

From: Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 11 March 2016

Subject: **Decision No: 16/00019 - Maidstone Integrated Transport Package – Phase 1. A274 & A20 junctions with Willington Street, construction of dedicated directional lanes**

Key decision Major Scheme with costs over £1m

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: Maidstone South East;
Maidstone Rural North;
Maidstone South;

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

Recommendations:

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

- i) give approval to the preliminary design scheme for Willington Street Maidstone A274 Sutton Road junction & Willington Street Maidstone A20 Ashford Road junction for development control and land charge disclosures;
- ii) give approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the scheme ;
- ii) give approval to enter into Local Growth Fund funding agreement subject to the approval of the Corporate Director of Finance & Procurement, and
- iii) 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.

1. Introduction

The Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (ITP) aims to reduce congestion and ease traffic movements through the town. The scheme is programmed for delivery before the end of 2017.

1.1 Willington Street connects the A20 and A274 routes which are the two key corridors into Maidstone from the east and south east. The scope of this first phase of the strategy is to improve the operation of the junction at the northern end of Willington Street with the A20 Ashford Road and the junction at the southern end of Willington Street with the A274 Sutton Road. At present these signalised junctions at each end of Willington Street are heavily congested under peak traffic conditions.

1.2 The junctions at each end of Willington Street are considered to represent significant 'pinch points' along the A20 and A274 corridors, inhibiting traffic movement to the east and south of the town. Both junctions currently operate as signalised T junctions, which cater for heavy turning movements to and from Willington Street.

1.3 The scope of the scheme is to improve the existing signalised junctions of Willington Street with the A20 and with the A274 in order to maximise efficiency of the network and reduce queueing and delays. The A274 / Willington Street junction also encompasses the adjacent signalised junction of Wallis Avenue with the A274.

1.4 The Willington Street Junction Improvements Scheme will include:

- Widening of carriageway to allow for an additional lane westbound on the A274 on the approach to the Willington Street junction,
- Widening of the westbound carriageway between the Willington Street and Wallis Avenue junctions to allow for 2 lanes of traffic,
- Signal optimisation of the Willington Street and Wallis Avenue junctions to take account of the new arrangement,
- Widening of carriageway to allow for a left turn lane on the westbound approach of the A20 to Willington Street,
- Signal optimisation to take account of the revised junction arrangement.

1.5 The Willington Street Junction Improvements Scheme forms the first part of the Maidstone Integrated Transport Package, which has been provisionally allocated £8.9m Local Growth Fund via the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, for spend between 2016/17 and 2019/20.

1.6 On 12 February 2016, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Independent Technical Evaluator recommended the approval of £1.3m Local Growth Fund to the project in 2016/17. Subject to Government confirmation and approval, this funding will be released to Kent County Council. The Local Growth Fund allocation, together with Local Developer contributions, will now allow the scheme to proceed.

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 £1.8m. The allocation from the Local Growth Fund is £1.3m. The remaining £500k is available from Section 106 Local Developer contributions.

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 The A20 Ashford Road is the main route to Maidstone town centre from the east and from the M20 junction 8. This single carriageway, 30mph road has an average annual 2 way daily flow of between 13,800 and 21,800 vehicles per hour, to the east and west of the Willington Street junction respectively. The route carries two way peak flows of up to 1,850 vehicles per hour.

4.2 The A274 Sutton Road corridor is the main route to Maidstone for the communities to the south east of the town. This route also serves the main commercial and industrial area of Maidstone at Parkwood. The A274 is a single carriageway 30mph road which has a two way average daily flow of 19,000 and peak flows of 1,680 vehicles per hour.

4.3 Willington Street provides an important link between the A20 and A274 route corridors to the east of the town centre. A significant number of vehicles travel via Willington Street, the A20 and New Cut to access the M20 at junction 7 and routes to north Kent. The road is heavily used by traffic travelling between the route corridors, attempting to avoid congestion in the town centre. Consequently there is a significant level of turning traffic at each end of Willington Street to and from the A20 and A274.

4.2 The scheme is totally within the highway curtilage of the A274 & A20. Planning consent is not required, no 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 The proposal is well established within the context of major development consents but is probably not well known to the local community. The scheme has been raised at the local Joint Transportation Committee (JTB) with a favourable response. It is recognised there will be a 'minimum-medium' impact on the local area and as such initial meetings have been undertaken with Maidstone Borough Council 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, as would be done for any highway scheme, when appropriate.

- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 Scheme information has now been submitted to Government, to confirm the £1.3m Local Growth Fund allocation to the Willington Street Junction Improvements scheme, as recommended by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Accountability Board.
- 4.6 On the basis of the Local Growth funding being confirmed, design and procurement proceeding satisfactorily and road space permits to carry out works affecting the A274 & A20 being granted by Kent County Council, a start of construction in late 2016 is anticipated.
- 4.7 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 if necessary. It is not anticipated at this stage Legal representation will be required.

5. Conclusions

This is an important scheme to help reduce congestion on the Sutton Road corridor, of the A274 strategic route. The allocation of Local Growth 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 2016 can be achieved.

6. Recommendations:

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7. Background Documents

7.1 Location Map

8. Contact details

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