

Old Oakwood Hospital Housing Site

A report by the Head of Transport & Development to the Joint Transportation Board

Background

1. A sum of £200,000, minus the cost of any other agreed highway works, was negotiated from the housing development on the Old Hospital site between Hermitage Lane & Queens Road as reported to this Board in August 2005. This money is intended for improvements to public transport which are reasonably required as a result of the Oakwood Development.
2. The money was to be paid in two parts with the first being £100,000 index linked paid before occupation of the 40th unit and the balance upon the provision of a bus-only link between Hermitage Lane in the west and Queens Road in the east through the site.
3. The first £100,000 has been received by Kent Highway Services (KHS) from the Borough Council.

Bus Only Link

4. The payment of the balance is conditional to the provision of bus-only link between Hermitage Lane in the west and Queens Road in the east through the site. The detail of how link can be provided without creating a rat run to the town centre has been at the centre of discussions and negotiations for a number of years. Originally the proposal was for a rising bollard however due to problems experienced in Beaver Road, Ashford it was felt that alternative systems should be investigated.
5. KHS's traffic consultants Jacobs were asked to investigate methods of control including rising bollards, a lifting barrier, gate, CCTV / cameras and a sump breaker. After investigation a report was prepared on the various differing methods which concluded that despite potential problems associated with bollards and the ongoing maintenance costs it was still felt that a physical closure in the form of a rising bollard would best meet the requirements set out in the brief.
6. Following discussions with the Director of KHS concerning the outcome of this report and further information about the improved performance of the rising bollard in Ashford, since an upgrade to the system a year ago, it has been agreed to move forward with a bus only link controlled by a rising bollard.

The need for a Bus Only Link

7. In 2009 Kent County Council (KCC) submitted a Kickstart bid to the Department for Transport for funding to pump prime enhancements to the services 6 and 7, which operate between Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells. Whilst the bid was initially successful, the funding stream was subsequently withdrawn by the new Government in 2010. Since this time Arriva and KCC have been working together to implement parts of the enhancement which will result in an increase in the frequency of the service 6 to half hourly when Phase 1b of the new Pembury Hospital opens in September 2011. The service 6 has the potential to provide an excellent link between Pembury and Maidstone hospitals, which will become increasingly important as services are moved from Maidstone Hospital to Pembury.

8. However, in order for this link to be established, it is critical that buses travelling into and out of Maidstone town centre can access the hospital without using the Fountain junction, as congestion here causes significant delays to journey times, and would make the half hourly frequency on the service 6 unachievable. The service 78 would also benefit significantly from using the link, providing faster and more reliable services between the Maidstone hospital and the town centre.

Funding

9. The original Section 106 between the developer and Maidstone Borough Council for the site set out that the cost of the bus gate should be borne by the developer. In order for KHS to provide Maidstone Borough Council with the relevant information to request payment a detailed design and cost estimate is required. However, due to the length of time since the Section 106 was agreed the developer is within their rights to request for the Section 106 to be renegotiated which would significantly delay any payment, may result in the loss of this payment and the prospect of getting the improved bus service in for the hospitals.
10. It is therefore, recommended that the existing £100,000 be used to design and implement the bus gate to allow the improved bus service to be provided as early as possible while the developer is being pursued for any outstanding payments. There is a potential risk that the additional funding will not be secured however this could be the case if the Section 106 is renegotiated. Due to the importance of providing an improved bus service between Maidstone and Pembury hospitals it is felt that regardless of receiving any further payments from the developer than the expenditure of the £100,000 on the bus only link would be justified.
11. The Section 106 set out that the expenditure of the highways contribution needs to be approved by this Board.

Recommendation

12. It is therefore, recommended that subject to the views of this Board, that the current £100,000 held by Kent County Council be used to implement the bus only link controlled by a rising bollard while the developer is being pursued for any outstanding payments.

Accountable Officer: Andy Corcoran 01233 648302