A249 Key Street and Grovehurst Road Junction Improvement Schemes

Public Consultation Booklet
2 December 2020 - 26 January 2021

kent.gov.uk/a249swalejunctionimprovements

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1| Introduction

Welcome to our public consultation on the A249 Key Street and Grovehurst Road junction improvement schemes.

We have been successful in securing £38.1 million from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to deliver these junction improvements. We already have £0.5m in developer contributions for improvements to Key Street, to help mitigate the impact of new developments. This gives us a total scheme budget of £38.6 million.

Further developer contributions will be collected and re-invested into the Borough to support growth within Swale's emerging Local Plan.

How this money is spent is still to be decided but would not be limited to highways and could be used on health, education and other community facilities.

The HIF funding and developer contributions represent a significant investment into the Borough that would be lost should these schemes not go ahead.

This public consultation is being run to:

- outline why the junction improvement works are required
- present the latest designs
- listen to feedback from residents, businesses, and other interested parties.

We will be consulting on these schemes from Wednesday 2 December 2020 to Tuesday 26 January 2021. We hope you will complete the consultation questionnaire so that we can take your views onboard. This will help us make improvements, where possible, to ensure the schemes are the best they can be.

This document contains some terms that you may be unfamiliar with, therefore a glossary has been provided later in the booklet to give further explanation. Terms that are included in the glossary are indicated in blue font.

2| Background

The Key Street and Grovehurst Road junctions are located on the A249, to the north east of the M2 Junction 5 heading towards the Isle of Sheppey.

The A249 Key Street junction is a two-bridge oval shaped roundabout junction with slip roads on the southern side and connections to the A249, A2 Keycol Hill, Bobbing Hill, Sheppey Way and Chestnut Street. It serves the A2, village communities, and Sittingbourne town centre.

The A249 Grovehurst Road junction is a double roundabout layout with a single dual carriageway bridge over the A249 connecting the two. It is the main route for traffic heading towards the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road to the east and Iwade village to the west. The junction also has connections to Grovehurst Road and Swale Way.

The Key Street and Grovehurst Road junction improvements are linked because of their proximity to each other on the A249, and their importance in connecting local communities and business to nearby towns and the wider A2/M2 road network.

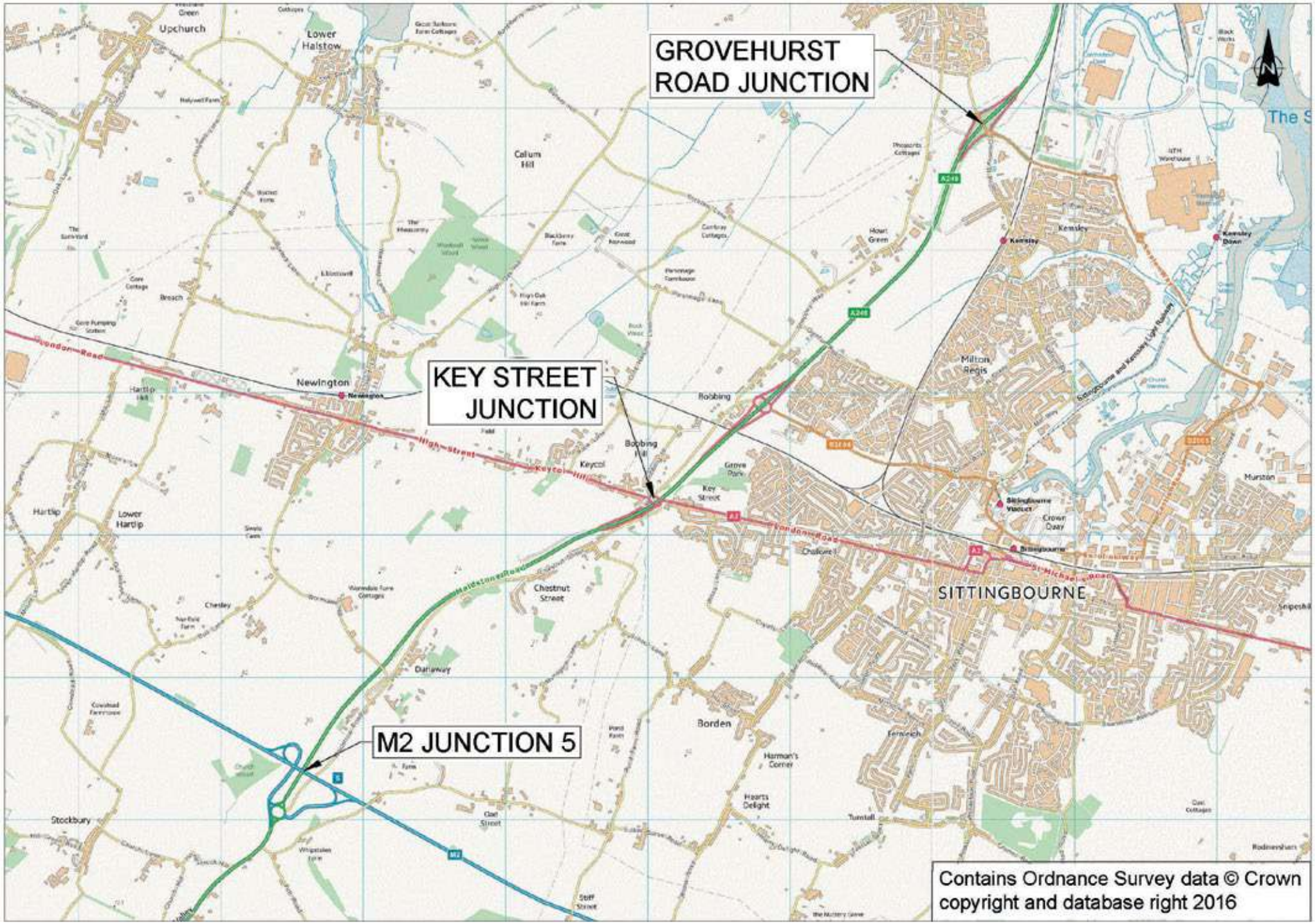
Road users currently using either Key Street or Grovehurst Road junctions often experience high volumes of traffic, which results in significant vehicle queues and congestion. The volume of traffic at these junctions is expected to increase as a result of future growth in the surrounding area, which is set out in the local plan. We are proposing improvements to the two junctions to reduce the impact of future growth, reduce congestion and address air quality issues.

Highways England M2 Junction 5 Works

Highways England are also proposing improvements to the M2 Junction 5. The Key Street and Grovehurst Road schemes are dependent on the M2 Junction 5 scheme being approved by the Secretary of State following a Public Inquiry, which began on the 9 November 2020.

The terms of the HIF funding require that Key Street and Grovehurst Road schemes are constructed by Spring 2024. To achieve this, it is likely that there will be some overlapping construction works.

We will work closely with Highways England to minimise disruption to local communities and businesses.


GROVEHURST ROAD JUNCTION
KEY STREET JUNCTION
M2 JUNCTION 5
SITTINGBOURNE
Upchurch
Lower Halstow
Newington
Hartlip
Lower Hartlip
Stockbury
Chestnut Street
Borden
Milton Regis
Kemsley
Bobbing
Keycol
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016

3| Why are these schemes needed?

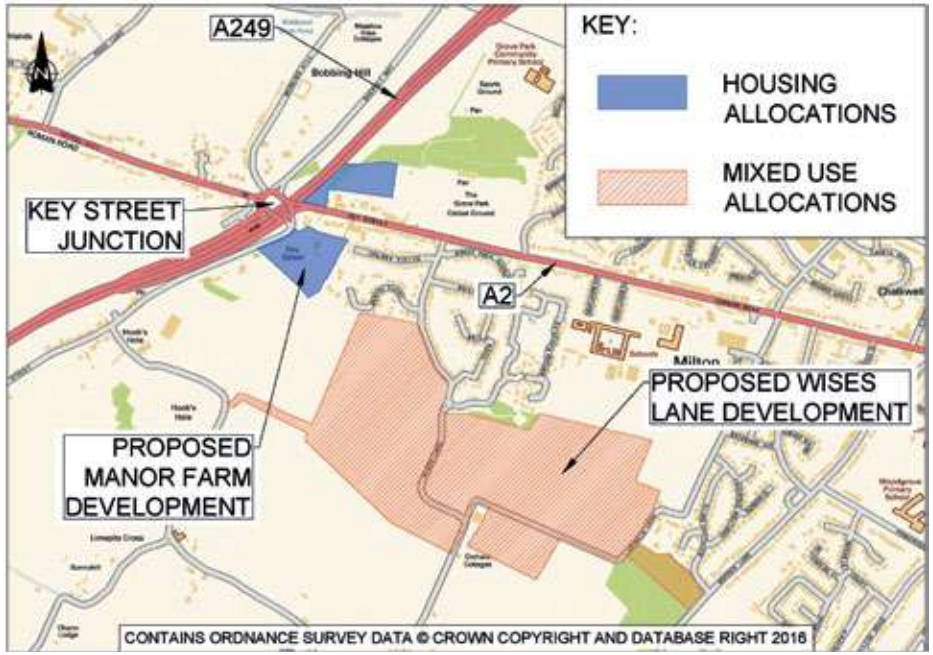
Both the Key Street and Grovehurst Road junction improvements are needed to provide the road network capacity required to handle future predicted housing and commercial development growth.

