



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No: 10

Report To: ASHFORD JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Date: 8TH DECEMBER 2009

Report Title: Victoria Way Major Highway Scheme - Initial Phase

Report Author: Jamie Watson – Project Manager, Kent County Council

Summary:	The purpose of this report is to update the Joint Transportation Board on progress with Kent County Council's proposals to provide a transport link between Victoria Road and Leacon Road through a combination of improvements to the existing Victoria Road and Leacon Road coupled with the construction of a 0.58km length of new single carriageway.
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Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: Ashford Town Centre Wards

Recommendations : The Executive be asked to:

1. Continue support

Policy Overview: Central Government's Regional Planning Guidance RPG9 and Ashford's Future Study (Halcrow, 2002) sets the context for the growth of Ashford and the provision for an additional 31,000 homes and 28,000 jobs by 2031.

Masterplanning studies to guide the sustainable delivery of the projected growth in the town are reported further in the Greater Ashford Development Framework (Urban Initiatives, April 2005), Ashford Town Centre Development Framework (Urban Initiatives, August 2005) and the Transport Strategy for Ashford (KCC, November 2005).

The preferred route option emerged as a result of the Victoria Way Corridor Delivery Study.

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1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Joint Transportation Board on progress with Kent County Council's proposed Victoria Way scheme which provides a catalyst for the town centre expansion and regeneration of Ashford's Southern Expansion Quarter, providing new opportunities for commercial and residential development in areas that would otherwise be inaccessible. In its entirety, it will provide a new high quality street environment and transport link for Ashford between the International Station/Beaver Road and the A28 Chart Road

2. Background

Following publication of the ODPM's Sustainable Communities Plan 2003, Ashford is now identified as one of the major growth areas in the South-East with a total of 31,000 homes and 28,000 jobs envisaged by 2031. Detailed masterplanning studies followed which has now led to the development of mutually supporting land use and transport strategies to ensure that the town's future growth is well planned and sustainable.

Ashford Borough Council has previously and recently consulted upon the Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) which will form one of the key documents of the Ashford Local Development Framework (LDF). A Transport Strategy for Ashford has also been developed by Kent County Council in line with the broad thrust of central government and county council transport policy which was approved by Members in January 2006.

Victoria way Phase 1 will link Beaver Road/Romney Marsh Road to the A28 Chart Road through a combination of improvements to the existing Victoria Road and leacon Road coupled with the construction of a 0.58km length of single carriageway with 1 lane in either direction. The single carriageway road facility is designed to be operated under a 30mph speed limit. For safety and scheme enhancement reasons, the proposals also include a 20mph zone in the vicinity of the school and the adjacent busy pedestrian crossing known as the learning link.

At the time of the full business case appraisal in October 2008, the scheme supported the delivery of 1323 homes, 17,850sqm of A1/A3 5000 sqm of leisure, 5000 sqm of offices and 1870 sqm of community floor spaces equating to approximately 1100 jobs by 2021. The scheme also improves the sustainability of non dependant development totaling 355 dwellings.

The overall aims and objectives for the scheme are:

- Provide a new quality street enabling and supporting new brownfield development along the Victoria way corridor, acting as a catalyst for the required town centre expansion.
- Reduce traffic congestion.
- Facilitate the provision of a new multi storey car park as an essential phase of the Ashford Car parking Relocation Plan to serve the new developments to the south of the town centre.
- Enable other car park sites to be redeveloped in the town centre, such as Elwick Place and Vicarage Lane.
- Public realm improvements to enhance the learning link pedestrian/cycle path

linking Victoria way over High Speed 1 directly to serve the current town centre.

- Provide a high quality streetscape that sets a standard for public realm associated with new development in the Victoria way corridor.

3. Art, Engineering & Public Realm

The complete Victoria Way regeneration scheme will be delivered in phases and it is Phase 1 (Initial Phase) that is to be implemented with the approved Community Infrastructure Fund 2. The initial phase will deliver a new route linking the A2042 Romney Marsh Road to the A28 Chart Road through a combination of improvements to Victoria Road and Leacon Road coupled with the construction of 0.58km section of single carriageway in either direction, a new traffic signal controlled crossing at Leacon Road/Brookfield Road, widening of Brookfield road up to the “Matalan Roundabout”, and minor improvements to Louden Way junction. A new Victoria Square will be established where this route is crossed by the learning link pathway, where high quality materials and edge treatments will be used to enhance the appearance and safety of the path for pedestrians and cyclists. A primary school is located adjacent to this square where additional road safety measures will be provided.

