
A28 Chart Road Dualling, Ashford

To: **Ashford Joint Transportation Board – 12 September 2017**

Main Portfolio Area: **Growth, Environment & Transport**

By: **Roger Wilkin, Director of- Highways & Transportation**

Classification: **For Information**

Ward: **Godinton, Great Chart with Singleton North, Victoria, and Singleton South**

Division: **Ashford Central, Ashford Rural West and Ashford South**

Summary: Progress Report on the A28 Chart Road Dualling Scheme

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The last formal report to this Board was in March 2016 following the initial scheme public consultation, although there have been subsequent verbal updates. Considerable progress was made on the project during 2016 and the completion of the Chilmington Section 106 Agreement in early 2017 enabled the CPO to be published and a Contractor to be appointed and it is now an appropriate time to give a detailed update report to the Board.

2.0 Construction Contract Award

2.1 A two stage 'Early Contractor Involvement' contract was awarded to Jackson Civil Engineering Ltd in February 2017 following a competitive procurement process with the award criteria being based on both cost and quality aspects. The quality aspects relate to the contractor demonstrating their understanding of the scheme and key matters such as construction methodology, traffic management and engagement with the local community. During the first stage the contractor supports the design team in developing and finalising the detailed design, advising on such things as buildability and programme impacts in order to mitigate some of the key construction risks associated with the project prior to the construction stage. When the detailed design is completed the contract price and construction programme are agreed prior to the award of the stage two construction phase.

3.0 Contractor Involvement

3.1 Following their appointment, Jackson have been supporting the Amey design team in developing the detailed design, working together to identify the key risk areas that would benefit from additional surveys and investigations. For example the planning and co-ordination of utility diversions is always a major risk item in highway schemes and Jackson have been carrying out trial holes to confirm the location of major plant and liaising with each utility company to inform what protection and

diversions will be required. Advanced ecological mitigation and the trapping of reptiles in key areas has already commenced to enable work to start in these areas next Spring. Jackson has also been supporting the County Council in land acquisition discussions by advising on specific buildability and programming aspects including potential accommodation works with affected parties

4.0 Land Acquisition

4.1 Most of the scheme can be provided within the existing highway corridor but land is required from eight mainly commercial or statutory bodies. Discussions commenced early on in the scheme development but a compulsory purchase order has been required to give programme certainty. Some aspects are procedurally complex where for example the road passes over the high speed railway line and there are three parties involved – Department of Transport as land owner, High Speed 1 as train operator and London & Continental Railways as the surplus land development arm. Some land owners have also changed such as the Bombardier site which is now owned by a private development company.

4.2 Small areas of the existing verges required for the scheme are owned by Ashford Borough Council and KCC are currently in discussions to have these areas transferred to KCC's ownership.

4.3 Despite the publishing of the Compulsory Purchase Order, discussions are still continuing with all landowners to agree the land acquisition by voluntary agreement.

5.0 Compulsory Purchase Order

5.1 A compulsory purchase order was published in May 2017 following the completion of the Chilmington S106 agreement. Five objections were received and most of these are either holding objections about points of detail. Efforts are currently being made to get them withdrawn but only one has been formally withdrawn so far.

5.2 The Secretary of State has therefore instructed that a Public Inquiry be held. No date has yet been set but the end of November has been suggested to the Secretary of State and for it to be held in the Borough's Council Chamber.

5.3 As part of the process a detailed statement of case and rebuttal of the objections has been served on the objectors and documents that the County Council will rely upon in support of the scheme put on deposit at the Ashford Gateway Plus.

6.0 Summary of Objections

6.1 The owner of No. 3 Chart Leacon Cottages is concerned that the access to the property will become left in/left out only and right turns out in particular will require a diversion to 'U' turn at Tank roundabout. It is accepted that there will be some inconvenience but such arrangements are common on dual carriageways, primarily for safety or operational reasons. An initial meeting has been held with the owner and a follow up meeting is planned once he has taken some professional advice.

