

M25/M26 EAST FACING SLIPS ON M25 in the vicinity of J5 Sevenoaks

LACK OF MOTORWAY CONNECTIVITY AT SEVENOAKS - THE IMPACT ON OUR WEST KENT VILLAGES

Dear Neighbour,

Economic Feasibility Study

Along with our neighbouring Parish Councils, Borough Green Parish Council is a member of Kent Area Local Councils (KALC). In 2014, KALC set up a KALC Motorways sub – group to pursue an ‘Economic Feasibility Study’ in support of the missing slip roads campaign at Sevenoaks. To engage consultants into the study, KALC needed to raise £15,000 from Kent Parish Councils and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. Kent County Council (KCC) agreed to fund a matching sum of £15,000 to achieve the required £30,000 for the study. Apart from our own local Parish Councils, there was support from those further afield such as Hawkhurst and Goudhurst Parish Councils whom also stated the traffic impact on their communities through the failure of these slip roads not being built back in the 1980s. Following a competitive tendering process run by KCC, SYSTRA Limited were appointed in December 2015 as our consultants to undertake the study. As the work has been to look at ‘East Facing’ Slips at ‘an appropriate location in the vicinity of Junction 5 of the M25, SYSTRA limited will be reviewing existing studies that have looked at a number of potential areas. These include East Facing Slips at Junction 5 of the M25/M26/A21; East Facing Slips on the M26 at the A225 near Otford; East Facing Slips at the A233 near Westerham; and any other appropriate locations in the vicinity of J5 M25. Your local Parish Council has contributed financially to the ‘Economic Feasibility Study’ and thus had the opportunity to also contribute on potential local, regional and national economic benefits and the potential impacts (including social and environmental) to SYSTRA Limited. The date for response to SYSTRA Limited via KALC closed on 29 January 2016. KALC, are in contract to receive a draft report from SYSTRA Limited on 19 March 2016. Contribution response to SYSTRA Limited encouraged inclusion of key issues as below:

TRAFFIC - THE A25 CORRIDOR

The latest Department for Transport traffic counts on the A25 show 18,106 vehicles a day through the western end of Borough Green, and 16,252 through Seal, which suggests that only 2,000 are purely local Borough Green Traffic. The vast majority of those 16,000 vehicles are probably generated by Sevenoaks, and could be taken off the A25 by implementing a full motorway junction at Sevenoaks, using the M26 as a bypass for Platt, Wrotham, Ightham, Seal and eastern Sevenoaks.

AIR QUALITY

There are already several AQMAs on the A20/A25 corridor from Maidstone through Borough Green to join those on the A25 in Sevenoaks. Investigations are just starting on pollution levels in Platt, and future investigations will probably indicate high levels at Wrotham Heath, Borough Green, Bat & Ball, Seal, Riverhead, Sevenoaks and Westerham.

LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

Borough Green, Wrotham, Ightham and Platt are home to or border several busy industrial estates, sandpits, landfills and quarries, which all contribute economically to the area, and provide much needed local employment. These businesses are severely hampered by local traffic, compromising their viability.

SOCIAL IMPACT

All our West Kent villages are sliced up by the traffic artery, it is impossible to take direct pedestrian routes anywhere, so there is much greater use of cars in the village simply to get about without danger - this is particularly true of parents taking children to school. We are well served with pedestrian crossings, and whilst they do enhance safety for pedestrians, they also aggravate noise and pollution levels by impeding smooth traffic flows.

NORTH WEST KENT - THE WIDER IMPACT

The lack of motorway connectivity to the M26 at Sevenoaks has a huge impact across north Kent, with A21 traffic diverting to the north east as far south as Lamberhurst, cutting across country to join the M20 at West Malling and Maidstone. The imminent opening of the dualled A21 at Pembury will not affect this, traffic jams will just move north to Sevenoaks, and traffic headed for Maidstone, Medway, Thanet and the Channel ports will still have to filter across country on inappropriate roads and through rural villages.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Government has a strategy to address the deficit by driving economic growth and housing development. This cannot happen in this area because we are being slowly strangled by a desperately inadequate road network, and East Facing Slips are the principal solution to many of the problems.

Air Quality is also critically important - growth will be severely limited if it leads to worsening traffic pollution. An AQMA is implemented to force local Planning Authorities to forbid development that impacts that AQMA, or raises pollution to levels that require an AQMA. If economic growth is hampered, the recovery cannot happen.

I will provide you with an update after the draft report release in March 2016. Meanwhile, latest news on the study and campaign can be found via the website www.j5-slips.org

As always, thanks for your continued support.

Tim Shaw / Councillor - Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

www.timshaw.info

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