The route will be constructed using good quality materials and street furniture throughout the new build, but will have to reflect the fact that a number of new development sites will be constructed along its length in the future. One of the main challenges will be to achieve a good quality product in the short term, whilst understanding the needs and requirements of new developments that will be built out in the medium and long term. It is envisaged therefore that further phases of the scheme will provide the high quality interface between the new route and the developed frontages.. This will be advised by a design code setting out a pallet of materials and furniture that developers will be required to complete under planning agreements.

A good quality public realm is being created by the use of quality materials, landscaping, aesthetically pleasing yet functional street furniture together with the integral use of art and street lighting to bring out the scheme identity and distinctiveness.

In order to deliver this scheme, an Integrated Design Team (IDT) has been put together involving engineers, consultants, urban designers, planners, landscapers, traffic experts, lighting specialists and artists.

4. The Scheme

4.1 Introduction

As a new street, Victoria Way must be thought of as much more than a new highway; it must incorporate good facilities for all users, not just vehicles. The scheme design and materials used in the construction will be of good quality incorporating public art features. The quality of construction will make Victoria way a destination within Ashford and encourage the desired development within the area.

Design standards and build quality proposed along the route vary and reflect the changing character and development needs for each section.

At the eastern end, the route will follow the existing Victoria Road which is bounded by an area of residential and commercial workshop premises with a primary school at its western end. In the central part, a new road is constructed across essentially disused brownfield sites created from former industrial works, crossing the Great Stour flood plain to join the end of Leacon Road. The route then continues westwards on Leacon Road passing through an established industrial estate before terminating at the junction with B2229 Brookfield Road and A28 Chart Road. An urban all purpose road classification has been adopted.

Outline details of the site area, core scheme components and existing and potential developments are illustrated on Figure A-3 – APPENDIX A.

4.2 General Scheme Layout

Previous reports and presentations have shown the extent of the works. The scheme implemented can be viewed on ashfordbestplaced.co.uk website or on kent.gov.uk website. Detailed Plans are available from the Author and will be available for viewing at the Board meeting.

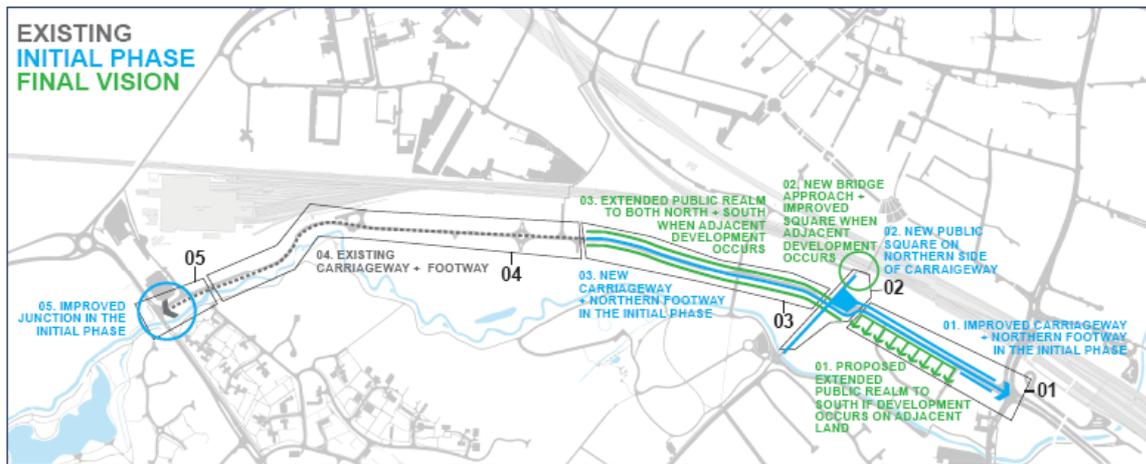
4.3 Phasing

The ultimate objective for Victoria Way is the provision of a high quality new street that has good links to the existing town centre, effectively regenerating the area to the south of the railway lines and providing a town centre extension. Victoria Way will incorporate improved pedestrian and cycle links to Elwick Road and Bank Street along the Learning Link and a new public focal area in the form of a new public square, known as Victoria Square, at the junction of the Learning Link and Victoria Way.

Due to the funding time constraints of this scheme, it will not be possible to construct the final Victoria Way scheme at the outset. With extensive future development planned in the Southern Expansion Quarter, it is also not desirable to construct the street at the outset using expensive materials and in advance of development along much of the proposed route.

The scheme is therefore to be delivered in a series of phases as development plans come forward. The initial phase will deliver the route with quality public realm elements incorporated where appropriate, and completed by the end of March 2011. The timescales for completion of the Final Vision are uncertain due to the development market, but the full scheme would be expected to be complete by 2021 at the latest.

