A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme

Public Consultation Brochure

Public consultation period:
15 September to 19 October 2020

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Kent County Council
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Contents

1 Introduction

Welcome to Kent County Council's (KCC) public consultation on the A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme.

The A229 Blue Bell Hill (referred to as Blue Bell Hill going forward) is a section of dual carriageway which runs between Junction 6 of the M20 in Maidstone and Junction 3 of the M2 at Blue Bell Hill village. This section of road is a key link between the M20 and M2, and between Maidstone and Medway.

Road users of Blue Bell Hill often experience high volumes of traffic which result in significant congestion issues and concerns about road safety. These congestion issues are likely to be made worse by future housing developments in the surrounding area and the new Lower Thames Crossing, which will both generate additional traffic.

Improvements to Blue Bell Hill are therefore required to improve journey time reliability, reduce delays and improve road safety across this section of the road network.

This consultation provides details of three options for improvements to address these issues. They involve a range of different improvement and rearranging works to the roundabouts and junctions, as identified in the map to the right.

This document contains some terms that you may be unfamiliar with, therefore a glossary has been provided on page 24 to give further explanation. Terms that are included in the glossary are indicated in blue font.

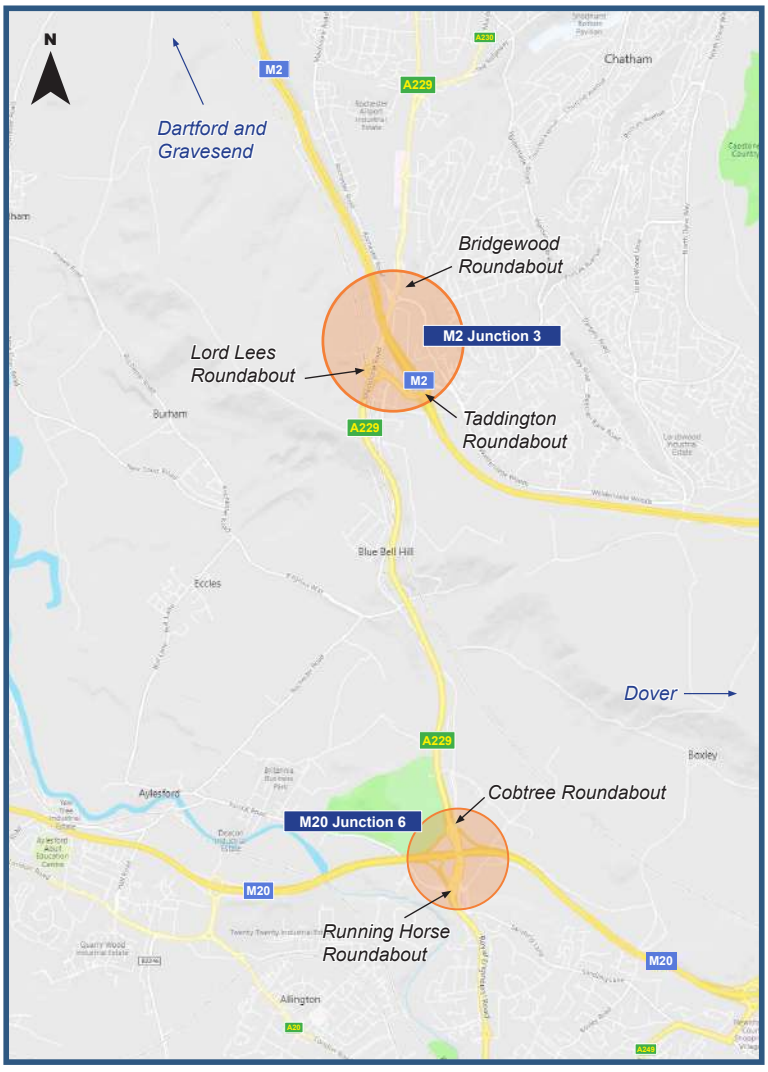


Figure 1 Map of Blue Bell Hill

2 Purpose of this Consultation

This consultation is taking place at an early stage in the project and has two purposes. Firstly, we would like to explain why we feel the scheme is necessary and share our early design options with residents, stakeholders and the travelling public.

Secondly, it provides an opportunity to seek feedback on these options and the scheme as a whole. This feedback will be used to help determine which option should be progressed or if a combination of works from across each of the options should be taken forward instead.

3 Project Background and Context

What is the background to the scheme?

Blue Bell Hill is a section of dual carriageway. It is a key link between the towns of Maidstone and Medway and provides the shortest route between the M2 and M20. It forms part of the Major Road Network (MRN) identified by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Figure 2 Location of Blue Bell Hill within a wider context.

A feasibility study has been undertaken to assess the key routes in Kent against the Major Road Network objectives. This study ranked the A229 as the second worst section of A road in the county against criteria of traffic levels, delays, collisions and journey time reliability. It also determined that the M20 and M2 junctions have a significant role in the delays and collisions on Blue Bell Hill, indicating the need to undertake improvement works here.

What influences traffic on the A229 Blue Bell Hill?

Traffic on the Blue Bell Hill is made worse by congestion at the following junctions:

- **The M2 Junction 3:** comprised of the Taddington (over M2) and Lord Lees (over A229) Roundabouts.
- **The M20 Junction 6:** comprised of the Cobtree (north of the M20) and Running Horse Roundabouts (south of the M20).

Blue Bell Hill currently sees 68,000 vehicles a day and it is well recognised that this stretch of dual carriageway along with its associated M20 and M2 junctions are frequently congested as a result of high levels of traffic. This also leads to frequent congestion and queuing on the M20 and M2 motorways.

According to traffic modelling, almost 70% of the traffic on Blue Bell Hill is for longer strategic journeys and the remaining 30% is local traffic, although this varies slightly by time of the day as shown in Table 1 below. Strategic traffic is classified as trips between the M2 and M20, whereas local traffic is classified as trips travelling between Maidstone and Medway.

