

From: Neil Baker, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport and Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee - 15 November 2023

Subject: Rennie Drive Fastrack Junction and Bus Lane

Key decision TBA

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: ETCC 17 March 2023

Future Pathway of report: For Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Dartford North East – Kelly Grehan.
The adjacent division is Dartford East – Penny Cole.

Summary: Under decision 23/00027 the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport agreed to accept the DfT BSIP offer of £18,985,735, for delivery of agreed initiatives, in the year 23/24. To ensure that the Rennie Drive scheme as one of the BSIP initiatives can progress to time, a further decision is required for approval to plan and spend the DFT BSIP funding.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport on the proposed decision to:

- i. Approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme, including any transfer of land and rights;
- ii. Approval to carry out any additional consultation required for the scheme;
- iii. Approval to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery and future maintenance of the scheme subject to a review of the procurement strategy by the Capital Officers Group / Strategic Commissioning;
- iv. Approval for any further decisions required to allow the scheme to proceed through to delivery to be taken by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member.

As contained in the Proposed Record of Decision, attached as Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Under decision 23/00027 the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport agreed to accept the DfT BSIP offer of £18,985,735, for delivery of agreed initiatives, in the year 23/24.
- 1.2. The Rennie Drive Fastrack Junction and Bus Lane scheme is one of the BSIP initiatives referenced as IPIG Bus Priority Measure Scheme A in Appendix A to decision 23/00027.
- 1.3. A condition with all BSIP funding is that it needs to be spent, and the full BSIP programme delivered by 31 March 2024, unless agreed otherwise with the DfT through their Project Adjustment Request (PAR) process.

2. Body of the report

- 2.1 The Rennie Drive Fastrack Junction and Bus Lane scheme has been prepared to enable Fastrack vehicles to travel directly from the Fastrack only bridge over the A282 along the northern part of Rennie Drive, and vice versa. This will improve the connectivity to the stops to serve the major businesses at the former Littlebrook Power Station site. Currently Fastrack vehicles are forced to do an extended routing between the Fastrack bridge and the site, double back on themselves at the Sainsbury's roundabout, adding journey time.
- 2.2 One major logistics company located at the Littlebrook site, is currently responsible for 1200 to 1500 Fastrack passenger journeys a day, with this peaking at 1800 trips when the business has its highest employment levels.
- 2.3 The bus lane element will also improve Fastrack operation as currently delays south bound on Rennie Drive, caused by peak hour congestion at the M25 Junction 1A are affecting journey times and service reliability. The implementation of an additional bus lane will reduce the risk of these services getting caught up in congestion around the Dartford Crossing.
- 2.4 Advance Statutory Undertakers works need to be undertaken during Autumn 2023 to facilitate a construction start in early January 2024. This will enable works to avoid the busy Christmas period (mid-November to end of December 2023) for the major logistics company and other logistic businesses at the former Littlebrook Power Station site, Dartford.
- 2.5 Fastrack is Kent County Council's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) flagship operation at Thameside. A new Fastrack Thameside electric operator service is due to start operating with a new electric bus fleet from March 2025 with the new Fastrack electric operator Go-Ahead Group.
- 2.6 Options were investigated for a roundabout at the Rennie Drive Fastrack Junction and alternatives for the bus lane but these were discarded as they could not be delivered without extensive third-party land and would be unachievable within the delivery deadlines which are in place as a condition of the BSIP funding.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The estimated project cost for the Rennie Drive Scheme is circa £2,500,000 including a risk allowance of £425,000. This will be fully funded from the capital element of the BSIP funding of £18,985,735, which is split as £12,454,840 capital and £6,530,895 revenue.
- 3.2 The funding has been released by DfT to KCC and has been allocated to the budget line P-7HE-61382-C20-DAA-3L18-00.
- 3.3 A condition with all BSIP funding is that it needs to be spent, and the full BSIP programme delivered by 31 March 2024, unless agreed otherwise with the DfT through their Project Adjustment Request (PAR) process. KCC is monitoring spend and delivery timescales to determine if, and when this process is required.
- 3.4 The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for BSIP funding does raise the potential that KCC would be responsible for overspend should this occur and may incur abortive costs should schemes not progress fully. The ongoing relationship with the DfT and the PAR process is in place to mitigate this risk.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 A small area of land to provide the widening for a footway/cycleway at Rennie Drive has been agreed with the land title holders Dartford Borough Council and The Bridge Management Company. This is being included with the S278 land adoption for Fastrack currently being managed by the Agreements Team using legal support from Governance, Law & Democracy for the Property work.

5. Equalities implications

- 5.1 An EqIA was published on 23 December 2022 and is attach as Appendix B
- 5.2 It has been identified that some groups will be negatively affected during construction, but these can be mitigated with informative on-site signage, proactive measures by the contractor and good stakeholder communications. Overall, the scheme has a positive impact.

6. Other corporate implications

- 6.1 There are no overlapping functions envisaged which will have an impact in other areas of the Council's work.

7. Governance

- 7.1 The main delegation via the Officer Scheme of Delegation will be the Corporate Director of Growth Environment and Transportation.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 This scheme supports economic growth by improving journey time and reliability of Fastrack services.
- 8.2 It maintains a reliable Fastrack network in conjunction with the increase in passenger numbers over the coming years.
- 8.3 It provides Fastrack services with a specific bus lane to reduce the chance that services are delayed by congestion arising from the Dartford Crossing.
- 8.4 The scheme is part of the DfT BSIP funding commitment where delivery is required within the financial year 2023/2024.

9. Recommendations

9.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport on the proposed decision to:

- i. Approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme, including any transfer of land and rights;
- ii. Approval to carry out any additional consultation required for the scheme;
- iii. Approval to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery and future maintenance of the scheme subject to a review of the procurement strategy by the Capital Officers Group / Strategic Commissioning;
- iv. Approval for any further decisions required to allow the scheme to proceed through to delivery to be taken by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member.

As contained in the Proposed Record of Decision, attached as Appendix A.

10. Background Documents and appendices

- 10.1 Decision no. [23/00027](#)
- 10.2 Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
- 10.3 EqlA
- 10.4 Appendix B: Site Design Drawings
 - 19653-WIE-GEN-XX-DR-C-900001 Rev C01
 - General Arrangement drawing nos. 19653-WIE-HGN-ZZ-DR-C-950101 Rev C01 & 950102 Rev C01

11. Contact details

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