

Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

**14
October
2020**



B2246 Hermitage Lane/A26 Tonbridge Road Project

Decision Making Authority	Kent County Council/Maidstone Borough Council
Lead Director	Simon Jones
Lead Head of Service	Tim Read
Lead Officer and Report Author	Russell Boorman/Benjamin Cuddihee
Wards and County Divisions affected	Maidstone Borough including Tonbridge & Malling
Which Member(s) requested this report?	Councillor Rob Bird

This report makes the following recommendations:

REPORT TO BE NOTED.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Maidstone Joint Transportation Board	14 October 2020

B2246 Hermitage Lane/A26 Tonbridge Road Project

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report provides an update in respect of the proposed junction improvements contained within the A26 Tonbridge Road and B2246 Hermitage Lane project.
- 1.2 The road project was previously part of the Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP) but was removed due to the lack of demonstratable benefit and good value for money. The project was then taken forward by a Member led working group with the aim of producing a scheme to utilise the available S106 funding.
- 1.3 The scheme was previously brought before the Joint Transportation Board in July 2019. Where following a comprehensive and thorough optioneering exercise, it was recommended that the scheme would not be progressed as the design options put forward did not sufficiently address the congestion experienced at the junction or posed a safety risk in terms of operation. A table outlining the previous options and the reasons for being discounted are shown in table 1.
- 1.4 The member led working group consisting of KCC Local Members, Maidstone Councillors and KCC officers have continued to work together to produce a design that all believe will provide the necessary capacity required to alleviate the current congestion issues experienced at the junction. This design is discussed in section 2.

2. Proposed Dual Roundabout Scheme:

- 2.1 The proposed scheme (*Appendix 1*) would see the existing signalised junction turned into a dual roundabout. This scheme further develops a similar proposal put forward by the prospective developer of the Land at Fant Farm site. Due to the constraints of the junction and to fully unlock the capacity benefits of the scheme, third party land will be required.
- 2.2 The third party land required is to the north-eastern corner of the A26 Tonbridge Road and Fountain Lane junction (*Appendix 2*). Title K299483 is owned by Pub Properties Alpha Limited. The land is currently occupied by the Taj Barming Indian Restaurant. The Fountain Lane arm approach would be widened into this additional land to reduce queue lengths for traffic wanting to turn left onto the A26 Tonbridge Road (East) Arm.
- 2.3 The main three-arm roundabout would be situated at the existing junction location with the third arm to the south-west acting as the link road with the smaller roundabout which also has three arms. The smaller roundabout would not be a complete roundabout as vehicles cannot make the right turn movement from A26 Tonbridge Road (West) into Farleigh Road. Vehicles would need to move through the main roundabout and return to the smaller junction, essentially performing a U-turn movement.

- 2.4 The scheme would include four signalised pedestrian crossing, one on each of the four arms of the junction. This is to provide an improvement on the existing provision for pedestrians, where there is no controlled crossing on the A26 Tonbridge Road (East) Arm.
- 2.5 A further option was also produced which examined the removal of all the formalised crossings bar the crossing on the A26 Tonbridge Road East. This was undertaken to evaluate the impact the pedestrian crossings made to the flow of the traffic at the junction.
- 2.6 Whilst this option was a better design for vehicles and resulted in reduced queues and higher average speeds. The benefits offered were not deemed significant enough to justify creating a worsening of the environment for pedestrians. Therefore, the option was discounted by the working group.

Option	Description	Reason for discounting
1	One-way system: Fountain Lane one way northbound, St. Andrews one way eastbound, A26 Tonbridge Road remains two way.	Diversion of traffic wishing to travel southbound along Fountain Lane.
2	A proposed double roundabout at the junction between Fountain Lane/Tonbridge Road.	Land Take requirements, cost, safety concerns for pedestrians crossing the junction and Safety concerns for vehicles turning left from Farleigh Lane into Tonbridge Road.
3	Bus Lane along A26 Tonbridge Road for eastbound buses.	Availability of the land, removal of parking and utility diversions.
4	Upgrade the A26 Tonbridge Road/Queens Road junction to a roundabout	Road safety concerns, land take requirement, utility diversions, unlikely to reduce congestion.
5	Hermitage Lane southbound no right turn into Heath Road, with right turners directed through Heath Grove.	Unsuitability for HGV's, reconstruction of local roads to increase traffic levels.
6	St. Andrews Church land take to assist right turns from St. Andrews road to A26 Tonbridge Road.	Availability of land + utility diversions.
7	Bus Lay by on Fountain Lane on currently vacant shop land.	Road safety issues, land take requirement, CPO, utility diversions.
8	Amended one-way system: Fountain Lane and A26 Tonbridge Road remain two-way, the no through road restrictions on St. Andrews road removed, to become one-way eastbound.	Road Safety issues, value for money, and unlikely to reduce congestion.
9	Amended. One-way system with additional works: Northern bus stop along the A26 Tonbridge road converted into a layby to allow a better free flow, adjustment of road markings at southern end of Fountain Lane (one for right turners and one for through traffic), flaring of Heath road/Hermitage Lane junction to increase provision of southbound traffic.	Road safety issues, removal of mature trees, value for money, unlikely to reduce congestion and land take requirements.

