



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter K: Transport Statement

Introduction

- K.1 This Transport Assessment (TA) Addendum has been prepared (by RSK Transport) to provide additional information to support the Revised TA, dated 28 May 2020, in relation to Heathlands Garden Community.
- K.2 The topics presented below address specific queries raised during the review of the TA and identify where further work may be necessary as the project evolves.

Cycle connectivity

- K.3 The A20 connects Heathlands to Maidstone to the north west and Ashford to the south east and passes through several villages in between. The extents of highway along this section of the A20 provide a generous corridor within which transport infrastructure can be provided. There is a 2.0m footway alongside most of its length, often overgrown due to a lack of maintenance, with wide grass verges.
- K.4 As part of the Garden Community proposals, there is an opportunity to widen this footway along the whole section to provide a suitable width (minimum 3.0m) shared footway / cycleway.
- K.5 This will provide connectivity to other villages, major employment sites and the towns of Maidstone and Ashford.
- K.6 Furthermore, this will offer a valuable connection for those living in those villages to also access those same destinations.
- K.7 While the outskirts of Maidstone and Ashford are around 12km from the site, these are within reasonable reach for commuting purposes by cycle, particularly if using an e-bike which extends the achievable journey length.

Severance through villages

- K.8 It is acknowledged that an increase in traffic flows along the A20 could have an effect on the road environment for existing users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. The provision of a continuous link between Maidstone and Ashford will mitigate these effects for those travelling along it. For those communities living along the A20, it is recognised that additional mitigation may be necessary to reduce the effect of severance.
- K.9 The recent scheme in Harrietsham is an example of how this has been delivered and further improvements may be required in this specific location as well as the remainder of the route through Harrietsham and in Charing. However, it should be noted that the sustainable transport provisions for the site will help to minimise the additional traffic generated by the development.

Connectivity to Lenham and rail station

- K.10 The current masterplan indicates a PRoW upgrade along the southern side of the railway line that would connect Heathlands to Headcorn Road to lead into the village and rail station. It is intended that this would be at least upgraded to a bridleway to allow for pedestrians and cyclists. Subject to discussions with landowners, this could be improved further to provide a bus-only link alongside a shared footway/cycleway. There is also potential for alternative and/or secondary access to Lenham village on foot and by cycle via Old Ashford Road, potentially via site allocations within the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan.

Proposed rail station/halt

- K.11 The potential for a new rail station/halt within the development will offer a significant contribution to sustainable travel choices with convenient connections to Maidstone and Ashford with services extending beyond to central London. The village stations along this route are only served by one train per hour in each direction for most of the day. With passenger numbers expected to be similar to those using Bearsted, the proposed station could be served by the express service too, subject to discussions with South Eastern, improving the frequency to two trains per hour and thereby increasing its attractiveness. Discussions will also need to be held with Thameslink as new services are due to serve Maidstone with extended services being planned for Bearsted and Ashford. The passenger numbers at the proposed station are likely to justify being served by the Thameslink service, which will offer increased permeability into central London and further connections beyond.

- K.12 Detailed feasibility studies will be required to examine the options available, which could ultimately include relocating Lenham Railway Station, that consider effects on timetable, signalling, rolling stock, track requirements and engineering to accommodate the station itself. Examination of other comparable rail stations completed in recent years, which offer a single platform either side of a twin track and limited changes to existing infrastructure, such as "Ilkeston" and "Lea Bridge", indicate that a new station could be delivered for a cost in the region of £12m.

