

Local Growth Fund (LGF) Funding Allocation

A joint report for information by Vicki Hubert (KCC) to the Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board on 15 February 2016 considering the allocation of the remaining LGF funding (£1.2m) not required for the Yew Tree Rd/Speldhurst Rd/A26 junction improvements.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following a successful bid to the Government's Single Local Growth Fund (SLGF) in 2014, Kent County Council (KCC) secured a contribution of £1.8 million to undertake a scheme of highway capacity improvements to the A26 London Road/Yew Tree Road/Speldhurst Road junction in Southborough.
- 1.2 Detailed plans have been finalised to provide staggered pedestrian crossings on the A26 arms, and new traffic signal equipment and the removal of the advanced bus lane signal on the A26 (south) arm, to improve the efficiency of the junction. This scheme has been costed at approximately £600,000 and is programmed for delivery during the early part of 2016.
- 1.3 In view of the relatively modest cost of the scheme relative to the total SLGF allocation, an approach was made to the Sponsoring Group to utilise the balance of the funding (£1.2m) to deliver additional highway capacity projects within Tunbridge Wells, with the understanding that works must be completed during the 2016/17 financial year and that the schemes contribute to the SLGF objectives of supporting the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities.
- 1.4 KCC have recently undertaken highway corridor studies on the A26 and A264 within Tunbridge Wells to identify the causes and potential solutions to peak time congestion on these routes.
- 1.5 With regard to the A26 corridor, it has been established that the potential to achieve further significant enhancements to highway capacity is limited, principally due to land constraints (as reported at the last JTB meeting in October 2015). However, the studies identified that there are potentially greater opportunities to improve highway capacity on the A264 corridor; specifically at the A264/Tonbridge Road/High Street junction in Pembury, and the A264/Halls Hole Road/Blackhurst Lane junction.
- 1.6 Junction capacity modelling work has established that the conversion of these two signalised junctions to roundabouts would potentially improve their operation thereby assisting in relieving peak period traffic congestion. However there would be significant problems in attempting to deliver either of these schemes, as outlined below.

2.0 A264 Junction Requiring Improvement

- 2.1 A264/Tonbridge Road/High Street junction
The A21 works are set to significantly affect this area during the 2016/17 financial year. This junction abuts one end of the Tonbridge Road. The opposite end of the Tonbridge Road is set to be shut for the whole of the 2016/17 financial year. Therefore the Street Works Team have confirmed that no roadworks can take place at this junction until Spring 2017.
- 2.2 A264/Halls Hole Road/Blackhurst Lane junction
For Significant construction issues may hinder the delivery of this project in the 2016/17 financial year:

- Land required, possibly from several owners;
- Significant stats work owing to major gas main running through the junction;
- Major earthworks required owing to level differences (which would be undesirable to carry out during the winter months when the construction period would be).

3.0 Options

3.1 With the roadworks embargo, no physical works can take place at the A264/Tonbridge Road/High Street junction. However, even if the problems associated with the Halls Hole Road junction mean it cannot be constructed in one year, several elements of the scheme can be undertaken during 2016/17 (ideally during the summer holidays):

- Land procurement £150k (please note this is an estimate: land agent required to establish an accurate cost)
- Surveys and detail designs £100k (educated guess)
- Service diversions £350k (estimate based on gas main running through the site that will need lowering, water services that will need lowering, communications cables to divert)

Total estimate for land, surveys and stats: £600k (2016/17)

Construction estimate: £750k (2017/18)

Total scheme cost: £1.35m¹

- 3.2 The key risk involved with this option is that the terms of the LGF funding may not be flexible enough to allow the split-year delivery of this scheme. The whole funding amount was profiled to be spent by the end of 2016/17. It is unclear at present whether the spending can overrun, or alternatively, other Kent schemes scheduled to take place in later years can be brought forward to achieve the same annual spend profile.
- 3.3 There are therefore many stages to go through before this scheme can be classed as being fully funded and deliverable. If the scheme progresses successfully through a set series of meetings, it will then be subject to a business case for approval by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 That the report be noted.

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¹ The total scheme cost figure of £1.35m is above the funding allocation of £1.2m, but this is based on very broad estimates. It is hoped that the total cost can be brought within the allocation. Any shortfall could potentially be met through developer contributions.