Table 1: Previously discounted working group options.

3. Improvements Offered

- 3.1 The proposed design has been modelled taking into account all projected traffic growth from the Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling Local Plans. Under these conditions the junction is shown to operate under free-flow conditions with a Degree of Saturation (DoS) below 75% on all arms during the morning and afternoon peaks with minimal Mean Max Queues (MMQ) recorded.
- 3.2 This is a marked improvement on the current situation and predicted future operation of the existing junction which if left unaltered would have DoS in excess of 100% on all arms during the AM and PM peaks bar the Farleigh Lane arm in the PM peak.
- 3.3 If the do-nothing option is implemented, the MMQ on each arm would be in excess of 100 and the junction would be severely over capacity by 2031.
- 3.4 The proposed option therefore provides a highly beneficial solution to the existing and predicted future congestion at this junction. This is of pertinence due to the levels of expected background and committed development in the immediate vicinity of the schemes location which requires a workable solution to be implemented.
- 3.5 The inclusion of controlled pedestrian crossings on each of the four arms of the junction will provide an improved environment in terms of safety and access for non-motorised users. This is important due to the number of schools in the local area.
- 3.6 The proposals would also offer air quality improvements by reducing emissions caused by congestion in the area. A freer traffic flow would result in shorter queues and reduced vehicular emissions. This is required owing to concerns regarding Nitrogen Dioxide (NO²) pollution and because the junction resides within the Maidstone Borough Council AQMA.

4. Associated Costs/Risks:

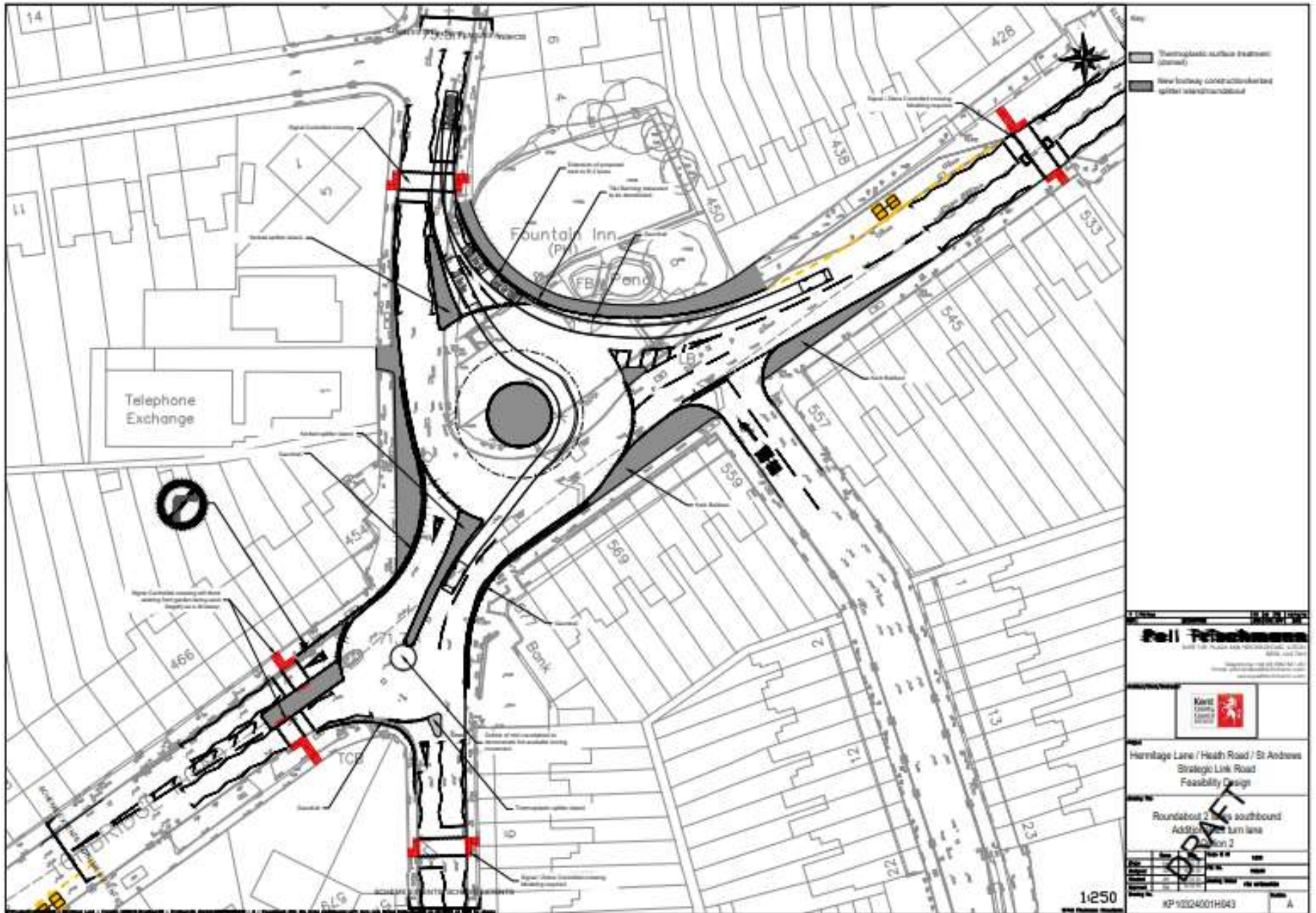
- 4.1 There are risks with the delivery of dual roundabout option proposed by the Working Group and these are identified below:
- 4.2 There is an element of third party land required for the scheme, there is the risk that purchase of this land cannot be negotiated and a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) will be required which will have effect the delivery timescale of the project.
- 4.3 Evidently due to the nature of the proposals there is funding gap that needs to be addressed. The available budget of £621,848 from committed s106 contributions is significantly short of the anticipated £3,197,000 cost for this option (*Appendix 3*). A funding bid for the existing shortfall has been made to Local Pinch Point Fund. KCC officers are also looking into the possibility of attributing further s106 contributions to the scheme. This would reduce the external funding request and provide greater confidence of the scheme's delivery.