Type of Traffic	AM	PM
Strategic (between M2 and M20)	69.5%	69%
Local (between Maidstone and Medway)	30.5%	31%

Table 1 Local versus Strategic Traffic on A229
Source: Strategic Modelling TN01- Lower Thames Area Cordon Model Network Coverage (2020)

What previous roadworks have taken place in the area?

This stretch of Blue Bell Hill has had improvements in the past, including the reconfiguration of the M2 Junction 3 as part of the major upgrade and widening of the M2 which opened in 2003.

In more recent years, we have developed a number of small-scale schemes to address the traffic issues on Blue Bell Hill. However, none of these have been progressed, aside from a scheme completed in 2014 to realign the Running Horse Roundabout (M20 Junction 6). This scheme aimed to address its poor collision history. The remaining schemes have not progressed because when factors such as cost, disruption to the road network and lack of long-term improvements to congestion were considered, the benefits of each scheme were quickly outweighed.

4 The Need and Benefits

Why is the scheme needed?

This scheme is needed to tackle high levels of congestion, concerns regarding road safety, poor air quality and to support local growth and additional traffic from the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC).

These aspects are explored in more detail below:

Reduce congestion

As mentioned earlier in this brochure, Blue Bell Hill is part of the Major Road Network (MRN) and serves as a key link between the two Strategic Road Network (SRN) roads of M2 and M20. These also provide onward connectivity to the M25, the Dartford Crossing and in time the LTC. It is also an important route for local traffic between the Medway towns and Maidstone.

Blue Bell Hill and the M20 and M2 junctions are frequently congested, which leads to congestion and queueing on the motorways.

Road safety

Between the years of 2014 to 2019, data from Kent Police showed there were 309 collisions on the main junctions connected to Blue Bell Hill. There were:

- Two fatal collisions
- 38 serious collisions (includes paralysis, fractures and severe lacerations)
- 269 slight collisions (includes whiplash, sprains and minor lacerations).

This data identified two accident hotspots:

- The M20 Junction 6 Running Horse Roundabout
- The A229 northbound exit slip road to Lord Lees Roundabout.

The Running Horse Roundabout has consistently featured as one of the worst collision sites in the county over the last 10 years (see Figures 3 and 4).

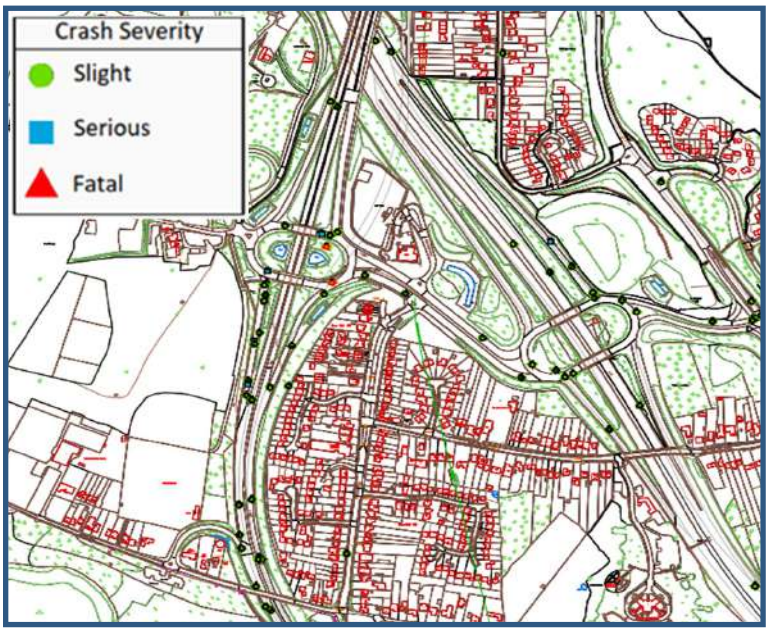


Figure 3 Collision sites between 2016-2018 at M2 Junction 3
Source: KCC Transport Intelligence team

The scheme therefore intends to improve road safety and reduce these collision rates across this stretch of the A229 and its junctions with the M20 and M2.

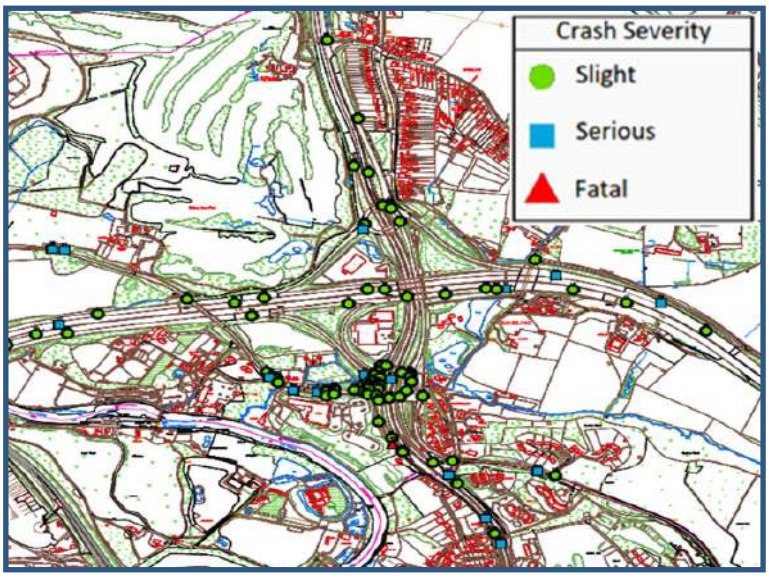


Figure 4 Collision sites between 2016-2018 at the M20 Junction 6
Source: KCC Transport Intelligence team

Improve air quality

The M20 Junction 6 sits within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) that also covers the Maidstone urban area. The annual average level of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and 24-hour average level of fine particulate matter (PM_{10}) are high which means the area is unlikely to meet national air quality objectives.

