

# BRIEFING NOTE

## Sturry Station: Context on station upgrade and line resignalling

**To:** Richard Shelton, Major Programmes HWT, KCC  
**From:** Mark Welch, Transport Strategy EPE, KCC  
**Re:** Sturry A28 Link-Road  
**Date:** 12 April 2021

### 1. Purpose of the note

- 1.1. To provide an update and look-ahead on the viability and timing of a potential upgrade to Sturry Station and associated works to upgrade signalling of the Canterbury West to Minster line section. This information will support case-making of the Sturry A28 Link-Road and responding to any citation of addressing the National Rail infrastructure as an alternative to the link-road.

### 2. Sturry Station

- 2.1. Sturry station has off-set platforms, with the Canterbury-bound (up direction) platform sat to the west of the Sturry A28 level-crossing, and the Minster-bound platform sat to the east of the level-crossing. Each platform is sufficient for 4-car train services stopping within the confines of the platform length. Longer services, due to the position of the platforms relative to the level-crossing, overhang the platforms and across the crossing, requiring its closure for not only transit of trains along the lines but for the duration of their dwell-times at Sturry station.
- 2.2. The frequency of the level-crossing closure and its duration results in congestion on the A28. KCC has commissioned Network Rail to investigate the case for running more services than operated prior to the introduction of the Emergency Recovery Measurement Agreements between Government and Southeastern in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, there is the potential in the future for the A28 to suffer further delays due to the level-crossing if neither the National Rail infrastructure nor the link-road are delivered.
- 2.3. To resolve the impact of trains overhanging the platform and causing prolonged level crossing closures, the station platforms would require extending. Whether the works would be capable of delivery through Network Rail's permitted development rights is unknown. There are some potential challenges

associated with whether room exists for standard width platforms between the rail track area and land ownership boundary of properties adjoining the rail corridor. Additionally, nearby local crossings may be impacted – namely Milner Court public level crossing serving a public right of way, and there may be challenges associated with providing alternative means of escape from platforms on their new section if required to meet rail safety standards.

- 2.4. Based on recent experience with other Network Rail capital projects, the potential cost of the platform extension works could lie in the region of £5m (KCC estimate based on recent costed examples). The likely duration of such a project is circa 3 to 4 years from inception to delivery, meaning Sturry station upgrade may be deliverable by 2025. However this of course is dependent on the actual complexity of the scheme and the need for accompanying consents and the risks those bring to the process.
- 2.5. Furthermore, the cost estimate given currently overlooks the wider context of the line section's signalling and consequently, the context given below in section concerning that future programme of works and its potential scope is important for understanding the likely timings and wider funding challenge for addressing the Sturry station and level crossing constraint.

### **3. Line section signalling upgrade**

- 3.1. Sturry station lies on a section of line that has disproportionately long signal sections relative to other parts of the Kent network. Network Rail has a planned programme of resignalling works for Control Period 7 running 2024-2029, which is currently expected to include coverage of the Sturry section of line. Known as East Kent Re-Signalling Phase 3 (phase 1 and phase 2 having been completed in Control Periods 4 and 5 respectively), the project will look to modernise and, where the business case can be made and funding found, deliver performance improvements.
- 3.2. For the line section that Sturry station sits on, KCC with the DfT commissioned Network Rail to investigate at a pre-GRIP level of feasibility the case for the East Kent Signalling Phase 3 works to deliver a signalling upgrade such that an increased frequency of train services could operate on the line – the current specific study examining the case for an additional High Speed train in the peak hours and off peak hours, fast between Ramsgate and Canterbury West (so non-stopping Sturry).
- 3.3. The resignalling works are relevant to the Sturry station upgrade option, as the station works would require changes to the signalling of the line and would also need to be designed to accommodate train service outcomes that the East Kent Re-signalling Phase 3 could deliver. There is also the potential impact of the station scheme on adjacent local level crossing. All these aspects mean the practical reality is that the Sturry Station scheme would likely be subsumed into the Phase 3 re-signalling programme.

- 3.4. Doing so would enable Network Rail to co-ordinate and plan signalling works, civils and their potential required closures, and works to the local level crossings amongst the Phase 3 works which will by default require significant works to signals across the whole line section along with addressing the impact of the over 70 level crossings between Ashford and Ramsgate.
- 3.5. The scale of the Phase 3 works is likely to be commensurate in cost terms with the former phases, and KCC's recent work with Network Rail suggests a cost of up to £200m (albeit this is pre-GRIP estimating and consequently at risk of significant change). Its delivery date is currently estimated at circa 2027 in Control Period 7.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1. There is scope to consider upgrading of Sturry station to reduce its impact on the A28. Whether those specific works would be required is going to be subject to KCC's success in delivery of the A28 in the first place, and then the remaining traffic impacts post link-road implementation on those remaining movements through the Sturry level crossing.
- 4.2. Successful delivery of Sturry station works is highly likely to be tied to achieving its incorporation into a funded scope of works for East Kent Re-Signalling Phase 3. The Phase 3 programme has a current expected delivery date of 2027; however Control Period 7 funding is not yet set by Government and given the Covid-19 pandemic effects on the rail industry there are likely to be some risks around its scope and delivery.
- 4.3. Given these timescales, there is no prospect that the scheme could be delivered prior to occupation of the consented development that is contributing to the link-road proposals, or prior to the link-road delivery subject to it obtaining planning permission.