

A20 Ashford Road junction with Willington Street



Looking west along A20 towards junction

Introduction

Willington Street experiences significant congestion particularly during the morning and evening peak periods. Increased congestion may encourage drivers to use unsuitable minor roads in the area. The reliability of bus services may also be reduced, affecting important bus routes, such as the Arriva Greenway (Maidstone - Ditton) and one of the routes from Maidstone Hospital to the town centre.

The A20 Ashford Road is a defined route on KCC's Resilient Network because of how busy it is and the lack of alternative routes. This strengthens the need to manage congestion, particularly in the event of an incident on the M20.

Between 2012 and 2017 there have been six road traffic incidents in the area. The proposed scheme would improve road safety by reducing failure to stop at traffic signals and smoothing traffic flow.

The key objectives for this scheme are to:

- Improve the efficiency of the junction thereby reducing congestion.
- Improve journey times and the reliability of journey times.
- Improve Road Safety.

Achieving these will unlock other benefits including:

- Increasing capacity on the network to better accommodate further development.
- Improve air quality.

What options did we consider before deciding on the preferred scheme?

The following options were considered:

Option 1: keep existing signals with an unsignalled priority left turn filter lane from Willington Street to the A20 Ashford Road (west). In addition, two ahead lanes would be provided on the Ashford Road (west) approach and exit.

Option 2: a signalised left turn with extended right turn lane and dedicated left turn lane on A20 (east).

Option 3: removal of existing signals and replace with a three-arm roundabout.

Options 1 and 3 have been discounted because they are more costly and will not deliver the much needed improvements to congestion on Willington Street. Option 2 is our preferred option. It builds upon the design concept presented to the Maidstone Borough Council and KCC's Joint Transport Board (JTB) in 2015.

The JTB expressed some support but asked for a greater degree of improvement. The design revisions now included in Option 2 present the most significant improvements to congestion, in the region of 36% in the morning peak period and 39% in the evening peak period and have been endorsed by the JTB.



Aerial view of Ashford Road / Willington Street



Map of Ashford Road / Willington Street

The Proposals - A20 Ashford Road junction with Willington Street

The Road

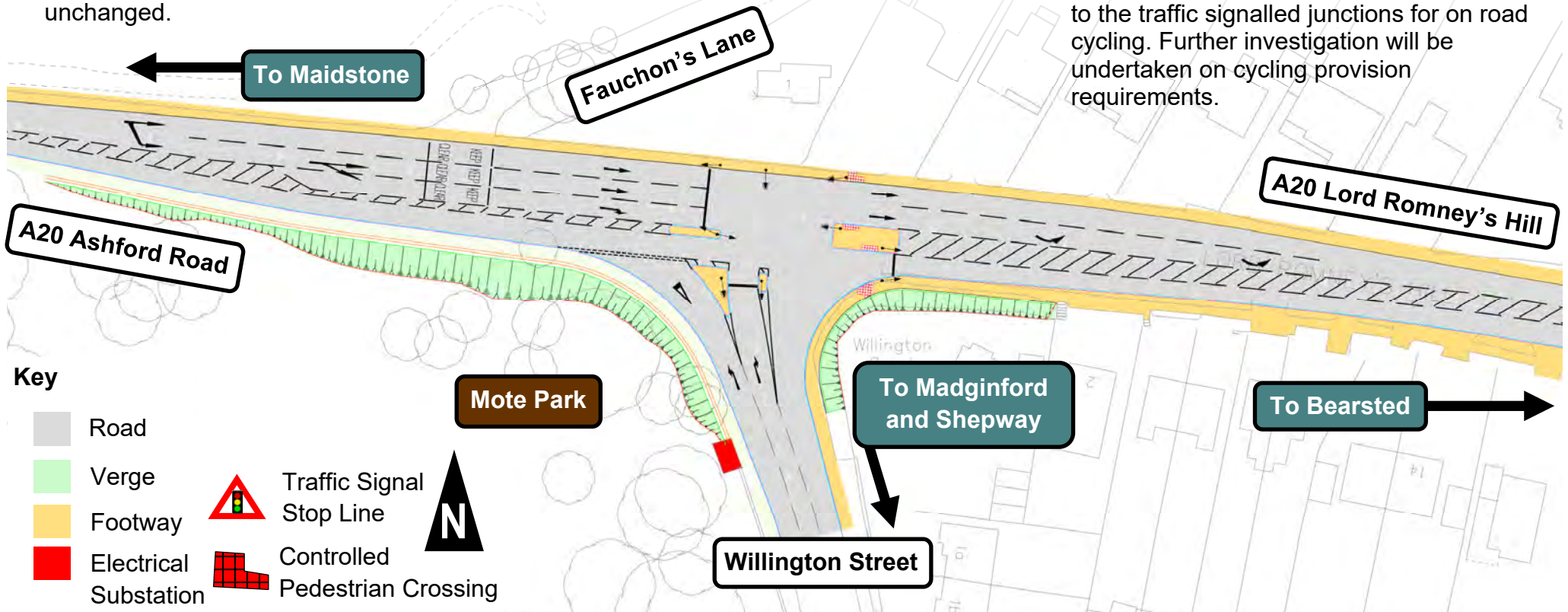
- Travelling east on the Ashford Road the lane would divide into two further back (west) from the junction than currently, with the inside lane for continuing east on the A20. The outside lane would divide in two with the now middle lane also for continuing east on the A20. Once through the crossing the two lanes on the A20 would filter down to one. The new outside lane would remain a dedicated lane for Willington Street.
- Travelling west on the Ashford Road there would be no change other than the upgrading of the traffic signals to incorporate a signalised pedestrian crossing.
- Travelling from Willington Street the inside lane would no longer be controlled by traffic signals but have give way lines instead. The outside lane would remain unchanged.

