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A249 Key Street and Grovehurst Road junction Improvements

To: **Swale Joint Transportation Board – 26 June 2023**

Main Portfolio Area: **Growth, Environment & Transport**

By: **Tim Read, Head of Transportation**

Classification: **For Information**

Ward:

Division: **Swale West and Sittingbourne North**

Summary: Update on the junction improvements on the A249 at Key Street and Grovehurst Road

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Joint Transportation Board will be aware of the previous reports presented on these projects, most recently to the JTB meeting of 27 February 2023.
- 1.2 This report gives an update on the A249 Junction improvement Schemes at:
 - Key Street
 - Grovehurst Road

2 Background

- 2.1 One of the outcomes of the Swale Local plan adopted 2017 was the need to improve the junctions along the A249 at M2J5, Key Street and Grovehurst Road. The improvements would support the delivery of over 6,000 homes in the period 2022 – 2031 identified in the adopted Swale Local Plan, reduce existing congestion and queuing, as well as improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 2.2 A detailed funding bid was submitted and in November 2019, Homes England, the non-departmental public body under MHCLG announced that the bid had been successful and £38.1m of grant funding had been allocated for both junction improvements. A Grant Determination Agreement (GDA) between KCC and Homes England was signed in September 2020. A condition of the GDA is that funding was due to be spent by 31 March 2024, however due to delays in the M2 Junction 5 scheme, which was a condition in the release of the HIF funding, an extension has been granted to 30 November 2024.

- 2.3 Approval to progress these proposals was confirmed following the KCC Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee meeting in March 2020.
- 2.4 The M2 Junction 5 scheme is being delivered by National Highways (formally Highways England). Following a public inquiry, the Secretary of State published a decision approving the project in June 2021. These works are currently under construction and due to be complete in 2025.

3 Current Situation

- 3.1 Systra have been commissioned to undertake the transportation assessments and develop the detailed designs for these schemes.

Key Street

- 3.2 The A249 Key Street junction is a two-bridge oval shaped roundabout junction with slip roads on the southern side and connections to the A249, A2 Keycol Hill, Bobbing Hill, Sheppey Way and Chestnut Street. It serves the A2, village communities, and Sittingbourne town centre.

Grovehurst Road

- 3.3 The A249 Grovehurst Road junction is a double roundabout layout with a single two lane carriageway bridge over the A249 connecting the two. It is the main route for traffic heading towards the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road to the east and Iwade village to the west. The junction also has connections to Grovehurst Road and Swale Way.

4 Scheme Proposals

Key Street

- 4.1 The scheme for Key Street is to improve capacity and safety on the existing Key Street gyratory and to relocate the access to the south bound slip road to the A249 along Chestnut Street. The improvements are considered permitted development, so a planning consent is not required.
- 4.2 Due consideration has been given to the proposed access to the Wises Lane development, granted planning consent by the Secretary of State following an appeal. A new footway/cycleway is to be included along Chestnut Street and the proposals are shown on the scheme plan in Appendix A.
- 4.3 The new roundabout on Chestnut Street is due to be provided as part of the Wises Lane development. The connection onto the A249 from the new roundabout is being delivered as part of the Key Street Improvement works.
- 4.4 The developer's application to discharge was approved on 2 February 2023 (ref 22/500782/SUB condition 25) and their consultants are now progressing with detailed design of the new roundabout. The proposed start date is September 2023, with an anticipated completion date of May 2024.

Grovehurst Road

- 4.5 The scheme for Grovehurst Road is to provide an additional bridge over the A249 creating a full gyratory junction. The pedestrian and cycle facilities include signal controlled crossings within the junction, which have been revised following comments received during the public consultation exercise. The proposals are shown on the scheme plan in Appendix B.
- 4.6 The land required for the gyratory has been safeguarded through voluntary agreement and s106 agreements. Heads of Terms have been agreed and the acquisition is currently being progressed through solicitors.
- 4.7 Planning consent for the scheme was granted on 16 March 2022.
- 4.8 Advance works completed on site include the Ground and Archaeological investigations, which completed in May 2023. Vegetation Clearance works have also been completed ahead of the bird nesting season, under an ecological watching brief. Water Voles were identified on site and have been translocated under a licence obtained from Natural England. Translocation of reptiles from the west side of the scheme was completed in October 2022, whilst translocation of reptiles from the east side began in April 2023 and is due to be completed in June 2023. A Great Crested Newt (GCN) licence has been obtained from Natural England and a reptile mitigation translocation site identified at Iwade Nature Park, where Environmental enhancement works have taken place. These works include the creation of hibernacula, scrub clearance and grassland enhancement.
- 4.9 It is noted that there has been an overlap between the planning application for the KCC Highway Improvements scheme ref SW/21/505738 and the Land east of Iwade development planning ref 19/503974/HYBRID which has a resolution to grant consent subject to signing of the section 106 agreement. To reduce the impact of traffic management on Grovehurst Road, the development access roundabout will be delivered as part of this scheme, with the developer paying for the cost of this work through a Section 278 agreement.
- 4.10 Following a detailed procurement process the build contract has been awarded to Jackson Civil Engineering. The works are due to commence in July 2023.
- 4.11 The project team are currently awaiting confirmation of Traffic Management (TM) permits and Temporary Traffic Regulation Order applications. TM will include a short section of single lane running on both the north and southbound of the A249 for the safe construction of the new bridge. Once confirmed, further detail will be provided on the TM arrangements for the delivery of the scheme.