Supporting planned growth

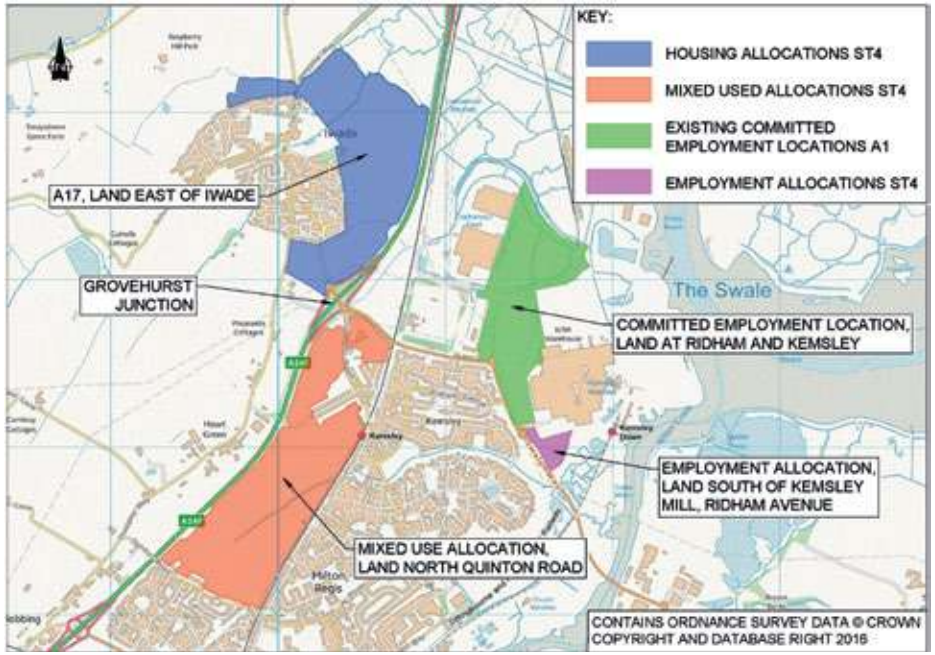
Swale Borough Council's Local Plan, which was adopted in 2017 sets out the need to provide 13,192 homes and 130,000 square metres of commercial units by 2031.

These junction improvements are needed to increase the road capacity to support the delivery of the Borough's Local Plan. The junction improvements will enable 7,899 homes to be built within the vicinity of the schemes.

The Swale Local Plan shows employment, housing and mixed-use allocation land identified for proposed development.



There are three sites near Key Street junction, as shown on the plan above.



There are also four sites near Grovehurst Road junction, as shown on the plan above.

Supporting local businesses

Swale's economy has a particular focus on manufacturing, transport and storage industries. The adopted Local Plan sets out aims to continue to develop the right conditions to support and stimulate growth in these sectors. The Grovehurst Road and Key Street junction improvements will be fundamental by helping to reduce congestion, improve traffic flows and improve connections to the A2 and M2.

The junction improvements support the upgrade of Sittingbourne town centre, and the Eurolink Industrial Park by providing better connectivity to the A249 and beyond by reducing the impact of congestion in the local area. This will benefit these industries and help to facilitate the future expansion of local distribution and manufacturing industries.

The Sittingbourne Area Strategy notes the importance of these junctions in supporting the retention of existing jobs and the creation of new employment opportunities.

Reduce congestion and queueing

A decision was made to seek funding for the A249 improvements, to ensure better connections to the M2 and therefore improve air quality and traffic flows.

The upgrades to the junctions are also needed to ensure that local communities and businesses can access the strategic road network (A2/M2) without continuing to experience significant congestion and queuing traffic on the A249 and surrounding local network.

The junction improvements offer benefits to the local community in terms of reduced local journey times and less congestion. This will particularly benefit those travelling between Medway towns and Sittingbourne and within Sittingbourne town centre.

The Key Street improvements include provision of traffic lights at the roundabout to reduce congestion. The traffic lights help to regulate traffic flows and improvements will be most keenly felt in the afternoon rush hour where traffic congestion is at its highest.

Improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists

The Swale Local Plan referenced the need to improve pedestrian and cyclist accessibility of the two junctions for existing and future housing developments in the nearby vicinity. The key aim is to help make cycling and walking a more desirable and appealing prospect for local communities.

Included within the schemes are significant improvements to the existing walking and cycling facilities, designed to encourage these types of journeys. These include signalised crossings and new shared footway and cycleways.

4| What do we want to achieve?

- Reduce existing traffic congestion at Key Street and Grovehurst Road junctions
- Provide suitable road capacity to enable the delivery of additional homes and employment in the Sittingbourne area
- Support local businesses by providing more reliable connectivity with the A2/M2
- Reduce air pollution by improving traffic flows and reducing congestion
- Promote more sustainable means of travel through improvements to the pedestrian and cycle facilities
- Provide a safer environment for all road users

5| Key Street junction proposals

The design is currently at outline design phase. Site surveys are being carried out and will be used, alongside your feedback, to develop the detailed design.

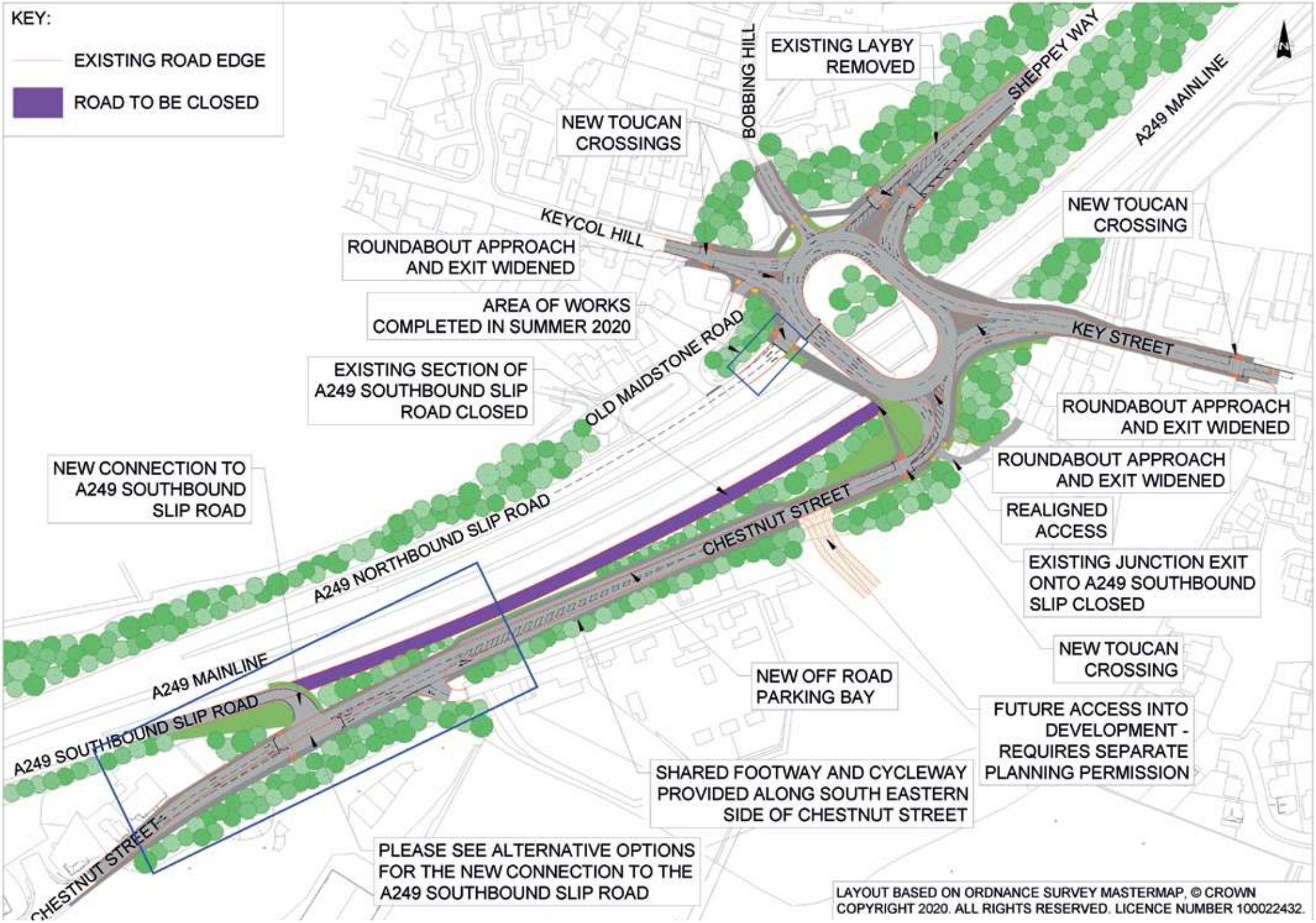
The list below provides a summary of the key changes being proposed:

