

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

**To:** Michael Payne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

**Decision No:** 20/00064

**Subject:** Local Growth Fund– Kent Strategic Congestion Management Programme – A2/A251 Junction Improvement Scheme

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Key decision sign off by Cabinet Member

**Electoral Division:** Faversham

**Summary:** In the original Growth Deal announcement in July 2014; KCC secured £4.8m for the delivery of the Kent Strategic Congestion Management Programme (KSCMP) in order to deliver schemes throughout the County to reduce the impact of increasing vehicular traffic.

The A2/A251 junction improvement scheme is proposed to be brought forwards as part of the KSCMP and a business case for the remaining £500k of the £4.8m programme is due to be considered by SELEP Accountability Board on 3rd July 2020.

The A2/A251 priority junction provides the primary access for Faversham and eastern Swale to the strategic road network. The junction caters for significant volumes of traffic and is currently operating over capacity in peak periods with serious levels of congestion and delay. This is a constraint to key strategic housing allocations in the Faversham area and to the economic wellbeing of the town.

The proposed scheme replaces the existing priority junction arrangement with a new signalised junction, which will include a controlled pedestrian crossing across the A2 eastern arm.

A key decision is required to allow KCC to progress with the next stages of scheme delivery; including negotiations with Kent Fire and Rescue Service and The Abbey School regarding small areas of land required to deliver the scheme, pursuing the Utility works and entering into a construction contract. This is required prior to the LGF business case sign off to ensure that the £500k LGF contribution can be spent within the Growth Deal period (prior to March 2021).

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to agree, to approve the progression, via KCC's Local Growth Fund arrangements, for the A2/A251 Junction Improvement Scheme; allowing it to progress to the next stages of development and delivery. Specifically this comprises approval for:

- i) KCC to act as the accountable body for the project;

- ii) KCC to enter into a Local Growth Fund (LGF) funding agreement;
- iii) KCC to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme;
- iv) KCC to progress with the necessary land acquisitions required to deliver the scheme;
- v) KCC to carry out public engagement on the scheme;
- vi) KCC to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme; and
- vii) The Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport, under the Officer Scheme of Delegations and in consultation with the Corporate Director for Finance and Procurement, to enter into relevant legal agreements and take other actions necessary to implement this decision.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In the Growth Deal announcements in July 2014 (Round One), January 2015 (Round Two) and February 2017 (Round Three), the Government allocated £570 million from the Local Growth Fund to capital projects across the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area.
- 1.2 In total, through the three rounds, £128m Local Growth Fund was allocated towards the delivery of 25 Highways and Transportation projects and 6 non-transport projects in Kent.
- 1.3 Through the Round One Growth Deal announcement; KCC secured £4.8m for the delivery of the Kent Strategic Congestion Management Programme (KSCMP) in order to deliver schemes throughout the County to reduce the impact of increasing vehicular traffic.
- 1.4 The A2/A251 junction improvement scheme is proposed to be brought forwards as part of the KSCMP and a business case for the remaining £500k of the £4.8m programme is due to be considered by SELEP Accountability Board on 3rd July 2020.
- 1.5 Through the Service Level Agreement with Essex County Council as the Accountable Body for SELEP, Kent County Council is responsible for the programme management of all Local Growth Fund projects in Kent.
- 1.6 This report provides an overview of the project and outlines the required decisions to allow the A2/A251 junction improvement scheme to progress.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 The total cost of delivering the scheme is £1.68m based on the design work completed to date.
- 2.2 The funding sources identified to deliver the scheme are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Funding Sources

| Funding Source             | Amount (£)        | Conditions  |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---|
| S106                       | £920,500          |   |
| Kent Lane Rental           | £300,000          | No time constraint  |
| LGF                        | £500,000          | To be spent by March 2021   |
| <b>Total Funding</b>       | <b>£1,720,500</b> |   |
| <b>Scheme Cost</b>         | <b>£1,678,363</b> |   |
| Potential KCC contribution |                   |   |
| LTP                        | £158,000          | Only if necessary to cover potential shortfall in S106 funding available within timeframe |

2.3 S106 developer funding of £920k has been identified for delivery of the scheme, of which £300k is already banked and a further £420k is expected to be banked within the project delivery timescales. There is some uncertainty about the remaining £200k S106 funding from one site which may not be available in the necessary timeframe. Consequently, a Local Transport Plan funding request for £158,000 will be submitted, if necessary, to cover the potential shortfall until such time as the S106 is available.

