

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

To: Mike Whiting - Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste

Decision No: 17/00025(b)

Subject: A2500 Lower Road Improvements – Phase 2 Lower Road Widening

Summary: This report updates Members on the Phase 1 A2500 Lower Road/Barton Hill Drive Roundabout Improvement Scheme and seeks approval for the outline design of the Phase 2 A2500 Lower Road Widening.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste is asked to agree:

- i) approval to the outline design for the A2500 Lower Road Widening, for public consultation, development control and land charge disclosures as shown on Drawing. No. 0323-PH2-PE-001 Rev 0. (Fig. 1)
- ii) to progress the design through the next stages of development and delivery including any ancillary works such as drainage and environmental mitigation;
- iii) to take all steps necessary to obtain and implement all statutory Orders and approvals or consents required for the schemes;
- iv) to enter into land and funding agreements associated with development contributions;
- v) to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme subject to the approval of the Strategic Commissioning Board to the recommended procurement strategy, and
- vi) for the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport, under the Officer Scheme of Delegations, to take further or other decisions as may be appropriate to deliver the A2500 Lower Road Improvement scheme in accordance with these recommendations and the earlier overarching decisions given under Record of Decisions 17/00025, that remains extant.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The A2500 Lower Road is a narrow single carriageway route, often described as the 'missing link' in Sheppey's road network. This road currently does not provide a safe and suitable route for all users. The narrow road width, lack of verges and abutting hedgerows create a constrained corridor, with no facilities for cyclists or pedestrians. This effectively severs the connection for non-motorised road users between the residential areas of south Minster and employment opportunities in Queenborough and is a poor-quality route for

vehicular traffic with ever-growing maintenance issues. Larger vehicles struggle to pass each other when traveling in opposite directions and this adds to the deterioration of the carriageway edge.

- 1.2 The existing traffic signal-controlled junction at the Lower Road junction with Barton Hill Drive is a pinch point on the principal A2500 route that serves the Isle of Sheppey and connects with the Strategic Road Network. There are congestion issues at this junction and the lack of capacity is acting as a barrier to the delivery of new housing at sites identified in the adopted Local Plan.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on the progress of the Phase 1 scheme and seeks approval for the outline design of the Phase 2, A2500 Lower Road widening, shown on Fig.2 – Drawing No. 0323-PH2-PE-001 Rev 0.
- 1.4 It is proposed to improve the A2500 Lower Road between Cowstead Corner and Barton Hill Drive and the Barton Hill Drive junction and provide a much need footway/cycleway link along Lower Road. The location of the proposals is shown on Fig 3.
- 1.5 The A2500 Lower Road improvements will be delivered in 2 Phases:
 - Phase 1 – The improvement of the Lower Road/ Barton Hill Drive Junction
 - Phase 2 – The Improvement of Lower Road between the A249 at Cowstead Corner and Barton Hill Drive
- 1.5 A report to this Committee on 13 March 2017 gave details of the Local Growth Fund (LGF) Growth deal (Round 3) that included the allocation of funding for the Lower Road Improvements and specifically the Barton Hill junction improvement (Phase1). The Record of Decision 17/000025 is at Annex A.
- 1.7 Policy A12 of 'Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017.' adopted in July 2017 has identified land to the west of Barton Hill Drive as a suitable allocation for some 620 homes, as well as associated infrastructure improvements including to the A2500 Lower Road. The Local Plan identifies access to this development from the new roundabout. The scheme has been designed to accommodate this fourth arm and cater for the associated traffic movements from the development site. The updated design is shown in Fig 1 - Drawing No. 0323-PH1-PE-001 Rev 0.
- 1.8 The LGF bid was limited to the improvement of the Barton Hill Drive junction as there was insufficient match funding available to bid for the full package of improvements. The inclusion of Policy A12 in the Swale Local Plan for the development of land to the west of Barton Hill Drive and KCC's successful bid to the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF), have provided the opportunity to deliver Phase 2 and provide the full package of improvements needed along this section of Lower Road.