- closing the existing A249 southbound slip road from the Key Street roundabout and introducing a new on-slip connection from Chestnut Street
- widening several of the Key Street roundabout approaches and exits
- improving road markings and road signs to provide increased clarity for drivers
- installing parking bays on Bobbing Hill and off-road parallel parking on Chestnut Street
- introducing pedestrian and cycle priority crossings on Keycol Hill, Sheppey Way, Key Street and Chestnut Street
- widening of the existing footways and verges where possible to provide shared footway and cycleways.

The plan on the next page shows these proposed works, with more detail provided later in this booklet.

The cost of the proposed Key Street works is approximately £5.8 million. This will be fully funded through Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and contributions from developers.

Some minor works have already been completed in Summer 2020 to improve safety and address immediate congestion issues. This included the addition of traffic lights and a pedestrian crossing on the A249 northbound slip road and the introduction of road markings on the Key Street roundabout.


KEY:
EXISTING ROAD EDGE
ROAD TO BE CLOSED
BOBBING HILL
EXISTING LAYBY REMOVED
SHEPPEY WAY
A249 MAINLINE
NEW TOUCAN CROSSINGS
KEYCOL HILL
NEW TOUCAN CROSSING
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH AND EXIT WIDENED
AREA OF WORKS COMPLETED IN SUMMER 2020
KEY STREET
OLD MAIDSTONE ROAD
EXISTING SECTION OF A249 SOUTHBOUND SLIP ROAD CLOSED
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH AND EXIT WIDENED
NEW CONNECTION TO A249 SOUTHBOUND SLIP ROAD
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH AND EXIT WIDENED
A249 NORTHBOUND SLIP ROAD
CHESTNUT STREET
REALIGNED ACCESS
EXISTING JUNCTION EXIT ONTO A249 SOUTHBOUND SLIP CLOSED
A249 MAINLINE
NEW TOUCAN CROSSING
A249 SOUTHBOUND SLIP ROAD
NEW OFF ROAD PARKING BAY
FUTURE ACCESS INTO DEVELOPMENT - REQUIRES SEPARATE PLANNING PERMISSION
SHARED FOOTWAY AND CYCLEWAY PROVIDED ALONG SOUTH EASTERN SIDE OF CHESTNUT STREET
CHESTNUT STREET
PLEASE SEE ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS FOR THE NEW CONNECTION TO THE A249 SOUTHBOUND SLIP ROAD
LAYOUT BASED ON ORDNANCE SURVEY MASTERMAP, © CROWN COPYRIGHT 2020. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. LICENCE NUMBER 100022432.

Detailed description of the proposals

Key Street roundabout proposals

This section of the booklet and the plan on the next page describe the proposed changes to the Key Street roundabout in more detail.

Key Street gyratory
To avoid making changes to the existing bridges, which would significantly increase the cost of the scheme and cause more disruption during construction, the proposals have sought to make the best use of the existing bridge space. This has been achieved by marking lane lines on the Key Street gyratory.

A249 southbound slip road arm
One of the most significant changes proposed is the closure of the existing A249 southbound exit slip road arm and the redirection of southbound traffic along Chestnut Street. A new connection will be provided to the existing A249 slip road. This will increase capacity and improve safety, by reducing the number of arms on the roundabout.

Chestnut Street arm
To increase capacity, the proposal is to add an additional lane to the roundabout approach. The existing crossing will be upgraded to a toucan crossing and relocated further away from the junction to improve visibility of the crossing for drivers, which improves safety.

A2 Key Street arm
An additional left turn lane is proposed on the roundabout approach to increase capacity, this will require road widening.

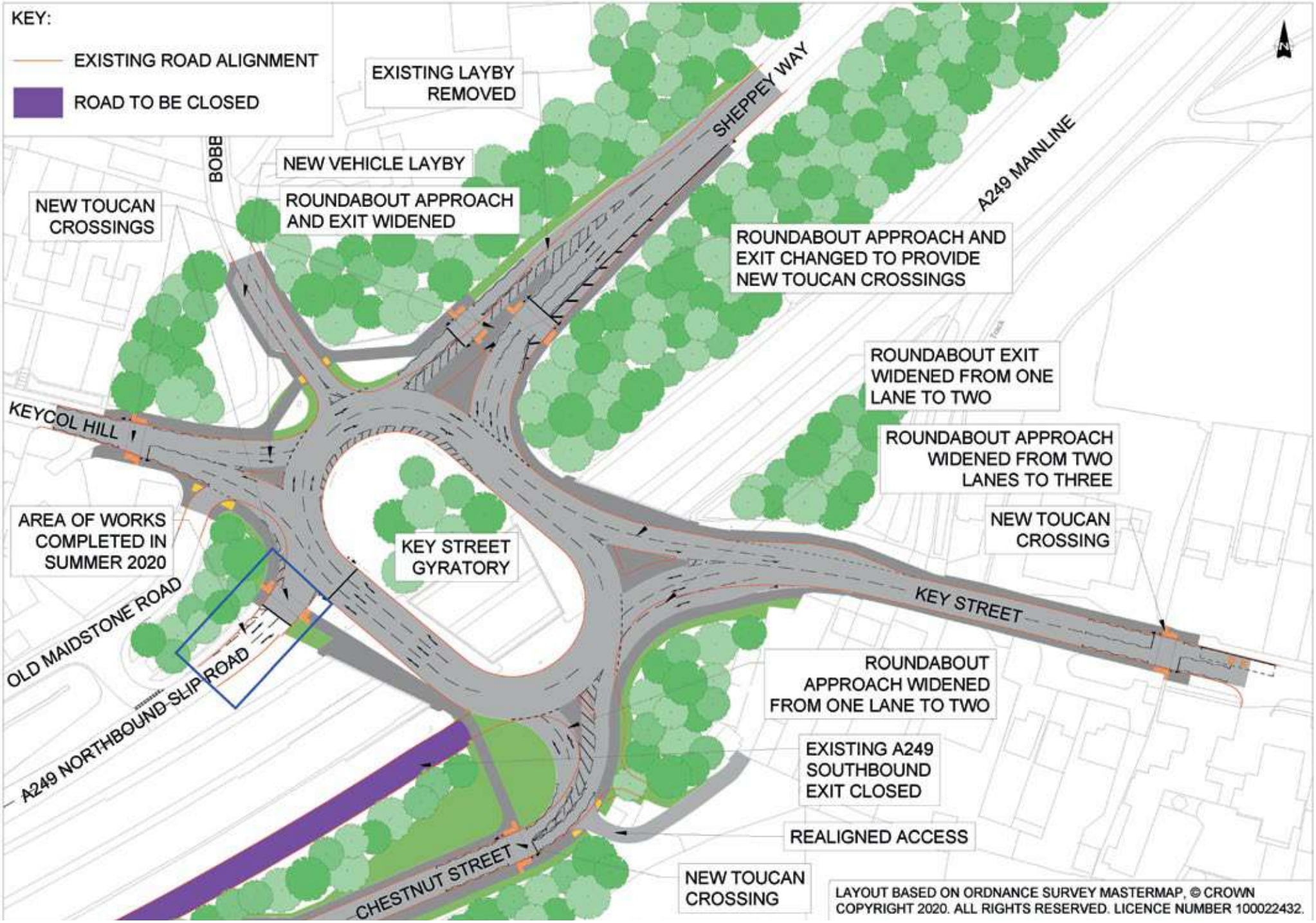
As part of the design development, a segregated left turn lane was considered and discounted. This would have provided slight improvements to capacity. However, the left turn lane proposed provides the required capacity, a safer layout and reduces our environmental impact by requiring a smaller area of land. The existing pedestrian crossing will be upgraded to a toucan crossing. This has been positioned away from the Key Street roundabout junction to improve safety, retain the existing layby and improve junction capacity.

