

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

**To:** Matthew Balfour - Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste

**Decision No:** 17/00061

**Subject:** A28/A291 Sturry Link Road, Canterbury

**Key decision:** Major Scheme with cost over £1m and affects more than two Electoral Divisions

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 16 September 2015, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee - 15 June 2017

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** Herne & Sturry, Canterbury City North East and Canterbury West

**Summary:** This paper updates Members on the progress of the A28/A291 Sturry Link Road Scheme and seeks comments on the outline design of the scheme.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Director for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste to:

- i) give approval to the revised outline design scheme for the Sturry Link Road Drawing No. 430392/000/49 Rev 0
- ii) delegate to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport, following consultation with the Cabinet Member, any further or other decisions as may be appropriate to deliver the Sturry Link Road scheme.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 A report to this Committee in September 2015 gave an initial overview and the concept design of the Sturry Link Road that led to a number of approvals to allow the scheme to progress. Some Members were concerned about the breadth of approvals and the decision was taken to allow for 'further specific authorities as necessary and with reversion to this Committee on matters of significance' which would be the case in any event with a major scheme that takes several years from concept to completion. It is now an appropriate time to provide an update on progress and to seek approval to the outline design, shown on Drawing No. 430392/000/49 Rev 0.

- 1.2 The A28 Sturry/Island Road is a principal road corridor between Canterbury and Thanet that also serves residents and businesses to the north east of Canterbury and Sturry. At Sturry, the A291 Sturry Hill provides a link to Herne Bay.
- 1.3 The section of A28 through Sturry is particularly difficult because of the level crossing of the Canterbury - Thanet railway line and the inevitable interruption to traffic and queuing through the centre of the community.
- 1.4 Canterbury City Council's District Local Plan - Publication Draft 2014 has identified land at Sturry and Broad Oak which lies north of the railway and west of the A28/A291, as a suitable allocation for some 1000 homes with accompanying infrastructure improvements including a Sturry Link Road to relieve the level crossing and access the new housing together with station access improvements. Other land use allocations at Hersden and towards Herne Bay may also in part be related to the Sturry Link Road.
- 1.5 A bid to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) for funding was approved in principle which together with contributions from the development of Broad Oak, Sturry and other development sites gives the opportunity to deliver the Sturry Link Road.

## **2. Scheme Overview**

- 2.1 The Link Road would run to the north and west of the A28 and A291. It would commence at a new junction on the A28 and head northwards across two arms of the Great Stour and over the railway line. Route alignment is highly constrained and is the most challenging in engineering terms. With poor ground conditions, the flood plain and the close proximity of the Great Stour to the railway a combined viaduct solution approximately 300m long is proposed rather than individual bridges.
- 2.2 From the railway the route would turn eastwards to connect back to the A291 at points (C) and (D). The alignment is less constrained and will be influenced by areas of ancient woodland and the layout of the proposed housing development. A junction in the area of (E) would allow separate connections to be made to the A291. The existing junction of A28 Island Road and A291 (F) will also be amended to reflect the changed direction and priorities of traffic flow.
- 2.3 The housing development will also be required to provide a road connection to Broad Oak Road/Shalloak Road north of the railway between points (B) to (G) with possible upgrading of the level crossing signals. A level crossing risk assessment is being undertaken to determine any change in risk of operation of the crossing due to these proposals.
- 2.4 The Link Road would allow all through traffic to avoid the Sturry level crossing although it would need to be retained for local movements and for buses. It would open up further opportunities for improvements to the station including a car park (F)

## **3. Scheme Delivery**

- 3.1 The land at Broad Oak has the capacity to provide 1150 homes and is an identified site together with Sturry sites in Canterbury City Council's draft Local Plan which has recently been Examined in Public before an independent planning inspector. Discussions have been held with the City Council and the Broad Oak and Sturry developers on a possible delivery model.
- 3.2 The current proposal is that KCC develops outline design options, holds public consultation and identifies a preferred route. This would then be progressed in more detail, an application for planning permission made and then statutory orders promoted including a Compulsory Purchase Order if land cannot be secured by voluntary acquisition.
- 3.3 KCC would then deliver the section of the Link Road from the A28 over the Great Stour and railway. The developers of the Sturry site would deliver the remainder of the Link Road as part of their development. The works would be programmed to ensure that the whole of the Sturry Link Road would be opened on completion of the KCC element of the works.

