

Junction 10a and development at Sevington

Note of a briefing for members held on 20th January 2013

The briefing was provided by Mary Gillett from KCC and Paul Harwood from the Highways Agency. 13 council members attended with guests from local parishes; area forums and the county council. Cllr David Robey chaired the session.

In introduction Richard Alderton updated the meeting on progress on the interim junction 10A scheme which has in principle grant support of nearly £20m from the South East LEP. He explained that the junction was designed in a way that it could be an interim scheme en route to the full junction 10A proposal should the latter be required but that was unlikely until sometime around 2030. The full scheme would cost in the order of £70 – 80m and there was no indication that such a sum would be forthcoming from government.

Crucially, therefore the interim scheme would buy considerable time to accommodate Ashford's growth needs for the foreseeable future without these having to be displaced to other more sensitive parts of the Borough where the impacts could be considerable.

At the first of these briefings held last autumn members had expressed concerns about the design and the modelling work undertaken on the interim scheme by the Highways Agency and Paul Harwood had been invited to explain this further.

Next Mary Gillett from the KCC Major Transport Projects team explained that KCC would be promoting the SELEP interim scheme and carrying out a period of testing the project to establish a detailed business case to justify the spending proposed – this is a primary condition of SELEP funding. As the project is operational development related to the County's role as highway authority, the County Council would be the planning authority determining a planning application. Mary would be the project manager for the scheme at KCC.

Paul Harwood gave a presentation – a copy is attached to this note. Paul explained the origins of the scheme and the design proposed. He then explained how the modelling had been undertaken, testing various scenarios. The first looked at the current state of affairs and the final two explored the impact of adding the developments permitted but unable to go ahead without J10a; plus an assumption about the future scale of growth the new local plan will allocate to 2030 and also the impact of the proposed AXA scheme at Sevington. The last option was a sensitivity test to see what the impact of a change in travel behaviour ('modal split') by 2030 would have.

The current state of affairs shows the junction under pressure, particularly in the evening peak – with a problem on the Kennington Road link. With the interim scheme built and all committed and future local plan development in place shows capacity used up in the evening peak, with the north side of the junction over capacity. The third scenario – assuming 15% less traffic on the basis people may

use other modes (bus, car sharing, bike etc) – shows the junction approaching capacity in the evening peak. The findings were illustrated by using queue lengths on each approach road to demonstrate the impact on congestion levels.

In conclusion, Paul re-emphasised the need for new junction capacity; explained that the SELEP scheme would provide capacity for the vast majority of the anticipated development coming forward in the next local plan (i.e. until 2030); and provide a breathing space for the town to enable the Government scheme to come forward in due course when it was needed.

A range of views were expressed in discussion by different members:

- The existing junction regularly fails in the evening peak with a particular problem on the off-slip from the London direction
- The impact of lorry traffic from Sevington combine with Operation Stack would create multiple problems
- The junction works well with the lights off (*response – work is underway to try to improve the phasing*)
- The Barrey Road junction remains a problem and potential danger (*response – this is not part of the SELEP scheme and would have to be promoted separately*)
- If a major occupier like Amazon locates at Sevington dedicated slip roads should be provided to the site
- Ashford should wait until the full Government scheme can be funded to provide the best solution
- More information is needed on actual flows onto the junction and the assumptions used (*response – Paul Harwood will be providing this*)
- KCC is the planning authority because this is operational development promoted by KCC but why Ashford cannot be the planning authority needs clarifying
- Concern that traffic on Highfield Lane would be diverted onto Kingsford Street and into Mersham (*response – this debate will be picked up by KCC as scheme promoter*)
- The Highways Agency should provide copies of notes of all meetings with AXA – a member intended to make FOI request

It was agreed that another briefing would be needed as the detailed design is tested – especially to tackle any detailed local issues arising.

Cllr David Robey