

Maidstone Joint Transportation Board



**12
January
2022**

Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP)

Decision Making Authority	Kent County Council/Maidstone Borough Council
Lead Director	Philip Lightowler (Interim Director)
Lead Head of Service	Tim Read
Lead Officer and Report Author	Barry Stiff/Lee Burchill
Wards and County Divisions affected	Maidstone Borough including Tonbridge & Malling
Which Member(s) requested this report?	Committee

This report makes the following recommendations:

For Information. That this report be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Maidstone Joint Transportation Board – Update Report	12 January 2022

Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP)

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 This report provides an update in respect of the major schemes currently in progress within Maidstone and the proposed junction improvements contained within the Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP). A map showing the locations of these schemes is included as Appendix 1.

1.2 Projected start dates for the various schemes are as follows:

- A249 Bearsted Road – April 2022
- Coldharbour – November 2022
- Hall Road – Autumn 2023 (subject to co-ordination with Coldharbour)
- Loose Road – Wheatsheaf Phase 1 – February 2022
- Loose Road - Armstrong Road- August 2022
- Loose Road – Sheals Crescent – August 2022
- Loose Road - Wheatsheaf Phase 2 – April 2023
- Loose Road – Cripple Street/Boughton Lane – TBC (currently Paused)
- A20/Willington Street – April 2023 (Subject to coordination with Wheatsheaf Phase 2)
- A274/Willington Street – TBC (currently Paused)
- A26 Tonbridge Road/Fountain Lane – TBC (No Funding in Place)

1.3 KCC provides regular project updates to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and at the latest Accountability Board on 19 November 2021, the Board resolved:

- To note the update on the project
- To note that a further delivery update will be brought to the February 2022 Board meeting, which will include;
 - Progress towards securing the required consent to relocate the ragstone boundary wall of Mote Park, associated with the A20/Willington Street site; and
 - A funding breakdown which sets out the split between the phases of the project

A summary of the decision is available on the SELEP website by using the link below:

<https://www.southeastlep.com/good-governance/our-boards/accountability-board>

2. SCHEME UPDATES:

2.1 A249 Bearsted Road Major Infrastructure Project (Funded through National Productivity Investment Fund):

- 2.1.1 The main planning application for the link road into Newnham Court was approved in November 2020. Although the section linking to the HGV delivery/unloading area was omitted due to unresolved planning matters regarding the concrete hardstanding area. This has now been resolved with a Lawful Development Certificate granted May 2021 by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) for the use of the area by HGV's and the retrospective planning permission submitted by the owners, Harvestore Holdings Ltd, for the retention of the existing concrete slab approved at MBC's November Planning Committee.
- 2.1.2 A further KCC planning application for the completion of the HGV link has been submitted and now that the permissions are in place for the concrete hardstanding, it is expected that this will be reported to KCC's Planning Committee on 9 February 2022. This is later than expected and is directly related to the delay in approval of the concrete hardstanding but has allowed time to address concerns raised by the local ward councillors regarding the visual impact and landscaping proposals for the scheme and which is now included in the submission rather than being dealt with by way of a condition.
- 2.1.3 A planning application has also been submitted to MBC for the drainage outfall and settlement lagoon to the land within the crematorium. This was originally due to be considered at the October 2021 planning committee but following comments from the local ward councillor it was deferred to allow further engagement to take place. This has now taken place and it is expected that a report will be considered at the February 2022 Planning Committee.
- 2.1.4 This is a fundamental aspect of the improvement scheme as, in addition to managing the removal of water from the highway, it will make significant improvements to the currently uncontrolled discharge of the highway water into the water course that flows into and through the Vinters Valley Nature Reserve (VVNR). The introduction of pollution control measures and settlement lagoon will:
- Manage and remove the heavy metals and hydrocarbons
 - manage and reduce the amount of road salt reaching the water course
 - reduce the build-up of sediment (silt) in the unnamed tributary of the River Len from the existing highway runoff; and
 - improve the water quality of the stream and lake and thus improve the biodiversity of VVNR's aquatic habitat.
- 2.1.5 The procurement of a contractor has been completed and whilst some advance works relating to trial holes to confirm location of utility apparatus and to carry out ecology works have been completed, the main contract cannot be formally awarded until such time as the outstanding planning matters have been concluded.
- 2.1.6 On the assumption that the two outstanding planning applications will be approved in February 2022, it is expected that the formal award of the Contract will be made in March 2022 and allowing time for the Contractor to mobilise their resources, a start in early April is expected. To avoid the risk of nesting birds delaying the start of the project, site clearance of the vegetation will take place during February 2022.