Sheppey Way arm
A new toucan crossing is proposed to provide a safe crossing point for pedestrians and cyclists. This requires the removal of the existing layby on the northbound side of Sheppey Way to provide enough space and minimise the removal of any trees. To improve safety, the proposal is to provide a toucan crossing in a location which improves visibility for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

Keycol Hill arm
To increase capacity and improve safety, the proposal is to widen both the roundabout approach and exit to provide a longer distance of two lanes.

Bobbing Hill arm
Changes to the Bobbing Hill arm are minimal, with the only significant change being the installation of a parking bay with space for approximately four cars.

A249 northbound slip road arm
No changes from the works completed in the summer of 2020 are proposed.


KEY:
EXISTING ROAD ALIGNMENT
ROAD TO BE CLOSED
EXISTING LAYBY REMOVED
SHEPPEY WAY
A249 MAINLINE
BOBB
NEW VEHICLE LAYBY
NEW TOUCAN CROSSINGS
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH AND EXIT WIDENED
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH AND EXIT CHANGED TO PROVIDE NEW TOUCAN CROSSINGS
ROUNDABOUT EXIT WIDENED FROM ONE LANE TO TWO
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH WIDENED FROM TWO LANES TO THREE
KEYCOL HILL
NEW TOUCAN CROSSING
AREA OF WORKS COMPLETED IN SUMMER 2020
KEY STREET GYRATORY
KEY STREET
OLD MAIDSTONE ROAD
A249 NORTHBOUND SLIP ROAD
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH WIDENED FROM ONE LANE TO TWO
EXISTING A249 SOUTHBOUND EXIT CLOSED
REALIGNED ACCESS
CHESTNUT STREET
NEW TOUCAN CROSSING
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Chestnut Street and A249 slip road connection proposals

This section of the booklet describes the proposed changes to Chestnut Street in more detail.

Chestnut Street

A large number of cars currently park on Chestnut Street as shown on the right.

To provide two full and clear lanes for traffic, a parallel parking bay is proposed on the northbound side of Chestnut Street, providing space for approximately 35 cars. This layout improves the safety and capacity of Chestnut Street, whilst still retaining the parking.

A 3-metre shared footway and cycleway route is proposed on the southbound side of the road, which will connect into the Key Street roundabout shared footway and cycleway.

These proposals are shown on the image to the right.

The Manor Farm developer has proposed a priority T-Junction, shown to the right, to connect into Chestnut Street. This is subject to its own separate environmental assessments, mitigation and planning submission.

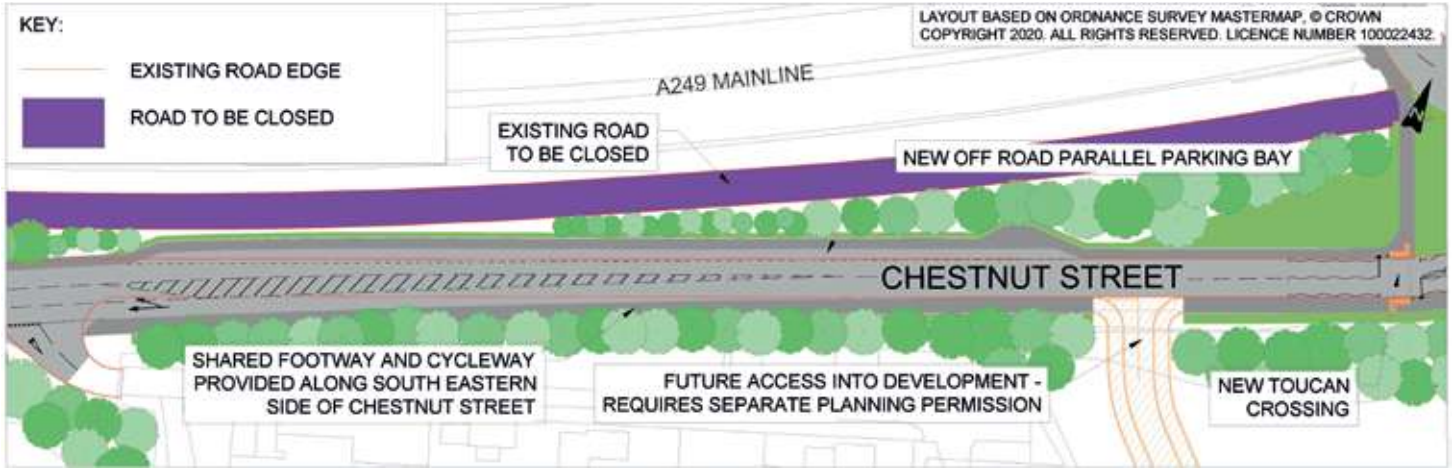
Planning permission was granted for their proposal by Swale Borough Council, and this T-junction will be funded and constructed by the developer. More information on the proposed development (ref. no – 17/500727), can be found at: pa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications/

New connection to the A249 southbound

At this stage, there are three possible options which may be implemented to provide the connection between Chestnut Street and the A249 southbound slip road, which are still under consideration. These are:

- Option 1: A traffic signal-controlled T-junction which gives priority for traffic using Chestnut Street
- Option 2: A T-junction which gives priority for traffic heading southbound on the A249
- Option 3: A roundabout which would also include an arm into the proposed development.

More details for these three potential options are provided below.



Option 1:

T-junction which gives priority for traffic using Chestnut Street

Option 1 would involve provision of a T-junction layout which gives priority for traffic using Chestnut Street.

As a result of the Chestnut Street priority and to provide enough capacity for traffic turning onto the A249 southbound slip road, it is likely that any such arrangement would require traffic lights. This is likely to encourage slower traffic speeds on Chestnut Street compared to Option 2.

This layout would be constructible within the highway boundary and results in a small loss of trees and scrub.

Option 2:

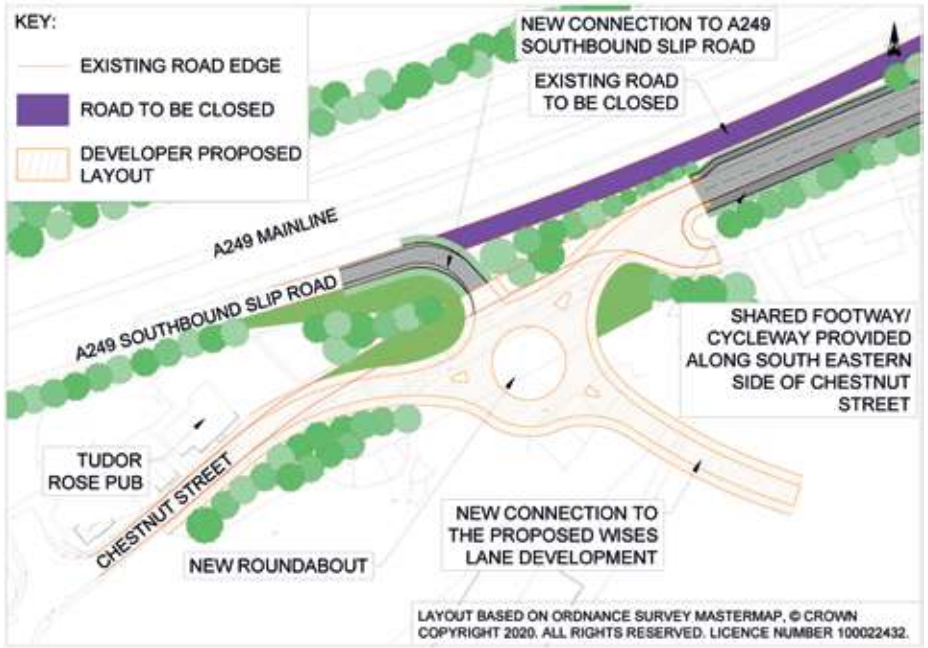
T-junction which gives priority for traffic heading southbound on the A249

Option 2 would involve changing the road on Chestnut Street to provide priority for vehicles heading to the southbound A249. It is likely that this would have sufficient capacity without requiring traffic signals.

This layout would be constructible within the highway boundary and results in a small loss of trees and scrub. However, this layout is likely to encourage faster traffic speeds on Chestnut Street compared to Option 1, as A249 bound traffic has priority and can continue ahead without braking. For this reason, Option 1 is preferred to Option 2.

Option 3:

Roundabout which would also include an arm into the proposed development



Option 3 has been proposed by the developer of the land at Wises Lane and is subject to its own separate environmental assessments, mitigation and planning submission.

