



**APPENDIX 1**

# **Maidstone – Hackney Carriage Unmet Demand Survey**

## **Final Report**

**October 2022**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Key points*

This survey has been conducted by Vector Transport Consultancy on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council.

The survey is intended to fulfil the requirements of Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act and to address the questions raised in the Department for Transport (DfT) 2010 Best Practice Guidance.

The objectives of the study may be broadly defined as:

- Consultation with major stakeholders
- Consultation with the trade
- Public consultation
- An unmet need survey
- A mystery shopper survey

There were six taxi ranking locations surveyed in Maidstone. The locations of the ranks surveyed were as follows:

King Street  
High Street (outside Lush)  
High Street HSBC (informal night time rank)  
Earl Street Upper  
Maidstone East  
County Hall (Week Street – informal night time rank location)

Low levels of activity were observed at High Street HSBC and Earl Street Upper.

The majority of Hackney Carriage hires occurred at the rank on High Street, at the junction with King Street, outside the Lush shop. This rank accounted for 78% of all observed hires.

The taxi ranks were surveyed, using video cameras fixed to nearby lamp posts and sign posts, from Thursday morning (16<sup>th</sup> June 2022) to the following Sunday morning (19<sup>th</sup> June 2022), in order to capture the busiest periods of the week, along with quiet periods. This ensured that if there is any unmet demand that these are the days when this was most likely to be evident, as passenger waiting delays.

For most of the three days observed, passenger queuing was occasional. There were some persistent queues which formed, to wait for Hackney Carriages at ranks. These occurred primarily at the High Street rank on Saturday night.

The peak deployment of Hackney Carriages was around 67% of the fleet on Friday night.

There was not sufficient capacity in the fleet to cope with peaks in demand at the High Street rank and at the Maidstone East rank. However, during other periods, there was generally sufficient capacity available.

Public consultation was undertaken through questionnaire surveys conducted on street and online. There was some evidence of public dissatisfaction with Hackney Carriage services. Dissatisfaction related to three key aspects of service. These were:

- Lack of availability during school run times and late night on Saturday nights
- Drivers unwilling to accept short distance hires
- Accusations that some drivers try to overcharge

Stakeholder consultation was undertaken with the taxi trade, minority group representatives, licensed premises, the police and Council representatives..

The public and stakeholder consultation feedback indicated that:

- The public and stakeholders are largely content with the level of service provided by Hackney Carriages.
- Some concerns were raised with respect to services provided for mobility impaired passengers.
- Lack of availability during school run times, primarily related to being able to pre-book services.
- Concern over refusals to take passengers on short journeys and to over charge passengers.

It should be noted, that the concerns about refusals and over charging were related to a minority of drivers.

#### ***Unmet need assessment***

Data from the taxi rank surveys was used, together with any indication from the public consultation surveys, of frustration with non-availability of Hackney Carriages, to calculate an Index of Significant Unmet Demand (ISUD).

Some persistent passenger queueing was observed at some ranks. This is an indicator of unmet demand. However, the extent of passenger queueing is assessed in context of all passenger volumes and passenger waiting, in order to derive the unmet demand index.

The ISUD index value calculated from the survey results indicates that the level is below the threshold which is held to indicate that the level of unmet demand is significant.

#### ***Trade Consultation***

Trade representatives and drivers were consulted to seek their views on the Hackney Carriage trade in Maidstone. The principal issues which were raised by the trade were:

- Lack of space on the King Street rank
- The trade concentrates on the ranks at High Street (outside Lush), King Street and Maidstone East Railways station. It is felt, by the trade, that there is no demand at the other ranks and that they are effectively redundant.

None of the trade respondents indicated that they used the informal rank on Week Street, outside County Hall. This contradicts the survey evidence, which indicates that this informal rank is well used at night.

#### ***Mystery Shopper Surveys***

Mystery Shopper surveys were undertaken to test willingness of drivers to accept short distance fares and to survey the passenger experience using Hackney Carriages and private hire vehicles in Maidstone. The mystery shopper surveys incorporated solo passengers and a guide dog user survey. Both Hackney Carriages and private hire vehicles were surveyed in the mystery shopper survey. Generally, the passenger experience was good and the licensed vehicles surveyed were clean, in good condition

and well driven. Most drivers communicated well. However, there were some drivers who appeared unhappy with accepting a short distance hire.

All test purchases with a guide dog were successful and in all cases drivers offered suitable assistance.

There was one instance of a refusal to take a passenger on a short journey and one incidence of over charging. These events served to corroborate some of the public consultation feedback.

### **Conclusions**

The primary purpose of this study is to determine whether there is evidence of significant unmet demand. The conclusion is that there is **no significant unmet demand**.

Users and stakeholders are largely content with the service provided by Hackney Carriages. Some users were concerned about lack of availability at times, particularly during school run times and late on Saturday nights. Some users were concerned about refusals to accept short distance hires and about over charging.