Combustion within vehicle engines results in high levels of NO_2 and PM_{10} which can be detrimental to human health as they can irritate our airways and lungs and often worsen respiratory conditions such as asthma. High levels of NO_2 also negatively impacts the environment by damaging ecosystems, reducing crop yields and intensifying the rate of climate change.

Maidstone Borough Council produced a Low Emissions Strategy in 2017 that aims to improve air quality within the area and ensure that the council complies with relevant air quality legislation. A key focus of this strategy is on reducing emissions produced by vehicles.

This scheme aims to reduce congestion, which will improve air quality.

Support local growth

The number of vehicles using Blue Bell Hill is expected to increase significantly with local growth and once the new Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) is opened in 2027.

Future forecast data indicates population growth of around 20-30% in the area around Blue Bell Hill between 2016 and 2041 (see Figure 5 on page 9).

Additionally, significant growth in jobs and households is predicted across the area, including in the three local boroughs of Maidstone, Medway, and Tonbridge and Malling. Figure 6 on page 10 shows the total number of jobs and households for each area by 2041.

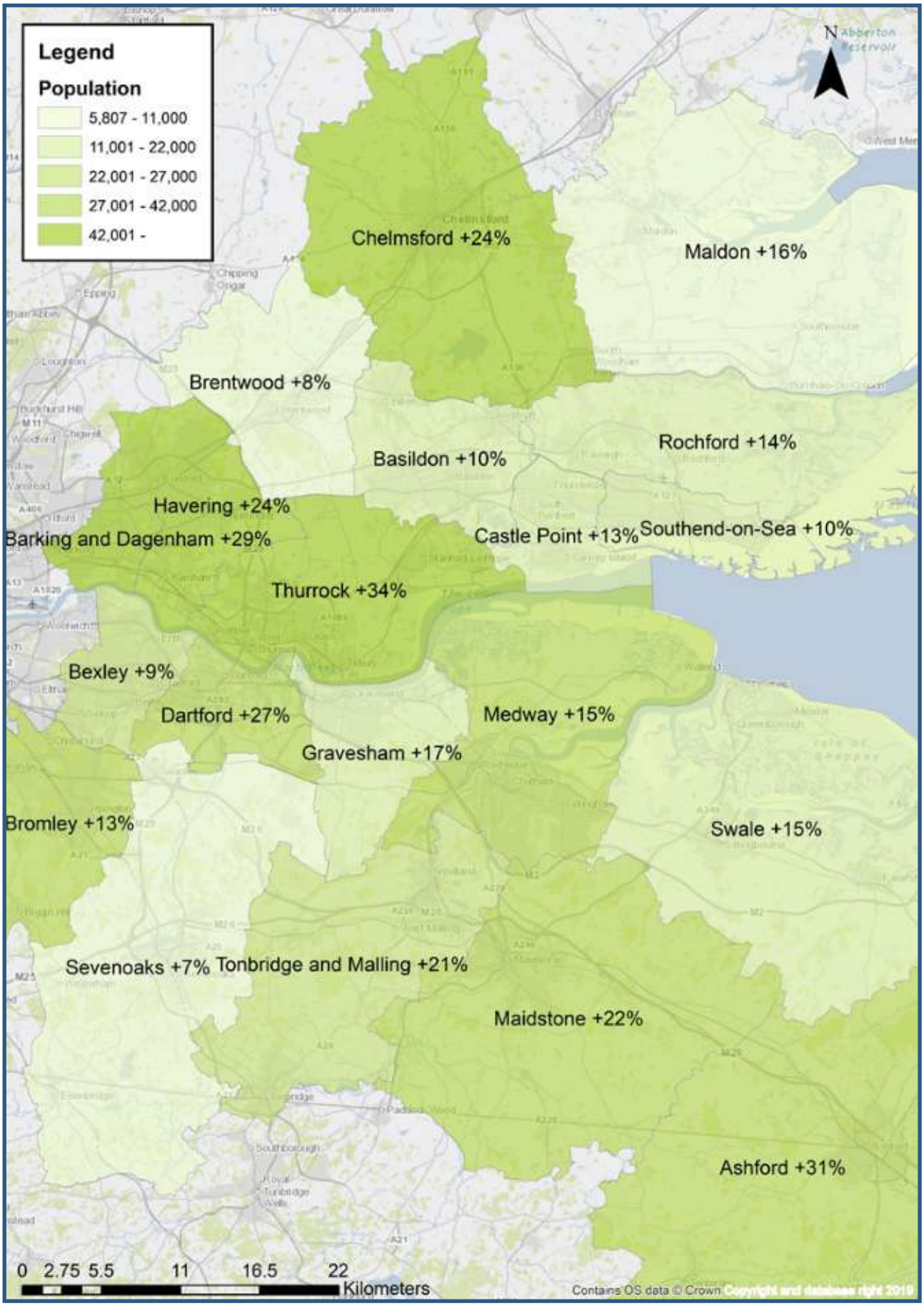


Figure 5 Forecast Population Growth for 2016-2041
Source: NTEM (2020)

