

THE KENT COUNTY COUNCIL (RATHMORE ROAD LINK CLASSIFIED ROAD) (SIDE ROADS) ORDER 2015

STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR MAKING THE SIDE ROADS ORDER

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is the Statement of Reasons of the Kent County Council ("the Council") for making the Kent County Council (Rathmore Road Link Classified Road) (Side Roads) Order 2015 (the "Order").
- 1.2 In preparing this statement, the Council has endeavoured to provide sufficient information so that its reasons for making the Order can be properly understood.
- 1.3 This statement:
 - 1.3.1 identifies the powers under which the Order is made (Section 2);
 - 1.3.2 sets out the background to the Order (Section 3);
 - 1.3.3 provides a general description of the Link Road scheme and details of the proposed Order (Sections 4 & 5);
 - 1.3.4 sets out the Council's reasons and justification for making the Order (Section 6);
 - 1.3.5 sets out the arrangements for the inspection of documents (Section 7); and
 - 1.3.6 sets out contact details for further information (Section 8).

2. POWERS UNDER WHICH THE ORDER IS MADE

- 2.1 The Order is made under sections 14 and 125 of the Highways Act 1980 ("the Act"). Section 14 of the Act authorises the Council in relation to a classified road:
 - 2.1.1 to stop up, divert, improve, raise, lower or otherwise alter a highway that crosses or enters the route of the road or is or will be otherwise affected by the construction or improvement of the road;
 - 2.1.2 to construct a new highway for purposes concerned with any such alteration as aforesaid or for any other purpose connected with the road or its construction and to close after such period as may be specified in the Order any new highway so constructed for temporary purposes.
- 2.2 Section 125 of the Act provides that any order made by the Council under section 14 may authorise the Council to stop up any private means of access to premises adjoining or adjacent to land comprised in the route of the

classified road, or forming the site of any works authorised by the Order and to provide a new means of access to any such premises.

- 2.3 The purposes of the Order is to enable the Council to stop up existing highways, stop up private means of access, carry out improvements to existing highways and construct new highways with respect to roads that cross or join the new Classified Road (the "Link Road") which is to be constructed between Wrotham Road, 38 metres north of the junction with Cobham Street, and Darnley Road, 55 metres north of the junction with Pelham Road.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE ORDER

- 3.1 The Council is proposing to construct the Link road which will be a new two-way single carriageway link road between Wrotham Road and Darnley Road in Gravesend town centre. The scheme is intended to assist the flow of traffic and accessibility for pedestrians, and enhance the built environment. It will reduce severance which is the real effect or perception of a barrier to pedestrian movements between the station, bus stops and town centre caused by the continuous flow of ring road traffic.
- 3.2 Kent Thameside is part of the Thames Gateway and is a major growth area with the objective of achieving many thousands of new homes and jobs. The area adjacent to the Thames is part of the old maritime and industrial past and the loss of traditional industries has led to job losses and some areas of deprivation. The brownfield development areas are extensive and much has been achieved such as Crossways, Ingress Park, Bluewater, Ebbsfleet International Station and Eastern Quarry. Government has created an Ebbsfleet Development Corporation for Ebbsfleet Garden City and London Paramount is planning a theme park on the Swanscombe Peninsula.
- 3.3 Kent Thameside is concerned with existing towns and communities as well as major new developments. Gravesend is at the very centre of the area. Public transport by rail and bus is an important element of enabling the movement of people. The proposals for the wider area such as at Ebbsfleet and London Paramount increase that need. Gravesend Station is located within the town centre but on the edge of the retail core and, with the adjacent bus stops and taxi rank, the area is the public transport focus for people entering and leaving the town. Gravesend has a one way town centre ring road system that runs between the station and the retail core and main bus stops. The area is generally tired and dated.
- 3.4 Gravesend Station is sited in a hollow so that overall access is poor. On the north side because of the ring road and lack of space, there is no forecourt or taxi pickup and bus stops are in a number of different locations. On the south side, where the main station building (Grade II listed) is located, there is more space but being away from the town centre on a one way road with no bus stops there is consequently less utilisation. There has been significant investment by Network Rail in the station with extended platforms that can accommodate 12 carriage trains, a new terminal platform, and an accessible

footbridge. Funding has been obtained by South East Trains for a cycle hub on the Rathmore Road side of the station and this is currently being planned.