2. Scheme Overview

Phase 1 – Lower Road Barton Hill Drive Junction

- 2.1 The approved outline design for Phase 1, the improvement of the Lower Road / Barton Hill Drive Junction, is shown on Fig 4 Drawing No. 43000416/000/06 Rev 0.
- 2.2 The existing traffic signals will be removed, and a new roundabout constructed to improve the capacity of the junction.
- 2.3 The size and location of the surface water storage lagoon has now been agreed with the landowner and the Internal Drainage Board and will be on land to the south of Lower Road. The land for the scheme and lagoon is being made available by the landowner and negotiations for the transfer of the land have commenced.
- 2.4 The revised outline design for the Phase 1 junction improvement incorporating the additional arm on the roundabout and the surface water lagoon is shown on Fig 1 - Drawing No. 0323-PH1-PE-000- Rev 0.

Phase 2 – Lower Road Widening

- 2.5 The outline design for Phase 2 is to widen a 1.1km section of the A2500 Lower Road between the A249 at Cowstead Corner and Barton Hill Drive, including the construction of a new shared footway/cycleway alongside the road. This will provide infrastructure for all road users, currently lacking in this location. The proposals are shown on the scheme plan in Fig 2 - Drawing No. 0323-PH2-PE-000- Rev 0.
- 2.6 The existing carriageway will be slightly realigned and widened to 7.3m to comply with current design standards and a new shared use 3.5m wide footway/cycleway will be provided along the north side of the road. The footway/cycleway will provide a link between the residential area of Minster and the commercial and employment areas in and Queenborough and Rushenden.
- 2.7 The widening of the road is generally to the north of Lower Road on land being made available by the promoters of the development site to the west of Barton Hill Drive.

3 Public Engagement

- 3.1 The proposals for Phase 1 were first presented to Minster Parish Council on 20 October 2016. This was followed by a presentation to Minster Parish Council on 7th December 2017, with an update on both Phase 1 and 2.
- 3.2 The proposals for Phases 1 and 2 were presented to the Swale Joint Transportation Board on 18 December 2017.
- 3.3 A public exhibition was held at the Minster Parish Council Office's on 5 December 2017 and this was attended by approximately 40 people. The proposals were generally well received. Attendees included a representative from the Lower Road Action Group who welcomed the proposals for the new footway/cycleway link.

- 3.4 A further public engagement exercise will be undertaken in June prior to commencement of construction of Phase 1 to give further information on the programme and traffic management required to build the new roundabout. The timescale is dependent on securing land acquisition and receipt of match funding through the s106 contributions.

4. Current Position

Phase 1

- 4.1 The SELEP LGF funding has been confirmed and developer contributions from s106 agreements identified.
- 4.2 Detailed design work has been completed on the proposals for the roundabout junction of the A2500 Lower Road with Barton Hill Drive.
- 4.3 A planning screening opinion for Phase 1 was submitted to the planning authority. Confirmation has been received that a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required and that the proposals are therefore able to proceed as permitted development.
- 4.4 Initial discussions have taken place with the KCC Streetworks Team to identify the most appropriate times to undertake the works. Details are still to be finalised, but construction will be planned to ensure minimum traffic disruption in July and August to avoid delays to holiday traffic. The proposed roundabout is mainly located on land adjacent to the highway and this will allow most of the works to be constructed with minimal impact on existing traffic
- 4.5 Construction tenders have been received and a preferred Contractor identified. The Contractor will be appointed in May 2018. The option to carry out Phase 2 of the scheme has been included in this contract.

