

Cabinet Member	Cllr Adem Mehmet (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Tonbridge Regeneration); Cllr Robin Betts (Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy); and Cllr Des Keers (Cabinet Member for Community Services)
Responsible Officer	Robert Styles (Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services)
Report Author	Dean Radmore (Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Manager)

Riverside Route Lighting Project, Tonbridge

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report brings forward a List C Capital Plan Evaluation for the Riverside Route Lighting project between Town Lock and Vale Road, Tonbridge. The project will provide high quality lighting to create a safe and secure public realm, minimising opportunities for crime during the night and in low natural light conditions for pedestrians moving between the Town Lock area and the industrial/retail estates in Vale Road/Cannon Lane and/or vice versa.
- 1.2 The report seeks approval to move the project forward for construction later in this calendar year.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 The Riverside Route Lighting project aligns to the Council's Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 - sustaining a borough which cares for the environment – by improving pedestrian safety and encouraging sustainable travel along this route at all hours of the day. The project is included in the 2025/26 Annual Service Delivery Plan.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the feasibility study report carried out by consultant Project Centre and recommend that Phase 1 of the project is taken

forward through the design stages up to and including the preparation of tender documentation.

- 3.2 Members are asked to consider the List C Capital Plan Evaluation for the Riverside Route Lighting Project at Annex 1 to the report, and to request Cabinet to recommend to Council the scheme be transferred to List A of the Capital Plan.
- 3.3 Members are asked to recommend to Cabinet for authorisation to use this Council's powers under s161 of the Public Health Act 1875 for delivery of the project with agreement from Kent County Council's Public Rights of Way.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 The Town Lock to Vale Road section of the Riverside Route is approximately 380m in length. From west to east, the first section of approximately 120m passes through a recently created landscape between the new residential warehouse-scale developments on Medway Wharf Road and Cannons Wharf to the south, and the river itself to the north. The following 260m section, east to Vale Road, passes the northern boundary of the former gasholder site, which is due to be redeveloped, and the rear of retail units on Cannons Wharf.
- 4.2 There are opportunities that exist for the section of the route between Town Lock and Vale Road/Cannon Lane to include the introduction of lighting. The lack of lighting in this section combined with a narrow path that is lined with trees and shrubbery and unprotected river edge, makes this an uninviting section of the route.
- 4.3 There has been a long-term aspiration from successive local Ward Members to improve safety along this section of the Riverside Route. Cabinet Members have requested that work be accelerated and this project be prioritised.
- 4.4 In order to assist the Council, external consultants Project Centre were appointed to undertake a feasibility study. This project focuses on Phase 1 identified in the Feasibility Report that contains no existing lighting. Phase 2 already has private low level bollard lighting associated with the housing development incorporating Waterway House, Davit House and Breach House that provides ambient light to the path itself. The route is well used by pedestrians to access the High Street and the retail park off Cannon Lane and also forms part of Public Right of Way MU33.
- 4.5 The Riverside Route between Town Lock and Vale Road has a number of land owners including TMBC, KCC, Redrow Homes Ltd, Tonbridge Riverside Regeneration Ltd, Duchess Street Properties Ltd as well as areas of unregistered land. Letters were sent out to known owners on 14th January 2025 with limited response.

Ongoing discussions have been taking place since the commencement of this project with Kent County Council's Public Rights of Way (PROW) Manager and on 13th December 2024 an email was received from the PROW Manager that stated

'Lighting may be installed by (1) the Highway Authority under the provisions of s.97 of the Highways Act 1980, by (2) the Local Lighting Authorities (districts and boroughs) under the provisions of s.161 of the Public Health Act 1875 and by (3) parish councils under the provisions of s.3 of the Parish Councils Act 1957'.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 The proposal is to progress through the next stages of delivery (design) up to and including tender documentation, based on information and recommendations based in the Feasibility Report.

6 Other Options

- 6.1 The other options considered included;
- Illuminated bollards - similar to the private bollards already in place within the housing development at the Town Lock end of the route. The lighting levels and height of the bollards would not provide sufficient illuminance or spread, and this approach is not supported by Kent Police.
 - Solar powered lighting - as there is an amount of coverage from the trees in places along the route, regeneration of solar power throughout the day may be hindered and the lighting levels may be affected during the winter period.
 - Electrically powered lighting columns - both 5m and 6m column heights have been considered in the feasibility report but both are to be considered within the design phase for the consistency of lighting spread and spacing of the columns.

7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 7.1 Members will note from the capital plan evaluation that the estimated build costs including contingency is circa £90,000 and the design costs are expected to be circa £12,000.
- 7.2 There is £20,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Funding already available for the design element and a proposed Business Rates Pool programme has been approved by KCC that includes circa £450,000 of Business Rate Pool funding for Tonbridge town centre including the Riverside Route Lighting scheme. The national business rates retention scheme enables local authorities to come together, on a voluntary basis, to pool their business rates, giving them scope to generate additional growth through collaborative effort and to smooth the impact of volatility in rates income across a wide economic area.
- 7.3 There is currently S106 funding allocated for this project and discussions will also take place with KCC Public Rights of Way regarding a possible financial contribution.

- 7.4 Taking the above into account I am pleased to advise that the project can be delivered in full with external funding and no funding will be needed from the Council.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 As outlined in the Riverside Risk Register at Annex 3, key risks within the project relate to:

- UKPN delivery timescales
- Approval to proceed from landowners or KCC Public Rights of Way
- Increased costs during the design phase of the project

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The project is being progressed through an internal Officer Delivery Group with representation from Legal Services. Mid Kent Procurement Partnership are also be engaged to ensure all legal requirements are met.

10 Consultation and Communications

- 10.1 As outlined in the Capital Plan Evaluation at Annex 1.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 A project timeline is attached at Annex 4. Subject to approval of Council, it is planned that construction will commence in Autumn/Winter 2025 and be handed over to the Council by March 2026. Every effort will be made to accelerate this timescale if possible.

12 Cross Cutting Issues

- 12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 12.1.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.

- 12.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

- 12.1.3 Limiting the environmental impact of new lighting on this section of the Riverside Route is a key consideration. The height and spacing of the lighting columns, the colour temperature (2700K – 3000K) and possible use of lighting shields suggested in the feasibility study has all been done to minimise the impact on biodiversity whilst providing a safe route for pedestrians.

- 12.2 Equalities and Diversity

12.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

12.3 Other If Relevant

- Procurement – Advice will continue to be sought ahead of the design and construction stages from the Mid-Kent Procurement Partnership
- Health and Safety – The installation of lighting will create a safer public realm, minimising opportunities for crime.
- Healthy Lifestyles – The installation of lighting will enable the route to be used by pedestrians at all hours.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – Capital Plan Evaluation Annex 2 – Project Centre Feasibility Report Annex 3 – Risk Register Annex 4 – Project Timeline