6.2 Matalan is concerned about the effect of the land take on existing car parking and in particular disruption to their business during the construction of the retaining wall within their car park. The formal objection does not reflect the positive

discussions with Matalan's Estates Manager that continue and there is optimism that the objection may be withdrawn. No parking spaces are lost as a result of the scheme and Jackson has been supporting the County Council to provide reassurance about the construction phase and we are tailoring the construction programme to avoid Matalan's busy periods and employing construction methods that will minimise the direct impact on the car park.

6.3 Network Rail has submitted a standard holding objection to allow time for them to complete internal consultation. This is frustrating bearing in mind the level of engagement so far but they do not have an objection in principle to the scheme and a formal Deed of Undertaking is being progressed that will allow Network Rail to formally withdraw their objection.

6.4 SHB Plant Hire were concerned about the impact on their business but acknowledged the need for the scheme and the ongoing land discussions. Following a response and reassurance from the County Council, SHB has withdrawn their objection.

6.5 FPC Ltd at the time of publication of the CPO were the potential purchasers of the London & Continental Railways development site, left over following construction of the High Speed 1 cut and cover tunnel, at Tank roundabout. Their objection was mainly related to valuation but things have moved on. FPC subsequently acquired the leasehold interest in the site but immediately sold it on. They however retained their interest in the CPO plot for which we have now agreed terms for the leasehold acquisition. It is expected that once this has progressed or some formal Memorandum of Understanding entered into that FPC will formally withdraw their objection.

6.6 From the above summary it can be seen that progress is being made and the issue will now be about how much more can be achieved before the Public Inquiry is held that will reduce the extent or possibly avoid the need for the inquiry.

7.0 Public Engagement

7.1 A further round of public engagement was held during July that was also attended by our contractor Jackson. Information was provided on progress and on the potential construction programme and traffic management phasing for the scheme. We are aware that inconvenience during construction is a major concern for not only the local residential and business communities but also the wider Ashford community and users of the A28. We are working closely with Amey and Jackson to ensure that impacts to the local communities and through traffic on the A28 are kept to an absolute minimum through the careful planning and co-ordination of the works

7.2 The first of the two public exhibitions was held at the Singleton Environment Centre in conjunction with Ashford Borough Council's Chilmington Green public consultation event. This was then followed by a scheme specific exhibition at Godinton Village Hall.

7.2 A further public engagement event is being planned ahead of the construction phase. It is hoped that this will be carried out in November or December 2017 when the detail design has been completed and key programme impacts such as utility diversions have been agreed and traffic management layouts and phasing finalised.

However the precise timing of this event will largely be dependent on the conclusion of the CPO and land acquisition.

8.0 Programme

8.1 The construction programme will be dictated by progress on confirmation of the compulsory purchase order and particularly if a Public Inquiry can be avoided or significantly reduced in scale. The timing of the Public Inquiry is also still an unknown and is dependent on the availability of an Inspector. New regulations have also extended the Notice of Entry periods under a CPO from one month to three months and we would seek the agreement of landowners to reduce this.

8.2 It therefore remains high risk but the aspiration and ideal situation would be where we can complete vegetation clearance in January/February 2018 and commence main construction in Spring 2018 with an anticipated construction period of 18 months.

8.3 If significant issues remain that will need to be heard at the public inquiry and upon which the Inspector will need to consider and the Secretary of State time to reflect on the recommendations or if the Public Inquiry is not held until 2018 then there will inevitably be a high risk of delay of start of construction, potentially until spring 2019.

9.0 Conclusions

9.1 Good progress has been made with the detailed design, award of contract, land negotiations and public engagement. The key issue is in achieving the confirmed compulsory purchase order at the earliest opportunity and all our efforts are being directed at this.

10.0 Recommendations

FOR INFORMATION

Future Meeting if applicable: As necessary but none planned at present	Date:
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