

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

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

Decision No: 17/00051

Subject: **Maidstone Integrated Transport Package – Phase 1. A274 Sutton Road at its junction with Willington Street, construction of dedicated directional lanes**

**Summary:** This paper updates the Cabinet Member on the progress on the design work for the Willington Street Junction Improvement Scheme. A preliminary scheme was presented and discussed at the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on 16 March 2016. Further work on this scheme shows that it will not deliver the intended benefits and therefore a re-design was required. As the re-design is significantly different to the original scheme discussed, the revised scheme is being presented to Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee for comment.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste is asked to give approval for public engagement on the revised outline design scheme for the A274 Sutton Road at its junction with Willington Street as attached at Appendix A.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Willington Street Junction Improvement 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.

1.2 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 southern end of Willington Street with the A274 Sutton Road. At present the signalised junction is heavily congested under peak traffic conditions.

1.3 In February 2016, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) approved £2.0m Local Growth Fund to the project and this funding, together with Local Developer contributions, will now allow the scheme to proceed.

1.4 This report provides an overview of the project and updates on latest design work.

1.5 The Willington Street Junction Improvements Scheme will include:

- Widening of carriageway to allow additional lanes both westbound and eastbound 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 3 lanes of traffic with dedicated turning lanes,
- Widening of the eastbound carriageway between the Wallis Avenue and Willington Street junctions to allow for 3 lanes of traffic with dedicated turning lanes,
- Signal optimisation of the Willington Street and Wallis Avenue junctions to take account of the new arrangement,
- Landscaping regime and acoustic barriers to provide screening.

## **2. Financial Implications**

2.1 The overall estimated scheme cost is £3.0m. The allocation from the Local Growth Fund is £2.0m and the remaining £1m 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 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 vehicles and peak flows of 1,680 vehicles per hour.

4.2 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.

4.3 The scheme is totally within the highway curtilage of the A274. 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 was included in the decision recommendation as a contingency safeguard, approved on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

4.4 The scheme has been discussed at the local Joint Transportation Committee (JTB) with a favourable response. However, following additional design work a further update was shared at the JTB and KCC officers have resolved to fully update the JTB once engagement has been carried out. It is recognised there will be a '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 planned as appropriate.

- 4.5 Detailed design of the scheme will now follow. To this end, KCC have engaged Balfour Beatty via the SCAPE contract to 'design and build' the project.
- 4.6 On the basis the Local Growth funding has been confirmed, design and procurement proceeding satisfactorily and necessary road space permits granted, a start of construction is anticipated for late 2017.
- 4.7 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQiA) has been amended following the re-design of the scheme and will be 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**

- 5.1 The scheme is programmed for delivery commencing before the end of 2017. As an initial layout design was found to reach saturation point in the first year after construction, a re-design has been carried out to increase the approach lengths and overall capacity of the junction. Further modelling work has been completed which includes future growth to 2029. At this stage of the design process, an improvement to assist congestion and improve journey time reliability has been demonstrated.
- 5.2 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 2017 can be achieved.

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

- 6.1 The Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste is asked to give approval for public engagement on the revised outline design scheme for the A274 Sutton Road at its junction with Willington Street as attached at Appendix A.

## **6. Appendices**

- Record of Decision
- Maidstone Integrated Transport Package – A274 Sutton Rd/Willington Street - General Arrangement Drg. No. **CO04300573-000-001 Rev1**

## **7. Contact details**

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