

Roundabout revamp key to progress

A Swale council spokesman said: "The representations made by Highways England reflect their consistent view as expressed on previous planning applications, where it was identified that there was limited capacity at M2 Junction 5 where potential queuing problems could arise.

"We have several planning applications which could potentially draw upon any of the capacity that remains at M2 Junction 5 and if necessary 'Grampian' conditions (conditions preventing the start of a development) can be imposed to ensure any development completions do not exceed the forecast capacity of the junction."

The spokesman added that the revamped Stockbury roundabout would provide the extra capacity required, with work due to start in spring next year if the government agrees to go ahead with the scheme.

Highways chiefs say they have to 'completely restrict' homes Housing plans could face safety fears road block

By Ellis Stephenson
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Future housing developments could be blocked by highways officials due to fears of queuing traffic on the M2 causing "severe safety implications".

Highways England said it will not allow any more new homes to be built in the A249 corridor other than those already agreed — until an £80million revamp of the Stockbury roundabout has been completed.

The revelation came in its response to plans for up to 852 homes, two schools and a community building north of Quinton Road in Kemsley.

Highways England spatial planning manager, David Bowie, said traffic predictions revealed there was a high chance vehicles could queue on the M2, even with a small amount of extra peak hour trips.

He added: "Highways England has provided a number of formal responses allowing limited housing to come forward ahead of the M2 Junction 5 scheme and we are now in a position where we are

having to completely restrict other housing coming forward." Mr Bowie went on to say plans could be given the go-ahead if the proposed 700-home develop-

ment to come forward ahead of M2 Junction 5, programmed to start in March 2020, other than that already granted due to the severe road safety implications

ted to making major improvements to the Stockbury and we are set to publish detailed



An artist's impression of the new flyover at Stockbury Roundabout

ment off Barton Hill Drive near the Lower Road in Minster on Sheppey was not approved. He said: "In summary, we cannot allow any further housing

of doing so." The authority said it was still on track to deliver the project. A Highways England spokesman said: "We are fully commit

proposals next month."

They added the restriction on planning applications will apply to anything deemed to bring more vehicle movements towards the M2 Junction 5, including businesses.

Development blueprint needs review

Swale council cabinet member for planning, air Mike Baldock (Swale Independents), said Highways England's stance proved the current Local Plan - the blueprint for what can be built where - was undeliverable, "Highways England has always understood there's always an issue with the Local Plan, which is why it has got to be reviewed. It's a totally failed plan and we've got to move as fast as we can to get the new plan in place." Cllr Baldock added: "I think the council has got to look at whether or not the government itself is blocking our ability to deliver any level of housing.

"I'd say it's a dysfunctional government that hasn't got joint-up working.

"We should be saying we need to get infrastructure in place before we deliver more houses."

Sittingbourne and Sheppey MP Gordon Henderson said other parts of the borough needed to take more new homes.

He said: "Faversham should now be taking the brunt of the housing. Sittingbourne and Sheppey has taken more than its fair share."

Government pulls £4.7m funding from project

No go for traffic lights to ease congested A249

By Tom Pyman

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Plans to install traffic lights at junction 7 of the M20 - hailed as a massive boost for drivers - have hit a roadblock after highways chiefs failed to secure crucial funding.

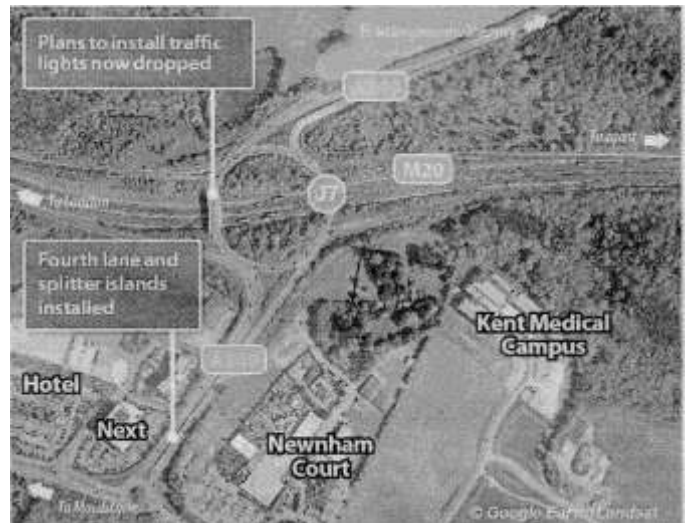
Details of an £11 million project to upgrade roads and infrastructure near the junction were revealed last year, including signals controlling vehicles using the roundabout from the coast-bound M20 slip and the A249 in both directions.

However, Kent County Council has announced significant changes to the plan after the £4.7m it was looking to secure from Highways England via the Growth and Housing Fund was pulled.

The council says alternative funding options are being investigated with the aim of starting work next summer but for now it means the scheme needs to progress without the much-anticipated traffic lights.

However, the nearby A249 Bearsted Road roundabout will be upgraded from three lanes on each side to four.

Under the plans, the junction



The improvement scheme around J7 of the M20 and A249

will soon be fully signalized, with two lanes at each entry point. Splitter islands will be added on all approaches, so there will always be a division between those turning left and those going round the roundabout. Bearsted Road will be widened with a second lane added east-bound and vehicular access to Newnham Court Farm removed.

Other improvements will see the New Cut Road roundabout become partly signalized, while with Newnham Court Shopping Village will be provided with new access for traffic.

Work on site will begin later this year and is expected to be completed in autumn 2020.

A Highways England spokeswoman said: "When the government published its draft Road Investment Strategy 2 recently it confirmed the Growth & Housing Fund will not be continuing beyond March 2020 in its current form."

£20m shortfall in road redesign

It's better news for Swale motorists approaching the top end of the A249.

The Stockbury Roundabout, where long-suffering motorists have endured rush-hour delays for years, is to have a flyover installed to allow free-flowing traffic on the A249.

Other changes to the junction with the M2 at Junction 5 - the

Sittingbourne, Sheppey and Maidstone turn-off - are due to include new slip roads off the A249, one north-bound heading towards Canterbury on the M2 and another south-bound heading towards London on the M2.

It is hoped the alterations will reduce delays and make the road safer as it is currently among

the worst in the county for the number of accidents.

The scheme is due to start in March 2020, subject to planning permission and the necessary funding being in place.

It is thought the cost will be about £80million and Highways England says it has a £20m shortfall, an original plan having been costed at about £60m.