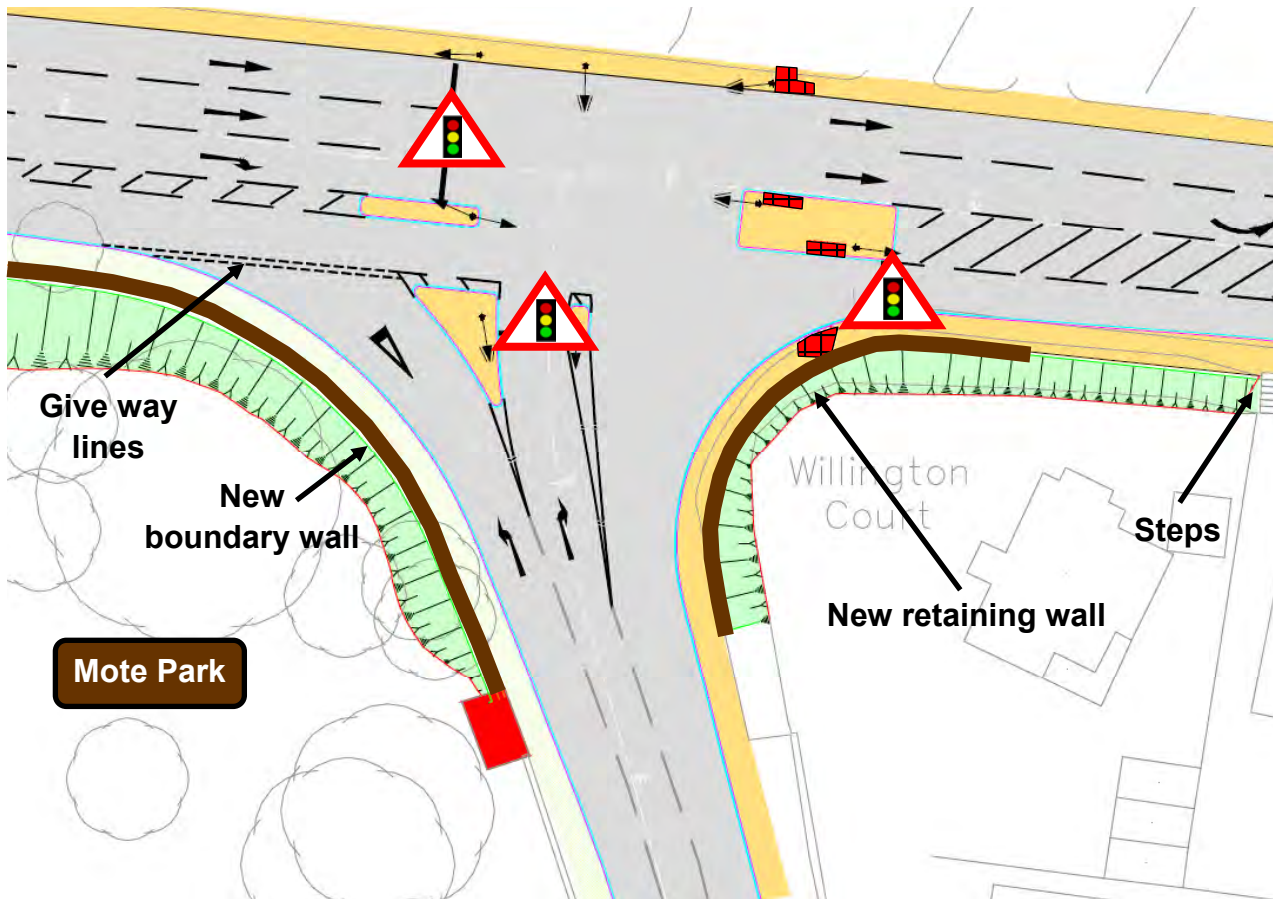
The Footway

- The existing footway widths would remain the same.
- A new signalised pedestrian crossing facility would be installed to allow safe passage between the south and the north side of the A20 with the island in the middle being widened.

Cycling

- Advanced stop lines would be provided prior to the traffic signalled junctions for on road cycling. Further investigation will be undertaken on cycling provision requirements.





Environment

- The current ragstone boundary wall of Mote Park would be removed and rebuilt slightly further towards the park by approximately 4m. Where possible, the existing stones would be re-used. Approval would need to be given by Historic England on construction methods.
- A new retaining wall would be built on the opposite side of Willington Street. Details of the materials that will be used are still to be decided but it is the intention to at least face the wall in ragstone.
- The steps just east of Willington Court on the south side of the A20 would remain.
- We have yet to draw up landscaping proposals in detail. However, our emerging proposal is to remove some small trees, which would be replaced nearby. The current verge on the south side to the east of the junction would probably be removed and paved owing to the difficulty of maintaining it.

Traffic Signals

- The traffic signals turning left from Willington Street to the A20 would be removed and replaced with give way lines.
- The traffic signals east of the junction would be upgraded to become a request pedestrian crossing.
- The other two junctions; turning right out of Willington Street and the Ashford Road east would keep their current traffic signals.



Image of current retaining wall