2.1.7 It is anticipated that the construction phase will substantially complete by the end of March 2023.

2.2 A20 Coldharbour Roundabout/A20 London Road - Hall Road (LGF Scheme):

2.2.1 The detailed design for the Coldharbour Roundabout scheme and the required acquisition of third-party land have both been completed.

2.2.2 Although the Coldharbour junction is reverting to a traditional roundabout without traffic signals, spare ducting is being provided to future proof the layout to avoid the need for extensive and disruptive works should traffic levels require the junction to be signalised in the future.

2.2.3 The procurement process is expected to start in February 2022, with a view to appointing a contractor in Summer 2022.

2.2.4 Construction is expected to start with off carriageway works in Autumn/Winter 2022 with construction being co-ordinated with the A249 Bearsted Road scheme, to avoid unacceptable conflicts with roadworks near two key junctions of the M20. Completion is expected in summer/autumn 2023.

2.2.5 The proposed scheme for the A20 London Road/Hall Road, Aylesford, continues to be developed alongside the Coldharbour scheme.

2.2.6 The procurement and construction of these works will follow on from the Coldharbour scheme, subject to availability of road space. The delivery of these two schemes will be closely linked due to their proximity and the need to reduce impacts on both the local road network and the M20 corridor.

2.3 A229 Loose Road Corridor (LGF Scheme):

2.3.1 The loose road corridor comprises of four separate junction improvement schemes:

- A229 Loose Road junction with the A274 Sutton Road (Wheatsheaf junction)
- A229 Loose Road junction with Armstrong Road/Park Way
- A229 Loose Road junction with Sheals Crescent
- A229 Loose Road junction with Cripple Street/Boughton Lane – paused following the consultation process

2.3.2 A229 Loose Road junction with the A274 Sutton Road (Wheatsheaf junction)

2.3.3 The planning consent for the demolition of the Wheatsheaf Public House was approved on 24th June 2021. An Historic England Level 1 and 2 heritage assessment of the building has been completed, and a Level 3 survey is currently being programmed with completion expected in February 2022. This work is required to satisfy KCC's heritage team following comments received during the planning process and subsequent consent. It will not be possible to proceed with the demolition work until these surveys have been completed to the satisfaction of KCC Heritage Team. A watching brief during demolition and a post demolition survey will also be required to assess any heritage assets that may be present beneath the current building.

2.3.4 Due to the constraints on road space and clashes with other projects the construction of this scheme will be split into phases. The first phase will see a trial closure of

Cranborne Avenue. The closure of this junction is a key component of the final design solution and will allow additional traffic data to be collected on how the junction will operate with the Cranborne phase of the signals removed. This will be a significant benefit and will allow refinements to the layout to be made based on real information, rather than modelling data. It is also expected that the closure itself will provide some capacity benefits in the short term ahead of the second phase of the scheme being implemented, which will include the demolition of the pub and construction of the new junction.

