
A249 Key Street and Grovehurst Road junction Improvements

To: **Swale Joint Transportation Board – 27 February 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 proposed 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 20 June 2022.

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 September 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 The development of the detailed proposals for the Key Street improvements had been put on hold awaiting the outcome of the developer's application to discharge planning conditions ref 22/500782/SUB (condition 25). The application to discharge was approved on 2 February 2023, which will now allow the consultants to progress the detailed design.
- 3.7 A further update on the detailed proposals will be provided once the programme for the delivery of the new roundabout is confirmed by the developer. Alternative arrangements will be looked at if there is a delay that prevents the Key Street improvements being delivered within the funding timetable.

Grovehurst Road

- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 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.

- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 Planning consent for the scheme was granted on 16 March 2022.
- 3.12 Advance works on the site are underway, with the Ground Investigation completed in March 2022. Archaeological investigation was completed in April 2022, although further mitigation works will be required ahead of construction. Vegetation Clearance works are underway and are to be completed ahead of the bird nesting season under an ecological watching brief. Water Voles have been identified on site and the required mitigation strategy has been developed. The strategy requires a Natural England Licence, with translocation planned for February/March 2023. A Great Crested Newt (GCN) licence has been obtained from Natural England and a reptile mitigation translocation site identified at Iwade Nature Park. Environmental enhancement works were completed June 2022, which included the creation of hibernacula, scrub clearance and grassland enhancement. Translocation of reptiles on the west side of the scheme was completed in October 2022 with translocation planned for the east side in March/April 2023.
- 3.14 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 it is proposed to include the development access roundabout as part of this scheme, with the developer paying for the cost of this work through a s278 agreement.

The A249 and interface with National Highways and the M2J5 Project

- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 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).
- 3.17 With west facing slip road closures currently planned until May 2023, the decision has been taken to delay the works involving traffic management on the A249 at Grovehurst Road until July 2023.

4 Programme

4.1 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.

4.2 The current programme is;

Key Street

Confirm proposals for the new roundabout on Chestnut Street	Confirmed 2 February 2023
Complete detailed design	May 2023
Procurement	May 2023 to October 2023
Construction of Chestnut St roundabout (by others)	TBC
Contract award	November 2023
Commence works	January 2024
Works completed	July 2024

Grovehurst Road

Advanced vegetation clearance	Ongoing to February 2023
Advanced ecological translocation (reptiles and water voles)	March 2023 to May 2023
Procurement	September 2022 to January 2023
Contract award (main works)	April 2023
Commence works	May 2023
Works completed	August 2024

4.3 Consideration is being 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 will be planned in detail with the KCC Streetworks Co-ordinator, National Highways and adjacent developments.

5 Communications

5.1 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.

5.2 A Communications and Engagement Plan is being developed. This will involve informing residents, road users and key stakeholders of the proposals and timescales for each of the phases of the project.

5.3 Notification of the roadworks will be provided prior to commencement of construction using temporary variable message signs, and by a letter drop to local residents and businesses.

- 5.4 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.

6 Financial

Key Street

- 6.1 The cost estimate for the improvements to Key Street is £5.9m.
- 6.2 Contributions of £0.5m 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
- 6.3 The balance of £5.4m being funded by the Housing Infrastructure Fund.
- 6.4 The new roundabout on Chestnut Street is due to be provided as part of the Wises Lane development.

Grovehurst Road

- 6.5 The cost estimate for the improvements to Grovehurst Road is £32.7m, which is being fully funded by the Housing Infrastructure Fund.
- 6.6 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
- 6.7 It is anticipated that further s106 developer contributions will be available to cover any shortfall that may materialise. However, the development of the outline designs and later detailed design and construction procurement strategy will all be aimed at achieving value engineering savings and optimising costs.
- 6.8 Tenders for the works have been received and are currently being assessed. The initial indication is that the tender prices are in line with the budget allowance.

Recovery Strategy

- 6.9 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.

7 Legal implications

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

8 Conclusions

8.1 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.

9 Recommendations

For Information

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

Appendix A	Key Street General Layout Plan - with Wises Lane development roundabout on Chestnut Street - Drawing no. 108945-dwg-ks-101-01 to 03 rev P3
Appendix B	Grovehurst Road Scheme Plan – Drawing no. 109617-dwg-101-01 rev P6
Appendix C	Location Plan