid will cover all expenditure relating to the design, planning, procurement and construction of the two junctions and a request has been issued to Homes England for advance financial support to cover the Business Case development and outline design work. Section 106 monies are also to come forward from associated developments in the area and it is proposed that these contributions are recycled within the local area; a proposal that is supported by Homes England, MHCLG and Swale BC.

2.2 Revised costings have been provided for both junctions by an independent cost consultant and these are being updated. This may mean that the estimated costs exceed the original £40m stated in the Expression of Interest. Homes England has advised that if this were to transpire, it should

not be a barrier to the bid being successful provided all relevant sections of the Business Case are suitably evidenced and pass scrutiny.

- 2.3 The A249 from the M2 to Sheerness is managed under a Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) Contract with Highways England. As such, any amendments/improvements or additions that have an effect on the route will be subject to agreement by Highways England and the DBFO Contract and may have financial implications. There is 18 years remaining on the DBFO Contract and under the terms of the contract there may be either compensatory or commuted sum payments required to mitigate the removal of or addition to HE assets/network. Further to this, Highways England will be seeking commuted sums to cover any additional maintenance requirements post the DBFO contract.
- 2.4 Discussions are at an early stage whilst the design development is taking place and KCC has requested that the DBFO provide details of the information they will require to enable costings to be developed.
- 2.5 These costs could be prohibitive to the progression of the scheme and the potential timeframe to receive a decision may also have an adverse effect on the scheme programme. Every effort will be made, working closely with Highway England colleagues, to mitigate the impact and matters of concern will be escalated appropriately.

3. Scheme Options

3.1 Key Street

- 3.1.1 Two options were identified as being total or partial signalisation of the roundabout in conjunction with introduction of a new southbound slip road which would intersect with a roundabout on Chestnut Street, serving the proposed development of the adjacent land.
- 3.1.2 Testing of the options showed that the full signalisation of the roundabout would not achieve acceptable traffic flows or capacity. Partial signalisation (the north bound off slip) achieves much improved flows both now and in the future and as such, has been identified as the preferred option for this location.

3.2 Grovehurst Road

- 3.2.1 3 options have been considered:
- Construction of a new gyratory including a new overbridge, extensions to the A249 slip roads and complete removal of the existing “dumbbell” roundabout arrangement.
 - Enlargement of the existing roundabouts and adjustments to the associated local road network/A249 slip roads
 - Removal of the “dumbbell” roundabouts and replacement with a fully signalised junction along with associated amendments to the local road network and A249 slip roads

- 3.2.2 Testing and analysis has shown that the signalised junction simply does not work and does not provide any increased capacity or improvements to flows. The enlargement of the existing roundabouts as per bullet point 2 above, whilst potentially much cheaper, would not operate to the same level, providing reduced capacity and traffic flow.
- 3.2.3 The new gyratory has therefore been selected to take forward within the Business Case. Modelling has shown that this demonstrates the best solution to support the proposed increase in development and also, addresses the known congestion issues.
- 3.2.4 This approach was agreed at the latest Project Workshop meeting and there is further potential to signalise the gyratory beyond 2037 should the need arise. This was supported by Highways England. In general terms, both of the junction improvements not only assist to support and release development, they resolve long standing congestion issues on the A249 slip roads that routinely sees traffic queuing on to the main carriageway at peak hours.
- 3.2.5 In addition the DBFO representatives also recommended that a design compliant with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) would be better supported than one which departs from known standards thereby limiting time delays and design risk. The outline design phase will routinely incorporate relevant KCC design standards those within the DMRB.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 There is the potential for Legal Agreements to be entered in to in relation to the DBFO and this will be explored further during the design process.
- 4.2 The design of both junctions aims to improve accessibility for all users and a walking, cycling and horse-riding assessment will be undertaken following submission of the Business Case to MHCLG.

5. Risk assessment

- 5.1 Prior to the submission of the HIF bid on 1st March 2019, work will commence on an EqlA which will be informed by the outline design work which is due for completion in February 2019.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The two schemes identified will enable the medium to long term delivery of new homes on allocated sites within the Swale Borough Local Plan and unlocks development being held back by existing congestion and issues on the main A249.

7. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the progress made to date on the preparation of the full business case for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid process.

8. Background Documents

8.1 Appendix A - Systra Workshop presentation – September 2018

8.2 Appendix B - Grovehurst Road – feasibility

8.3 Appendix C - Key Street – feasibility

9. Contact details

Report Author

- Andy Moreton – Senior Project Manager
- 03000 413423
- Andy.Moreton@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:

- Simon Jones, Highways, Transportation and Waste
- 03000 411683
- Simon.Jones@Kent.gov.uk