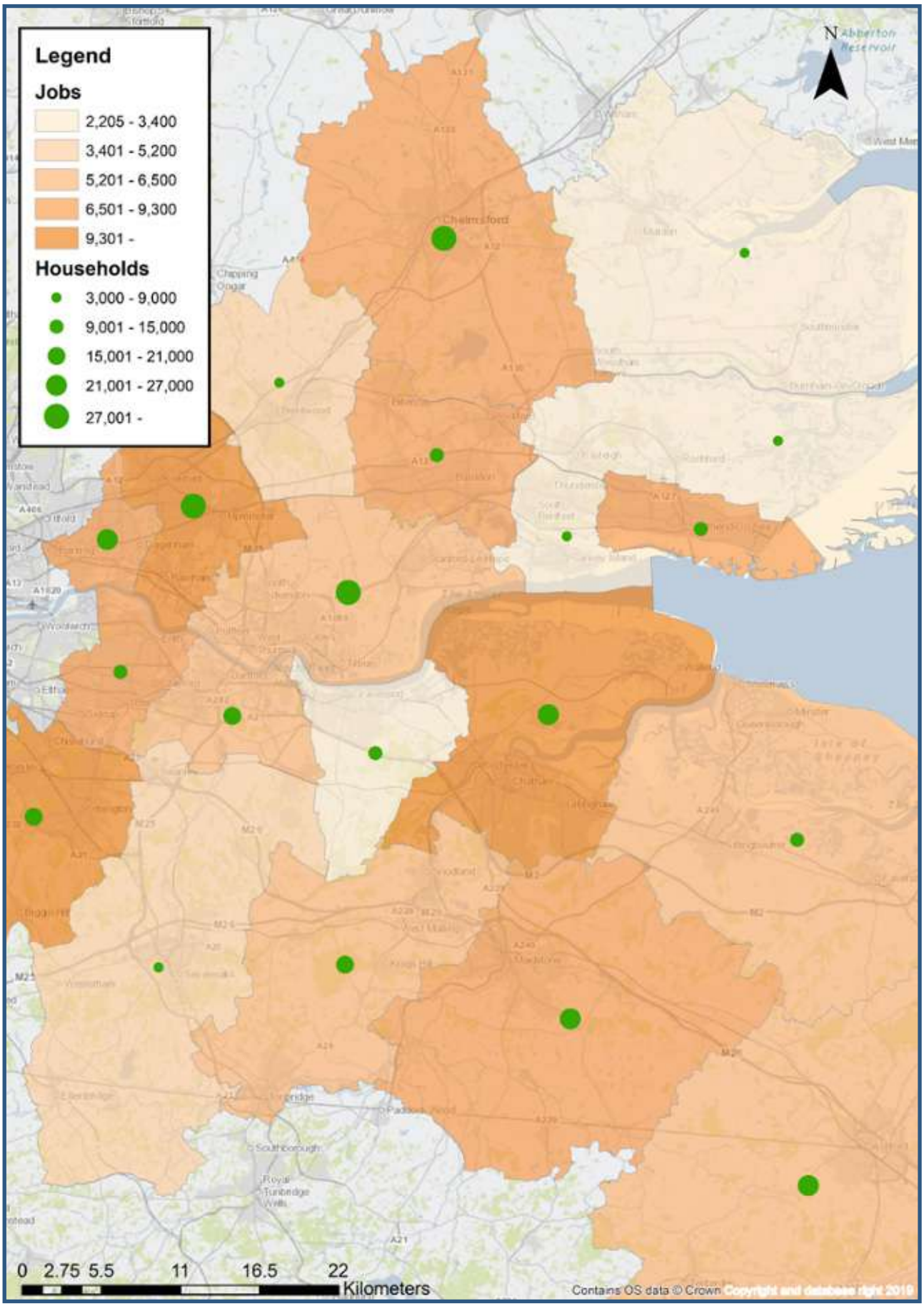


Figure 6 Forecast Jobs and Households Growth for 2016-2041
Source: NTEM (2020)- Taken from OAR

Medway, Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling's Local Plans also indicate large increases in housing by 2031 as demonstrated in the figure below.

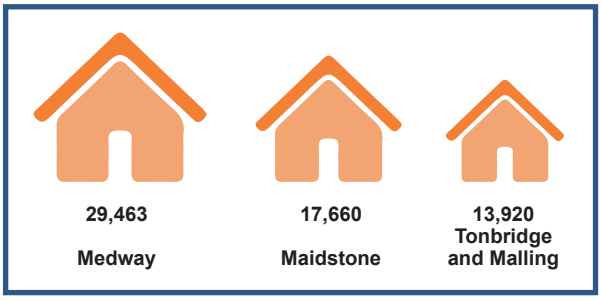


Figure 7 Number of new homes by 2031
Source: Borough Local Plans

In addition to this localised growth, Highways England's LTC, a proposed new road connecting Kent and Essex through a tunnel beneath the River Thames, will be another source of growth.

LTC will be the biggest road project in the UK since the M25. More information on the project is available from Highways England's website: https://highwaysengland.co.uk/lower-thames-crossing-home.

With LTC in place, some traffic will move away from the Dartford Crossing to the LTC scheme, thereby increasing the traffic on Blue Bell Hill as vehicles need to transfer between the motorways. Modelling undertaken for LTC has identified a significant increase in vehicles per day using Blue Bell Hill, affecting both the northbound and southbound stretches of the road as shown in Table 2 below.

	Direction	Vehicle Counts (2016) AM	LTC Model Forecast Vehicle Increase (2027) AM
Blue Bell Hill	Northbound	3,300 vehicles	+501 to +1,000 Passenger Car Units (PCU)
	Southbound	4,400 vehicles	+101 to +250 PCU
	Total	7,700 vehicles	+602 to +1,250 PCU

Table 2 Predicted increase in traffic count at Blue Bell Hill anticipated as a result of LTC
Source: ITT; Strategic Modelling TN01- Cordon Model Network Coverage (2020)

Congestion issues will therefore likely worsen because of planned developments and LTC. This scheme is required to improve capacity on Blue Bell Hill and its associated junctions to allow it to accommodate the increase in future traffic.

What is the A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme aiming to achieve?

The aim of the scheme is to find a solution that addresses these issues through a set of objectives.

A review of relevant national, regional and local policies has been undertaken to ensure our scheme objectives align and to confirm whether existing policies and programmes support our proposals.