Whilst there were periods observed when there was unmet demand, the level of unmet demand was below the level which would be deemed to be significant. Therefore, the survey has concluded that there is **no significant unmet demand** for Hackney Carriages in Maidstone .

There is adequate spare capacity in the fleet to cater for short term fluctuations in demand, such as bank holidays and end of month weekends. There is adequate capacity in the fleet to cater for further growth in demand should it occur. There appears to be more Hackney Carriages in the fleet in Maidstone, than could be sustained by rank hires alone.

There is no significant unmet demand. Therefore, there is no compelling need to increase the number of Hackney Carriage Licences, on the basis of public benefit.

On this basis the authority has discretion in its hackney licensing policy and may either:

- Maintain the current limit
- Issue any number of additional plates as it sees fit,
- Remove the numerical limit



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# 1 STUDY OBJECTIVES

## 1.1 General

This study has been conducted by Vector Transport Consultancy on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council.

The study is intended to fulfil the requirements of Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act and to address the questions raised in the Department for Transport (DfT) 2010 Best Practice Guidance.

The principle objectives of the study include:

- Consultation with major stakeholders
- Consultation with the trade
- Consultation with the public
- Taxi rank surveys

In addition, a mystery shopper survey was undertaken to test the level of service provided by Hackney Carriages at ranks in Maidstone, for various types of user and to test acceptance of short distance journeys.

## 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Definitions

This report refers to Taxis, Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles. Both Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles are licensed to operate within the Maidstone Council area.

Hackney Carriages may be hired in three ways. These are; on street hailing, hire at a taxi rank and by telephone or taxi office booking.

Private Hire Vehicles may only be hired through advance booking. This is generally done by telephone or at a Private Hire Vehicle operator's office.

It is common for members of the public to have limited knowledge of the difference between Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles. Indeed, both types of licensed vehicles are frequently referred to collectively as Taxis. In this report, the term Licensed Vehicle(s) is used as a generic term to encompass both Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles, though where appropriate, the specific type of licensed vehicle is identified.

Licensed Vehicle operations can often include:

- Independent (often sole trader) owner drivers who only operate at times and on days of their choosing;
- 'Independents' who share their vehicle with one or occasionally more than one other licensed drivers, who do not have a vehicle of their own, meaning the one vehicle can be available up to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- Radio / PDA booking circuits, taking bookings up to 24 hours a day, which they pass on to self-employed drivers that sign up to the circuit or sometimes drivers that join as a shareholder, where the circuit operates as a co-operative. The times drivers operate relate to the demands on the circuit. It's also possible that some drivers are members of more than 1 radio circuit;
- Limited companies operating either Hackney Carriage, PHV based services or
- Both using their own vehicles and employing drivers to operate them on their behalf.

Maidstone Council is the licensing authority for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire operators, drivers and vehicles within their area. They are able to specify the standards they require (over and above the legal minima) for operators, drivers and vehicles, they can regulate Hackney Carriage fares and specify the number of Hackney licenses they issue.

### 2.2 DfT guidance on Unmet Demand surveys

In 2006 the Department for Transport (DfT) issued Good Practice Guidance to licensing authorities on the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) industry. This guidance was updated in 2010. It includes advice on the measurement of unmet demand.

Significant Unmet Demand (SUD) has two components:

- Observed or 'patent' demand – that which is directly observable
- Latent or 'suppressed' demand – that which is released by additional supply.

Where a limit has been imposed, the DfT recommend that surveys be repeated every three years to confirm that unmet demand had not arisen.

### **2.3 Observed unmet demand**

Observed, or patent unmet demand is determined from direct observation of passenger waiting times at representative taxi ranks and at representative times of day. Where the supply of taxis at a particular time and location is inadequate, intending passengers will have to wait until a taxi arrives. Where this waiting time becomes excessive there is unmet demand and where this occurs at a number of locations and for lengthy periods it constitutes Significant Unmet Demand.

### **2.4 Latent unmet demand**

Where potential passengers are deterred from using taxis through the assumption or knowledge that waiting times will be high, these passengers may decide not to travel or use an alternative means of transport. These passengers will not feature in the taxi rank surveys. Therefore to get an estimate of this latent demand an alternative form of survey is required. This generally consists of face to face interviews with pedestrians to enquire about their experience in hiring and using taxis. Such a survey can also provide other information on taxi use.

### **2.5 Other Surveys**

The DfT guidance also recommends that stakeholders such as taxi providers and representatives of groups which rely heavily on taxis are contacted for their opinions on the number of taxis and the possible impact of licence quantity controls.

### **2.6 Breakdown of the Hackney Carriage trade**

Markets and hire methods typically targeted by Hackneys, in the UK, include:

- Public, private and unofficial ranks;
- Flag down/on-street;
- Telephone / radio bookings
- Contract work for statutory authorities such as for education authorities or social services;
- Commercial contract work;
- One off/occasional private hire for individuals or organisations;
- Evening leisure;
- Daytime shopping/social/business;
- Tourism
- Various combinations of the above that 'fit together' in time

Practices vary by location. For example, in some locations, a large proportion of work is serviced by radio bookings or bookings provided through pda's or mobile phone apps, whereas in other areas, work is based on rank based hire.