To provide a safe roundabout with enough capacity, land outside of the highway boundary would be required.

More information on the proposed development (ref no – 17/505711), can be found at: pa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications/.

All three of these options are currently possible to connect to the A249. All the options are being considered, discussed and developed to provide a solution which is compliant with the road design standards. The layout which would ultimately be selected and constructed is likely to be dependent on three key factors:

- whether planning permission is granted for the land at Wises Lane development. If granted, then it is likely that the roundabout solution would be implemented
- discussions with Highways England to determine the preferred layout
- your consultation feedback and how each option may affect you.

Key Street pedestrian and cycle proposals

The scheme aims to improve the existing provision to encourage sustainable and active lifestyles of people living and working locally.

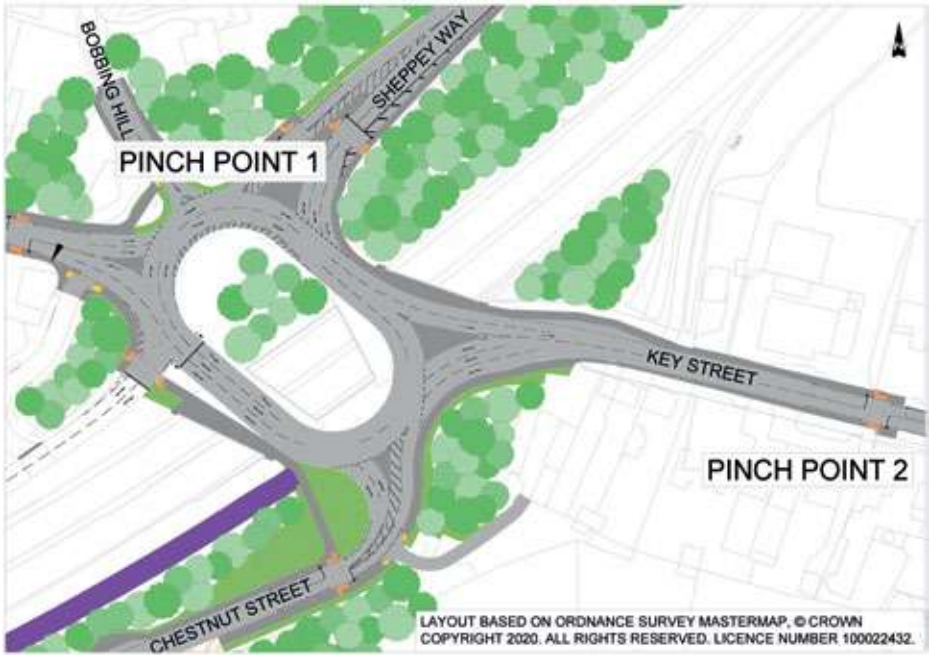
To achieve this, we have sought to improve the pedestrian and cycle facilities. These include:

- widening existing footways and verges where possible to provide a shared footway and cycleway
- providing additional information and directional signage
- improving the road crossing points (including the introduction of toucan crossings to prioritise walking and cycling).

Wherever possible, a 3-metre-wide shared footway and cycleway has been proposed. There are a few locations where this reduces to the minimum accepted width of 2.2 metres. These are where there are constraints such as property boundaries and the width of existing bridges.

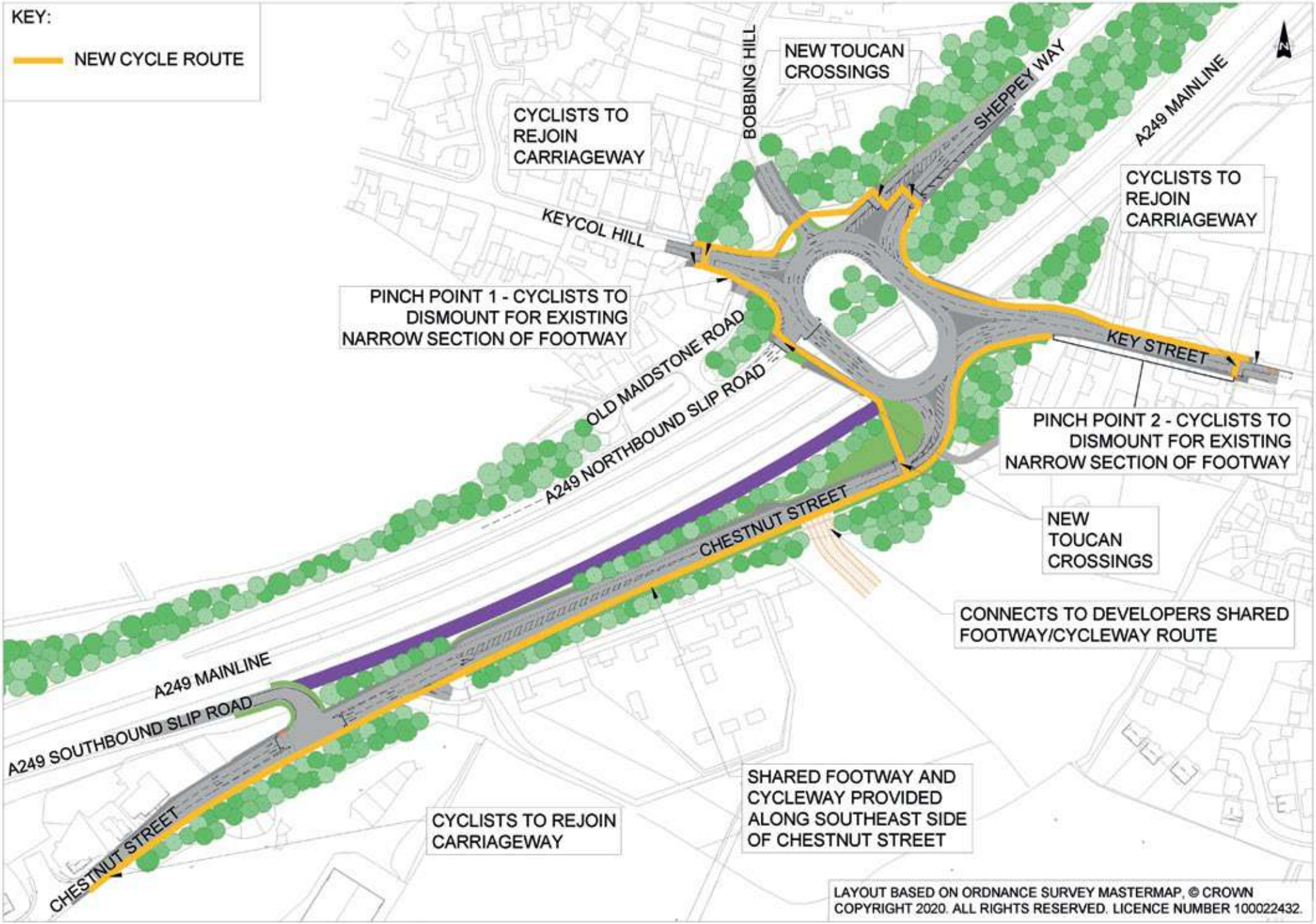
Unfortunately, there are two 'pinch point' locations where we are currently unable to provide the minimum shared footway and cycleway widths. These locations are:

- Pinch point 1 – There is a 10 metre length of footway on the southern side of Keycol Hill footway where the width is constrained by the highway boundary and widening may not be possible.
- Pinch point 2 – The southern footway on Key Street is constrained by existing property boundaries between the proposed toucan crossing on Key Street and the Key Street roundabout.



We are continuing to investigate possible solutions at these pinch points to see if they can be removed at the next stage of design.

As can be seen on the plan on the next page, the proposed pedestrian and cycle facilities will aim to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety and connectivity throughout the scheme. The facilities will connect into the developers proposed shared footway and cycleway network, should these developments come forward.


KEY:
NEW CYCLE ROUTE
BOBBING HILL
NEW TOUCAN CROSSINGS
SHEPPEY WAY
A249 MAINLINE
CYCLISTS TO REJOIN CARRIAGEWAY
CYCLISTS TO REJOIN CARRIAGEWAY
KEYCOL HILL
PINCH POINT 1 - CYCLISTS TO DISMOUNT FOR EXISTING NARROW SECTION OF FOOTWAY
OLD MAIDSTONE ROAD
A249 NORTHBOUND SLIP ROAD
KEY STREET
PINCH POINT 2 - CYCLISTS TO DISMOUNT FOR EXISTING NARROW SECTION OF FOOTWAY
CHESTNUT STREET
NEW TOUCAN CROSSINGS
CONNECTS TO DEVELOPERS SHARED FOOTWAY/CYCLEWAY ROUTE
A249 MAINLINE
A249 SOUTHBOUND SLIP ROAD
CHESTNUT STREET
CYCLISTS TO REJOIN CARRIAGEWAY
SHARED FOOTWAY AND CYCLEWAY PROVIDED ALONG SOUTHEAST SIDE OF CHESTNUT STREET
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Key Street environmental impact

We do not anticipate that the design changes would introduce any new significant adverse environmental impacts, but we do recognise that any changes may impact the environment. We have therefore undertaken early stage environmental assessments, for several environmental categories. More detail is provided below.

