

# Maidstone Joint Transportation Board



**16  
October  
2019**

## **A229 and A249 links between M2 and M20 with the proposed new Lower Thames Crossing**

<b>Decision Making Authority</b>	Kent County Council
<b>Lead Director</b>	Simon Jones, Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Joseph Ratcliffe, Transport Strategy Manager
<b>Wards and County Divisions affected</b>	Wards affected: Boxley, Aylesford North and Walderslade, Burham and Wouldham, Detling and Thurnham, North Downs. County Divisions affected: Maidstone Rural North, Malling North East, Maidstone Rural East.
<b>Which Member(s) requested this report?</b>	Cllr Bird

### **This report makes the following recommendations:**

That the report be noted.

### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Maidstone Joint Transportation Board	16 October 2019

# **A229 and A249 links between M2 and M20 with the proposed new Lower Thames Crossing**

## **1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

1.1 Report requested by Cllr Bird.

## **2. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

2.1 Cllr Bird requested a report on the proposed improvements to the A229 and A249 links between the M2/A2 and M20 corridors taking into account the additional traffic expected as a result of the proposed new Lower Thames Crossing.

2.2 This report summarises the work of Kent County Council (KCC) to address the issue and presents three options to continue to make the case for improvements to the A229 and A249 as a result of the increase in traffic from the proposed new Lower Thames Crossing. These options involve continuing to make the case to the Department for Transport (DfT) and Highways England for inclusion of improvements to these links between the two motorway corridors as part of the Lower Thames Crossing project, or to be delivered through the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) in the period 2020 to 2025. A third options requires KCC to continue to fund, at risk of no certainty of further development funding or funding for delivery, the development of a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) which will increase the chance of success in bidding for funding in future rounds of the Large Local Major (LLM) scheme programme, i.e. for the post 2025 period. This option does, however, also require 15% local contribution to total capital scheme costs.

2.3 KCC continues to progress all three options, while recognising the limitations of each. KCC acknowledges that the option of developing an SOBC has the greatest chance of securing funding in the future.

2.4 The Committee is asked to note the report on the work being done.

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## **3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

3.1 Cllr Bird requested a report on the proposed improvements to the A229 and A249 links between the M2/A2 and M20 corridors taking into account the additional traffic expected as a result of the proposed new Lower Thames Crossing. This report summarises the work of Kent County Council (KCC) to address this issue.

3.2 Highways England is progressing the development of a new Lower Thames Crossing (tunnel) to the east of Gravesend linking to the A2 near the existing 'Gravesend East' junction. The scheme also includes the widening of the A2 between the 'Gravesend East' junction and Junction 1 of the M2. Highways England plan to submit a Development Consent Order (DCO) to the Planning Inspectorate in summer 2020. If the DCO is granted, and

subject to funding, the scheme would be open to traffic in 2027. Further information on Highways England's scheme can be found at <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/lower-thames-crossing-home/>

- 3.3 Highways England's Lower Thames Crossing project does not include any wider network improvements to the Strategic Road Network (SRN) in Kent beyond the widening of the A2 between the 'Gravesend East' junction and Junction 1 of the M2. The project is also not delivering any local road network improvements in Kent beyond those that are directly required for scheme, i.e. there are proposed new link roads around the 'Gravesend East' junction with the A2 due to the reconfiguration of this junction to accommodate the new junction of the Lower Thames Crossing and the A2.
- 3.4 Highways England has stated that any wider SRN improvements will need to be delivered through the Road Investment Strategy (RIS), the second of which (RIS2) will be set by the Department for Transport (DfT) this autumn for the period 2020 to 2025. Highways England has also stated that any local road network improvements will need to be delivered by the Local Highway Authority, i.e. KCC.
- 3.5 KCC has therefore made numerous representations to the DfT and Highways England through consultations on the development of the priorities for RIS2. Several letters to Ministers and the Secretary of State have also been sent by KCC's Leader and the responsible Cabinet Member. Several Kent MPs have also written letters. In summary, KCC's position on the wider network improvements that are essential alongside the proposed new Lower Thames Crossing, include the following:
  - Improvements to the A229 and its junctions with the M2 (Junction 3) and the M20 (Junction 6) as the shortest link between the two motorway corridors. An earlier proposal by the DfT included upgrades to this link as one of the options for the Lower Thames Crossing project (the Option C variant) but it was dropped from the project when the east of Gravesend route (Option C) was announced as the preferred route option. KCC supported the Option C variant and has continued to make the case for its inclusion in the project.
  - Improvements to the A249 and its junctions with the M2 (Junction 5 – improvements for which are being delivered through RIS1) and the M20 (Junction 7) as another vital link between the two motorway corridors to provide additional resilience.
  - Improvements to the M2/A2 corridor from the new Lower Thames Crossing to Dover, including additional capacity on the M2 between junctions 4 and 7, improvements to the interchange between the M2 and A2 at M2 Junction 7 (Brenley Corner) and the completion of the dualling of the A2 from Lydden to Dover.
- 3.6 All of the above are stated as strategic priorities in KCC's *Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock (2016-31)* [https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/72668/Local-transport-plan-4.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/72668/Local-transport-plan-4.pdf). They are also stated as priorities for RIS2 for the newly emerging Sub-National Transport Body (STB) – Transport for the South East (TfSE) and were submitted to the DfT as part of the evidence gathering process for the development of RIS2.