Scheme objectives

- To improve journey time reliability at M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges of the A229
- To reduce congestion along the route
- To enable the local area to develop in accordance with population and housing growth predicated under Local Plans
- To reduce the impact of additional traffic from the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) and allow LTC to maximise potential benefits it can provide for the Kent area
- To improve road safety and address known accident hotspots
- To make best use of existing assets including land and highways
- To provide suitable routes and facilities for public transport
- To provide safe and improved routes for pedestrians and cyclists
- To improve air quality, particularly in the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
- To protect and enhance the local environment.

How is the scheme being funded?

Funding for the scheme is yet to be confirmed and will be determined by the outcome of the next stage of the funding bid process which is due to be submitted to the DfT before the end of the year.

If our bid is successful, it is anticipated that 85% of funding for the scheme will come from the DfT's Major Road Network funding pot for Large Local Major Schemes and the remaining 15% of funds will need to come from other sources (e.g. developer contributions and government funding opportunities). At this stage the scheme is anticipated to cost around £142m.

5 The Design Proposals

What work has been undertaken on the scheme to date?

Over the last few months, we have undertaken an exercise to identify possible solutions to address the current and future traffic issues at the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges of Blue Bell Hill.

This involved an initial ideas generation workshop in June 2020 to develop a range of possible works that could be used within options. This was followed by another workshop to develop some of these options. A sifting process was completed, which involved the use of traffic modelling to determine the potential impact of these different works to traffic levels.

The works were also assessed against criteria including acceptability, cost, demand and feasibility as laid out in guidance set by the Department for Transport's Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST).

The works that performed best were combined into three options to be taken forward and are included within this consultation.

What are the three options currently being proposed?

This scheme is still in an early phase of design and therefore further modelling and assessment work will be undertaken on each of these options. They are not definitive, and the final selected option could involve combinations of works currently included within any of the three options.

Each of the options involves a range of different improvements and rearranging works to the roundabouts at the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges.

There are some similarities between all three options as shown in the option comparison table below:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Northern end of Blue Bell Hill			
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		✓	✓
Southern end of Blue Bell Hill			
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			✓
Along the length of the A229 Blue Bell Hill			
Widen the A229 to three lanes when travelling southbound towards Maidstone (between Lord Lees and Cobtree Roundabouts)	✓	✓	✓

Table 3 Comparison of works within options

Design Option 1

As shown in the option comparison table above, some of the elements of Option 1 (listed below) are also included in Options 2 and 3.

At the northern end of Blue Bell Hill, proposed upgrades around **Lord Lees** and **Taddington Roundabouts** aim to **improve journey time reliability**.

They include:

- Widening the road between Taddington and Lord Lees Roundabouts to four lanes to increase capacity, allowing two left turn lanes to be used to provide direct access to the slip road for the A229 heading southbound, towards Maidstone.
- Improving the slip road at the Lord Lees Roundabout to provide easier entry onto the A229 southbound.
- Adding a new slip road onto the M2 (westbound towards London) from the A229 immediately after Lord Lees Roundabout. This would reduce traffic on Lord Lees and Taddington Roundabouts.
    - This would require the closure of the slip road from Lord Lees Roundabout onto the A229 northbound to Bridgewood Roundabout. Some re-routing of traffic would be required and therefore Walderslade Woods Junction would be converted to a roundabout, which would allow for traffic to navigate the junction more easily and reduce delays.
- Upgrading the current signalised junction at Taddington Roundabout through:
    - Dedicated lanes for traffic travelling from the M2 eastbound (towards the coast) to the A229 via a new bridge over the M2, reducing the amount of traffic signals and allowing traffic to pass through the junction more quickly.
    - A separate left turn lane from the M2 westbound to the A229, allowing traffic from the M2 to run freely and avoid traffic signals. This will enable traffic to clear the junction more quickly and reduce delays.

At the southern end of Blue Bell Hill, works are focussed on the **Running Horse** and **Cobtree Roundabouts** to improve capacity and safety.

They include:

- Enlarging the Running Horse Roundabout to the west, on the Village Hotel side. This would enable traffic signals to be added to some arms of the roundabout, which would generate gaps in the traffic and allow traffic on non-signalised arms to enter the roundabout more easily. This would address the accident hotspot and improve pedestrian safety through dedicated crossings.
- Improving the slip road onto the M20 eastbound at the Cobtree Roundabout to avoid traffic backing up onto the A229 southbound. This would improve journey time reliability.

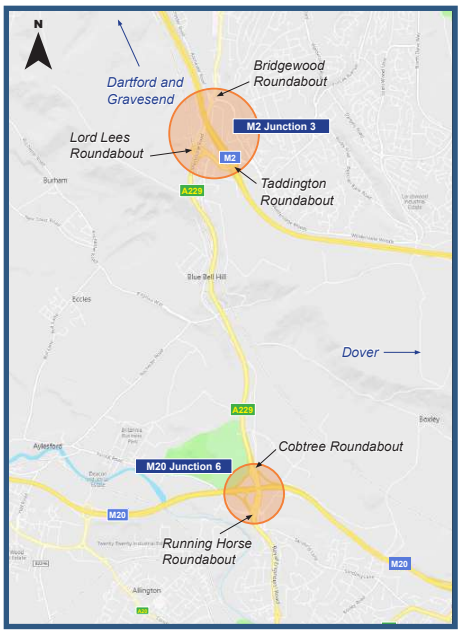


Figure 8 Plan showing location of proposals

Along the length of the A229 Blue Bell Hill works are focussed on **increasing capacity**.

They include:

- Widening the carriageway between Lord Lees and Cobtree Roundabouts, travelling southbound in the direction of Maidstone, to three lanes.

Design Option 2

As shown in the option comparison table, some of the elements for Option 2 (listed below) are also included in Options 1 and 3.