Where appropriate, public realm proposals for the initial phase which remains for the final vision will be constructed in durable high quality materials. Elsewhere, where initial phase proposals may be modified to deliver the vision, consideration has been given to limiting the extent of hard materials and/or the re-use of materials.



4.4 Phasing Benefits

The phased approach to the Victoria Way scheme offers many financial, environmental, and urban design benefits in achieving the final vision.

The role of the initial phase is to provide a transport connection, help drive development on the adjacent land and deliver an urban, vibrant street. Development can not occur along the length of the scheme until the transport connection has been made, and an urban and vibrant street cannot be achieved until adjacent developments are built.

So the phased approach is required and will occur over a number of years depending on the rate at which development schemes come forward.

The final vision street will not be built in full until the adjacent development is also built, which means that:

- sacrificial work is limited as the street corridor simply widens rather than being upgraded or replaced
- the extended public realm design can be flexible to respond to the future context of the development and street
- the street can evolve over time as it responds to each new development, allowing it to grow its own character or a range of characters

4.5 Phasing Constraints

While the project phasing has benefits during the timescale of the project implementation, there are some constraints which particularly apply to the initial phase.

- The vision of a 'lively, urban avenue' can not be achieved in full in the initial phase.
- There will be a lack of active frontages along the street in the initial phase, the street will not be as lively or urban as anticipated in the vision. While this vision will be achieved over time, it will not be realised for a number of years.
- The only built frontages along the street in the initial phase will be the existing buildings, these buildings and their uses are very different to those anticipated in the final vision.

- The aspiration for the creation of a 'traditional avenue', symmetrical trees on either side of the street, can not be achieved in full as the final vision kerb alignment cannot be provided.

4.6 Phasing Opportunities

The phased approach provides benefits and constraints in achieving the final vision. The following design opportunities, which capitalise on the benefits and address the constraints, ensure the final vision is achieved.

- As the final vision kerb alignment can not be achieved on both sides along the length of the scheme, it is important to at least achieve it on one side. The northern kerb alignment installed in the initial phase will be that of the final vision, which means any future change to the street width will only need to occur to the southern edge.
- A planted tree spine that runs along the final vision northern kerb alignment (implemented in the initial phase) provides a consistent tree solution during the life of the street, where a traditional avenue (i.e. a row of trees on both sides of the street) could not be achieved without the final vision southern edge.
- As the southern edge is not planted within the initial phase, future planting can respond to and address new development, creating green small spaces, rather than a linear line of street trees.
- Good streets have good edges. However within the initial phase, Victoria Way has limited built edges. The initial phase will have an interesting vertical edge, either temporary around development sites or permanent where development has occurred.
- An intelligent lighting scheme will address the needs of the initial phase but be adaptable to meet the needs of the final vision. Feature lighting at strategic places will create interest, while street and footway lighting will ensure a safe night streetscape.
- A visual language based on Ashford's history, through integrated art and design, creates a sense of interest and a layer of culture into the evolving streetscape.

5.0 Design Approach - Initial Phase

The initial phase design aims to achieve the final vision design and material where possible and appropriate. The final vision northern kerb edge has been achieved along the majority of the scheme, where as the southern edge could not due to the constrained nature of the existing Victoria Road. Street tree planting is located on the northern edge, creating a northern 'spine', which is consistent over the life of the scheme. Similarly, the street lighting is also largely located within this 'spine'.

Due to the nature of this changing street, all materials have been chosen for their durability, accessibility, maintainability and robustness, as well as their aesthetic value. This approach is to ensure that the street can be easily maintained as construction work occurs adjacent to as well as on the streetscape as the final vision is slowly implemented over the next 15 years.

A consistent carriageway design approach has been applied across the varying character areas of the scheme. The contrast paved median changes in width and function along the road to address the different road needs. Within the 20mph zone the contrast paving moves to the channels to create a design that slows motorists down.

Victoria Square is the focus of the scheme, where the main design features are located. The carriageway bends around the edge of Victoria Square to create the boundary of the public space and make a unique place making feature.

A modular boundary treatment runs along the northern boundary of the scheme, creating a facade like edge where needed.

5.1 Layout Design

The vision for Victoria Way is as a lively urban avenue, a new street. Development of the highway layout design for the Initial Phase has therefore sought to detail ways in which the character and layout of this new street can be introduced, setting the bench mark for future extended public realm phases.

The actual layout of the highway involves a single trafficked 'running' lane in each direction, generally 3.25m wide, and where possible, added carriageway width to provide flexibility in the design to accommodate either, or a combination of, protected right turn lanes, on street parking, loading/unloading bays and bus lane and stop provisions as may be required both now and in future phases.