5 The A249 and interface with National Highways and the M2J5 Project

- 5.1 The A249 from the M2 to Sheerness is managed under a Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) Contract with National Highways. Any amendments, improvements or additions to the A249 that influence the route will be subject to agreement by National Highways and the DBFO contractor.

- 5.2 Discussions have been held with representatives of National Highways and the contractor for the M2 Junction 5 improvement scheme to consider programme and traffic management implications for the delivery of these projects within the funding timeframe. Please see Location Plan (Appendix C).
- 5.3 With significant Traffic Management and diversions in place for the first half of 2023, the decision has been taken to delay the works involving traffic management on the A249 at Grovehurst Road until July 2023.

6 Programme

- 6.1 An interim scheme to install traffic signals at the junction of the A249 north bound exit slip road and the Key Street Gyratory was completed on 7 August 2020.
- 6.2 The current programme is;

Key Street

Detailed design documents issued	Completed May 2023
Procurement	June to October 2023
Construction of Chestnut St roundabout (by others)	September 2023 to May 2024
Contract award	November 2023
Commence works	Early 2024
Works completed	July 2024

Grovehurst Road

Advanced ecological reptile translocation	April 2023 to June 2023
Contract award (main works)	Completed May 2023
Commence works	July 2023
Works completed	September 2024

- 6.3 Consideration has been given to reduce the impact that construction works will have on the A249 and the local highway network. The timing and traffic management for both the improvements at Key Street and Grovehurst Road works has been planned following discussions with the KCC Streetworks Co-ordinator, National Highways and adjacent developments. There will be regular discussions between these parties to review the impact of the works on the network.

7 Communications

- 7.1 A public consultation has been undertaken. The consultation ran for eight weeks from Wednesday 2 December 2020 until Tuesday 26 January 2021. Details of the consultation and the subsequent reports are available to view via the following link: www.kent.gov.uk/a249swalejunctionimprovements.

- 7.2 Separate Communications and Engagement Plans are being developed for both schemes. This will involve informing residents, road users, Parish Councils and key stakeholders of the proposals and timescales for each of the phases of the project. A full time Public Liaison Officer from Jackson will be working on the project to assist in the development and delivery of the Communications and Engagement Plan, for the Grovehurst Road Improvements
- 7.3 Notification of the roadworks, including traffic management, and temporary road closures necessary for the safe construction of the works will be provided prior to commencement of construction using temporary variable message signs, and by a letter drop to local residents and businesses.
- 7.4 A steering group has been established and meets on a bi-monthly basis. The high-level meetings provide key stakeholders with a project update and review of key risks in delivery of the project and ensure the outcome of the delivery partners.

8 Financial

Key Street

- 8.1 The cost estimate for the improvements to Key Street is £5.8m.
- 8.2 Contributions of £0.9m have been collected from the developments at:
- High St Newington, planning reference 16/501266
 - Spirit of Sittingbourne, planning reference 14/505440
 - Crown Quay, planning reference 16/507877
 - Wises Lane, planning reference 17/505711
 - Pond Farm 19/501332
- 8.3 The balance of £5m being funded by the Housing Infrastructure Fund.
- 8.4 The new roundabout on Chestnut Street is due to be provided as part of the Wises Lane development.

Grovehurst Road

- 8.5 The cost estimate for the improvements to Grovehurst Road is £32.8m and is being fully funded by the Housing Infrastructure Fund. The successful tender price is in line with the budget allowance.
- 8.6 The current cost estimate is robust and is based on outline proposals that have been reviewed by external cost consultants. It includes:
- construction costs
 - budget estimates from the utility companies
 - project management costs
 - allowances for contingencies, inflation, and risk
- 8.7 It is anticipated that further s106 developer contributions will be available to cover any shortfall that may materialise. The cost of the new roundabout on

Grovehurst Road north will be paid by the developer, through a Section 278 agreement.

Recovery Strategy

8.8 As part of the HIF funding agreement there is a recovery strategy that will claw back developer contributions from developments that have a traffic impact on the Key Street and Grovehurst Road junctions and that would have been expected to contribute to the improvements. There is an expectation that this could raise in the region of £8.0m that will be used for the purposes of investing into much needed infrastructure necessary to mitigate against further future housing within the Borough of Swale.

9 Legal implications

9.1 This Report is for information only and hence there are no legal implications for the Board.

10 Conclusions

10.1 The successful award of the Homes England HIF funding, the commitments to make all the land available and match funding from s106 agreements will allow the highway improvements of the A249 Junctions at Key Street and Grovehurst Road to be delivered, in support of the Swale Local Plan; Bearing Fruits 2017.

11 Recommendations

For Information

Future Meeting if applicable: As necessary prior to construction.	Date: TBA
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Appendices

Appendix A	Key Street General Arrangement Overview - Drawing no. GB01T22H76-DWG-000-02 rev T0
Appendix B	Grovehurst Road Scheme Plan – Drawing no. 109617-dwg-101-01 rev P6
Appendix C	Location Plan