Air quality

During construction, there is potential for increased dust resulting from moving materials or emissions from machinery.

We will look to mitigate this by implementing measures such as dust suppression and use of electric equipment where possible.

Post-construction, it is anticipated that local air quality will be improved due to a reduction in idling traffic and congestion, which would otherwise be made worse from the increased traffic flows.

Noise and vibration

There is potential for increased noise and vibration during construction. These effects will be temporary and limited to the construction period.

There are three Noise Action Plan important areas near to Key Street junction. To make sure we respect these areas, appropriate measures will be implemented to mitigate noise during the construction period. These may include noise barriers, selection of quieter tools and machinery and adjusting working hours where practical.

Cultural heritage

No listed buildings are within the scheme extents, however, there are six listed structures, nine archaeological monuments and a single conservation area within 300 meters of the site.

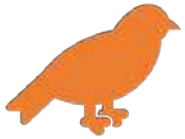
The use of appropriate construction methods and materials will mean cultural heritage impacts are unlikely.

Landscape

The proposed construction activities are unlikely to result in any significant visual or landscape effects.

Although the road will be widened in places, replacement and improved planting will be included in the proposal where possible. To minimise the impact, re-seeding and planting of trees will take place at the earliest opportunity to reinstate the visual screening provided by the vegetation.

The final landscape of the proposed junction is expected to be similar in use and appearance to the existing road junction.



Biodiversity

Initial surveys and assessments have determined that the proposed design changes would not lead to any significant adverse impact on the ecology and environment.

However, further surveys, including a Biodiversity Offsetting Report are planned for further investigation.

Additionally, to mitigate any risks of habitat disturbance, care will be taken during the construction, such as using hooded lighting, avoidance of storage in wooded areas and adjusting working hours where practical.

Where trees and shrubs are planted, species will be selected which are in keeping with local planting to enhance biodiversity.

Materials and waste

Materials that are dug up will be re-used on site where possible to reduce waste.

Material that cannot be re-used on site, will be disposed of locally wherever possible to minimise transportation requirements.

Material selection will consider materials that will require less maintenance and less frequent replacement.

Drainage

The works proposed will increase carriageway and hard surface areas.

There are no watercourses within the scheme, but there is an Environment Agency Flood Zone and a Source Protection Zone.

Further design development and flood risk assessments would aim to reduce the potential impact. The drainage strategy for the site would be designed to accommodate the increase in runoff and make allowance for climate change.

Population, community and human health

The scheme will aim to improve journey times, which will save road users time on their journeys through Key Street.
Enhanced pedestrian and cycling facilities will be provided to encourage sustainable and active lifestyles of people living and working locally. These will link better with existing Public Rights of Way, improving access to green space for residents.
During construction, journey times will be affected, and diversion routes will be put in place as required. To mitigate this, traffic management and signage will be used to minimise disruption.

Other environmental impacts

A review of local geology, soils and climate change, including consideration of greenhouse gas emissions, will also be undertaken.

Key Street next steps

Further design development

The scheme is currently at outline design phase. The detailed design work required before construction includes:

- incorporating your feedback into the development of the design proposals
- developing environmental mitigation plans
- developing the detailed design based on detailed survey information and mitigation requirements
- developing construction plans to manage both timing of works and impacts on traffic and local communities during construction.

Anticipated timeframes

The key dates below give an indication of our anticipated timeframes.

The timescales are subject to change as the scheme develops and are driven by the requirements of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), set by Homes England.

The aim is for construction of the scheme to be completed by Spring 2024. The start date for construction of Key Street is yet to be confirmed. To minimise disruption on the road network and avoid concurrent working on Key Street and M2 Junction 5, construction for Key Street may start in Spring 2022 but could be brought forward to commence in 2021.

Although it is yet to be confirmed, we do not expect our proposals for Key Street to require planning permission.

Key dates are as follows:

- analysis of feedback from this consultation – Spring 2021
- further environmental survey work – 2021
- detailed design work – Spring to Summer 2021
- construction works start – Summer 2021 to Spring 2022 (start dates are variable as described above)
- construction works completed – Spring 2024 (or before depending on start date).

Before the works, we will update you on the:

- final design
- timescales for construction
- traffic management arrangements during construction.

6| Grovehurst Road junction proposals

The design is currently at outline design phase. Site surveys are being carried out and will be used, alongside your feedback, to develop the design for planning submission.

It is proposed that the existing 'dumbbell' Grovehurst Road and A249 junctions be upgraded to a single raised gyratory. This would be achieved using two bridges over the A249 and would substantially increase the capacity of the junction.

The list below provides a summary of the key changes being proposed:

- repurposing the existing two-way bridge into a two-lane one-way bridge, forming part of the new gyratory
- constructing an additional bridge north east of the existing bridge over the A249
- removing the existing roundabouts to the north west and south east of the A249
- installing traffic lights on the gyratory and respective roundabout approaches
- altering the roundabout approach and exit arrangements between the new gyratory and Grovehurst Road and Swale Way
- changing the A249 slip roads, particularly the two Isle of Sheppey facing slip roads, which will be completely reconstructed
- providing a new access to Nichols Transport Logistics Park to the north east of Swale Way
- introducing pedestrian and cycle priority (toucan) crossings
- widening of the existing footways and verges where possible to provide shared footways and cycleways.

The plan on the next page shows these proposed works, with more detail provided later in this booklet. The cost of the proposed Grovehurst Road works is approximately £32.8m. This will be fully funded through Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF).


KEY:
EXISTING ROAD EDGE
ATTENUATION LAGOON
A249 NORTHBOUND MERGE SLIP ROAD
PROPOSED TRAFFIC LIGHTS JUNCTION
GROVEHURST ROAD NORTH
A249 MAINLINE
PROPOSED BRIDGE
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH AND EXIT WIDENED
A249 SOUTHBOUND DIVERGE SLIP ROAD
EXISTING BRIDGE
PROPOSED TRAFFIC LIGHTS JUNCTION
A249 NORTHBOUND DIVERGE SLIP ROAD
PROPOSED TRAFFIC LIGHTS JUNCTION
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH AND EXIT WIDENED
A249 SOUTHBOUND MERGE SLIP ROAD
EXISTING ACCESS REALIGNED
PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST ROUTE TO KEMSLEY PROVIDED THOUGH DEVELOPMENT
ROUNDABOUT APPROACH AND EXIT WIDENED
A249 MAINLINE
EXISTING ACCESS MAINTAINED
GROVEHURST ROAD SOUTH
SWALE WAY
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LAYOUT BASED ON ORDNANCE SURVEY MASTERMAP, © CROWN COPYRIGHT 2020. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. LICENCE NUMBER 100022432.

Detailed description of the proposals

This section of the booklet and the plan on the previous page describe the proposed changes to the Grovehurst Road roundabout in more detail.

The proposed gyratory

To improve capacity and safety, a new gyratory layout is proposed, taking all traffic around a single larger gyratory system, instead of two small roundabouts.

The proposals include traffic lights on the two A249 diverge slip roads, Grovehurst Road north and Swale Way arms and the respective sections of the gyratory.

To provide capacity, three lanes have been provided on the gyratory except over the existing A249 bridge, where only two lanes are provided. This avoids making changes to the existing bridge, which would significantly increase the cost of the scheme and cause more disruption during construction.

This will not impact on the capacity improvements because traffic flows on the southern section of the gyratory will be lower.

A249 'Isle of Sheppey facing' slip roads

To connect with the new gyratory, the A249 northbound merge slip road, will need to be completely reconstructed. To cater for the future traffic demands, a single lane slip road is proposed.

Similarly, the southbound A249 diverge slip road will also need to be reconstructed to connect to the new gyratory. To increase capacity, the proposals are to widen the slip road to three lanes at the gyratory.

A249 'M2 facing' slip roads

To improve capacity and safety, the A249 northbound diverge slip road will be widened to two lanes, with a further widening to three lanes at the traffic lights.

The roundabout exit onto the A249 southbound merge slip road will be widened to two lanes.

Grovehurst Road north arm

The Grovehurst Road north will be altered to connect into the new gyratory layout. To improve capacity the gyratory approach will be widened to three lanes at the traffic lights. A single lane exit has been provided for traffic travelling towards Iwade.