In some areas almost all of the trade may focus on one particular aspect of the market at the same time (i.e. school contracts) causing there to be unmet demands in other parts of the market at that time.

The market for taxis – both Private Hire Vehicles and Hackneys is therefore influenced by many factors – both on the demand and the supply side. Demand, for example, is influenced by:

- The overall population,
- The extent of car ownership,
- Availability of other transport including public, community and private transport,
- Levels of mobility impairment and disability,.
- Seasonality,

The extent and hours of the night time economy will affect demand. The market will also be influenced by the supply of Hackney and PHVs, in terms of the quality, affordability and quantity of provision – both perceived and actual.

## 3 BACKGROUND TO TAXI LICENSING IN MAIDSTONE

### 3.1 The Maidstone Borough Council area

The mid 2020 population estimate for Maidstone is 173,132. The Borough borders Swale, Ashford, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling Boroughs and Medway Unitary Authority.. Maidstone town centre has an active night time economy.

### 3.2 Council policy context

The Local Transport Plan for Maidstone (Kent Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016–2031) makes no mention of the potential role that licensed vehicles may play in local transport. However, the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy 2012 - 2026 does mention the role that licensed vehicles play within the public transport provision in Maidstone Borough. It is recognised within the document that licensed vehicles can reduce the need for car ownership and can help improve access to services in rural areas.

### 3.3 Licensed vehicle statistics

Historic licensed vehicle numbers are presented in Table 1. This enables a comparison between Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle numbers to be made. Data has been obtained from Department for Transport Statistics. No 2009 data was available.

Year	Hackney Carriages	Private Hire Vehicles	Total licensed vehicles	Driver numbers
2005	39	320	359	450
2007	45	365	410	398
2011	48	287	335	389
2013	48	223	271	340
2015	48	254	302	426
2017	48	236	384	392
2018	48	201	249	346
2019	48	175	223	308
2020	48	175	223	339
2021	48	135	183	267
2022	48	141	189	259

**Table 1 - Historic Licence information**

Drivers in Maidstone Borough may be licensed to drive Hackney Carriages, Private Hire Vehicles or Dual Licensed, to drive both types of licensed vehicles. The ratio of drivers to vehicles, in 2022, was 1.37. This statistic corroborates trade feedback, that there is some multi-shift operation of licensed vehicles. It was noted that there was an anomaly in the historic data from 2007, which suggest that there were more licensed vehicles than drivers.

The number of licensed drivers had reduced in recent years. Some trade feedback suggests that some of the licensed drivers are not currently actively driving licensed vehicles. This feature is common nationally, owing to the influence that Covid-19 had, reducing demand for licensed vehicles during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a consequence of Covid-19, some drivers had to find other means of earning an income. Some of these drivers have not returned to the trade. There has also been a trend of reduced numbers of private hire vehicles over several years, prior to Covid-19.

The proportion of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles, per 1,000 population (mid 2020 values), for all authorities in the South East region, is presented in Table 2 and Figure 1. Authorities are grouped by those which limit the number of Hackney Carriages and those which do not. These groups are each ordered in terms of increasing proportions of total licensed vehicles per 1,000 population. Maidstone has a relatively low proportion of Hackney Carriages per 1,000 population, compared with other authority areas which apply a limit.