5.2 Victoria Road Design

5.2.1 Victoria Way Corridor Alignment

The alignment for the Victoria Way corridor between Beaver Road and the Learning Link (Jemmetts Path) is largely dictated by existing physical constraints and the corridor that has been secured by developments that have planning consent which can be summarised as follows:

- At the western end of this section, the corridor alignment is fixed by the recent junction improvements and the adjacent Learning Campus and Bellways Homes development proposals.
- The Victoria Road Primary School is required to be maintained as viable to continue operation as a school in the foreseeable future. The ATCAAP also indicates that the school buildings should be retained and incorporated within future development proposals. No land is therefore shown to be taken from the school site.
- At the eastern end of this section, the corridor alignment is fixed by the Zed Homes development.

5.2.2 Beaver Road Junction Design

This junction will serve as the east gateway to Victoria Way and recently underwent major improvement works to convert what was previously a roundabout to a fully signal controlled junction.

Completed and opened to traffic in July 2008, it included realignment of the eastern end of Victoria Road between George Street and Beaver Road to create and secure a 24m wide gateway corridor for the new Victoria Way. The adjacent plots of land have planning consent for a learning campus to the north of Victoria Road and a housing development to the south and the final vision Victoria Way corridor is secured between Beaver Road and George Street.

The aim of the scheme is to achieve the final vision design where possible and appropriate, this aim can be fully achieved at the Beaver Road gateway. This is because the full street width has been acquired and the two adjacent development sites have a possibility of being completed in a similar timeframe as the initial phase, allowing a vision for the final streetscape as you enter the scheme.

The northern kerb has been kept as straight as possible, allowing consistent footway and planting. This proved particularly difficult to achieve opposite the George Street junction, as the turning circles were tight. However it was deemed a consistent northern pedestrian footway in front of the future Learning Campus was a priority, resulting in a slightly constrained, yet workable traffic solution.

A cycle path on the southern verge will link with the Stour Valley cycle network via George Street and the proposed improvements to this link proposed by Bellway Homes. In the final vision, this cycle path is proposed to continue along length of the scheme.

The paved median includes an informal crossing, a turning lane for the proposed new Bellway Homes development, gateway tree planting, traffic lights and a formalised crossing. The versatility of this aesthetic paved median strip reduces white traffic control lines and bituminous surfacing.

5.2.3 Beaver Road Junction to Victoria Square (Initial Phase)

Victoria Road will be utilised, and widened in part on the north side, to maintain and provide safe access to existing workshop yards, businesses and side roads.

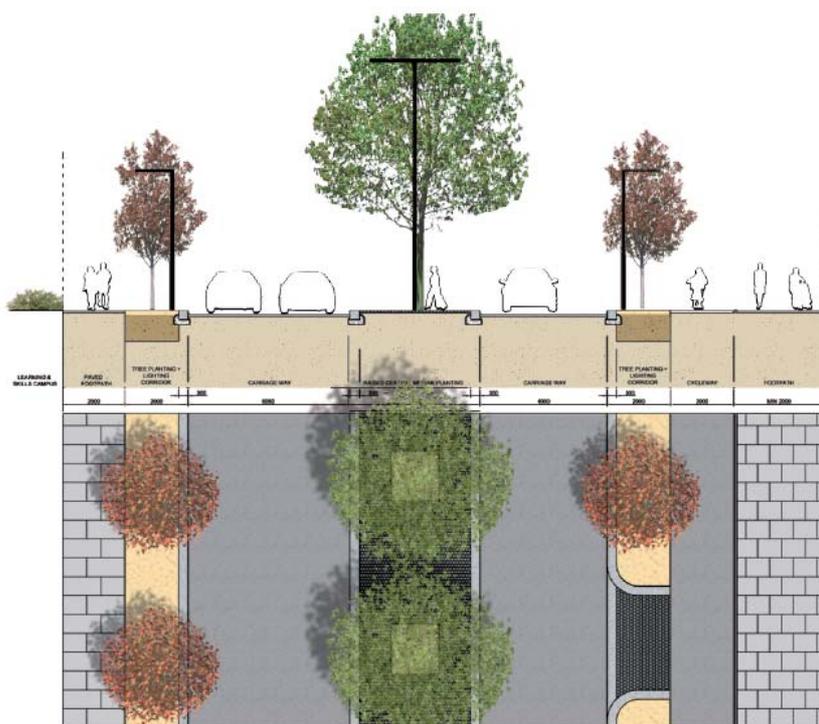
Between Beaver Road junction and George Street a high quality streetscape across the full 24m corridor width is proposed. This includes a contrasting paved central median 2.5m (min) in width to accommodate gateway tree planting, an area for traffic waiting to turn right into the proposed Bellway Homes development, and a small island refuge as part of an informal pedestrian crossing point immediately east of the junction with George Street.