Grovehurst Road south arm

Grovehurst Road south will be changed to connect into the new gyratory layout. To improve capacity the gyratory approach will be widened to three lanes, with a priority entry. The roundabout exit, towards Kemsley will be widened to two lanes, before merging into the existing single lane.

Swale Way arm

The Swale Way arm will be changed to connect into the new gyratory layout. To improve capacity the gyratory approach will be widened to three lanes at the traffic lights. The roundabout exit will be widened to two lanes.

To improve the flow of traffic, a traffic light-controlled junction is proposed at the Nicholls Transport access and the approaches widened to two lanes.

Grovehurst Road pedestrian and cycle proposals

The scheme aims to improve the existing pedestrian and cycle facilities to encourage sustainable and active lifestyles of people living and working locally.

The existing layout at Grovehurst Road junction doesn't encourage walking, with narrow footways and informal road crossings. There are also no cycling facilities, which means that cyclists must share the road with cars. This can be seen at the southern roundabout at Grovehurst Road junction in the image below.

To improve the pedestrian and cycle facilities, the proposal is as follows:

- widening existing footways and verges where possible, to provide a shared footway and cycleway matching other best practice cycle infrastructure elsewhere in Swale and notably along Swale Way
- providing additional information and directional signage
- improving the road crossing points (including the introduction of toucan crossings to prioritise walking and cycling).

The facilities on the existing A249 bridge will be removed and the new shared footway and cycleway route will cross the A249 via the new bridge. Providing suitable facilities on the existing bridge was not considered to be practical because the bridge would need to be modified and widened. This would significantly increase the cost of the scheme and cause more disruption during construction.

We have looked at various options to provide the best possible pedestrian and cycle facilities. This included options which follow the road edge and options which run separately from the road, requiring additional structures to cross the A249 and slip roads.

The following section provides an overview of the three shortlisted options. All these route options would provide a continuous 3-metre-wide shared footway and cycleway, as is currently provided along Swale Way.

These options were deemed most suitable for the site overall considering factors such as directness, safety, environmental impact, cost and constructability.

Shared footway and cycleway route options

Option 1

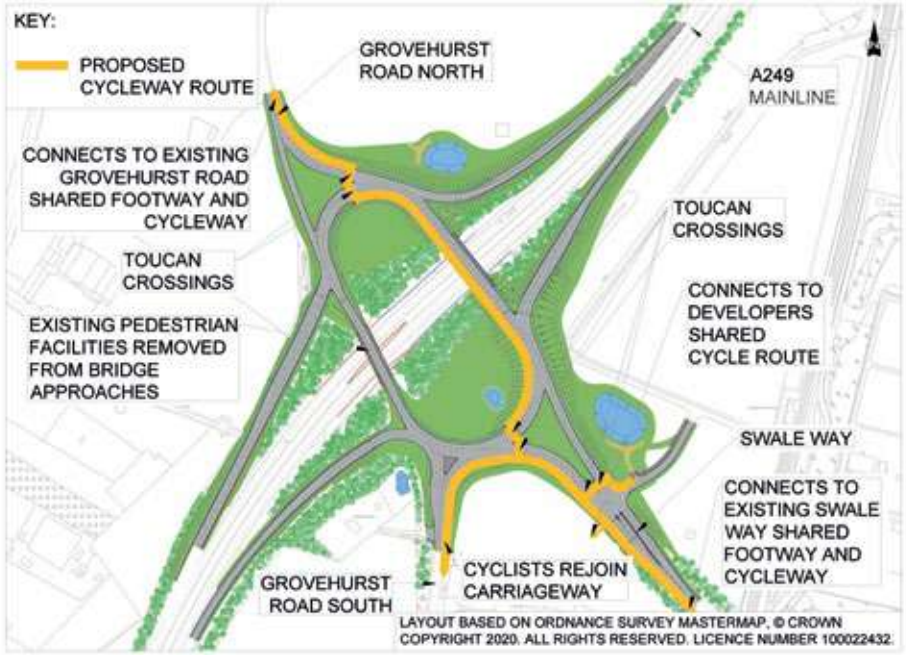
This route crosses the A249 on the northeast side of the new gyratory bridge.

We have provided toucan crossings along this route to prioritise walking and cycling where road crossings are required.

This route connects into the existing Swale Way, Grovehurst Road North and Great Grovehurst Farm pedestrian and cycle facilities for access into Kemsley.

This route is currently included within our proposals.

Option 2



Similarly, to option 1, this route crosses the A249 on the new gyratory bridge. However, this option runs around the inside of the gyratory and crosses on the south-west side of the new bridge.

This option also provides toucan crossings along the route to prioritise walking and cycling where road crossings are required.

This route also connects into the existing Swale Way, Grovehurst Road North and Great Grovehurst Farm pedestrian and cycle facilities for access into Kemsley.

Option 3

This option provides a separated route for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the A249 immediately to the north of the Grovehurst Road junction on a new shared footway and cycleway bridge.

This route requires a new bridge and is less direct, however fewer crossings are required improving the safety and comfort of the route.

We have provided two toucan crossings along this route to prioritise walking and cycling where road crossings are required.

Alternative separated options have been considered. Routes to the south of the junction are not possible because of the overhead utility cables, but a bridge which runs through the centre of the new junction could be considered if this was preferred.

This segregated route would require an additional bridge to cross the A249. This would increase the cost of construction significantly and may require additional funding to be sought and therefore may not be possible. However, we would welcome your thoughts on this option to understand your preference and see whether this is worth investigating further.

Grovehurst Road environmental impact

We do not anticipate that the design changes would introduce any new significant adverse environmental impacts, but we do recognise that any changes may impact the environment. We have therefore undertaken early stage environmental assessments, for several environmental categories. More detail is provided below.

Air quality

During construction, there is potential for increased dust resulting from moving materials or emissions from machinery.

We will look to mitigate this by implementing measures such as dust suppression and use of electric equipment where possible.

Post-construction, it is anticipated that local air quality will be improved due to a reduction in idling traffic and congestion, which would otherwise be made worse from the increased traffic flows.

Noise and vibration

There is potential for increased noise and vibration during construction. These effects will be temporary and limited to the construction period.

Appropriate measures will be implemented to mitigate noise during the construction period, such as noise barriers, selection of quieter tools and machinery and adjusting working hours where practical.

Cultural Heritage

The study area is also known to contain archaeological items of interest. There is one listed building within 300m of the site.

An assessment of potential impact on heritage assets shall be prepared and mitigation measures put in place, to ensure that no heritage effects arise as a result of the scheme.

Landscape

A landscape and visual impact assessment will be completed to identify and mitigate potential impacts and enhance the environment where possible.

The construction phase is likely to cause temporary landscape changes, which will be mitigated through site planning and management.

Permanent landscape changes will include the removal and replanting of trees, an additional bridge over the A249, revised slip road embankments and new road signs.

To minimise the impact, re-seeding and planting of trees will take place at the earliest opportunity to reinstate the visual screening provided by the vegetation. Native species will be planted to support biodiversity and nature conservation.

Biodiversity

Initial surveys and assessments have determined that the design changes would not lead to any significant adverse impact on the ecology and environment.

The scheme is located close to:

- The Swale, a tidal channel of the Thames estuary that separates the Isle of Sheppey from the rest of Kent, lies within 500m of the scheme. The Swale is a Special Protection Area, Ramsar Site, and Site of Special Scientific Interest
- The Swale Estuary, a Marine Conservation Zone.

An Ecological Impact Assessment will be prepared to identify in detail ecological effects of the scheme, including any impact on local habitats and species and recommend mitigations. Planting of trees and shrubs in keeping with local planting is also proposed to enhance biodiversity.

Materials and waste

Materials that are dug up will be re-used on site where possible to reduce waste.

Material that cannot be re-used on site, will be disposed of locally wherever possible to minimise transportation requirements.

Material selection will consider materials that will require less maintenance and less frequent replacement.

Drainage

The works proposed will increase carriageway and hard surface areas.

There are no watercourses, Environment Agency Flood Zones or Source Protection Zones located within the scheme.

The drainage strategy for the site will be designed to accommodate the increase in runoff and make allowance for climate change.

Population, community and human health

Post construction, journey times will be improved, which will save road users time on the journeys through Grovehurst Road.

Enhanced pedestrian and cycling facilities will be provided to encourage sustainable and active lifestyles of people living and working locally. These will link better with existing Public Rights of Way, improving access to green space for residents.

During construction journey times will be affected and diversion routes will be put in place as required.

