

A2 Bean and Ebbsfleet Junctions Improvements

A2BE - Public Consultation Correspondence - (Bean Parish Council response 25.04.17). 18/05/17

Item 1 – Bean Parish Council response. The TAR concedes that the performance of several Options is similar. Option 5 is the only one meeting the benefit cost ratio. However, this is by omitting improvements to B255 and A296.

Highways England have investigated and appraised a number of Options for the A2 Bean junction improvements. It is true that Option 5 has the best performing benefit cost ratio and is the lowest cost scheme but it is not proposed solely on this basis. Option 5, in combination with Ebbsfleet Option 1, has the best performance against the wider scheme objectives.

As reported in Section 6.0 of the Technical Appraisal Report, Options were assessed against the project objectives, the Client Scheme Requirements and detailed appraisal such as economic benefit, benefit cost ratio, safety, air quality, construction impact and duration, landscape, townscape and biodiversity impact, land take and affordability to Highways England.

Following this assessment Highways England concluded that Bean Option 5 and Ebbsfleet Option 1b (Option B05E01) would be presented for public consultation. Please refer to Section 17 Table 33 – Summary of Option Appraisal of the Technical Appraisal Report.

Item 2– Bean Parish Council response. Disagree with cause being merge of traffic from Dartford with that from Bluewater. It is lack of capacity along Watling Street/ Roman Road and single lane entry to A2. Both can be dealt with by upgrading existing route as shown on some rejected Options. It is environmentally better to improve that route rather than bring more traffic to Ightham area and demolish homes and remove Spirits Rest Horse Sanctuary.

It is acknowledged that the loss of Ightham Cottages and the Spirits Rest Horse Sanctuary is a very sensitive issue. Following comments received at the Public Consultation the permanent closure of the B255/A296 off-slip is being reviewed. The retention of the link between the B255 and the A296 for some movements is a matter that Highways England will consider during Stage 3, the preliminary design.

Congestion currently experienced on the B255 is caused by the congestion where traffic merges onto the B255 and traffic exits onto the B255/A296 slip road. With the amount of new traffic generated by the new development, which would have a significant impact on this junction, it is necessary to separate the Bluewater and Dartford traffic streams accessing the A2 eastbound. The congestion on the A296 is likely to be resolved.

Item 3 – Bean Parish Council response. We note the use of the word “should”. Local experience is that an extra signalised lane will not compensate for loss of free flow slip and direct access towards Dartford. Reducing the road width of the merge of traffic from Greenhithe and that exiting from Bluewater will lead to longer queues. Please refer to the response provided above.

Item 4 - Bean Parish Council response. The use of the words “Further development” confirms that this would be a problem

This is not the case. The proposals presented at the public consultation are at an early stage of development and our response was to the effect that further work will be undertaken as the scheme progresses.

Item 5 - Bean Parish Council response. It is lack of capacity along Watling Street/ Roman Road as well as single lane entry to A2. Both can be dealt with by upgrading existing route as shown on some rejected Options. Forming an extra junction is disruptive to the A2 mainline flow.

We need to consider how all three roundabouts at the Bean Junction can best be improved in order to cope with the additional traffic that will be generated by the new developments. This includes new traffic that will be coming from all directions to travel through the Bean junction.

Taking this into consideration, widening Watling Street on its own would not be enough to cater for the amount of traffic that would need to use the Watling Street roundabout to access the A2 or Dartford. The option we are proposing and the other options we have considered have been tested using standard traffic modelling software and in accordance with best practice.

Item 6 – Bean Parish Council response. The requirement is to support growth, but this must be without gridlock. The solution ignores the Memorandum of Understanding, signed by Highways Agency to deal with the Bluewater peaks. Option 5 omits all improvements to B255 north of A296, identified in some other Options, to reduce inbound queues for Bluewater. The car parks are not the constraint, it is traffic queuing on B255.

Option 5 introduces a new conflict for outbound Bluewater traffic. It brings all Coast bound traffic as well as all London bound traffic to a signalized roundabout. Experience of traffic signals at M25 junction 2 is that it leads to queues onto A2 exits and blocking of local roads at junction 1b that have unenforced hatching. Off-peak, the signals are unnecessary.

Highways England's Client Scheme Requirements set out the requirements for Highways England to develop options for improving the Bean and Ebbsfleet Junctions. The proposed improvements to the Bean and Ebbsfleet Junctions form part of the Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Programme (STP) and are considered necessary to support the level of development growth proposed for Kent Thameside, which could ultimately lead to the development of some 15,000 homes and 30,000 jobs, in the area served by the Bean and Ebbsfleet Junctions.

The Technical Appraisal Report summarised the traffic, economic, safety and environmental assessments of the options, and is the basis for deciding which option is to be included in the Public Consultation.

The options that have been considered during Stage 1, have been tested using standard traffic modelling software and in accordance with best practice. Current design standards for introducing new traffic signal control do not permit signals to be part-time operation.

Item 7 – Bean Parish Response. The current EQ planning permission sets a trigger of 3000 homes completed for the signalisation of this junction.

It is not clear which part of the road network you are referring to. Based on your comment, we assume it is the proposed access to Eastern Quarries off the A296, and are responding accordingly.

Regarding the EQ planning permission, based on information provided by Dartford Borough Council, the 3000 homes will be in place by 2025 and hence we have allowed for this, and the provision of a traffic signal controlled junction, in our traffic modelling.

It should be noted that because the implementation of the signal controlled junction and ancillary works would be carried out by the developer, the details of the proposed access are not included in the Highways England layout drawings.

Item 8 – Bean Parish Response. Ignoring the problems of Bluewater Peaks (that are daily, not just Christmas) is contrary to the Bean Junction Memorandum of Understanding. If the budget is insufficient to deal with identified adjacent improvements, then more budget should be sought.

Dealing with peak traffic generated by Bluewater isn't included in the Highways England Client Scheme requirements for the A2 Bean and Ebbsfleet junction Improvements. Please refer also to the response we made to your initial comment No 6.

Item 9 – Bean Parish Response. The words “safety concern can be addressed” concedes there will be a problem and there is more than one layout in the consultation that would deal with it. Is widening to full dual 4-lanes through Bean part of another scheme?

Please refer to Highways England response provided for Item 4. Road Safety Audits will be undertaken in the next phase of the design development where a formal independent safety performance examination will be undertaken to report on potential road safety issues and identify opportunities for improvements in safety for all road users for the junction improvements.

If there are 'safety concerns' regarding the potential queuing back onto the A2 following a safety audit, improvement measures will be put in place such as a review of the traffic signals control type or provision of additional signage for the safety of all road users.

The eastbound A2 carriageway is converted to 4 lanes by removing the existing hard shoulder and using narrow lanes from the end of the new A2 slip road to east of Swanscombe footbridge is part of the A2 Bean and Ebbsfleet Junction Improvements.

Item 10 – Bean Parish Response. The three-crossing scheme is unsatisfactory and similar to one withdrawn in 2000 as it wasn't on the 'desire line'. This is another reason for reverting to a widened Watling Street that is environmentally less damaging.

We have reviewed your response and do not understand reference to the 'desire line'. The current NMU layouts will be developed during Stage 3 and there are clear opportunities that exist for a coordinated approach between Highways England and the local authorities in the area.

I would like to thank you for getting involved in our consultation. To keep up to date with what's happening, you can subscribe to our web page <http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/a2-bean-and-ebbsfleet-junction-improvements/> to be automatically notified of any updates.