The overall road layout has been dictated by the desire to fix the northern kerblines as far as possible to align with the future final vision scheme proposals. This has been achieved up to a point 50m east of Victoria Crescent where, due to land constraints, the route continues westwards solely within the existing highway boundary.

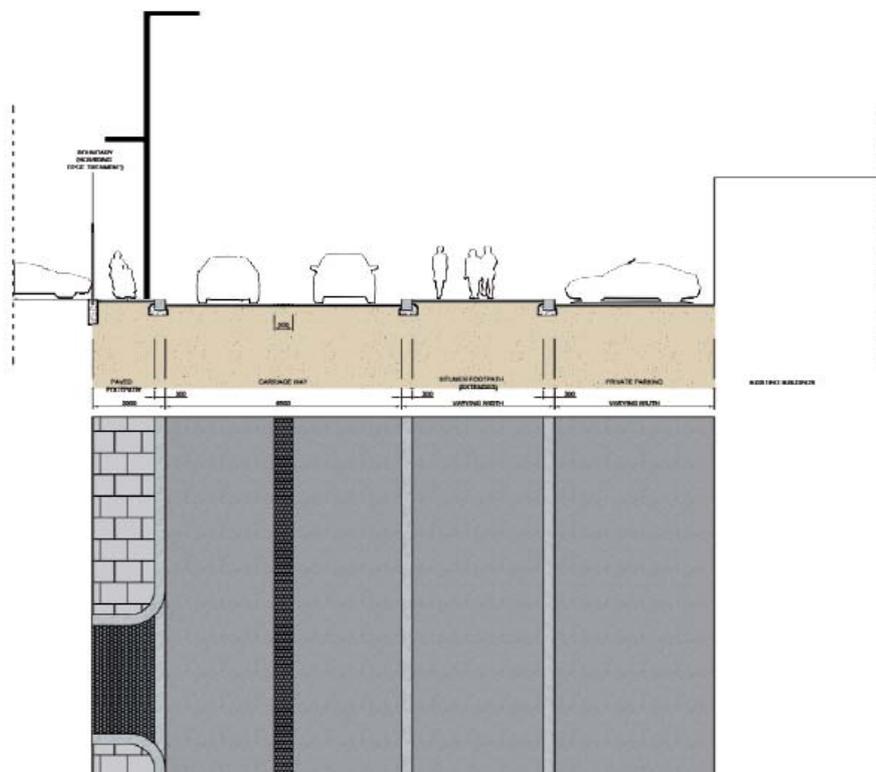
To the west of the junction with George Street, the highway has a total width of 6.5m including a 0.5m paved, overrunable, central median designed to improve street aesthetics by reducing the need for road markings.

A segregated cycleway is proposed on the southern footway between George Street and the junction with Beaver Road where new signalized pedestrian/cycle facilities have been installed. This cycle route will connect to a proposed pedestrian/cycle

route to be provided by developers in George Street and bridged across the River Great Stour to link to Victoria Park.



Beaver Road Gateway Section - Initial Phase



Victoria Road Section - Initial Phase

5.2.4 Beaver Road Junction to Victoria Square (Final Vision)

The overarching principles for the scheme have been detailed above and these have been assessed to produce a final vision scheme for the Victoria Road section. A

