

To: **Tonbridge and Malling Joint Transportation Board**

By: **KCC Highways, Transportation & Waste**

Date: **20 September 2021**

Subject: **A20 Coldharbour and A20 Hall Road/Mills Road Junction Improvements**

Classification: **Information Only**

Summary: **This report updates Members on the progress of the schemes and provisional programme for delivery**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The A20 Coldharbour roundabout scheme is part of the Maidstone Integrated Transport Programme and 'Keep Maidstone Moving' initiative. The A20 Hall Road/Mills Road junction scheme is closely associated with this programme because of the closeness between the two junctions and similar housing development pressures. See location plan in Appendix A
- 1.2 A verbal update was last given to the Board at its meeting on 8 March 2021. The Covid pandemic has continued longer than anticipated and it is an appropriate time to give a provisional update on the situation for both schemes.

2. A20 Coldharbour roundabout

- 2.1 The A20 Coldharbour junction area is a largely unrestrained site, and this has allowed for a conventional improvement scheme to provide a larger roundabout with a wider circulating area and wider approach entry lanes. See scheme layout on Drg. No. CLDHBR-CAP-HGN-00-DR-0035 D2-P05 in Appendix B.
- 2.2 There has been previous comment about whether the roundabout should be signalised because of the tidal nature of the traffic flows. The current view is that it should operate more efficiently as a normal roundabout. However, ducting, and other associated infrastructure, will be installed, and budget retained so that traffic signals could be retro fitted. Such a decision would follow a post completion operational review, after a period to allow traffic movements to settle down; or if there is a future change in traffic conditions related to the progressive build out of housing development in the area.
- 2.3 The existing shared footway/cycleway on the south side of the roundabout is being retained and the existing pedestrian facilities on the northern side and towards the M20 Junction 5 and beyond are also being retained. Connectivity between pedestrian and cycle facilities on the southern and northern sides of the A20 remains in line with the existing provision with crossing points available on the western side of the Hermitage Lane/Preston Hall junction and on the eastern side of the Poppyfields/2020 roundabout.

- 2.4 The landscaping of the roundabout central island will have a Royal British Legion theme to acknowledge and celebrate the work they have been doing in Aylesford for over 100 years.
- 2.5 The scheme was estimated in 2019 to cost £3.5m and to be funded by £2.7m from the Local Growth Fund provided by SELEP and the remaining £0.8m from S106 planning contributions. The estimate is being reviewed to provide confidence that there is sufficient budget to cover risk in relation to construction industry resource and material costs which have been impacted by Covid. This will also provide a useful cost indication before construction tenders to deliver the scheme are received.
- 2.6 Land for the scheme is being acquired from the Royal British Legion Industries who have been very co-operative and who are also making land available for a construction site compound. The land transfer has been complicated because the Secretary of State for Health has a residual interest in the land, but all matters are close to being resolved and completion is expected during autumn 2021.
- 2.7 Construction tenders will be invited towards the end of 2021 or early 2022 and subject to satisfactory returns and affordability the objective is for a start of construction in autumn 2022. The actual start date will be dependent on agreeing the 'occupation of road space' with KCC Streetworks Team who have responsibility for co-ordinating all works on the highway across Kent. A20 Coldharbour and other planned schemes are also on key corridors and close to M20. Highways England will therefore also have an interest to ensure that the risk of traffic backing back to the motorway is properly managed.

3. A20 Hall Road/Mills Road junction

- 3.1 The A20 Hall Road/Mills Road junction area is highly constrained, and this has led to a less conventional solution, as shown on Drg. No. A20HR-CAAP-HGN-DR-C-0043 P04 in Appendix C. The proposal is to move the bus stops and controlled pedestrian crossings slightly away from the junction that would then allow for a lozenge shaped roundabout to be provided for the junction. This would avoid the large elements of 'dead' inter-green time associated with the current signalised crossroads that it is considered are affecting its overall effective operation.
- 3.2 The scheme is largely constrained within the existing highway boundary other than in the southwest quadrant where the Crown Estate has dedicated the small area required.
- 3.2 A virtual public engagement exercise was carried out between 3rd February and 18th March 2021. Social media ensured that it was well advertised and over 570 responses were received. A verbal summary of the main responses will be given at the meeting.
- 3.3 A recurring comment was about the frequent flooding of the junction. The scheme design includes some drainage mitigation measures but because of the concerns raised, this aspect is being revisited and the Crown Estate has been asked if further land could be made available for additional underground surface water attenuation tanks.
- 3.4 Officers are very aware that this is a highly constrained scheme involving a hybrid solution. They are also aware that Mills Road is the only entrance to

Quarry Wood Industrial Estate that has over 100 major food, retail, and commercial firms. It is vital that disruption during construction is kept to a minimum, particular as firms seek to recover from the Covid pandemic and that on completion the scheme provides tangible benefits over the existing layout.

- 3.5 It is therefore considered prudent to review the layout and how it will operate. Travel patterns may also have changed, as we emerge from Covid, and new traffic and pedestrian counts have been commissioned. These will be used to model the operation of the junction now, with the scheme on opening and in future years as the housing growth in the area comes on stream and adds to the pressures on the highway network.
- 3.6 The traffic surveys, modelling and scheme review will be undertaken as quickly as possible but inevitably it will take a few months. However, the additional time can be accommodated as it would not be appropriate to commence construction of the A20 Hall Road/Mills Road junction until construction of the A20 Coldharbour roundabout was significantly advanced to minimise disruption to drivers by not having two major roadworks taking place at the same time and in proximity. Subject to a satisfactory outcome of the traffic and review work, construction could follow after A20 Coldharbour is completed in 2023 although some earlier advance or facilitating works may be possible. The objective would be to accelerate where possible to minimise the overall time that roadworks will be taking place along this section of A20.
- 3.7 The scheme was estimated in 2019 to cost £3.5m and to be funded by £2.2m from the Local Growth Fund provided by SELEP and the remaining £1.3m from S106 planning contributions. However, as with A20 Coldharbour, the estimate is being reviewed because of the implications of Covid and this will be informed by the A20 Coldharbour tender returns.

4. Summary

- 4.1 These are both important junction improvements, but progress has been affected by the Covid pandemic.
- 4.2 Construction tenders for A20 Coldharbour roundabout will soon be invited with the objective of starting construction in autumn 2022.
- 4.3 The A20 Hall Road/Mills Road junction is a highly constrained scheme requiring a hybrid solution. Further delay is unfortunate, but the junction is critical to the retailers and firms on Quarry Wood Industrial Estate and taking time out to survey the current traffic flows and review the junction operational modelling to confirm the validity of the scheme is considered a sensible approach that it is hoped the Board will support.

5. Recommendation(s)

For Information Only

6. Background Documents

Appendix A – Location Plan.

Appendix B – Drg. No. CLDHBR-CAP-HGN-00-DR-0035 D2-P05 A20 Coldharbour roundabout scheme plan.

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