**Table 2 - Proportions of licensed vehicles per 1,000 population**

Licensing Area	Mid 2020 population estimate	Hackney Carriages	Private Hire Vehicles	Total licenced vehicles	Hackney Carriages per 1,000 population	Private Hire Vehicles per 1,000 population	Total licenced vehicles per 1,000 population
Maidstone [Limited]	173,132	48	141	189	0.3	0.8	1.1
Dover [Limited]	118,514	69	92	161	0.6	0.8	1.4
Test Valley [Limited]	127,163	44	168	212	0.3	1.3	1.7
Tunbridge Wells [Limited]	118,939	107	134	241	0.9	1.1	2.0
Mid Sussex [Limited]	152,142	154	168	322	1.0	1.1	2.1
Slough [Limited]	149,577	103	373	476	0.7	2.5	3.2
Brighton and Hove [Limited]	291,738	590	395	985	2.0	1.4	3.4
Thanet [Limited]	141,458	92	398	490	0.7	2.8	3.5
Milton Keynes [Limited]	270,203	201	790	991	0.7	2.9	3.7
Havant [Limited]	126,339	36	490	526	0.3	3.9	4.2
Portsmouth [Limited]	214,692	202	721	923	0.9	3.4	4.3
Oxford [Limited]	151,584	107	546	653	0.7	3.6	4.3
Southampton [Limited]	252,872	281	1,025	1,306	1.1	4.1	5.2
Reading [Limited]	160,337	216	660	876	1.3	4.1	5.5
Crawley [Limited]	112,474	123	547	670	1.1	4.9	6.0
Wokingham [No Limit]	173,945	64	78	142	0.4	0.4	0.8
Runnymede [No Limit]	90,327	48	35	83	0.5	0.4	0.9
Spelthorne [No Limit]	99,873	55	49	104	0.6	0.5	1.0
Horsham [No Limit]	145,474	46	115	161	0.3	0.8	1.1
Dartford [No Limit]	114,051	66	70	136	0.6	0.6	1.2
Arun [No Limit]	161,123	192	17	209	1.2	0.1	1.3
Bracknell Forest [No Limit]	124,165	55	117	172	0.4	0.9	1.4
Rother [No Limit]	96,716	102	34	136	1.1	0.4	1.4
Gosport [No Limit]	84,679	61	65	126	0.7	0.8	1.5
Tandridge [No Limit]	88,542	92	42	134	1.0	0.5	1.5
Ashford [No Limit]	131,018	102	97	199	0.8	0.7	1.5
Mole Valley [No Limit]	87,547	100	33	133	1.1	0.4	1.5
Swale [No Limit]	151,015	181	52	233	1.2	0.3	1.5
West Berkshire [No Limit]	158,465	119	137	256	0.8	0.9	1.6
Adur [No Limit]	64,187	39	66	105	0.6	1.0	1.6
Winchester [No Limit]	125,925	89	120	209	0.7	1.0	1.7
Waverley [No Limit]	126,556	164	49	213	1.3	0.4	1.7
Isle of Wight [No Limit]	142,296	186	54	240	1.3	0.4	1.7
Worthing [No Limit]	110,727	60	127	187	0.5	1.1	1.7
Wealden [No Limit]	162,733	124	161	285	0.8	1.0	1.8
Gravesham [No Limit]	106,890	135	53	188	1.3	0.5	1.8
Basingstoke and Deane [No Limit]	177,760	43	285	328	0.2	1.6	1.8
West Oxfordshire [No Limit]	111,758	106	109	215	0.9	1.0	1.9
Elmbridge [No Limit]	137,215	111	155	266	0.8	1.1	1.9
Surrey Heath [No Limit]	89,204	75	100	175	0.8	1.1	2.0
New Forest [No Limit]	179,649	99	261	360	0.6	1.5	2.0
East Hampshire [No Limit]	123,838	84	176	260	0.7	1.4	2.1
Hart [No Limit]	97,608	138	69	207	1.4	0.7	2.1
Sevenoaks [No Limit]	121,387	158	108	266	1.3	0.9	2.2
Medway [No Limit]	279,142	386	226	612	1.4	0.8	2.2
Vale of White Horse [No Limit]	137,910	249	63	312	1.8	0.5	2.3
Fareham [No Limit]	116,338	147	119	266	1.3	1.0	2.3
Guildford [No Limit]	150,352	143	229	372	1.0	1.5	2.5
Folkestone and Hythe [No Limit]	113,320	219	71	290	1.9	0.6	2.6
Rushmoor [No Limit]	94,387	107	182	289	1.1	1.9	3.1
Chichester [No Limit]	121,508	37	348	385	0.3	2.9	3.2
Eastleigh [No Limit]	135,520	103	350	453	0.8	2.6	3.3
Cherwell [No Limit]	151,846	178	380	558	1.2	2.5	3.7
Tonbridge and Malling [No Limit]	132,571	140	350	490	1.1	2.6	3.7
Buckinghamshire [No Limit]	547,060	335	1,724	2,059	0.6	3.2	3.8
Canterbury [No Limit]	166,762	209	425	634	1.3	2.5	3.8
South Oxfordshire [No Limit]	143,782	417	135	552	2.9	0.9	3.8
Hastings [No Limit]	92,554	53	321	374	0.6	3.5	4.0
Eastbourne [No Limit]	103,324	95	325	420	0.9	3.1	4.1
Windsor and Maidenhead [No Limit]	151,273	144	538	682	1.0	3.6	4.5
Woking [No Limit]	100,008	129	370	499	1.3	3.7	5.0
Reigate and Banstead [No Limit]	149,243	90	693	783	0.6	4.6	5.2
Lewes [No Limit]	103,525	120	495	615	1.2	4.8	5.9
Epsom and Ewell [No Limit]	81,003	32	482	514	0.4	6.0	6.3