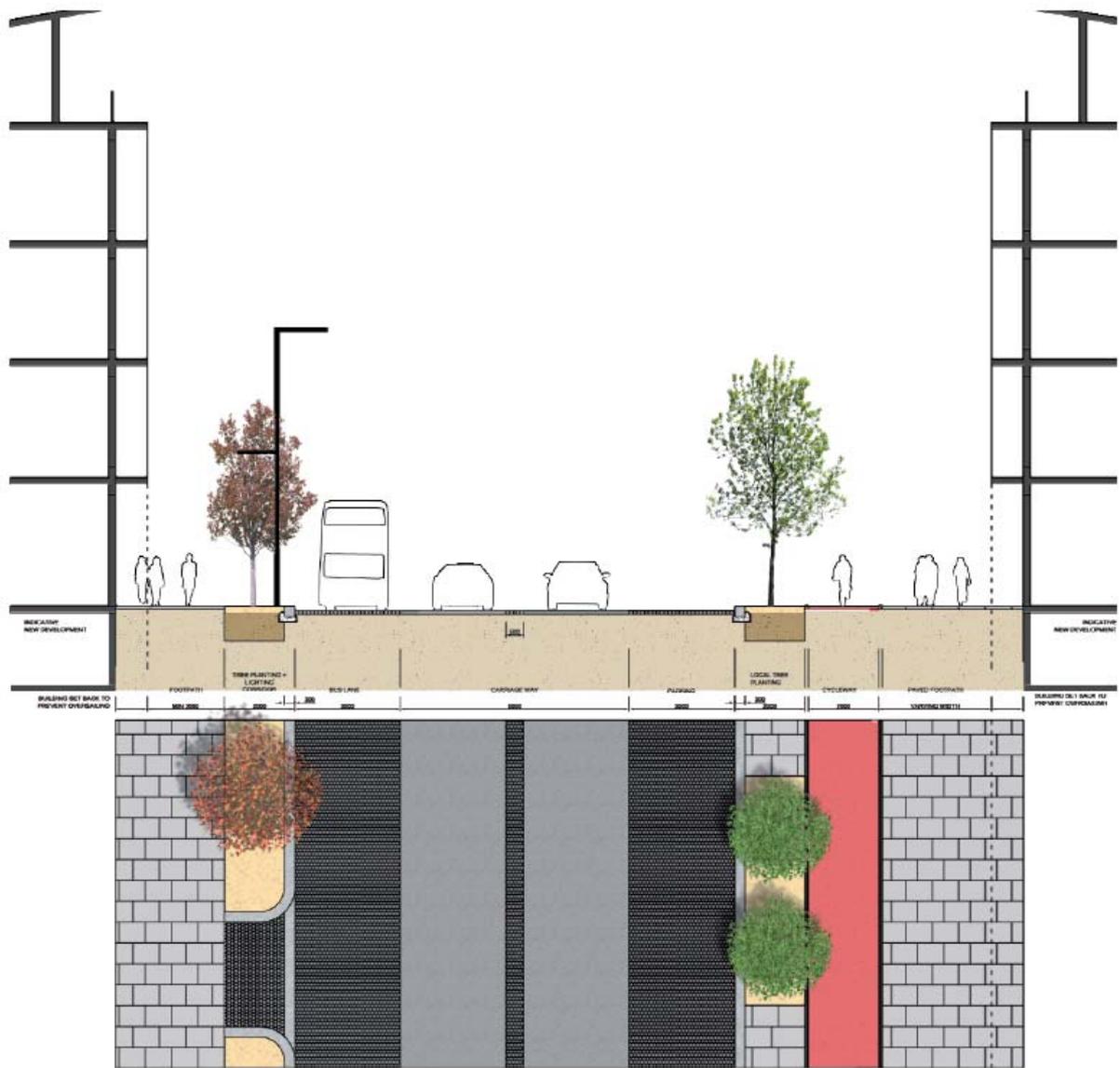
corridor width of 24 metres has been identified in the Victoria Way Corridor Delivery Study and this has been adopted by the developments that have received planning consent along the Victoria way route. The assessment has produced the following assumptions for the future requirements for this section of the scheme and how they can be incorporated into the available corridor:

- A single 'running' lane will be required in each direction. Each lane will be 3m wide with a 0.5m median strip in contrasting paving.
- Victoria Way is seen as a key public transport corridor and with SMARTLINK planned to use Victoria Way a bus lane will be required on the approach to the Beaver Road junction to bypass the anticipated queues (250m to 350m in 2031) and provide the priority required of a bus rapid transit system. Bus lane to be minimum 3.0m wide.
- The vision for Victoria Way is for a high quality urban avenue with active frontages. In order to assist in creating the activity it is desirable to provide on-street parking that will encourage people to stop and use the new street. An additional lane is therefore proposed to offer flexibility in the future design and implementation. This lane could be used for parking, loading bays or bus lane and bus stop areas. Additional lane width of 3.0m allowed for total flexibility
- The north side kerb line of Victoria Way will be fixed in the initial phase to avoid abortive works and help in the provision of a sustainable scheme. A 2.0m wide footway and 2.0m wide tree lined median will be implemented in the initial phase and this will remain unaltered. In areas where there is insufficient width to fit the tree line and footway, they will be provided within the final vision
- The vision for Victoria Way is as an urban avenue. This traditionally would mean a tree lined street. It is only possible to provide the tree spine on the north side in the initial phase and allowance is made in the final vision for a further 2.0m wide median, to mirror the north side, which can be planted in the future.
- A cycle route is required along the Victoria Way scheme. As the vision for Victoria Way is as a busy vibrant street, the cycle route should ideally be segregated from pedestrians. It is planned to position the cycle route on the south side of the street as this is the shady side and lends itself better to activity. The minimum recommended width by Sustrans is 2.0m with 3.0m preferred.
- A wide footway is then required to allow for the anticipated activity that will occur along Victoria Way. The aim is to create a new 'great street' for Ashford and sufficient space should therefore be afforded to pedestrians so that they can comfortably walk, browse at any retail developments and stop and talk to friends. Street activity should be encouraged and space must be provided for the activity. Inevitably street furniture will be required such as sign posts and litter bins. It is desirable for these to be positioned to allow a minimum clear width of 2.0m for pedestrians. A minimum width of 3.0 metres has been provided.