- 3.5 The Link Road scheme is specifically identified in the Kent Local Transport Plan (2011-2016) April 2011 as one of the (STIP) Strategic Transport Investment Package Schemes. Further support to the aims and objectives is provided by Policies CS05 (Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area) and CS11 (Transport) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2014). The scheme and the wider town centre were discussed at the Public Examination in 2013/14.
- 3.6 The Link Road scheme is a standalone project but the next deliverable phase of a wider project within an earlier Gravesend Transport Quarter Master Plan. The outline planning permission for the Master Plan was allowed to lapse because some changes were made to the Link Road scheme and with it now being delivered by the County Council, as Highway Authority, the planning application was determined by the County Planning Authority. The underlying principles of the Master Plan relating to a town centre transport hub, improved accessibility, reduced severance and quality public realm remain as objectives for the Borough Council and are all included within the policies of the adopted Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy. The first phase provided the improvement of the Civic Square with some highway improvements and was completed in 2011. Future phases could include the upgrade and expansion of the station car park and an enhanced bus interchange. The Link Road scheme would enable this to be delivered effectively by removing traffic from Barrack Row.
- 3.7 The Link Road will create a new two way road approximately 260m long between Wrotham Road and Darnley Road. The route follows the line of the existing Rathmore Road, over part of its length that is of poor standard and operates in a one way east bound direction.
- 3.8 The decision to publish and implement a Side Roads Order is given in Record of Decision 14/000094(b) taken by the Council's Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport on 24 July 2015.

4. THE LINK ROAD SCHEME

- 4.1 The Link Road will be to the south of the station and will carry the existing one way ring road traffic that currently uses Clive Road and Barrack Row. The Link Road will include footways on either side, enhanced in width to provide a shared cycleway link between the Civic Square and the station with a signal controlled crossing. Traffic signals will be provided at each end of the Link Road, and at Wrotham Road and Darnley Road junctions, to control the movement of traffic and to provide further controlled pedestrian crossing facilities.
- 4.2 The Link Road crosses the existing Rathmore Road public car park owned by Gravesham Borough Council that has 225 spaces including 14 disabled spaces at the eastern end that serve the station, civic centre and town centre.

The Link Road has been designed to minimise land take to enable 65 spaces to be retained including at least 6 disabled spaces.

- 4.3 The overall displaced parking will be accommodated at Gravesham Borough Council's nearby Parrock Street car park. Disabled spaces, convenient to the town centre, have already been designated to offset the aggregate net loss of 9 spaces at Rathmore Road car park, along existing Rathmore Road and at Barrack Row. While there is a net loss of disabled parking spaces at Rathmore Road it is assumed that some users are visiting the Civic Centre or town centre and the new spaces at Parrock Street access are not significantly less convenient.
- 4.4 Under the scheme Equalities Impact Assessment action plan, the Council will seek to ensure that Gravesham Borough Council provide sufficient disabled parking spaces at the Parrock Street car park during the scheme construction period and also to review the overall number and location of disabled spaces following completion of the Link Road scheme.
- 4.5 A new footway ramp will provide a pedestrian connection to the Link Road and to the station and town centre via the controlled crossing.
- 4.6 A new forecourt will be provided in high quality materials for the south side of the station accessed from the Link Road by an "In and Out" arrangement. The area will provide room for the "drop off and pick up" of passengers, a taxi stand and 5 disabled parking spaces - 2 more than existing.
- 4.7 An acoustic fence will be provided along the northern boundary of the retained car park adjacent to the Link Road to mitigate any noise impacts on the rear of properties in Cobham Street.
- 4.8 The Link Road will generally be at a lower level than the retained car park and the level difference will be accommodated by a landscaped earth slope and a brick or stone faced retaining wall behind the footway.
- 4.9 The existing Rathmore Road will generally be subsumed within the scheme but a retained section between Stone Street and the station will be improved using high quality materials to create a cyclist and pedestrian area - also planted with a line of trees. The road will need to cater for vehicles serving No. 24 Stone Street and the station yard - they will enter from Stone Street and exit via the station forecourt.
- 4.10 Clive Road will become a "cul de sac" with a connection to Barrack Row maintained for bus use only. Clive Road will no longer be used for ring road traffic and it will provide local access to the north side of the station, the station car park and premises, access to Thamesgate car park and rear service access to some town centre shops.
- 4.11 The footways, kerbs and some sections of carriageway along Clive Road will be upgraded to provide a higher standard of public realm and to emphasise the connectivity between the station, bus stops, town centre and the Civic

Square. Traffic signals will be provided at the junction with Stone Street to control the movement of traffic, to reflect Clive Road being in two-way use, and to provide controlled pedestrian crossing facilities.