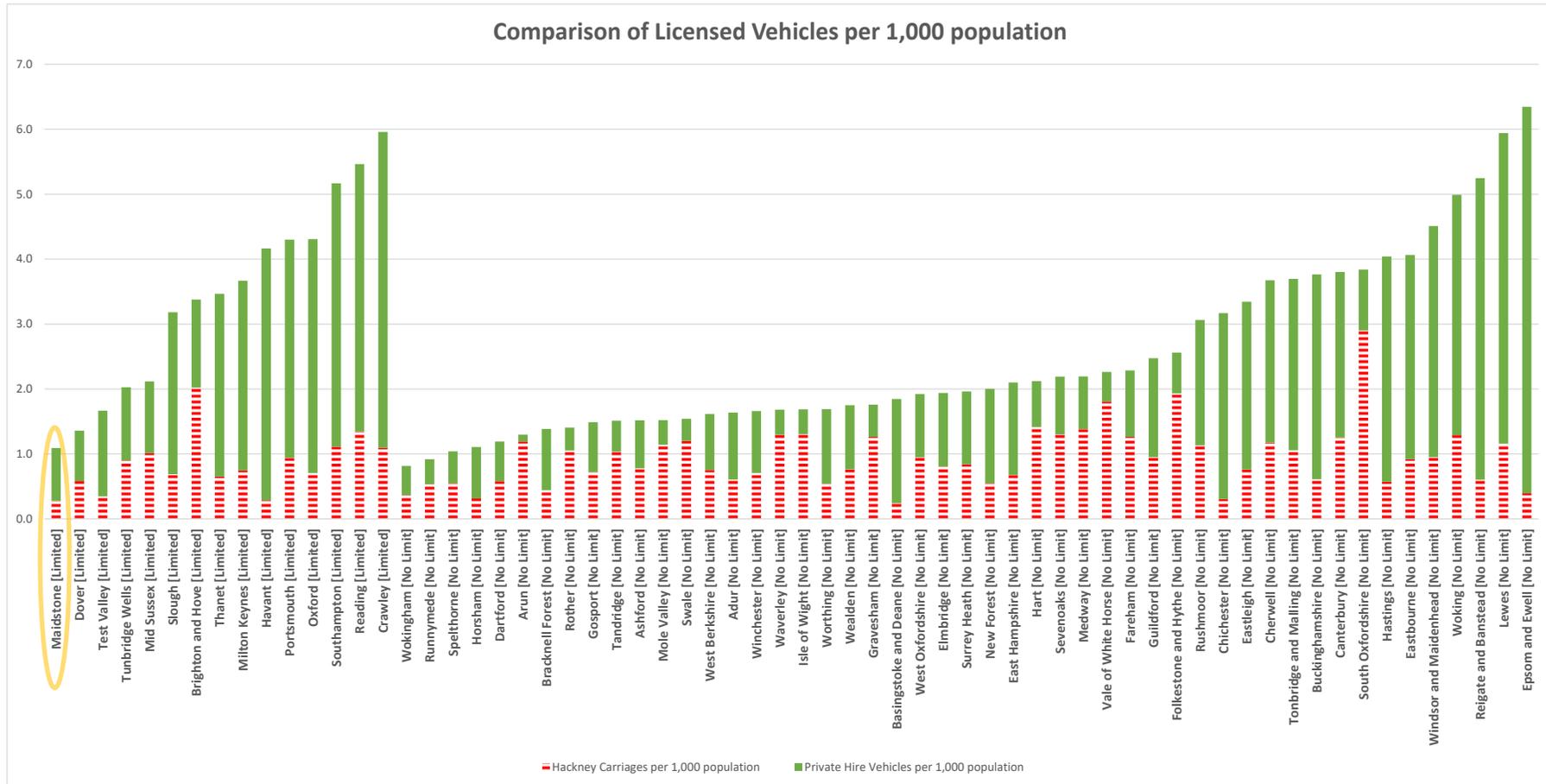


Figure 1 - Licensed Vehicles per 1,000 population

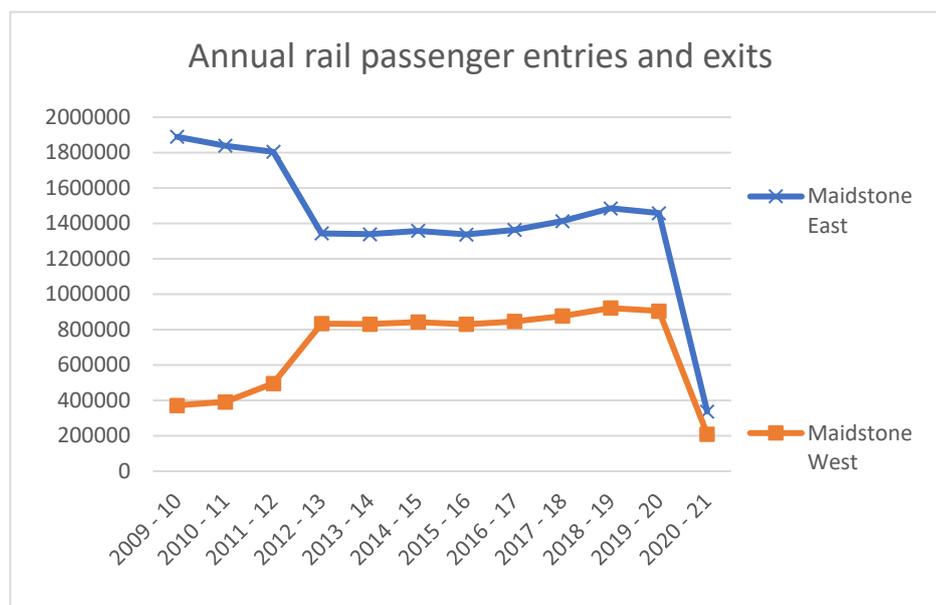
### 3.4 Rail Passenger growth

Interchange with rail services can be a significant generator of demand for Hackney Carriage services. Therefore, it is worth reviewing changes in rail patronage in railway stations serviced by Hackney Carriages. The two ranks in Maidstone which serve railway stations are Maidstone East Railway Station, and Maidstone West Railway Station. The volume of hires which Hackney Carriage drivers, waiting on the station ranks, can expect, would be anticipated to relate to the volume of passengers passing through the station.