At the northern end of Blue Bell Hill, proposed upgrades around **Bridgewood** and **Lord Lees Roundabouts** with minimal works at **Taddington Roundabout** aim to **improve journey time reliability.**

They include:

- Adding a new slip road onto the M2 westbound (towards London) from the A229 immediately after Lord Lees Roundabout. This would reduce traffic on Lord Lees and Taddington Roundabouts.
    - This would require the closure of the slip road from Lord Lees Roundabout onto the A229 northbound to the Bridgewood Roundabout. Some re-routing of traffic would be required and therefore Walderslade Woods Junction would be converted to a roundabout. This would allow traffic to navigate the junction more easily and reduce delays.
- Adding a new slip road from the M2 eastbound (towards the coast) to a new junction configuration at Bridgewood Roundabout. This would include enlarging the current roundabout and providing a dedicated lane from the M2 slip road onto the A229 southbound (towards Maidstone).
    - This would require the A229 southbound under Lord Lees Roundabout to be widened to two lanes.
- Adding a separate left turn lane from the M2 westbound to the A229 at the Taddington Roundabout. This would enable traffic from the M2 to run freely and avoid traffic signals at the junction, allowing traffic to clear the junction quicker and reduce delays.

At the southern end of Blue Bell Hill, proposed upgrades are focussed on **Running Horse** and **Cobtree Roundabouts** to **improve capacity and safety**.

These are the same works proposed as part of Option 1 (southern end).

They include:

- Enlarging the Running Horse Roundabout to the west, on the Village Hotel side. This would enable traffic signals to be added to some arms of the roundabout, which would generate gaps in the traffic and allow traffic on non-signalised arms to enter the roundabout more easily. This would address the accident hotspot and improve pedestrian safety through dedicated crossings.
- Improving the slip road onto the M20 eastbound at the Cobtree Roundabout to avoid traffic backing up onto the A229 southbound. This would improve journey time reliability.

Figure 9 Plan showing location of proposals

Along the length of the A229 Blue Bell Hill works are focussed on **increasing capacity**.

They include:

- Widening the carriageway between Lord Lees and Cobtree Roundabouts, travelling southbound in the direction of Maidstone, to three lanes.

Design Option 3

As shown in the option comparison table, some of the elements for Option 3 (listed below) are also included in Options 1 and 2.

At the northern end of Blue Bell Hill, proposed upgrades around **Bridgewood** and **Lord Lees Roundabouts** with minimal works at **Taddington Roundabout** aim to **improve journey time reliability**.

These are the same works proposed as part of Option 2 (northern end).

They include:

- Adding a new slip road onto the M2 westbound (towards London) from the A229 immediately after Lord Lees Roundabout. This would reduce traffic on Lord Lees and Taddington Roundabouts.
    - This would require the closure of the slip road from Lord Lees Roundabout onto the A229 northbound to the Bridgewood Roundabout. Some re-routing of traffic would be required and therefore Walderslade Woods Junction would be converted to a roundabout. This would allow traffic to navigate the junction more easily and reduce delays.
- Adding a new slip road from the M2 eastbound (travelling towards the coast) to a new junction configuration at Bridgewood Roundabout. This would include enlarging the current roundabout and providing a dedicated lane from the M2 slip road onto the A229 southbound (towards Maidstone).
    - This would require the A229 southbound under Lord Lees Roundabout to be widened to two lanes.
- Adding a separate left turn lane from the M2 westbound to the A229 at the Taddington Roundabout. This would enable traffic from the M2 to run freely and avoid traffic signals at the junction, allowing traffic to clear the junction more quickly and reduce delays.

At the southern end of Blue Bell Hill, works are focussed on **Running Horse** and **Cobtree Roundabouts** to **improve journey time reliability**.

They include:

- Creating a new grade separated junction, using the Forstal Road Bridge as one of the bridges. A ‘grade separated junction’ is where traffic comes off one road at one level and onto another at a different level, as at the M20 Junction 7. This has the potential of removing traffic wanting to get onto and off the M20 from both the Cobtree and Running Horse Roundabouts.

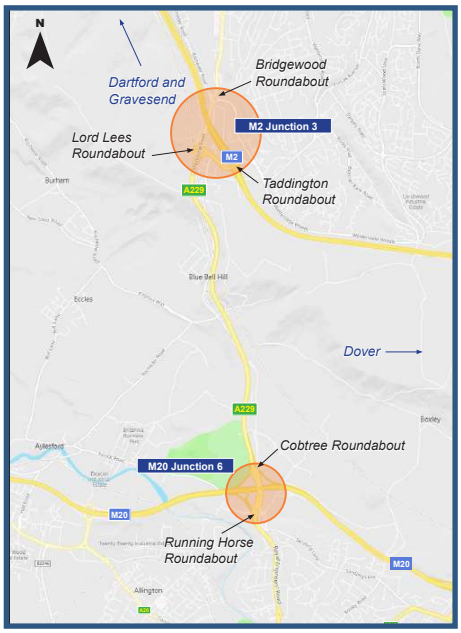


Figure 10 Plan showing location of proposals

Along the length of the A229 Blue Bell Hill works are focussed on **increasing capacity.**

They include:

- Widening the carriageway between Lord Lees and Cobtree Roundabouts, travelling southbound in the direction of Maidstone, to three lanes.

6 Environmental Impact

What will be considered within the development of the selected option?

As we are in the early design phase, the environmental impact of the three options is in the process of being identified. However, the following information summarises what we currently understand, including the potential impacts, and the further reports and studies to be completed.

This work will confirm the extent of potential impacts under each environmental area for all of the options as the project progresses. This will inform the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that is currently being prepared for the scheme. As we develop our proposals, we will ensure that we share further details about the environmental impact with the public.