- 4.12 Railway Place will be improved to accommodate the turning movements of heavy goods vehicles from the changed distribution of traffic resulting from Clive Road becoming two-way and no longer part of the one-way ring road. Three disabled parking spaces will be removed but they have already been provided on Windmill Street as part of the earlier Civic Square scheme.
- 4.13 Barrack Row together with Garrick Street will be limited to bus use and vehicles serving frontage premises. The southern footway will be improved in both width and by the use of higher quality materials to allow the relocation of bus stops from Clive Road to provide a more centralised public transport facility at Barrack Row and Garrick Street. Three disabled parking spaces will be lost but they have already been provided for within designated spaces at Parrock Street car park.
- 4.14 St James Street junction with Darnley Road will be made "exit only" to offset any risk of an increase in traffic using it to bypass the signed Darnley Road and New Road route arising from the changed distribution of traffic resulting from use of the Link Road.

5. DETAILS OF THE ORDER

The new Link Road is the Classified Road and the Side Roads Order refers to the changes to the existing roads and private means of accesses - the "side roads". While reference is made to "stopping up" the overall situation is that what is public highway now will remain as public highway and private means of access will be maintained.

5.1 Rathmore Road between Darnley Road and the Station

This section will be incorporated into the new Link Road and as a "side road" existing highway rights will be "Stopped Up" but the area will remain as public highway incorporated within the new Link Road.

5.2 Rathmore Road in front of the Station

This section of highway will be "Improved" as part of the creation of the new station forecourt area.

5.3 Rathmore Road between the Station and Stone Street

This section will be for use by pedestrians and cyclists but with the need to accommodate occasional vehicles servicing the station yard area and No 24 Stone Street. Existing highway rights will be "Stopped Up" and then new "Highway" created to reflect the use by cyclists and pedestrians together with a "Private Means of Access" for the use by service vehicles.

5.4 Car Park accesses

The existing western entry and eastern exit private means of access to the car park will be "Stopped Up" and then a new "Private Means of Access" for both entry and exit to the retained car park will be created from the new Link Road in the area of the existing western entry. Access to the retained car park will be more convenient as the Link Road will be a two-way road with entry and exit available from either the Darnley Road or Wrotham Road direction.

5.5 Side Roads Order Implementation

The Link Road will take approximately 1 year to construct. Rathmore Road is currently mainly used by vehicles having the car park and station as a destination. The car park will be closed for the duration of the construction works until the retained car park comes into use on completion of the Link Road. Pedestrian and vehicular access to the station will be maintained from either Darnley Road or Stone Street at all times - probably under a "cul de sac" arrangement. Pedestrian access is also available between the south and north station entrances via the station bridge and lifts, within the station curtilage, connecting the platforms.

6. REASONS FOR MAKING THE ORDER

- 6.1 Gravesend town centre seeks to build upon its strengths as a commercial centre and heritage riverside town. Competition and changes to the way people shop have resulted in some of the retail offer in the town centre becoming dated. Gravesend town centre offers established retail and commercial services but there are areas that are in need of physical regeneration. Parts of the town centre are dominated by traffic and the existing one-way system has been declared an Air Quality Management Area.
- 6.2 The current one-way system is a barrier for pedestrian movements between the station, bus stops and town centre caused by the continuous flow of ring road traffic. It also limits the ability to integrate public transport services. To maximise the regeneration potential in the town centre it is important that connections between different transport modes are convenient and attractive.
- 6.3 The underlying principles of the Transport Quarter Master Plan relating to a town centre transport hub, improved accessibility, reduced severance and quality public realm continue to be objectives for the Borough Council and together with support for the scheme are all included within the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy.
- 6.4 The Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy also identifies opportunities for the town centre that would provide about 890 homes, 10,500 square metres of retail use and 5,670 square metres of office space.
- 6.5 The draft Transport Quarter Master Plan of which the Link Road was a key element was widely consulted upon by Gravesham Borough Council. Exhibitions were held at Towncentric, St Georges Shopping Centre for two weeks and at the Civic Centre for two weeks in June and July 2009 together with specific stakeholder workshops. Analysis of the questionnaires indicated

that the proposals were well supported. The Master Plan was formally adopted by the Borough Council in October 2009.