2.4 There will be no revenue cost to KCC, only £158,000 capital funding from the LTP to cover the timing of the S106 funding. KCC Officer time required for the delivery of the junction improvement scheme will be capitalised and met from the project funding sources identified.

### 3. Policy Framework

3.1 The scheme has a strong fit with the objectives of 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)'

3.2 The scheme particularly addresses Strategic Outcome 2 "Kent communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life". The scheme will increase the capacity at the already constrained A2/A251 junction in Faversham; reducing journey times to assist Kent's residents to reach employment, education and leisure activities.

3.3 The A2/A251 junction improvement is expected to benefit road users, pedestrians and the local economy. The expected benefits include:

- A reduction in congestion and delay for local trips to and from Faversham and for longer distance road users;
- Making Faversham a more attractive and accessible option for commercial development;
- Alleviation of any constraint on current housing development.
- Improved journey reliability;
- A controlled junction which will improve safety and journey quality;
- A safe pedestrian crossing improving pedestrian access to the town.

### The Report

4.1 The A2/A251 priority junction provides the primary access for Faversham and eastern Swale to the strategic road network. The junction caters for significant

volumes of traffic and is currently operating over capacity in peak periods with serious levels of congestion and delay. This is a constraint to key strategic housing allocations in the Faversham area and to the economic wellbeing of the town.

- 4.2 The proposed scheme replaces the existing priority junction arrangement with a new signalised junction, which will include a controlled pedestrian crossing across the A2 eastern arm.
- 4.3 The County Council has prepared a business case which demonstrates that the scheme will provide a high value for money solution to improve capacity at the junction. The business case outlines the options which were considered when developing the project; and the reasons for selecting the preferred solution.
- 4.3 The business case is due to be considered at SELEP Accountability Board on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020; and will, if approved, unlock the £500k Local Growth Fund contribution towards the scheme.
- 4.4 An EQIA has been completed for the scheme and the assessment has shown that there are no protected characteristics adversely affected by the scheme. The EQIA will continue to be reviewed as the scheme progresses.
- 4.7 There are no implications for the council's property portfolio arising from the project. Small areas of land are required from the Abbey School and Kent Fire and Rescue Service to deliver the scheme; however these are already in KCC's ownership and leased to the school and fire service.
- 4.8 Through the decisions outlined above, any further decisions required to allow the scheme to proceed through to delivery will be taken by the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The A2/A251 junction improvement scheme is largely externally funded with a small KCC capital contribution of up to £158,000 which will only be utilised if there are delays with the Developer Contributions coming forwards.
- 5.2 The scheme will alleviate capacity issues at this constrained junction; reducing congestion and journey times for the travelling public.
- 5.3 A key decision is required to allow KCC to progress with the next stages of scheme delivery; including negotiations with Kent Fire and Rescue Service and The Abbey School regarding small areas of land required to deliver the scheme, pursuing the Utility works and entering into a construction contract. This is required prior to the LGF business case sign off to ensure that the £500k LGF contribution can be spent within the Growth Deal period (prior to March 2021).

## **6. Recommendation(s)**

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The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to agree, to approve the progression, via KCC's Local Growth Fund arrangements, for the A2/A251 Junction Improvement Scheme; allowing it to progress to the next stages of development and delivery. Specifically this comprises approval for:

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- v) KCC to carry out public engagement on the scheme;
- vi) KCC to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme; and
- vii) The Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport, under the Officer Scheme of Delegations and in consultation with the Corporate Director for Finance and Procurement, to enter into relevant legal agreements and take other actions necessary to implement this decision.

## **7. Background Documents**

7.1 The business case for the A2/A251 Junction Improvement Scheme is available to view here:

<https://www.southeastlepp.com/app/uploads/2019/09/KSCMP-Business-Case-20-21.pdf>

7.2 The EQIA for the A2/A251 Junction Improvement Scheme is available to view here:

<https://kentcountycouncil.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/get/EqIA/ layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B721B23D3-37D6-41A0-BDCE-CD10C3CA7FC4%7D&file=2006%20-%20A2-A251%20Faversham%20junction%20improvements.docx&action=default&mobileRedirect=true>

7.3 Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

## **8. Contact details**

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