Blue Bell Hill sits within or nearby to several designated areas (protected areas) including:

- Environment Agency flood zone
- The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) e.g. Wouldham to Detling Escarpment
- Areas of Ancient Woodland e.g. immediately south and west of Lord Lees Roundabout
- A Special Area of Conservation (SAC) e.g. North Downs Woodlands
- Four scheduled monuments:
  - Cistercian Abbey at Boxley
  - White Horse Stone
  - Aylesford, Little Kit's Coty House Megalithic Tomb
  - Kit's Coty House Long Barrow
- Several listed buildings:
  - The Old Farmhouse
  - St Andrew's Chapel
  - Park House
  - Allington Castle
  - Barn at Boxley Abbey

Air quality

There is potential for increased amounts of dust during the construction period, which could impact residents. Dust levels will be dependent on the works area and weather conditions on the day of construction. However, these impacts would be mitigated by best practice measures during construction (e.g. dust suppression measures).

Once the works have been completed, it is expected that local air quality would improve due to reduced congestion, including within the Air Quality Management Area around the southern junctions. Detailed modelling will take place in the coming months to help determine the best performing option from an air quality perspective.

Noise and vibration

There could be temporary noise and vibration impacts during the construction period for residents closest to the proposed works areas. Appropriate measures will be used to mitigate these.

Detailed modelling will be used to help determine the best performing option from a post-construction noise perspective.

Biodiversity

There is potential for protected species to be present, nearby to the proposed works for each option. A Habitat Survey will be undertaken to confirm the presence or absence of protected ecological species. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will also be undertaken.

Landscape and visual effects

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers most of the scheme area. Residents nearby to the road and users of Public Rights of Way (PROW) closest to the proposed works may experience a change in views. A Landscape Strategy is being developed to mitigate potential impacts and enhance the environment where possible. This will be shared as the scheme progresses.

Cultural heritage

There is potential for the Cistercian Abbey at Boxley, a scheduled monument in close proximity to the proposed M20 slip road widening (for Options 1 and 2), to be impacted. This could include an impact to the surroundings of the scheduled monument given the close proximity to the new slip road. Further design development and cultural heritage studies would aim to mitigate any potential impacts. A review of Listed Buildings and other known heritage assets would form part of these studies.

Sustainable forms of transport

This project presents an opportunity to encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of transport. The significant traffic congestion currently experienced on Blue Bell Hill results in poor journey time reliability. This in turn reduces the attractiveness of using public transport such as the Arriva route 101 bus that runs between Maidstone and Gillingham.

The appeal of using the National Cycle Route 17 and PROW that connect the towns of Maidstone and Medway are also reduced by these high levels of congestion and associated poor air quality.

Road drainage and the water environment

There is potential for impacts to the watercourse that runs beneath Blue Bell Hill at Running Horse Roundabout. Further design development, flood risk and water quality studies would aim to reduce this potential impact.

Other environmental topics

A review of local geology, soils and material assets, waste and climate topics for each of the options will also be undertaken and will form part of the EIA.

7 Equality Analysis

To help ensure that we are meeting our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 we have prepared an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for the proposals put forward in this consultation.

An EqIA is a tool to assess the impact any proposals would have on the protected characteristics: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race, religion, and carer's responsibilities. The EqIA is available to view online at kent.gov.uk/a229bluebellhill or on request.

The scheme will deliver positive impacts through improved pedestrian and cycle facilities and improvements to journey time reliability for traffic and public transport. It will also improve air quality, particularly in the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

The scheme will provide temporary negative impacts during construction due to changes in access to property and bus stops. Liaison will take place with bus operators to mitigate issues from changing bus stop locations. The construction will be planned to ensure properties are accessible at all times. It is not expected to have any long-term adverse impact.

8 Have Your Say

Why is my feedback important?

This consultation is taking place alongside a wider assessment exercise to understand which of the three options is most suitable to be progressed and developed as the preferred option for the A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme or if a combination of works included within the different options should be used.

We want to understand and incorporate the views of local residents, stakeholders and the travelling public in our proposals and therefore we would like your feedback on the scheme and each of the three proposed options.

When is the consultation taking place?

The consultation will run for five weeks from Tuesday 15 September until Monday 19 October 2020. All feedback must be provided by 19 October to be incorporated into the analysis for the scheme.

How and where can I find out more about the scheme?

We are not holding any in-person consultation events due to the current social distancing restrictions in place as result of COVID-19. The consultation is therefore being held online via our Virtual Public Consultation Hub which can be accessed from this webpage kent.gov.uk/a229bluebellhill. The hub allows you to view and access the following consultation materials at any time:

- a video introducing the scheme
- exhibition boards introducing the scheme and summarising the three options
- detailed plans and visuals of the three design options
- this consultation brochure
- Frequently Asked Questions.

How can I provide feedback on the proposals?

You can provide feedback by completing a questionnaire that is available at kent.gov.uk/a229bluebellhill. If you are unable to complete the questionnaire online a paper copy can be requested by:

✉ **Email:** A229bluebellhill@kent.gov.uk
Telephone: 03000 42 14 37

This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.

All feedback must be submitted during the consultation period which closes on 19 October.

9 Project Timeline and Next Steps

How will my feedback be incorporated?

All feedback will be reviewed and analysed following the closure of the consultation.

The findings of this analysis will then be compiled into a Consultation Report. This report will be used to inform the next stage of the funding bid process, which will then be submitted by to the Department for Transport (DfT) before the end of the year.

Your responses will help us to understand which of the options is most suitable to be progressed and developed as the preferred option.