3.7 As well as submissions to Highways England and DfT to inform priorities for RIS2, KCC has also continued to make the case for the Lower Thames Crossing project to deliver the required wider network improvements. In KCC's response to the statutory consultation on the proposed Lower Thames Crossing in December 2018, as part of its review of the traffic model, it stated that:

For the A229:

- *"In 2026, the introduction of the LTC is forecast to increase traffic flows on this corridor during both peak hours, particularly between Maidstone and the M2. In 2041, the Lower Thames Crossing is forecast to generally increase traffic flows on the A229, again between Maidstone and the M2 in the AM peak, but a combination of increases and decreases in the PM peak.*
- *As would be expected, because the A229 is the most direct link between the M20 and M2, Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) flows are substantially increased in the AM and PM peaks. On Blue Bell Hill this is an increase of 118 HGVs in the AM peak and 139 in the PM peak in 2026, growing to 179 in the AM peak in 2041. This increase in traffic places more pressure on the capacity of the A229 at Blue Bell Hill.*
- *However, the data hides the problems with the junctions at either end (M20 Junction 6 and M2 Junction 3) that cause delays and blockages on the network, causing queues and congestion."*

For the A249:

- *"As with the A229 corridor, being a key route between the two motorway corridors means that two-way traffic flows are expected to increase on the A249 in both peaks in both 2026 and 2041.*
- *However, HGV flows are expected to generally decrease on the A249, albeit in very small absolute numbers (up to 3 HGVs in the AM peak and 6 in the PM peak by 2041). This is surprising and suggests that HGVs are either re-routing completely to the M2/A2 corridor further east or using the A229 and A228 as shorter routes between the motorways."*

3.8 Further analysis is currently underway with a cordon of the Lower Thames Crossing Area Model (LTAM) made available by Highways England to KCC, which will help to inform KCC's further submissions as part of the DCO planning process. This work will also help to inform scheme development for the local road network to enable KCC to make the case for mitigation measures needed as a result the new Lower Thames Crossing.

3.9 The announcement by DfT of the Major Road Network (MRN), i.e. the busiest local authority 'A' roads, which includes the A229 and A249, also presents an opportunity for KCC to bid for funding to deliver improvements if they are prioritised in a top 10 list for the whole South East by TfSE. The scale of any improvement works needed on the A229 or A249 exceeds the

£50 million threshold for MRN scheme funding, therefore they would need to be funded through the Large Local Major (LLM) scheme fund. TfSE have been instructed by DfT to prioritise two or three schemes from the whole of the South East for LLM funding in the period 2020 to 2025. KCC submitted a bid for LLM scheme funding for the A229 and is currently working to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). However, due to the scheme being at an early stage of its business case development, it was not prioritised by TfSE in its top three for delivery in the 2020-25 period, therefore it is likely that it will only be considered for funding in a later programme, i.e. post 2025.

3.10 KCC are therefore pursuing the following options:

3.11 Option 1: KCC continues to make the case to the DfT and Highways England that improvements to the A229 and A249 are included as part of the Lower Thames Crossing project. This is likely to be rejected by the DfT and Highways England as it has been so far.

3.12 Option 2: KCC continues to make the case to the DfT and Highways England that improvements to the A229 and the A249 are included in the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) for the period 2020-25. Although works to the associated motorway junctions (M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 for the A229 and M2 Junction 5 [already committed in RIS1] and M20 Junction 7 for the A249) may be part of RIS2, which is due to be announced by DfT this autumn, the A229 and A249 are part of the local road network and are the responsibility of KCC. In response to a consultation on the future of the Strategic Road Network (SRN), KCC did make the case for these roads to be trunked and added to Highways England's network due to the strategic function that they perform in connecting motorways. However, trunking the A229 and A249 was rejected by DfT as they are not seeking to expand the SRN at this time.

3.13 Option 3: KCC continues to develop potential schemes to improve the A249 and A229 at risk, as there is no funding stream for scheme development or any funding for scheme delivery. The Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for an A229 scheme requires revenue funding to further its development and it has not been prioritised as a top three scheme in the South East by Transport for the South East (TfSE) (largely as a result of its early stage of scheme development), therefore it is unlikely to be funded in the 2020 to 2025 period. It is however being developed as a pipeline project for post 2025. LLM schemes also require 15% local contribution (local authority and/or developer) as match funding, therefore contributions from development need to be secured before any improvement project could proceed.

3.14 All three options will continue to be progressed, noting their limitations. Option 3 represents the greatest chance of success, as by developing a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC), the chances of being prioritised for the next programme of Large Local Major (LLM) scheme funding, post 2025, are increased if the scheme is developed to SOBC stage. Funding for delivery however, would depend on it being developed to Outline Business Case (OBC) with release of funding only guaranteed on competition of Full Business Case (FBC) and 15% local contribution.

#### **4. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

4.11 This report is for information only.

#### **5. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

5.1 The Committee is asked to note this report on the work to progress improvements to the A229 and A249 links between the M2/A2 and M20 corridors taking into account the additional traffic expected as a result of the proposed new Lower Thames Crossing.

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#### **6. REPORT APPENDICES**

6.1 N/A

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#### **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 Lower Thames Crossing position statement (2018 statutory consultation)  
<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/transport-and-highways-policies/lower-thames-crossing-position-statement>

7.2 Lower Thames Crossing Development Consent Order Consultation 2018  
Response from Kent County Council  
[https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/89785/Kent-County-Council-Response-to-Lower-Thames-Crossing-Consultation-2018-FINAL.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/89785/Kent-County-Council-Response-to-Lower-Thames-Crossing-Consultation-2018-FINAL.pdf)

7.3 KCC response to the Department for Transport's 'Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads' consultation on Highways England's 'Strategic Road Network Initial Report' – Item 8 - Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 31 January 2018  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/g7548/Public%20reports%20pack%2031st-Jan-2018%2010.00%20Environment%20Transport%20Cabinet%20Committee.pdf?T=10>