- 6.6 The Council held an exhibition of the Link Road proposals at Towncentric and in the Civic Centre in May 2012 to accompany the submission of the planning application. Leaflets were distributed to local residents and businesses, and details were placed on the Council's website. Comments were considered as part of the determination of the planning application.
- 6.8 Planning permission for the Link Road was approved under Regulation 3 of the Town & Country Planning General Regulations 1992 in November 2014. Submissions to discharge planning conditions are underway. The Report by the Council's Head of Planning Application Group to the Planning Applications Committee in October 2014 provides a comprehensive description of the scheme and issues that were considered.
- 6.9 The Council has secured all the land required to deliver the Link Road.
- 6.10 The Council is in discussion with utility companies about the effect on their plant and any diversion or protection requirements in accordance with the provision of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and the associated Code of Practice.
- 6.11 The Council has entered into Basic Asset Protection Agreements with Network Rail in respect of any carriageway works that might affect Darnley Road and Railway Place railway bridges.
- 6.12 Funding has been secured through the grant by the Homes & Communities Agency to the Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Implementation (Homes & Roads) Programme in 2011 and approval in principle support through the grant by the Department of Transport of Local Growth Funding to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership in July 2014. The Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Programme Steering Group agreed in principle in July 2015 that the scheme could be fully supported by the Homes & Roads programme grant in the event that Local Growth Funding was delayed or not confirmed.
- 6.13 An Equalities Impact Assessment has identified the change in location and convenience of disabled parking spaces as low impact with an action plan prepared to mitigate the effects of the scheme.
- 6.14 Article 6 and Article 1 of the First Schedule of the European Commission on Human Rights has been considered. The scheme has been widely publicised and the opportunity given to comment. All those affected by the Order will be informed by press, public notices and letter as appropriate and will have the right to make representations to the Secretary of State. No person will be deprived of their property or legal right of access. Residential home owners who consider that the value of their property has been affected by physical factors, such as traffic noise, arising from use of the Link Road may be able to make a valid claim under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973.

6.15 In summary, there is a long standing recognition of the need for the Link Road scheme, no obstacles to delivery and it is fully funded It will enable the following key objectives to be achieved:

- 6.15.1 to move the ring road traffic from Clive Road and Barrack Row to the south of the station to integrate the station with the town centre and bus stops;
- 6.15.2 to remove the ring road traffic from the part of Stone Street that separates the Civic Square from the station and bus stops;
- 6.15.4 to provide public realm on old Rathmore Road and Clive Road to give improved streetscape and continuity with the earlier Civic Square works;
- 6.15.5 to improve the southern entrance to the station with a dedicated drop off/pick up facility, taxi rank areas and disabled parking spaces; and
- 6.15.6 to enhance the opportunities for jobs and homes in the town centre.

7. INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

7.1 The following documents are available for public inspection from 9.00 - 17:00 on week days at:

7.1.1 Kent County Council, Main Reception, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ.

7.1.2 Gravesham Borough Council, Main Reception, Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend, Kent DA12 1AU.

7.2 the documents are:

- 7.2.1 the Order and accompanying plan;
- 7.2.2 this Statement of Reasons;
- 7.2.3 Record of Decision 14/000094(b) - 24 July 2015;
- 7.2.4 planning permission GR/12/441 - 14 November 2014;
- 7.2.5 scheme plan - Drawing No. 4300253/000/10 Rev2;
- 7.2.6 report by the Council's Head of Planning Application Group to the Planning Applications Committee - 22 October 2014;
- 7.2.7 Equalities Impact Assessment - 18 May 2015;

- 7.2.8 Road Safety Audit Stage 1 - 2 September 2014;
 - 7.2.9 extracts from the Kent Local Transport Plan (2011-2016) - April 2011;
 - 7.2.10 extracts from Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy - adopted September 2014.
- 7.3 The documents can also be viewed on Kent County Council's web site: visit <http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/roads/road-projects/rathmore-road-improvement-scheme>.

8. CONTACT DETAILS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- 8.1 Interested parties affected by the Order who wish to discuss matters with the Council should contact John Farmer - Project Manager (Major Projects) by either:
- 8.1.1 by telephone on 03000 418181
 - 8.1.2 by e mail to rathmoreroadlink@kent.gov.uk
 - 8.1.3 by post to Kent County Council, Highways, Transportation & Waste, Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XX