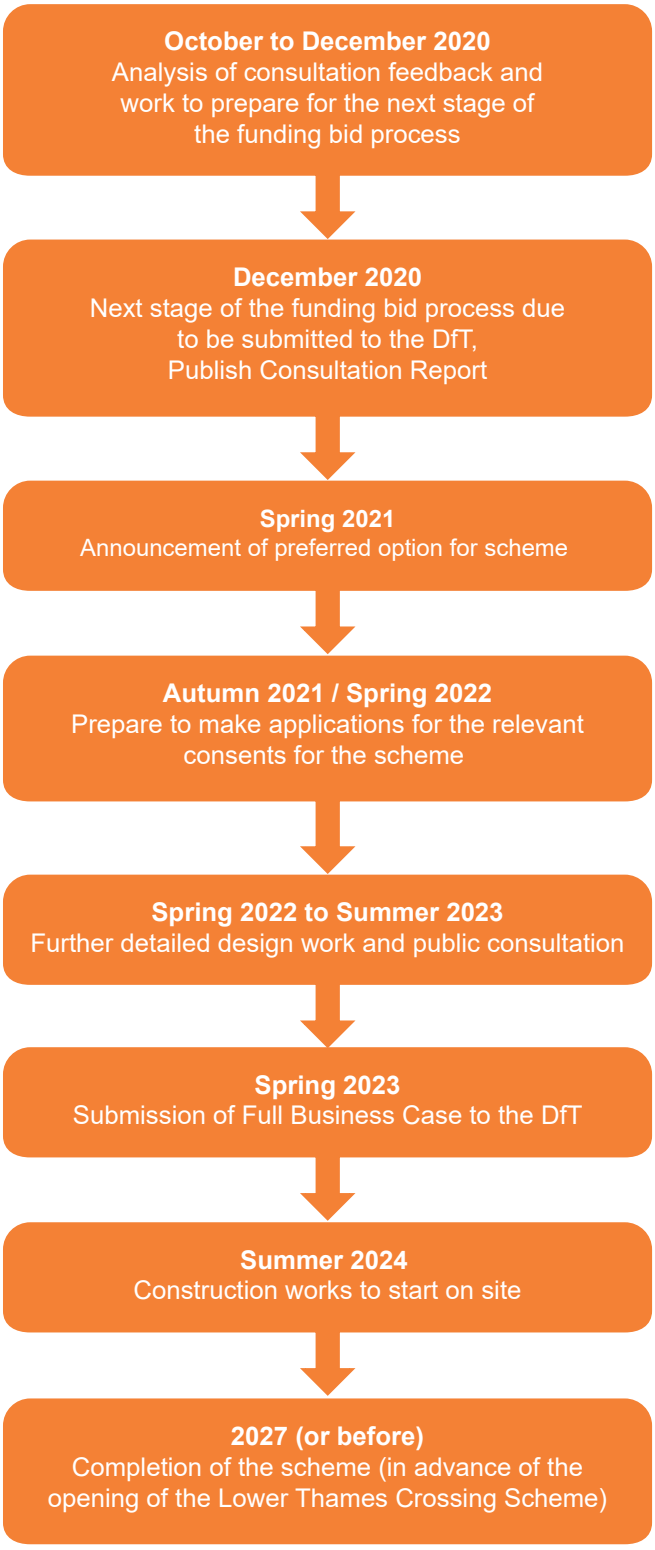
What are the next steps following the submission of the funding bid?

The scheme is still in an early phase. Further detailed design work will be required before construction could begin including:

- Selection of the preferred design option
- Refining and developing the design of the chosen option
- The development of environmental mitigation plans
- Further engagement with the community and other stakeholders
- The development of construction plans to manage both the timing of works and impacts on traffic during construction of the scheme.

What are the anticipated timelines for the delivery of the scheme?

The timeline below gives an early indication of our anticipated timeframes. These are subject to change as the scheme develops and are driven by the requirements of the Major Road Network funding, set by the Department for Transport (DfT). The aim is for construction of the scheme to start in Summer 2024, to allow it to be completed before Lower Thames Crossing opens to traffic in 2027.



10 Glossary of Terms

Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) - An AQMA is an area in which air quality is not likely to meet national objectives.

Department for Transport (DfT) - The DfT is the government's department responsible for supporting the UK's transport network. They work with agencies and partners to help the UK's businesses and to get people and goods travelling around the country.

Department for Transport's Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST) - EAST is a decision support tool that quickly summarises and presents evidence on options in a clear and consistent format to enable effective comparison of their performance.

Designated area - Nature sites and areas of countryside can be 'designated'. This means they have special status as protected areas because of their natural and cultural importance.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) - An EIA is a comprehensive assessment of the scheme's impact on the environment.

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) - A HRA is used to highlight any areas where works under a scheme are likely to result in significant effects to protected habitats and to consider ways in which these can be avoided or reduced. Where no alternative solutions can be found to reduce a significant effect to a protected habitat, works can only proceed if there is a strong case and over-riding public interest for the scheme and if compensatory measures can be secured.

Interchange - An interchange is where vehicles join or leave a road or where roads meet, for example, a slip road, signalised junction, roundabout etc.

Local Plan - A Local Plan is a plan for future development of a local authority area created by the Local Planning Authority. It provides a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities.

Major Road Network - The Major Road Network is formed of the country's busiest and most economically important roads that frequently connect major motorways with smaller local roads.

Passenger Car Unit (PCU) – A PCU is a measure used primarily to assess highway capacity, for modelling purposes. Different vehicles are assigned different values, according to the space they take up. A car has a value of 1; smaller vehicles will have lower values, and larger vehicles will have higher values.

Strategic Road Network - The Strategic Road Network is made up of the nation's motorways and major A roads.

11 Requesting Alternative Formats

Paper copy versions of the exhibition boards, FAQ document, project brochure and questionnaire are also available. If you would like to request paper copies of our consultation materials, or if you have any questions about this consultation please contact us:

Telephone: 03000 42 14 37
Email: A229bluebellhill@kent.gov.uk

If you require any of the consultation material in an alternative format or language please contact us:

Telephone: 03000 42 15 53
Text relay service: 18001 03000 421553
Email: alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk

Please note that this number goes through to an answering machine that is monitored during office hours.