The above represents good use of the available 24m, offering the flexibility for potential change as developments progress along the Victoria Way corridor and the future context becomes clearer.



Beaver Road Gateway Section - Final Vision



Victoria Road Section - Final Vision

6.0 Victoria Square

Victoria Square is the focus of the scheme, where the main design features are located. The carriageway bends around the edge of Victoria Square to create the boundary of the public space and make a unique place making feature.

A modular boundary screening treatment runs along the northern boundary of the scheme, creating a facade like edge where needed.

A new square will provide an improved, community area for the public to use and will include seating, enhanced landscaping and a pavilion/shelter.

Traffic around the square will be limited to 20mph with a controlled pedestrian crossing at the intersection of the learning link footpath and the new carriageway.

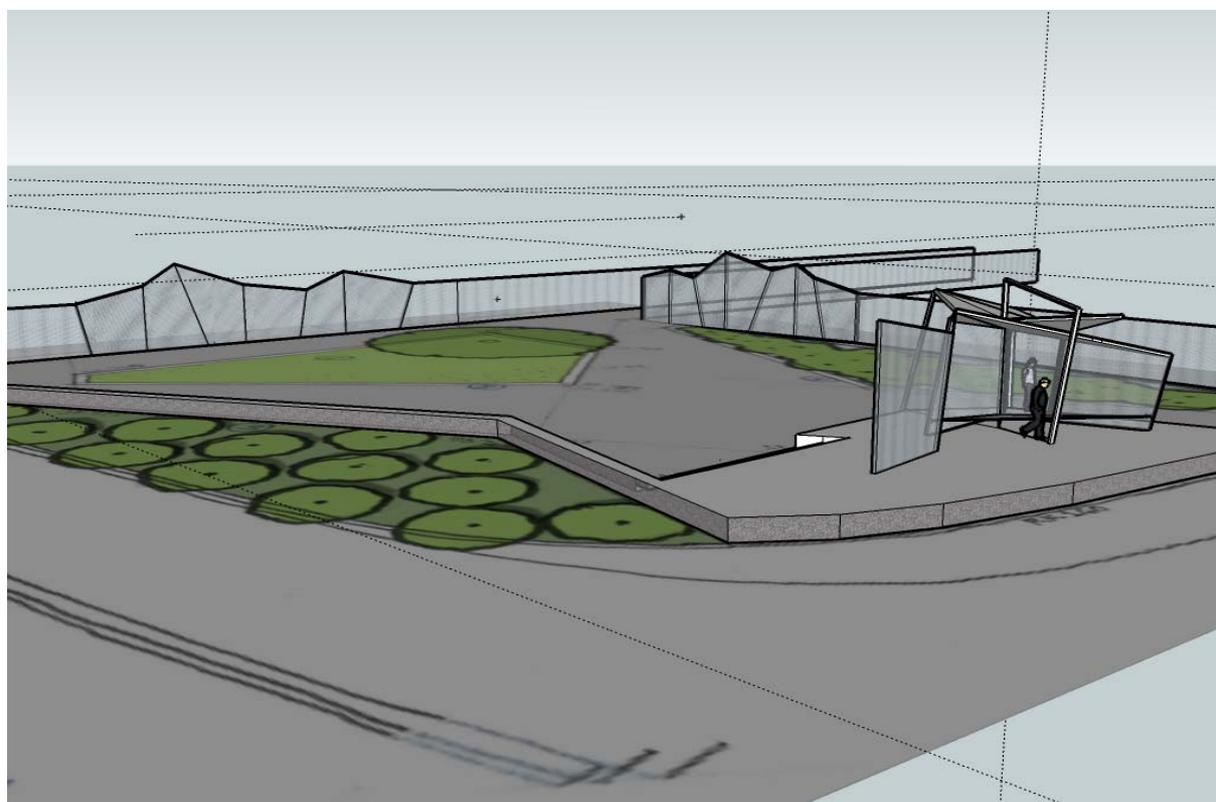
The square demands a high level of integrated lighting design and key public spaces are characterised by lighting design that utilises direct, indirect, reflected, dynamic

and vertical illumination. The lighting approach seeks to create a scheme that carefully considers its overall energy usage whilst balancing the needs of pedestrians and vehicular users. A typical lighting column to be used throughout the scheme is shown in Appendix B