- 2.3.5 The trial closure will be implemented through an Experimental Traffic Order (TRO). This TRO must be in place for a minimum of 6 months and up to maximum period of 18 months. Objections and comments can be made in the first 6 months of the TRO. After 6 months has lapsed, it will be possible to make the Order permanent subject to addressing any comments/objections that may be received.
- 2.3.6 It is planned to carry out at least two further traffic surveys to assess traffic flows and to analyse how the displaced traffic from Cranborne Avenue will be redistributed and assess any additional intervention measures that may be required at other adjacent junctions (including Plains Avenue).
- 2.3.7 The phase 1 element (experimental TRO) is currently scheduled for week commencing 14 February 2022, with the expectation that the order will be made permanent during September 2022.
- 2.3.8 The phase 2 construction works are currently expected to be carried out between Spring 2023 and Spring 2024.
- 2.3.9 **A229 Loose Road junction with Armstrong Road/Park Way**
- 2.3.10 The Armstrong Road junction improvements will create a right turn lane for southbound traffic and relocate the pedestrian crossing to the south side of Loose Road. This scheme falls under permitted development and detailed design work is progressing. It is hoped that this element of the corridor can be delivered ahead of the Wheatsheaf junction, using KCC's term contractor, Amey. Discussions are currently ongoing with KCC Street Works Team to see if it's possible to deliver this scheme utilising the summer school holiday period, to minimise impacts to road users. If this is possible then as long as the road space is available, the scheme could be delivered by Spring 2023 before the Phase 2 Wheatsheaf construction works.
- 2.3.11 **A229 Loose Road junction with Sheals Crescent**
- 2.3.12 The Sheals Crescent junction improvement will provide a filter straight into Sheals Crescent for southbound traffic by removing the need for traffic to give way when turning right into Sheals Crescent. It is anticipated this will be delivered in conjunction with the works to Armstrong Road.
- 2.3.13 **A229 Loose Road junction with Cripple Street/Boughton Lane**
- 2.3.14 This design was paused following the consultation process but a revised scheme to avoid any impact to the landscaped area in front of the shops, particularly the loss of any trees. Whilst this may deliver some minor improvements to the length of the right turn lane into Cripple Street, it is not expected to deliver any noticeable capacity benefits. It also unlikely that it will be possible to relocate the signal crossing as some widening in front of the shops is required to facilitate its relocation.
- 2.3.15 Half bus laybys are also being considered where space will allow their introduction, this would allow some vehicles to pass a stationary bus and whilst this may help with driver frustration at being held up it will not provide any capacity benefits to the junction.

- 2.3.16 These possible design solutions will need to be weighed up carefully to assess the cost against the potential benefits. There are likely to be significant utility diversions which may make these possible changes unviable. Utility companies are currently being approached to provide estimates for any diversionary works that may be required.
- 2.3.17 A further update will be provided once costings are known.

2.4 **A20 Ashford Road junction with Willington Street (LGF Scheme):**

- 2.4.1 This improvement will provide additional capacity on the Eastbound A20 approach to the junction by extending the length of the two-lane approach and also providing wider lanes that will allow eastbound vehicles to pass the queuing right turning traffic more easily. Currently eastbound traffic is frequently blocked by larger vehicles turning right and this only adds to the length of the eastbound queue to the junction. These amendments will allow more traffic to move through the junction at each change of the signals.
- 2.4.2 To accommodate the additional widening of the eastbound carriageway, it will be necessary to widen the westbound carriageway into the existing verge and toward the Mote Park boundary wall, which will require the wall to be repositioned. There are currently utilities and highway street furniture including road signs, lamp columns and a VMS sign which all need to be relocated into the verge. The street furniture will need to be located with sufficient lateral clearance to the edge of carriageway to avoid being struck and to allow access for maintenance. Utilities need to be retained within the verge to minimise the impact of any future maintenance works.
- 2.4.3 A short additional lane is also being provided on the westbound approach to the junction to provide additional capacity on this approach.
- 2.4.4 The boundary wall of Mote Park forms part of the listed curtilage to Mote House and consequently requires a listed building consent submission to Maidstone Borough Council.
- 2.4.5 A pre-application meeting was held with Maidstone Borough Council Cllrs and officers in November to discuss the application, prior to the submission of the listed building application. The report was then considered at the MBC Planning Committee held in December 2021. Unfortunately, the Committee decided to defer a decision until the February Committee meeting to seek further clarification from KCC as to why the wall needs to be re-positioned, clarify the predicted capacity benefits of the highway improvement, and clarify the public benefits of the proposal.
- 2.4.6 It should be noted that this junction is identified within the local plan for improvements but is heavily constrained on all sides which makes significant improvements impossible without the costly acquisition of third-party land, and which would most likely be only achievable through a contentious compulsory Purchase Order process and more significant impacts to the grounds of Mote Park. Efforts have been made to minimise impacts to the boundary wall but to deliver any benefits within the land constraints at this junction the current proposal is the only viable option.
- 2.4.7 Whilst the funding is currently secured for this part of the MITP project, there is a risk that any further delays in achieving listed building consent and agreement to reposition the wall may result in SELEP withdrawing the funding and relocating this elsewhere. This consent is a key milestone for SELEP, to provide comfort that the scheme can be delivered.