- 4.4 It should be noted that the cost highlighted above is an initial assessment of the cost and would likely be value engineered and refined during the detailed design process.
- 4.5 The extent of the proposals will also cause widespread disruption to local traffic during the construction phase. The A26 Tonbridge Road junction with Fountain Lane is a primary route to Maidstone Hospital and therefore appropriate traffic management and consultation will need to take place to minimize the impact on the neighbouring community.
- 4.6 Initial utility diversion estimates have highlighted a significant cost of £850,000 for lowering the BT Openreach cables within the boundaries of the junction. Further investigatory work would be required to understand the accuracy of this proposed cost.

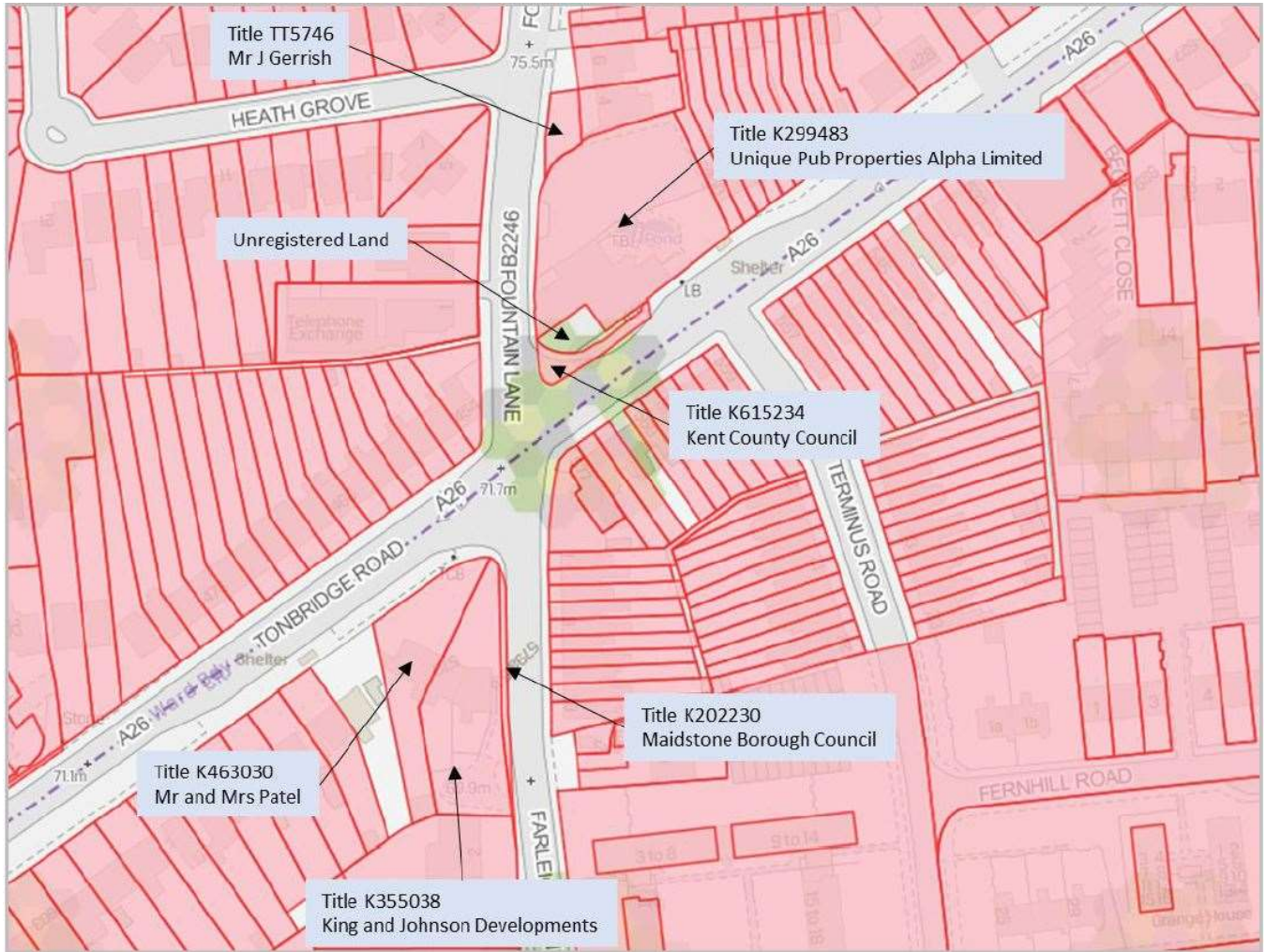
5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Kent County Council officers recommend that the board acknowledge the latest development in the improvement proposals to the A26 Tonbridge Road Junction with Fountain Lane. The current design offers a suitable and credible solution to the congestion issues experienced at the junction and would provide sufficient capacity up to and beyond 2031.
- 5.2 The board is also asked to note the significant funding gap in terms of funding available and the cost of the scheme. As previously advised, whilst there is a relatively sizeable pot of s106 funding available, this is not enough to implement an improvement scheme capable of fully alleviating the impact of predicted future growth at the A26 Tonbridge Road/Hermitage Lane corridor and nearby congestion issues within the Maidstone Urban Centre.