6.1 Permanent Hoardings [Victoria Square]

The design of the permanent hoardings on Victoria Square to define the edges of the square is still being designed following a brief presentation to the Ashford Borough Council pre planning committee members, where the overall view suggested that the permanent hoardings identified needed further thought. This has brought about the need to reduce the number and scale of double layered hoardings, reducing materials and fabrication costs. This will create:

- a significant reduction in the number of 'designed' hoardings providing a more cost effective solution.
- Each one is bespoke and more dramatic in form creating greater impact with less hoardings. These would be less regular than the previous design but this has little bearing on fabrication costs.
- They would be smaller in size and therefore have less wastage and materials costs during fabrication.
- They would remain double layered to create the Moiree effect.
- Exploring cost cutting through the use of standard 'off the shelf' perforation size.
- Considering using powder coated perforated sheet, to compliment the finish on the pavilion and to reduce costs.
- Maintenance costs must be at the fore front of the design.



View of Victoria Square showing Hoardings and Pavilion/Shelter/Bus Platform

Standard Hoardings [Victoria Square]

The remainder of the square would be edged with lengths of more standard hoardings.

These would be constructed using a single layer complimentary material fixed to a standard fencing support structure. Options being explored are; single layer perforated steel, standard fencing mesh, or a long lasting painted perforated marine ply.



Pavilion/Shelter/Bus platform

The detailed design of the pavilion is being developed, to refine areas of the design and to outline a costing for the work.

The Integrated Design Team (IDT) is in the process of defining the specific materials, colour and finish of the structure and are considering a powder coated finish that uses shades of subtle colour on each surface to enhance the multi faceted element of the design.

The IDT is currently outlining technical, health and safety and practical design issues to ensure that the design is robust.



Victoria Square – landscaping/Hoardings/Pavilion/Bus Platform



View of Pavilion/Bus Platform

7.0. Maintenance

Management of Ashford's Public Spaces (green spaces and public realm) is taking place. A study managed by Ashford's Future Company aims to explore and evaluate the options for funding & managing public spaces throughout Ashford. The main aims are:

- overcome concern about the adequacy of current maintenance regimes
- get political buy-in to the need to find alternative solutions and agreement on the way forward

- encourage investment in high quality public realm design and specification in key locations, avoiding 'dumbing down' to minimise up-front cost.

The outputs will inform key decisions on management and maintenance of existing greenspaces (River Stour corridor and Victoria Park) and public realm (including Victoria Way and Victoria Square) within the SEQ. Ashford has the potential to be a good practice case study for work in this field. AFC has already undertaken some preparatory work to identify and assess a range of possible options for managing public spaces throughout Ashford. These include:

- public realm – within existing urban areas and targeted investment in high quality public realm in association with new development
- strategic parks – Discovery Park, Victoria Park and parks at Conningsbrook and Willesborough Dykes/East Stour
- local greenspaces and green infrastructure projects, including the Ashford's 'Green Necklace'

A CABE Enabler has been appointed.

Preliminary output is an AFC Board Paper with a clear proposal for funding and managing different types of public space – due December 2009

Ownership and maintenance of the structures within Victoria Square are still to be confirmed. A maintenance regime is to be developed with costs and authority sort for ownership shortly.

8. Programme

Land Acquisition – all completed by December 2009.

Design – completed by November 2009

Tender – Early December 2009

Award contract – February 2010

Start on site – April 2010

Complete works – March 2011

9. Funding

Community Infrastructure Fund 2 was approved in March 2009 for £16.5m from the Homes and Communities Agency.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, this report identifies the scope of the project and details limits of the scheme, materials to be used and structures within the new Victoria Square. The scheme to be implemented is the initial phase within the Southern Expansion Quarter with development to progress the long term vision.

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Appendices

A – Figure A-3 Scheme and development context

B – DW Windsor light column

**Background
Papers:**

The Greater Ashford Development Framework – Urban
Initiatives, April 2005
Ashford Town Centre Development Framework – Urban
Initiatives, Aug 2005
The Transport Strategy for Ashford – Kent County Council,
November 2005



LED MONARCH LUMINAIRES MOUNTED AT 8'6" T.S. AND 5'6" T.S. ON
C8 BRACKETS AND A 11" CONICAL COLUMN

DW Windsor
LIGHTING

APPENDIX B