Phase 2

- 4.6 The NPIF bid for part funding of Phase 2 has been confirmed. It is a condition of the NPIF Funding that it is spent by March 2020.
- 4.7 Match funding and the provision of the land required for the widening of Lower Road has been identified and agreed in principal with the promoters of the development site under Local Plan Policy A12. The confirmation of the match funding and provision of the land will need to be secured through a s106 agreement, following resolution to grant planning permission. An outline planning application is due to be submitted by the developers to Swale Borough Council in May 2018.
- 4.8 Consultants have been engaged to provide the feasibility design, detailed design and construction drawings for Phase 2.
- 4.9 A screening opinion is being prepared for Phase 2 to determine if a full Environmental Impact Assessment is required. As the nature of the site of Phase 2 is similar to Phase 1 it is anticipated this will not be required and hence the scheme will also be able to proceed as permitted development.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 The appointment of the preferred contractor to undertake the works for Phase 1 will be undertaken in May 2018. The contract will include the works for Phase 2 but there will be a break clause in the contract should Phase 2 not progress to construction.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the negotiations and entry onto and transfer of the land required for Phase 1 of the scheme will be completed by the end of May 2018.
- 5.3 The earliest construction start date for Phase 1 is summer 2018; there is a risk that construction may be delayed until spring 2019, if land acquisition or the receipt of match funding through the s106 contributions are delayed.
- 5.4 The design of Phase 2 will be progressed, and land will be acquired in line with the developer's planning application timeline. It is anticipated that the earliest date for construction of Phase 2 Spring 2019.
- 5.5 Consideration will be given to the construction works to ensure that they have minimal impact during the main tourist season. For Phase 2, the widening of Lower Road will inevitably have a greater impact, and this will also be planned in detail with the Streetworks Co-ordinator.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The overall estimated cost of the scheme for both phases of the Lower Road improvements is £6.655m.
 - The estimated scheme cost for Phase 1 is £1.805m.
 - The estimated scheme cost for Phase 2 is £4.85m.
- 6.2 **Phase 1:** The allocation from the Single Local Growth Fund for Phase 1 of £1.265m was formally confirmed by the SE LEP Accountability Board in June 2016 and there is a requirement to spend the allocation before the end of 2020/21. A total of £0.54m is to be provided via developer contributions. A s106 agreement for the contributions has been signed, with contributions due prior to commencement of the associated development.
- 6.3 **Phase 2:** The allocation from the National Productivity Investment Fund of £3.195m was formally confirmed by the Department of Transport in a letter to the County Council dated 25 October 2017. There is a requirement to spend the allocation by March 2020. Match funding is being provided by a developer contribution of £1.455m, with a further £0.2m contribution from Swale Borough Council being made available to the scheme. The developers funding will result from the development on the site of Policy A12 and this will need to be secured through a s106 agreement.

7. Policy Framework

- 7.1 The Lower Road improvements 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 help to reduce congestion, improve safety and mitigate associated air quality

concerns. By providing additional traffic capacity it will unlock development potential for new homes and jobs in Minster and the surrounding areas on the Isle of Sheppey. The benefits will broaden out to Eastchurch and Leysdown to the east of Sheppey.

- 7.2 The Lower Road improvements are fully supported by the 'Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2031', which identifies the improvements to Lower Road and improved east-west cycleways on Sheppey as key priorities for the Swale Borough area. It also highlights how investment in these infrastructure projects is vital to boost Kent's economy and support a growing population. Furthermore, the Active Travel Strategy sets out the ambition to make active travel an attractive and realistic choice, recognising the significant benefits this brings to public health, reducing congestion and improving air quality. This scheme directly supports those objectives.

8. Legal and Equalities Implications

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

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The successful award of the NPIF funding and contributions from the promoters of the development site to the west of Barton Hill Drive will enable the full scheme of highway improvements along the A2500 Lower Road to be delivered. This will also provide a much needed footway and cycleway link connecting the key areas of the Minster and Queenborough.
- 9.2 The scheme has made significant progress. The design and procurement for Phase 1 is complete and the contract award to the preferred contractor to undertake the works is imminent. The surveys and feasibility designs for Phase 2 are well advanced. Phase 2 has been included as an option in the Phase 1 contract so that a procurement exercise will not need to be repeated.
- 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 significance and with the Corporate Director invited to take other decisions where appropriate and where authorised under the Officer Scheme of Delegations.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 The Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste is asked to agree:
- i) approval to the outline to the outline design for the A2500 Lower Road Widening, for public consultation, development control and land charge disclosures as shown on Drawing. No. 0323-PH2-PE-001 Rev 0. – Fig

- ii) to progress the design through the next stages of development and delivery including any ancillary works such as drainage and environmental mitigation;
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- vi) for the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport, under the Officer Scheme of Delegations, to take further or other decisions as may be appropriate to deliver the A2500 Lower Road Improvement scheme in accordance with these recommendations and the earlier overarching decisions given under Record of Decisions 17/00025, that remains extant.

11. Background Documents

Fig 1 – Drawing No. 0323-PH1-PE-001 Rev 0 – Phase 1 Scheme Plan
Fig 2 – Drawing No. 0323-PH2-PE-001 Rev 0 – Phase 2 Scheme Plan
Fig 3 – Location Plan Drawing
Fig 4 – Drawing No. 43000416/000/06 Rev 1 – Phase 1 Approved Layout
Annex 1 - Record of Decision 17/00025 dated 13 March 2017.
Equalities Impact Assessment dated 24 April 2018

12. Contact details

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