

# STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

7 October 2020

## A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Tom Gilbert (Principal Planning Officer)
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

### Executive Summary

On 15 September 2020 Kent County Council launched a public consultation on three options of proposed highway improvement works to the A229 Blue Bell Hill section and M2 junction 3 and M20 junction 6. The consultation closes on the 19 October 2020.

This report considers the consultation and recommends that the proposed response set out in Section 4 and appendix 1 of the report is forwarded to Kent County Council as the Council's formal response.

### Purpose of Report

Decision

### This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the content of the Kent County Council 'A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme' consultation is noted, and the Council's response as set out in appendix 1 is approved for submission.
2. If detailed responses are not agreed, then Head of Planning & Development has delegated powers to submit responses in consultation with the chair and vice-chair of the Strategic Planning & Infrastructure Committee.

### Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	7 October 2020

# A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>• We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council’s overall achievement of its aims as set out in section 3.</p>	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <p>The report recommendations support the achievement of all four cross cutting objectives</p>	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
<b>Risk Management</b>	Please refer to Section 3 of this report.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
<b>Financial</b>	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Rob Jarman (Head of

		Planning and Development)
<b>Legal</b>	Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council duties under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	No privacy or data issues identified	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
<b>Equalities</b>	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The recommendation will not have any impact on crime and disorder as it is a response to a highways issue.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
<b>Procurement</b>	This report does not raise any specific procurement issues at this stage.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Kent County Council is currently consulting on proposed potential improvements to the A229 Blue Bell Hill section between M2 junction 3 and M20 junction 6, and the motorway junctions themselves. The consultation runs from 15 September to 19 October 2020.
- 2.2 This report will summarise the consultation and a summary of the responses from Maidstone Borough Council. Kent County Council has provided a standard template to collect responses; a draft version of the Council's response is attached in appendix 1.

### **Background**

- 2.3 The Blue Bell Hill section of the A229 runs from the Lord Lees Roundabout to the Running Horse Roundabout. It is in Kent County Council Highways authority area, as well as the Districts of Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone.

2.4 This section of the A229 provides a link between the Medway towns and Maidstone as well as a strategic route from the M2 to the M20 motorways. At present it is noted that 68,000 vehicles per day use this stretch of the highway.

2.5 As noted, this section of highway is used to connect strategic and local centres. Most of the traffic, approximately 70%, uses Blue Bell Hill for longer strategic journeys, whilst the remaining 30% is for local journeys between Maidstone and Medway.

2.6 In 2003 constructions works were completed to the improve junction 3 of the M2. These were part of upgrades to the M2 motorway that included carriageway widening.

2.7

### **Reasons for the highway improvement scheme**

2.8 Kent County Council have suggested that there are 5 reasons that the proposed changes are needed. These include:

- Congestion
- Road safety
- Air quality
- Local growth; and
- Impact of the Lower Thames Crossing

### **Proposed options**

2.9 Kent County Council is proposing three potential options (background items 1-3). It is important to note that KCC is not suggesting a preferred option at this stage and has indicated that depending on the results of the consultation a hybrid of the 3 options may be taken forward for further consideration.

2.10 A summary of the three options is set out in the table below. The table has been taken from the consultation brochure published in support of the consultation. It is important to note that there are some similarities between all three options, and these are indicated in the comparison table below.

	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>
<b>Northern end of Blue Bell Hill</b>			
Improvements to the slip road onto the A229 southbound at Lord Lees Roundabout	✓	✓	✓
Increase the road width between Taddington and Lord Lees Roundabouts to four lanes	✓		
A new slip road onto the M2 (westbound) from the A229 immediately after Lord Lees Roundabout	✓	✓	✓
Upgrade of the current signalised junction at Taddington Roundabout allowing traffic travelling from the M2 eastbound to A229 via a new bridge over the M2	✓		
A new separate left turn lane from the M2 westbound to the A229 at Taddington Roundabout	✓	✓	✓