2.4.8 Due to other projects being carried out on the network in the near vicinity, the construction will be planned with KCC's Street Works team alongside the other network pressures but will need to be programmed after the completion of the A249 Bearsted Road project. Accordingly, the earliest this could be delivered would be after Spring 2023, although it would need to be co-ordinated carefully with the Wheatsheaf improvement scheme.

2.5 A26 Tonbridge Road junction with Fountain Lane (Developer Funded Scheme):

2.5.1 An outline scheme has been identified which would provide a dual roundabout to replace the existing signalised junction. This requires the acquisition of adjacent third-party land, and negotiations are ongoing with the relevant landowner for the voluntary acquisition of the property.

2.5.2 The feasibility design is complete but further design is required to progress this junction further. There are currently insufficient S106 contributions available that will allow this scheme to be progressed. KCC are continuing to work with MBC and TMBC to seek other funding opportunities to be able to deliver this scheme in conjunction with the MITP projects. Until such time as funding becomes available it is not possible to predict when this could be delivered, but it should be assumed that the design, planning required for the demolition of the property and procurement could take at least 12 months to complete.

2.6 A274 Sutton Road junction with Willington Street (Developer Funded Scheme):

2.6.1 This is a developer funded scheme with no deadline on the spend, and as such, this scheme will be promoted towards the end of the overall programme to allow schemes with funding constraints to be delivered first. This will ensure that other funding streams which have been secured are not lost and reallocated outside of the County.

3. CONCLUSION:

3.1 As per the decision at SELEP Accountability Board on 12th February 2021 and endorsed at subsequent Accountability Boards, all LGF schemes that can demonstrate that they met the SELEP conditions by September 2021 will be able to spend their LGF allocation after the end of the Growth Deal. This has been achieved for all of the LGF funded MITP schemes with the exception of A20/Willington Street, which needs to achieve the listed building consent for the re-positioning of the Mote Park boundary wall.

3.2 If permission can be achieved for the listed building consent, KCC are confident that the current programme as detailed above, will mean that sufficient progress has been made on the schemes to ensure that the SELEP conditions can be met.

3.3 The key to being able to provide more programme certainty on the delivery of the MITP projects is largely dependent on resolving the two outstanding planning matters for the Bearsted Road scheme. As most of the schemes are not allowed to be carried out simultaneously due to direct road space conflicts, fixing the Bearsted Road programme, will enable the subsequent delivery programmes to be more accurately forecasted.

3.4 KCC will continue to carefully plan all schemes to address the complications of available road space within Maidstone in the coming years. Some of the schemes that are planned to be delivered first will affect traffic on the M20 during construction, and as such National Highways (formerly Highways England) will not permit them to

be delivered simultaneously. In addition, there are substantial utility works planned within the area and careful negotiations with KCC Street Works Team is required to ensure that all schemes can be delivered as quickly as possible. Whilst provisional road space bookings have been made for some of the projects, regular discussions are taking place and will continue with all affected parties to ensure changes and any conflicts in works can be co-ordinated and managed proactively, and where possible impacts to the local communities and the traveling public are minimised. It should be noted that timescales given within this report are dependent on the availability of road space and could still be subject to change if planned Gas or utility works in the area conflict with the proposed timetable, particularly where utility works are in direct conflict and would need to be carried out first to avoid disturbance to newly laid surfaces.

**Appendix 1:
Map of Highway Improvement Schemes in Maidstone**

