

## **East Kent Access – Phases 1 and Phase 2**

A report by the Head of Transport Projects to the Thanet Joint Transportation Board on 13 September, 2005

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### **Introduction**

A progress report on East Kent Access Phase 1 and Phase 2

### **Phase 1**

Phase 1A – the link road from A256 Sandwich Bypass around the southern curtilage of Pfizer to Ramsgate Road and Phase 1B – the dualling of the A256 Sandwich Bypass between the Pfizer roundabout and Ramsgate Road roundabout were both completed in December 2004.

Phase 1C – the further improvement of the A256 from Ramsgate Road roundabout to dual carriageway standard to a new roundabout at the old Richborough power station site achieved statutory approvals in May 2005.

The updated scheme assessment and application to Government to move from Provisional Acceptance to Full Acceptance of funding was approved on 26 July 2005.

This was welcome news because it not only allows Phase 1C to proceed but it confirms cover for the expenditure already incurred by the County Council when in 2003 it elected to proceed at risk with Phases 1A & 1B in order to demonstrate commitment to East Kent and provide infrastructure improvements at the earliest opportunity.

The timing of the approval of funding does however mean as with the earlier elements that construction will not be starting at the ideal time of year but on the approach of autumn.

Negotiations with the contractor on the programme and price consequence on the funding approval are being close to being concluded and the construction contract will formally start on 5 September. As time was of the essence, Notices to Treat & Enter under the Compulsory Purchase Order have already been served so that seasonally critical environmental mitigation can be carried out.

Unlike the earlier elements, the construction programme is less dependant on early earthworks progress and the initial focus will be in progressing statutory undertakers diversions and starting construction of the new bridge and sluice gates at Stonar Cut. The overall construction period is likely to be about two years and this is a reflection of the complexities of the service diversions and interface with the construction activities.

As with any on-line improvement traffic disruption will be inevitable but efforts will of course be made to keep this to a minimum. A reduced speed limit through the length of the works will be necessary for the safety of the workforce and travelling public.

Regular liaison will be maintained with local businesses and landowners fronting the road, Dover and Thanet District Councils, Sandwich Town Council, Minster & Cliffsend Parish Councils, and other interested organisations. Information will also be posted on the County Council's web site.

## **Phase 2**

The environmental assessment and planning application for Phase 2 was submitted on 30 June, 2005. See Figure 1. While the basic scheme remains unchanged, the design detail has been developed in respect of accommodation access tracks and service roads to serve adjacent and severed land. Footpaths have been accommodated and cycleway provision made with overall cycling facilities improved. Earth mounding to provide some screening where possible has been included together with ideas for recontouring adjacent land to use surplus material. Landscaping and environmental mitigation measures have been included. Surface water drainage has been considered and while soakaways are possible at the Minster end of the scheme surface water will in general outfall to ditches, Minster Stream and Pegwell Bay.

Phase 2 was submitted for LTP funding in July 2004. Government has recognised the need for the scheme but said that '...it does not represent a sufficient priority for approval at this stage'. Government has confirmed that there are no outstanding appraisal issues and will await the outcome of the regional prioritisation of major schemes being carried out by the Regional Transport Board before reconsidering the bid for funding. Initial indications from the South East England Regional Assembly prioritisation methods are that Phase 2 achieves the highest ranking in adherence to regional policies, deliverability and value for money. Phase 2 is the County Council's top priority major scheme in the Provisional Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006-2011 submitted in July 2005.

In the mean time, the County Council remains committed to getting the scheme delivered at the earliest opportunity and this is demonstrated by funding having been made available to progress the scheme and submission of the planning application.

Subject to satisfactory completion of the planning process the next stage will be publication of the Compulsory Purchase Order and Side Roads Order.

Further reports will be brought to the Board at appropriate times to report progress on the construction of Phase 1C and the promotion of Phase 2.

### **Contact Officer**

John Farmer (01622) 696881