- 5.3 KCC officers believe the scheme will represent good value for money and will provide an effective solution capable of relieving the network constraints anticipated with future predicted growth. If the current funding bid proves to be unsuccessful, further funding opportunities will be explored.
- 5.4 KCC officers will continue to work with the third party land-owners to negotiate the voluntary purchase of the required land. However, at this stage the necessity for CPO cannot be ruled out and remains an option if required.

Appendix 1 – Scheme Design



Appendix 2 – Third Party Land Requirements



Appendix 3 – Initial Scheme Cost Estimate

Preliminary Cost Options

The overall values for this scheme are as follows:-

Hermitage Road Summary	
	Option 10 - Roundabout
200 Site Clearance	£127,000
300 Fencing	£23,000
400 Road Restraint Systems	-
500 Drainage and Service Ducts	£68,000
600 Earthworks	-
700 Pavements	£111,000
1100 Kerbs, Footpaths and Paved Areas	£65,000
1200 Traffic Signs and Road Markings	£23,000
1300 Road Lighting, Columns, Brackets and CCTV Masts	£55,000
1400 Electrical Works and Road Lighting and Traffic Signs	£1,053,000
1600 Piling and Embedded Retaining Walls	-
1700 Structural Concrete	-
1800 Structural Steelwork	-
2400 Brickwork, Blockwork and Stonework	-
2500 Special Structures	-
2700 Accommodation Works for Statutory Undertakers	-
3000 Landscape and Ecology	£2,000.00
Sub Total	£1,527,000
Preliminaries @ 30%	£459,000
Traffic Management @ 25%	£382,000
Total	£2,368,000
OH+P @ 9%	£214,000
Purchasing of Restaurant (Taj Barming)	£615,000
Total	£3,197,000