

SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD 15 JUNE 2009

Subject:	Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road - Update
Director/Head of Service:	Acting Director of Kent Highway Services
Decision Issues:	These matters are within the authority of the Kent County Council
Decision:	Non-key
CCC Ward/KCC Division:	All
Summary:	<i>Update on progress on Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road</i>
For Information:	This report is for Members' information.
Classification:	THIS REPORT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Introduction

1. Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road, between Ridham Avenue and Castle Road, will provide a new route out of the Eurolink business estate and the East Hall Farm residential development, removing traffic from Sittingbourne town centre and allowing capacity for regeneration.

Background

2. As part of the relief road Swale Way has been constructed, by developers, from the Grovehurst interchange with the A249 to Ridham Avenue, the access to Kemsley Mill.

3. From Castle Road, on the Eurolink business estate, to the East Hall Farm residential development a further section of Swale Way has been built, again by developers.

4. The Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road scheme fills the gap, with a crossing of the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway and Milton Creek.

5. At present Eurolink traffic has to enter and leave via Sittingbourne town centre, mixing with traffic from the East Hall development, which has no other access/exit. The relief road will give a new exit to the A249, removing traffic from the town centre, which will then have capacity for regeneration.

Current Situation

6. The scheme was given planning permission in 2006, although there was a revision to the scheme following objection from both commercial and residential interests in the Ridham Avenue area.

7. A Public Inquiry into the scheme's Compulsory Purchase and Side Roads Orders was held in July 2008. Although all but one statutory objection had been withdrawn

before the Inquiry, the Inspector heard evidence from a number of non-statutory objectors who had concerns about the impact of the crossing of Milton Creek on navigation by some vessels.

8. The Inspector recommended that the Orders should be confirmed, and the Secretary of State for Transport did so on 28 December. That was the last statutory hurdle to be cleared.

9. Following an advertisement in the Official Journal of the European Union a number of contractors were invited to pre-qualify for the tender process. From those who returned pre-qualification questionnaires, to determine suitability to undertake the construction of the scheme, six contractors have been invited to submit tenders.

10. Tenders were sent out on 6 April and are due back on 5 June. The tenders will be in two parts, answers to quality questions and a priced Bill of Materials. The quality element will be assessed and scored before the priced Bill is reviewed. The contract will be awarded to the contractor scoring best on a 70/30 price/quality assessment.

11. It is expected that a contract will be awarded in August with works on site by mid September. Construction will take about two years, with the road open in the third quarter of 2011.

Works On Site

12. There has been some site clearance and fencing works on site. This is to allow the trapping and relocation of newts and reptiles into new habitat that has been created over the past couple of years.

13. The trapping of newts, a European Protected Species, is being undertaken by trained ecologists working under the terms of a licence issued by Natural England.

14. Unfortunately there has been vandalism of the fencing designed to exclude newts and reptiles from areas already trapped. There is a risk of migration back to the old habitat, which will then require re-trapping. Hopefully the vandalism will diminish and the overall programme will not be disrupted.

15. Advance utility diversions and archaeological investigations may follow.

Planning Conditions

16. The 2006 planning consent imposed a number of conditions, some of which must be discharged before construction can start.

17. Key amongst the conditions were those relating to ecology, which had to be agreed with English Nature, the Kent Wildlife Trust and the County Council's ecological advisers. These conditions had to be discharged before Natural England could issue the newt trapping licence.

18. Further conditions, including those relating to the final form of the Milton Creek bridge, have still to be discharged. Swale Borough council will be consulted before Kent County Council as the Planning Authority, discharges the conditions.

Future Programme

19. Funding for the scheme is from the Department for Transport and the Homes & Communities Agency (formerly the Department of Communities & Local Government). Although the funding is approved in principle it will not be confirmed until

the tenders have been assessed and it is clear that the cost of the scheme, that is both design and construction, is still within the budget previously agreed. This is £43.0 million, with £29.0 million from DfT, £9.9 million from HCA and £4.1 million from developers through a S106 planning agreement.

20. A draft submission for Conditional Approval of the DfT funding has been made, this submission will be refined and submitted together with a submission for Final Approval when the tenders have been assessed. The draft Conditional Approval submission has not received adverse comment.

Construction

21. Construction should start in mid September 2009. Until a contract is let it is not possible to say in what order the works will be done, but given that the scheme only touches existing roads at Ridham Avenue, where traffic flow is currently quite light, and Castle Road, there should be little disruption to local traffic.

22. There will be some construction impact - dust, noise, vibration and possibly lights, affecting residents at Kemsley Fields, but conditions in the works contract will limit these impacts.

23. Reports to this Board will be regularly update progress on site.

Completion

24. Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road should be open in the third quarter of 2011, subject to no unforeseen construction problems, such as adverse weather or ground conditions.

Extension to the A2

25. Work continues to identify a route for the extension of Swale Way from East Hall to the A2 in the vicinity of Bapchild.

26. A separate report will be made to this Board in due course.

Contact Officer: John Turner KHS, Major Projects Team 01622 696882