Historic passenger volume trends are presented in Table 3 and Figure 2.

Total annual passenger entries and exits		
	Railway station	
Year	Maidstone East	Maidstone West
2009 - 10	1,889,886	372,120
2010 - 11	1,839,396	391,745
2011 - 12	1,805,500	495,896
2012 - 13	1,343,900	834,293
2013 - 14	1,339,752	831,718
2014 - 15	1,358,356	843,268
2015 - 16	1,337,663	830,421
2016 - 17	1,363,702	846,586
2017 - 18	1,412,954	877,163
2018 - 19	1,485,492	922,192
2019 - 20	1,457,950	905,096
2020 - 21	337,504	209,524

**Table 3 - Historic Rail Passenger Volumes**

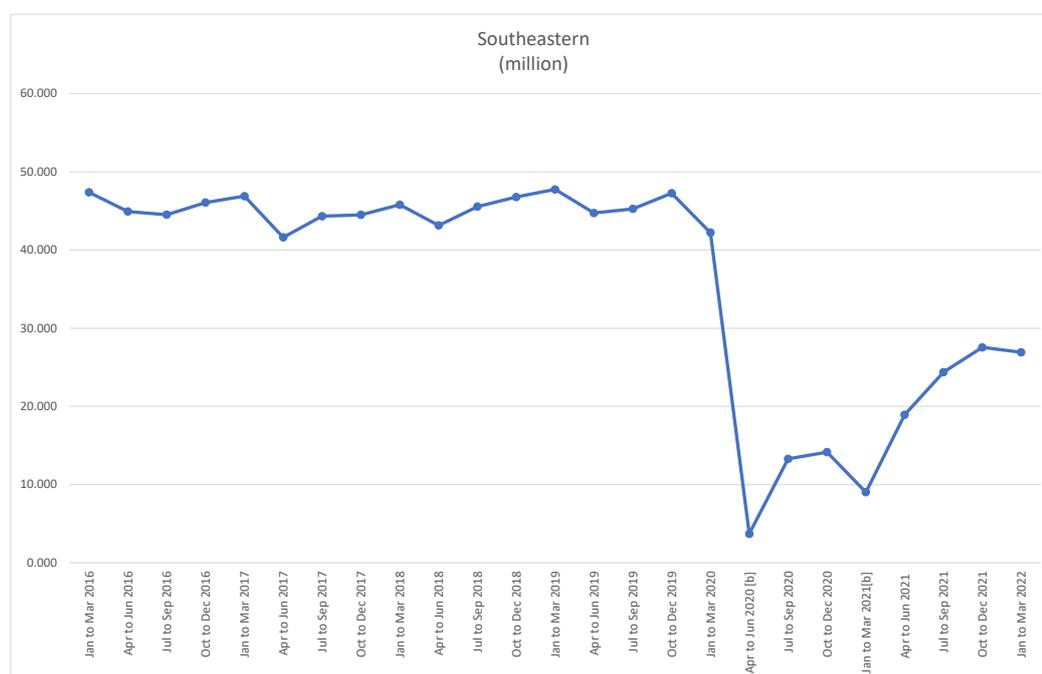


**Figure 2 – Profile of annual rail passengers**

Prior to 2020, The passenger volumes through Maidstone East tended to grow year on year. The passenger volumes during 2020 – 21 were significantly lower than in previous years. The drop in patronage was related to Covid-19 lockdown measures, which encouraged people not to travel and work from home where possible.

Data for 2021 – 22 for specific stations, was not available at the time of report publication.

Patronage data for individual rail operating companies was available as quarterly data for each year. The patronage profile for rail operators, presented in Figure 3 (millions of passengers) provides a general indication of the level of patronage recovery.



**Figure 3 - Quarterly rail operator patronage volumes - Southeastern**

The patronage data presented in Figure 3 suggests that passenger volumes have not recovered to pre-Covid levels.

### 3.5 Fares comparison

Private Hire and Taxi Monthly magazine publish monthly league tables of the fares in Licensing Authorities in the UK. The Tariff 1 fares for a two mile journey (distance costs only) are compared and ranked. The higher the ranking, the more expensive the journey, compared with other authorities. The October 2022 table (the latest available at the time of preparation of this report) indicated that the fares in Maidstone were ranked 22 out of 347 authorities listed, with a fare of £8.00.

In terms of national fares, the highest comparable fare was £13.40 and the lowest £4.40. The mid ranked (position 173) fare was £6.60.