A20 towards Maidstone / M20 Junction 8

- K.13 The TA analysis indicates that the majority of traffic generated by Heathlands would travel along the A20 towards Maidstone with a large proportion leading onto the M20, Jn 8. It is acknowledged that there are congestion problems around the A20 between the Penfold Hill roundabout and Junction 8, encompassing four roundabouts. The complexity of the traffic patterns and queue interaction between these junctions will require micro-simulation modelling to assess the overall impacts of the Garden Community on this part of the network as well as assess the likely success of proposed improvements. However, such a model would be created to encompass all the local network and provides a greater level of detail than is typically required at the land promotion stage of the process.
- K.14 Notwithstanding the above, improvements identified in the TA comprised partial signalisation of the M20 roundabout or construction of a slip lane, and creation of two lanes for motorway-bound traffic at the A20 Ashford Road roundabout, which is likely to require widening to accommodate a separate ahead lane for Maidstone-bound traffic. At the Penfold Hill and Eythorne Street roundabouts, it is likely that improvements will also be required, which could include signalisation of both junctions. However, further analysis will be required to understand the implications of downstream junction improvements on the level of congestion at these locations.
- K.15 Combined with these improvements leading up to the motorway, the M20 westbound on slip is understood to be below DMRB standards due to the constraints of the bridge over the railway downstream. Further detailed modelling of this slip road, using the methodology in CD122, and discussions with Highways England will be required to assess the likely impacts of the traffic generated by Heathlands on the safe operation of this slip road. This may need to consider the associated impacts with any future scheme for managing the M20 during periods of congestion around Channel crossings.

Bus service provision

- K.16 It is likely that any rail station/halt option will only be implemented during the latter phases of development and therefore an interim solution for connectivity to existing stations would be to introduce a shuttle bus service. Although a service could be provided to connect to both Charing and Lenham stations, it is likely that a single service to Lenham, being the closer station and towards the prevalent direction of travel, would offer a more reliable and frequent service that would ensure its attractiveness. This service would also connect residents with the local facilities and secondary school in Lenham.
- K.17 The A20 already benefits from an hourly bus service between Maidstone and Ashford with plans being explored by the bus operator to increase this to a 30-minute frequency. There is the potential to introduce a Bus Rapid Transit Scheme between Maidstone and Ashford with the TA indicating the option of using guided busways and higher frequency services. The rural section of the A20 operates adequately for a bus service to travel along without requiring intervention to provide bus priority. The sections toward the built-up areas are constructed as dual carriageway sections with generous verges. This presents the opportunity to introduce bus priority through reallocation of road space.
- K.18 As travel habits change over a period of time, this will improve the opportunity for road space reallocation into Ashford Town Centre, including Ashford International Station, and along the approach to Junction 8 where congestion would otherwise affect the reliability of services.
- K.19 It is evident that the anticipated improvements to bus services and other sustainable transport measures will be of benefit to existing and new residents alike.

A20 access roads and junctions

- K.20 The future alignment of access roads between the development site and the A20 will be determined through examination of potential constraints in conjunction with discussions with landowners. It is noted that the majority of this land is under the same control as several of the "principal landowners" family group(s).
- K.21 The access roads are likely to intersect with the A20 at a roundabout junction towards either end of the development site, dispersing the traffic across different locations. The exact form and scale of these junctions will be subject to further work at a more detailed stage with the TA demonstrating that a suitable form of junction is possible.

- K.22 The likely cost of each junction will be around £1m. The link roads not serving development frontage are expected to cost in the region of £1k per linear metre, with the distance between the railway and A20 being around 1km. Two new all-purpose road bridges will be required across the railway with likely costs of circa £5M each.
- K.23 Infrastructure to the south of the development, such as crossings of HS1 and the M20 are likely to utilise existing bridges. It is recommended that any new bridges would only be for use by pedestrians and cyclists and would be in the region of £2-3M per crossing, acknowledging the required closures of important infrastructure that this would entail.

Internal trip implications

- K.24 The TA presents assumptions around the internalisation of trips given the mix of uses on the site and the principle of the development being one where people can 'live, work and play'. The trip rates have been conservatively reduced for several trip purposes including employment, schools, shopping and leisure uses.
- K.25 A recent study for a sustainable community in Cambourne Village has shown that there is a complex matrix of internal and external trips depending on the uses and individual catchment areas. For example, a specialist shop will have a different pattern of visitors to a community facility and will still attract external trips, such as staff. Further consideration will be needed at later stages when more detailed assessment of impacts is examined.