#### **4. Current Position**

- 4.1 KCC Major Projects team has completed the feasibility work for the section of the Link Road from the A28 over both arms of the Great Stour and railway to connect to a proposed roundabout within the development site. A viaduct is proposed;
  - to minimise the impact on the flood plain and to avoid the need for additional land acquisition to provide flood storage compensation.
  - to provide surety of costs and time and eliminate the risk associated with constructing embankments on poor ground.A computer generated impression of the viaduct is given in Appendix B attached.
- 4.2 Early developer contributions of £1.45m have been secured in s106 agreements to fund the design and planning of the works.
- 4.3 Canterbury City Council in accordance with planning policies is keen to encourage increased movement by buses. The section of Link Road between the A28 and the development is proposed as being three lanes with one lane dedicated for use by buses. Future bus provision and routing still needs to be confirmed so it is unclear at this stage the number of services that will divert to the Sturry Link Road and the benefit of this provision.
- 4.4 Three developers, Environ Design (Sturry) Ltd, Barrett Homes and David Wilson Homes, have completed master planning for the sites to deliver a total of 1150 homes. The proposed route of the Sturry Link Road has been included in the master plan. They consulted on the master planning with the local community in April 2017. Subject to the outcome it is their intention for two planning applications to be submitted in the coming months; Environ Design (Sturry) Ltd for 700 homes and Barrett Homes and David Wilson Homes together for 450 homes.

- 4.4 Along the A28 frontage, there is a natural gap in existing development between a car showroom and a water treatment plant to the west and a farm house to the east. The optimum route is one that also generally follows land boundaries and is shown on Appendix A attached. A route further to the west would affect land allocated in the Local Plan for employment uses and any potential expansion of the treatment plant. A route further to the east would encroach more onto the flood plain and in particular bring the route closer to the farm house. While a route more to the west is more beneficial for the owners of the farm house the scheme will be on a raised viaduct where it crosses both the railway and the river arms and unfortunately will always be intrusive.
- 4.5 Formal public consultation is proposed for the end of June but some initial discussion has already been held with the land owners.

## **5.0 Next Steps**

- 5.1 Following the public consultation and an assessment of all the responses and practical considerations and scheme objectives, the Cabinet Member will be invited to approve the preferred scheme to take forward.
- 5.2 A planning application will then be submitted to the County Council as a Regulation 3 application for the whole scheme that will include the indicative route that will be indicated within the developer's planning applications.
- 5.3 Land acquisition will continue by voluntary agreement if possible but a compulsory purchase order will be published if necessary to give land and programme certainty.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The overall estimated scheme cost is £29.6m. The 'in principle' allocation from the Single Local Growth Fund of £5.9m was formally confirmed by the SE LEP Accountability Board in June 2016. This funding together with an earlier advance developer contribution of £1.45m is being drawn down to support scheme development costs and there is a requirement to utilise all the LGF allocation before the end of 2020/21. A total of £23.7m is to be provided via developer contributions.
- 6.2 A funding mechanism is proposed for the developer contribution element of the scheme cost that will be agreed with Finance and subject to the implementation of S278 agreements. The agreement will ensure that all Kent County Council's costs are met and should a forward funding mechanism be used, including any borrowing costs, the provision of a robust allowance for risk and inflation and the provision of a bond by the developers. Discussions have commenced but substantive progress can only be expected when the developers have secured planning consents.

## **7. Policy Framework**

7.1 The Link Road supports the 2015-2020 Strategic Statement 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes' and the strategic statement of ' Kent Communities feel the benefits of economic growth'. The scheme will reduce congestion, improve safety and help mitigate associated air quality concerns. By providing capacity it will unlock development potential for many new homes and jobs in north east Canterbury. The benefits will broaden out to Herne Bay and Thanet.

## **8. Legal and Equalities Implications**

8.1 There are no immediate legal implications. An initial Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared and approved and this will be reviewed as the scheme development and design is progressed.

## **9. Conclusions**

9.1 The A28 through Sturry and the issues with the level crossing have long been a concern. The potential of development at Broad Oak and Sturry and at other sites and the confirmed allocation of LGF funding gives the opportunity to deliver the Link Road. This will achieve both direct benefits and the opportunity to facilitate wider benefits. 2019/20 is the earliest date envisaged for construction but that will be significantly influenced by satisfactory progress through planning and statutory order stages.

9.2 The scheme has made significant progress. The developers have prepared their masterplan as a precursor to the submission of planning applications. KCC and its consultants have completed surveys and developed an outline design in co-operation with the developers and in discussion with Network Rail and the Environment Agency.

9.3 With a project of this nature and time frame further specific authorities may be necessary and the Cabinet Member will be invited to take those decisions with reversion to this Committee as appropriate on matters of more significance and with the Corporate Director invited to take other decisions where appropriate and where authorised under the Officer Scheme of Delegations.

## **10. Recommendations**

The Cabinet Member is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Director for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste to:

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- ii) delegate to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport, following consultation with the Cabinet Member, any further or other decisions as may be appropriate to deliver the Sturry Link Road scheme.

## **11. Background Documents**

- Proposed Record of Decision

- Record of Decision 15/00070 dated 25 September 2015 - <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD5168&ID=5168&RPID=15203963>
- Appendix 1 Drawing No. 430392/000/49 Rev 0
- Appendix 2 Drawing No. 43003932/00/50 Rev 0 Viaduct Image
- Equalities Impact Assessment dated Version 3 dated 14 August 2015 - <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD5167&ID=5167&RPID=15203968>

## **10. Contact details**

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