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Media Release

For Immediate Release

Essential road upgrades will start in October to enable 8,000-home development to go ahead

Major highway improvements designed to facilitate the construction of new housing communities will begin in earnest over the next few months.

The schemes are part of a £72m programme of road improvement works which will be taking place over the course of the next few years to ensure vital infrastructure is in place before new houses are built east of the A419.

The New Eastern Villages (NEV) project is one of the largest greenfield developments in the country. It will consist of around 8,000 homes, new schools, employment spaces and community facilities. It will span 724 hectares, with its eastern boundary reaching the point at which the River Cole meets the A420.

In order for the development to go ahead, the Council has prioritised the need to ensure the roads and junctions around the A419 can cope with the anticipated increase in traffic that the NEV will bring, and a Cabinet meeting will be held on 10 July at which approval will be sought to allow the schemes to proceed.

The first improvement scheme is proposed to take place at the White Hart junction this October. This key project will involve the construction of a new northbound on-slip road from the roundabout onto the A419, replacing the existing unconventional and below-standard slip road. The southbound slip road from the A419 onto the roundabout will be widened, the roundabout will be signalised, the existing entry onto Ermin Street will be closed and replaced by a new priority junction on Oxford Road and the number of lanes circling the roundabout will be increased.

These changes will create extra capacity on the roundabout that will help to reduce queuing traffic which backs onto the A419 at peak times.

Some additional land will need to be acquired to enable the new northbound on-slip to be constructed and negotiations with landowners are currently ongoing.

Another key project involves making major changes to the Gablecross junction, the work for which is proposed to start in January 2020. In its current form, the junction is not big enough to accommodate the expected increase in traffic levels. Plans are in place to make the junction larger and to add traffic lights. Modelling tests have shown that this will provide sufficient capacity to accommodate more vehicles. If approval is given, the work at Gablecross should be completed in March 2021.

In January 2020, work will also begin on the Southern Connector Road, a new road which will link the NEV with Commonhead roundabout. The two-way single carriageway road will be about 1.5 miles long and measures will be introduced to prevent it being used as a rat-run. A footway will be constructed on one side of the road and a shared footway/cycleway on the other. It is expected to be completed in June 2021 and is subject to a Housing Infrastructure Fund grant of up to £18.972m.

The need for a new link road across the A419 from the NEV to the existing community has also

been identified. For this, the Great Stall Bridge will be constructed, but not until after 2021.

The Council is also assessing the feasibility of constructing an additional pedestrian crossing over the A420, east of the junction with Old Vicarage Lane at South Marston. The purpose of the crossing would be to provide safe travel routes between the proposed village of Rowborough, to the north of the A420, and the new secondary school campus, to the south of the A420. Two possible locations have been identified and a feasibility study will consider the options.

A new road will also be built under the railway line near Acorn Bridge. This will allow access from the A420 to the proposed village of Rowborough.

A number of junctions to the west of the A419 have also been identified as likely to see an increase in traffic as a result of the NEV. The junction locations identified are Piccadilly roundabout and the Nythe Road/Oxford junction. Improvements to these junctions will also add greater vehicle capacity and will start in March 2020. They should take 12 months to complete.

Together the highways schemes at the White Hart roundabout, Southern Connector Road, Gablecross junction, Nythe Road junction and Piccadilly roundabout are expected to cost £72.5m and budgetary approval will be sought at the July Cabinet meeting. To support this, a grant of £47.63m from the Government's Local Growth Fund, delivered via the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, is available.

Limitations with this funding has determined that work needs to be completed by 2021, which means some of the schemes will run simultaneously.

The remaining infrastructure improvements, such as the construction of new schools, health facilities and green spaces, will be addressed as part of the planning development process.

Councillor Gary Sumner, Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, said: "I am delighted to see that these important and necessary road improvement works will be brought before Cabinet next week. The New Eastern Villages is a huge development and these highways schemes are the largest we have ever undertaken.

"We are confident that, when finished, these roadworks will make things much better for motorists by reducing journey times and easing congestion.

"We have already been working closely with the residents and businesses who will be most affected while the roadworks are taking place and we will continue to ensure they, along with everybody else in Swindon, are kept up to date with everything they need to know as the works progress.

"It's important that we deliver these road improvements before work starts on building the houses as it will ensure that vital infrastructure is in place first.

"Delivering the NEV is one of this Council's key Pledges and I am pleased to say that work is progressing well and that we are giving priority to these vital infrastructure improvements which will benefit everybody in Swindon."

Recent roadworks at the Greenbridge roundabout and Coate Water roundabout were part of the NEV infrastructure improvements.

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