To mitigate this, traffic management and signage will be used to minimise disruption.

Other environmental impacts

A review of local geology, soils and climate change, including consideration of greenhouse gas emissions, will also be undertaken.

Grovehurst Road next steps

Further design development

The scheme is currently at outline design phase. The detailed design work required before construction includes:

- incorporating your feedback into the development of the design proposals for submission of the planning application
- developing environmental mitigation plans
- developing the detailed design based on detailed survey information and mitigation requirements
- developing construction plans to manage both the timing of works and impacts on traffic and local communities during construction.

Anticipated timeframes

The key dates to the right give an indication of our anticipated timeframes.

The timescales are subject to change as the scheme develops and are driven by the requirements of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), set by Homes England.

Although it is yet to be confirmed, we expect the Grovehurst Road junction scheme will require planning permission.

Key dates are as follows:

- analysis of feedback from this consultation – Spring 2021
- further environmental survey work – Spring 2021 to Spring 2022
- submit planning application – Spring to Summer 2021
- detailed design work - Spring 2021 to Winter 2021
- construction works start – Spring 2022
- construction works completed - Spring 2024 (or before).

There will be another opportunity for you to provide your feedback on the scheme, during the planning consultation period next year.

If planning permission is granted, before works start, we will update you on the:

- final design
- timescales for construction
- traffic management arrangements during construction.

7| Equality analysis

To help ensure that we are meeting our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 we have prepared an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for the proposals put forward in this consultation.

An EqIA is a tool to assess the impact any proposals would have on the protected characteristics: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race, religion, and carer's responsibilities.

The EqIA is available to view online at: kent.gov.uk/a249swalejunctionimprovements or on request.

The schemes will deliver positive impacts through improved pedestrian and cycle facilities and improvements to journey time reliability for traffic and public transport.

The schemes are likely to provide temporary negative impacts during construction due to increased journey times and potential relocation of bus stops. Liaison will take place with bus operators to mitigate issues from changing bus stop locations. The construction will be planned to ensure properties are accessible at all times. There are not expected to be any long-term adverse impacts. The EqIA will be updated after the consultation to consider any relevant information received.

8| Have your say

Your feedback is essential in helping us refine our designs and ensure they best suit the needs of your local community. We want to hear your comments and views.

The consultation will run for eight weeks from Wednesday 2 December 2020 until Tuesday 26 January 2021.

You can provide feedback by completing the questionnaire, which is available on our website: kent.gov.uk/a249swalejunctionimprovements

Your feedback will be reviewed and analysed following the closure of the consultation. The findings will then be compiled into a consultation report and made available on our website.

If you would like to request paper copies of the consultation material, or if you have any questions about this consultation please contact us:

Email: **a249swalejunctionimprovements@kent.gov.uk**

Telephone: **03000 42 14 37**

(This number goes to an answer machine which is monitored during office hours.)

If you require any of the consultation material in an alternative format or language, please email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 42 15 53 (text relay service number 18001 03000 42 15 53). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.

9| Glossary of terms

Attenuation Lagoon
A designed feature to store rainwater during storm events to slow the speed at which rainwater enters nearby ditches, streams and rivers.

Biodiversity Offsetting Report
Report written to document biodiversity benefits identified to compensate for any losses associated with a development.

Conservation Area
Areas that manage and protect a place of special architectural or historic interest.

Detailed Design
A thorough design presenting technical and construction information, usually prepared for construction.

Developer Contributions
Contributions that a developer makes to the local council, to mitigate the impact of a development.

Dumbbell Roundabout
A double roundabout junction which is formed of two roundabouts at either end of a connecting road.

Ecological Impact Assessment
Process of identifying and assessing the impacts on animals, plants, their habitats and ecosystems.

Flood Zone
Land assessed as being at risk from river or sea flooding.

Gyratory
A traffic system requiring circular movement of traffic. More complex and usually larger than a typical roundabout.

Greenhouse Gas
A gas that contributes to global warming. Carbon dioxide and methane are examples of a greenhouse gas

Highway Boundary
Defines the area of land which is maintained by the Highway Authority, in this case, Kent County Council or Highways England.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)
A government fund of up to £2.3 billion, which will help to deliver up to 100,000 new homes in England. Funding is awarded to local authorities on a competitive basis, providing grant funding for new infrastructure that will unlock new homes in the areas of greatest housing demand.

Listed Buildings / Structures
Building or structure which is of architectural or historic interest and is therefore protected for future generations.

Local Plan / Adopted Local Plan
A plan for future development of a local authority area created by the Local Authority. It provides a basis for planning and addressing development needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities.
Swale Borough Councils Local Plan provides a framework for development until 2031. More information, can be found here: https://swale.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/local-plans/adopted-local-plan-for-swale

Outline Design
Design drawings produced to demonstrate the principals of the proposed design.

Marine Conservation Zones
Areas that protect a range of rare or threatened habitats and species, around the English coast.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)
A government department responsible for supporting communities and creating great places for people to live and work.

Mixed – Use Allocation
Development which blends multiple types of land uses (e.g. residential, commercial, office, educational) into one space, with the land uses becoming combined.

Noise Action Plan Important Areas
Areas also known as noise hotspots, which have been identified in the action plan.

On-Slip / Slip Road
Road used by vehicles to enter or leave a major road. Diverge slip roads take traffic away from the major road, while merge slip roads allow traffic to enter the major road.

Pinch Point
In this booklet - a section of a road / footway / cycleway which narrows or is obstructed.

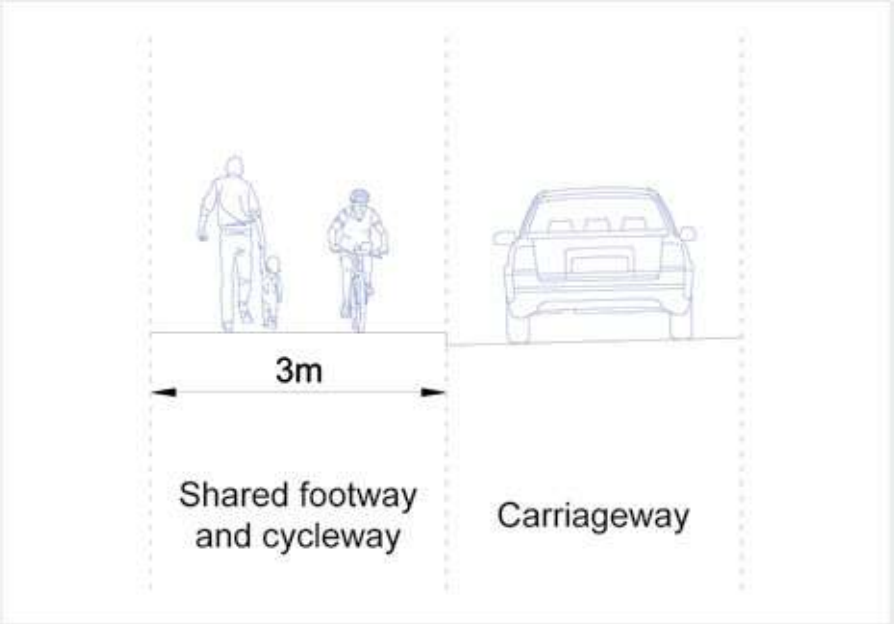
Public Inquiry
Formal process overseen by a planning inspector, to reach a decision on whether to give planning approval or refusal for a given development.

Public Rights of Way
Land where the public have a legal right to pass over, such as footpath, bridleway etc.

Ramsar Site
Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

Secretary of State Approval Decision
When the Secretary of State decides if a development site should be granted planning permission, due to the site being of national or regional importance.

Shared Cycleway/Footways
Route designed to accommodate the movement of both pedestrians and cyclists. A typical shared footway and cycleway cross section is shown below.



Site of Special Scientific Interest
A protected area that's of scientific interest due to the rare species of plant, animal or landscape features that may lie in its boundaries.

Sittingbourne Area Strategy
Strategy which sets out how future development will help to grow and ensure the viability of Sittingbourne town centre and neighbouring communities. The town is the principal urban area and the focus for local development. The strategy can be found here: http://services.swale.gov.uk/media/files/localplan/adoptedlocalplanfinalwebversion.pdf (on page 62).

Source Protection Zone
A zone where the risk of contamination from any activities might cause pollution of groundwater in the area.

Strategic Road Network
Road network made up of the nation's motorways and major A roads.

Special Protection Area
Area designated to protect rare and vulnerable birds, under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

Toucan Crossings
Signalised crossings which allow both pedestrians and cyclists to cross at the same time.

kent.gov.uk/a249swalejunctionimprovements

Kent County Council
kent.gov.uk