## 4 TAXI RANK SURVEYS

### 4.1 Current taxi ranks

There were six taxi ranking locations surveyed in Maidstone. The locations of the ranks surveyed were as follows:

King Street  
High Street (outside Lush)  
High Street HSBC (informal night time rank)  
Earl Street Upper  
Maidstone East  
County Hall (Week Street – informal night time rank location)

Low levels of activity were observed at High Street HSBC. The rank on Earl Street was used occasionally, for drivers to park their hackney carriages. No hires were undertaken from this rank during the survey period.

The majority of Hackney Carriage hires occurred at the rank on High Street, at the junction with the King Street, outside the Lush shop. This rank accounted for 78% of all observed hires.

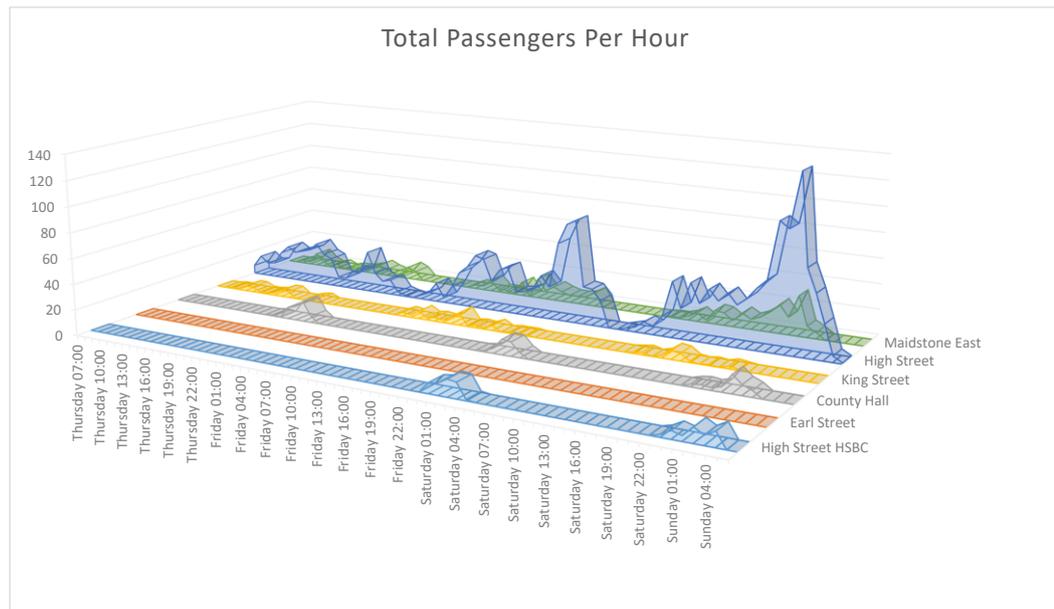
The taxi ranks were surveyed, using video cameras fixed to nearby lamp posts and sign posts, from Thursday morning (16<sup>th</sup> June 2019) to the following Sunday morning (19<sup>th</sup> June 2019), in order to capture the busiest periods of the week, along with quiet periods. This ensured that if there is any unmet demand that these are the days when this was most likely to be evident, as passenger waiting delays.

For most of the three days observed, passenger queuing was infrequent. However, there were some periods of passenger queueing at Maidstone East Railway Station. These passenger queues generally occurred following the arrival of a train and the subsequent arrival of passengers at the rank. On Saturday night, persistent passenger queues formed at the High Street rank, outside Lush.

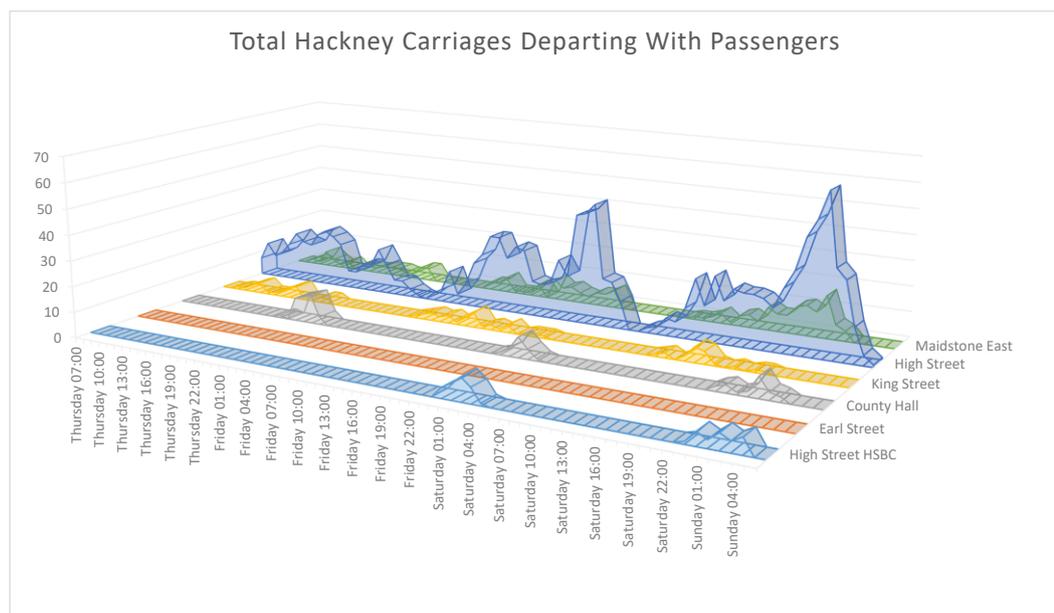
The occurrence of passenger waiting is taken into account in context with total passenger volumes observed at all ranks, when assessing the significance of unmet demand.