A new slip road from the M2 eastbound to a new junction arrangement at Bridgewood Roundabout		✓	✓
<b>Southern end of Blue Bell Hill</b>			
Enlarge the Running Horse Roundabout to the west	✓	✓	
Improve the slip road onto the M20 eastbound from Cobtree Roundabout	✓	✓	
A new grade separated junction, where the existing Forstal Road bridge is currently located			✓
<b>Along the length of the A229 Blue Bell Hill</b>			
Widen the A229 to three lanes when travelling southbound towards Maidstone (between Lord Lees and Cobtree Roundabouts)	✓	✓	✓

2.11 The project is envisaged to cost £142 million. Funding will be an 85% to 15% split between central Government money (Major Road Network funding) and other sources (other government funding opportunities and developer contributions).

### **Next steps**

2.12 The consultation acknowledges that there is further design and modelling to be undertaken. Specifically there is further work to be done with regards to: refining the preferred design, environmental mitigation plans, air quality modelling, noise and vibration modelling, a landscape strategy, a habitats survey, cultural heritage studies, flood risk and water quality studies, geology and soil studies and waste and climate studies.

2.13 The provisional timetable following the consultation is as follows:

- October – December 2020 – consultation feedback analysis
- December 2020 – funding submitted to Department for Transport and publication of consultation report
- Spring 2021 – preferred option announced
- Autumn 2021 – Spring 2022 – Prepare applications for relevant consents for scheme
- Spring 2022- Summer 2023 – Detailed design work and public consultation
- Spring 2023 – Submission of business case to Department for Transport
- Summer 2024 – Constructions works to start
- 2027 – completion of the scheme

### **Summary of responses**

2.14 The Council's full proposed responses are set out in appendix 1 of the report and use the standard template provided by Kent County Council. However, a summary of Council's response is as follows:

- In principle Maidstone Borough Council is supportive of works to improve the M2 & M20 junctions of A229 and acknowledge that there are present issues.

- The Council has concerns with the impact the improvements works may have on the landscape and environmental designations (North Downs AONB and adjoining North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation).
  - The Council believes the improvement works are important and needed due to the planned Lower Thames Crossing works.
  - The Council believes the improvement works could have an impact on the provision of sustainable transport options and these need to be analysed and planned for.
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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

3.1 Option A: To not make representation.

3.2 Option B: To approve the Borough Council's representations outlined in appendix 1.

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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 The preferred option is option B that the committee approve the response set out in appendix 1 of this report and that it be sent to Kent County Council as Maidstone Borough Council's formal response. This is the only way to ensure the Council's views are formally recorded and can be taken account.

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### **5. RISK**

5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

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### **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

6.1 N/A

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### **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

7.1 The public consultation closes on 19 October 2020. If agreed, the proposed response set out in appendix 1 to this report will be submitted to Kent County Council to meet that deadline.

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Maidstone Borough Council Response to A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Background document 1: Scheme Plan: Option 1

[https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/gf2.ti/f/1171682/80810117.1/PDF/-/Scheme\\_Plan\\_Option\\_1.pdf](https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/gf2.ti/f/1171682/80810117.1/PDF/-/Scheme_Plan_Option_1.pdf)

Background document 2: Scheme Plan: Option 2

[https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/gf2.ti/f/1171682/80811173.1/PDF/-/Scheme\\_Plan\\_Option\\_2.pdf](https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/gf2.ti/f/1171682/80811173.1/PDF/-/Scheme_Plan_Option_2.pdf)

Background document 3: Scheme Plan: Option 3

[https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/gf2.ti/f/1171682/80820645.1/PDF/-/Scheme\\_Plan\\_Option\\_3.pdf](https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/gf2.ti/f/1171682/80820645.1/PDF/-/Scheme_Plan_Option_3.pdf)

Background document 4: Consultation brochure

[https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/gf2.ti/f/1171682/80830309.1/PDF/-/Consultation\\_Brochure.pdf](https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/gf2.ti/f/1171682/80830309.1/PDF/-/Consultation_Brochure.pdf)