

To: Tonbridge & Malling Joint Transportation Board
By: KCC Highways and Transportation
Date: 18 September 2023
Subject: Kent Street Junction improvement update
Classification: For recommendation

Summary: This is a report summarising the public consultation that has been undertaken on the proposed Kent Street/Malling Road highway improvements and recommended next steps.

Members of the Board to consider and make a recommendation to:

Option a) proceed to detailed design and construction with the scheme as consulted on.

Option b) proceed to detailed design and construction but amend the scheme by removing the cycle facility but providing a footway between Kent Street and Beech Rd

1.0 Introduction and background

1.1 S106 funding was secured from Kings Hill Phase 2 development and carried through to the S106 for the Phase 3 development.

1.2 The funds are for 'Local Traffic Management and Calming' for:

- A scheme at Kent Street, Mereworth junction with the A228 designed to mitigate the impact of traffic arising from the Development and to enhance safety and conditions for local residents, pedestrians and cyclists; and
- A scheme of traffic management at Offham Village designed to mitigate the local impact of traffic arising from the Development and to enhance safety and conditions for local residents, pedestrians and cyclists. This scheme was completed several years ago.

1.3 Design options being considered are aimed at improving visibility at the Kent Street junction with the A228 plus some additional footway provision, signing, surfacing and strengthening of ironwork/service chambers within the carriageway of the A228 over the length of the scheme; provision of uncontrolled crossing points on A228, keeping as close to the Kent Street desire line as possible; providing a footway link from Kent Street to the wider Kings Hill area and consideration to the potential for the widening of A228 Malling Road.

1.4 Options were presented to the JTB in March 2021 with the recommendation to progress to designs on a scheme that would give the most amount of improvement.

2.0 Scheme update

2.1 Over the last 24 months, various schemes have been investigated working closely with the landowner and local Councillors with the main aim to provide better visibility at the junction. This has proved difficult due to the geometry of the junction with houses close to the main road.

- 2.2 The project has now got to a point where the design has taken into account feedback and developed proposals that widens the A228 Malling Road between Kent Street and Beech Road, this busy section is narrow and used by a large number of heavy goods vehicles travelling between the M20 motorway, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. The existing carriageway width makes it very tight when large vehicles pass each other, any incidents on this route can cause a high-level of disruption to the surrounding road network.
- 2.3 Both Kent Street junctions have very poor visibility for vehicles wishing to turn out onto the A228 Malling Road. This scheme also proposes the installation of traffic signals at the crossroads to assist these turning vehicles. Both Kent Street junctions will be widened to provide sufficient carriageway width for vehicles to turn in whilst another vehicle waits at the stop line. The traffic signals will also provide a pedestrian push button crossing facility across Malling Road, not only improving the area for pedestrians and cyclists but providing a vital safe link to the new bus stops proposed to the north of Kent Street.
- 2.4 The scheme also includes a 4-metre-wide shared cycle and footway on the western side of the Malling Road with a 1-metre-wide safety buffer to separate passing traffic from pedestrians and cyclists. A new footway link has recently been installed at the western end of Kent Street which joins up with the bridleway that runs around the outside of Kings Hill. This new link could result in more pedestrians and cyclists requiring a safe crossing point over the Malling Road, which the traffic signal scheme provides.

3.0 Consultation summary

- 3.1 KCC consulted on the proposals from 23 May until 3 July 2023 via an online consultation ([Let's talk Kent](https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk) - letstalk.kent.gov.uk) and held 2 sessions with plans on display at Mereworth village hall on Monday June 19 and Wednesday 21 June.
- 3.2 Appendix A has the full consultation report and plans which consist of an overall layout plan, 4 more detailed drawings and a typical cross section of the cycle path.
- 3.3 In total there were 1,357 document downloads from the webpage. It was viewed 9,029 times with 3,839 unique visitors. There was a total of 144 responses to the questionnaire.
- 3.4 65% of those that replied strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed pedestrian improvements which includes a footway and a controlled crossing. 30% tended to disagree or strongly disagreed.
- 3.5 52% those that replied strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal to provide a 4.0m wide cycle way and footway which includes a footway and a controlled crossing. 32% tended to disagree or strongly disagreed.
- 3.6 50% those that replied strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed traffic signal junction. 43% tended to disagree or strongly disagreed.

4.0 Land

- 4.1 KCC has been liaising with the Landowner who is supportive in general of the proposal and willing to provide land to allow the road widening and visibility improvements.

Should the proposals proceed, land negotiations will need to be completed prior to any construction activity taking place.

5.0 Environmental, Ecological and Arboriculture Assessments

5.1 KCC commissioned Waterman consultants to undertake all necessary Environmental, Ecological and Arboriculture assessments as part of the outline design process. The detailed design period will require a further commission to make sure all relevant approvals, mitigation and actions are undertaken.

6.0 Finance

6.1 The current available S106 developer funding is £743,000.

6.2 Should these proposals be supported as a whole or amended, detailed designs will be required to acquire final costs for construction. It is anticipated that the remaining £0.743m will **not** be sufficient to fund the whole scheme (detailed design and construction). An outline design cost suggests that the scheme would require a budget of £0.930m. An option (option b) to remove the cycle facility has been included which requires less land and reduced construction costs.

7.0 Programme

7.1 The estimated programme is shown in Table 1 below.

Activity/scheme	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024
<i>Kent Street/Malling Road highway improvements</i>								
Outline designs								
Consultation								
JTB report and consultation feedback								
Detailed design								
Environmental, Ecological, Arboricultural assessments								
Land negotiations								
construction procurement								
Final approvals								
contractor mobilisation period								
Start of construction								

Table 1 – estimated programme

8.0 Legal

8.1 Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) will have to be advertised, and if agreed will be made on commencement of construction. The only anticipated TRO is for double yellow lines at the Kent Street junction to prevent parking over the traffic signal detector loops or close to the stop line.

8.2 The proposals are permitted development and do not require planning permission.

8.3 Consultation with the Local Planning Authority in relation to the removal of hedgerows will be undertaken (as they have been identified as protected hedgerow under the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006 - NERC Act, 2006).

9.0 Equalities

9.1 The Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is included at Appendix B and shows that there will be positive impacts for all users as the proposed improvements will separate

users from vehicular traffic wherever possible therefore creating a safer environment for all users, encouraging walking and wheeling bringing overall health benefits.

- 9.2 Implementation of traffic signals will cause delay to traffic travelling along the A288 Malling Road when there is a demand called on the side roads. Delays are likely to impact a few minutes at most. Unable to fully mitigate delays however improved pedestrian crossings and access will allow for better access to walking and wheeling users at the junction along this route.

10.0 Conclusion and recommendation

- 10.1 The proposals received overall majority support for all elements although a relatively low return of questionnaires.

- 10.2 2 options have been provided for the Board to consider and make a recommendation with an officer recommendation to proceed with option b) due to the reduced costs to bring it in line with the existing available budget along with reduced land requirements.

Option a) proceed to detailed design and construction with the scheme as consulted on

Option b) proceed to detailed design and construction but amend the scheme by removing the cycle facility but providing a footway between Kent Street and Beech Rd

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Consultation feedback report including:

1. Consultation Plan – overall layout
2. Consultation Plan 1- Kent Street and A228 Malling Road
3. Consultation Plan 2 – A228 Malling Road
4. Consultation Plan 3 – A228 Malling Road
5. Consultation Plan 4 – A228 Malling Road by Beech Road
6. Kent Street Consultation Plan – Typical cross section of cycle path

APPENDIX B

Equality Impact Assessment