

**SEVENOAKS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD - 15 DECEMBER 2009**

**UPDATE ON JUNCTION IMPROVMENTS AT COWDEN CROSS, B2026  
HARTFIELD ROAD, COWDEN**

Report of the: Local Transport & Development Manager, Alan Ash

Status: For Member recommendation

Chairman: Cllr P J Coates

Head of Service: Head of Transportation & Development – David Hall

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**Summary:** This report is to request that the Members of the Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment Highways & Waste (EHW) that the proposed agreement with the landowner to maintain the hedgerow is accepted and that this interim arrangement is monitored through the crash remedial process.

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**Introduction**

- 1 Cowden Cross is located on the B2026 some 5.5 km south of Edenbridge, this section of highway has a single carriageway in each direction and is subject to a national speed limit. The east/west approaches to the B2026 are from rural communities with the junction from the east being controlled by compulsory stop regulations and the approach from the west controlled by give way regulations.
- 2 The B2026 Westerham to East Sussex route study report that was produced by Jacobs in December 2008 made no recommendations for improvements other than hedge cutting and other maintenance matters.

**Background**

- 3 The casualty history for the junction is low, with only two police reportable incidents directly attributable to junction movements. There are however a number of other reported incidents to the south of the junction (this has been extrapolated from the last ten years incident data as supplied to Kent Highways Service (KHS) by Kent Police). Details of these are attached as a separate Appendix.
- 4 This section of highway and intersection have been the subject to a number of highway safety measures over the past few years, including;
  - Installation of double white centrelines either side of the junction on the B2026.

**Item No. 07a)**

- Improvements to the southbound visibility splay when approaching the crossroads from the east - this has been facilitated by local agreement with land owner.
  - Much improved northbound visibility by means of hedge cutting and removal of dead trees (local landowner has provided an undertaking to maintain) and the re-location of a British Telecom pole that was hindering sightlines.
  - A scheme to reduce the current speed limit to 50 mph (see Item No. 7b).
- 5 In order to further improve the visibility to the north a mature hedgerow would need to be removed. This would require the acquisition of the section of privately owned land bounding the highway. This process has so far proved unsuccessful on a voluntary basis with the next stage being Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of the section of land.
- 6 For such a CPO to proceed the relevant funding must be secured and currently there is no provision within the local Transport & Development budgets for this. Kent County Council (KCC's) property services group, Mouchel, have indicated fees of approximately £3,000 plus advertising in addition to the market cost of the land.
- 7 It should also be noted that this location has not featured within any recent Crash Remedial studies as having an abnormal trend or likelihood of incidents that would also indicate the need for remedial works.
- 8 Furthermore the local landowner has agreed, following communication with Cowden Parish Council, to undertake maintenance of the boundary hedge three times per year (twice summer, once autumn) and as part of the initial works a number of dead trees will be removed to further aid visibility.
- 9 Recent correspondence from the Parish Council has indicated that they consider that the voluntary arrangement proposed would be satisfactory; however Members should be aware that the local KCC Member and a local resident have expressed grave concerns that the voluntary arrangement will not provide the improved safety improvements at this junction.

**Recommendations**

- 10 Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board (JTB) Members are asked to recommend that KHS take no further action with the compulsory purchase of the land at this time and that the junction is monitored in the annual crash site review.
- 11 JTB Members are asked to recommend that KHS enters into the voluntary arrangement with the local landowner as the preferred option.
- 12 After further consideration it is recommended that the JTB Members consider the voluntary arrangements before proceeding with the CPO option.

**Sources of Information:** Kent Highway Services

**Contact Officer(s):** Alan Ash - 08458 247 800

**INTERIM DIRECTOR OF KENT HIGHWAYS** Caroline Bruce