### 4.2 Rank survey results

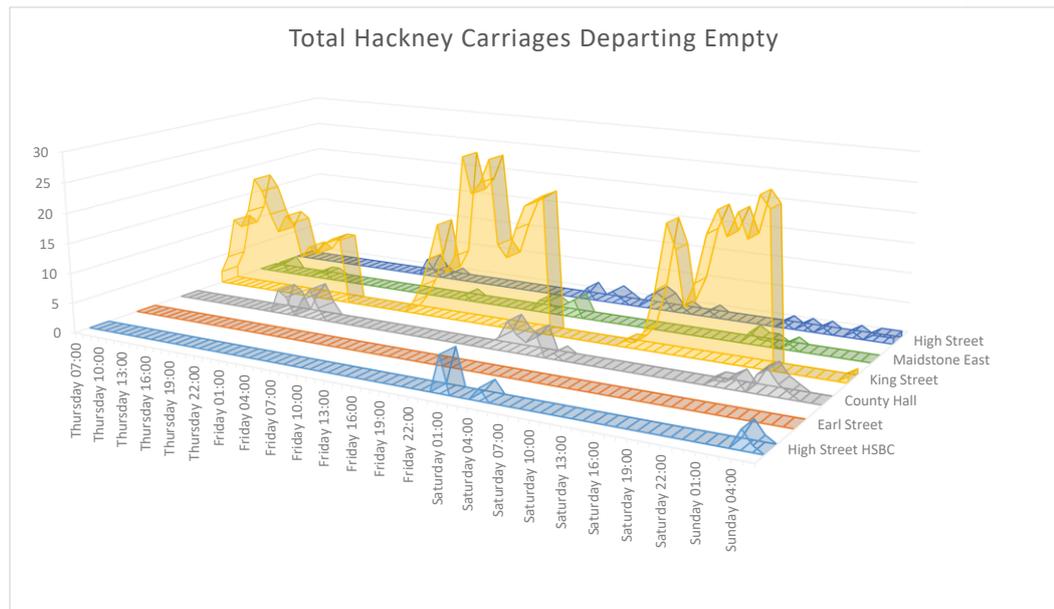
Rank survey results are presented in this section.



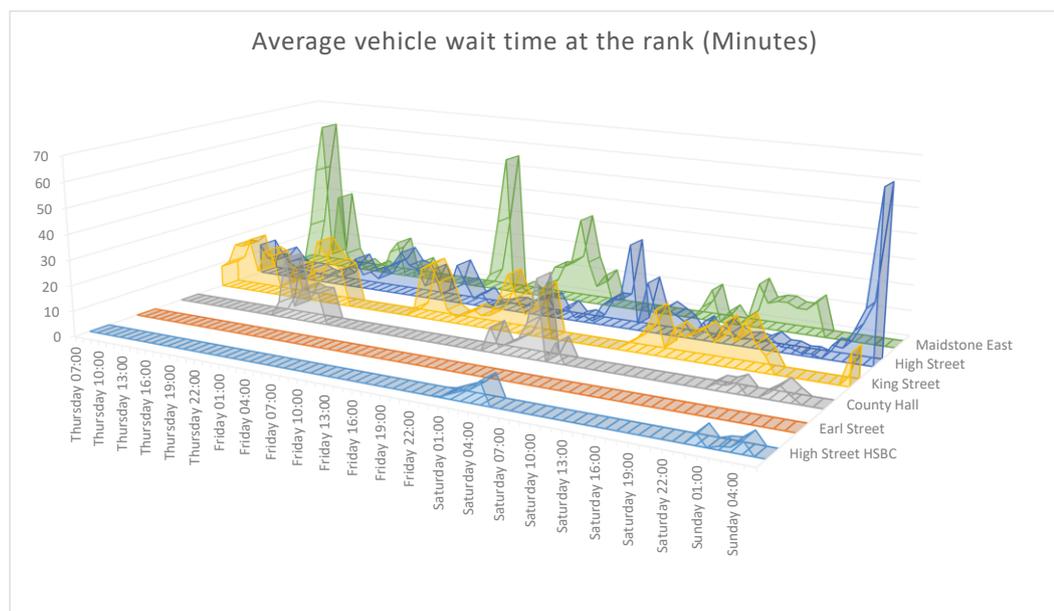
**Figure 4 - Passengers per hour at each rank**



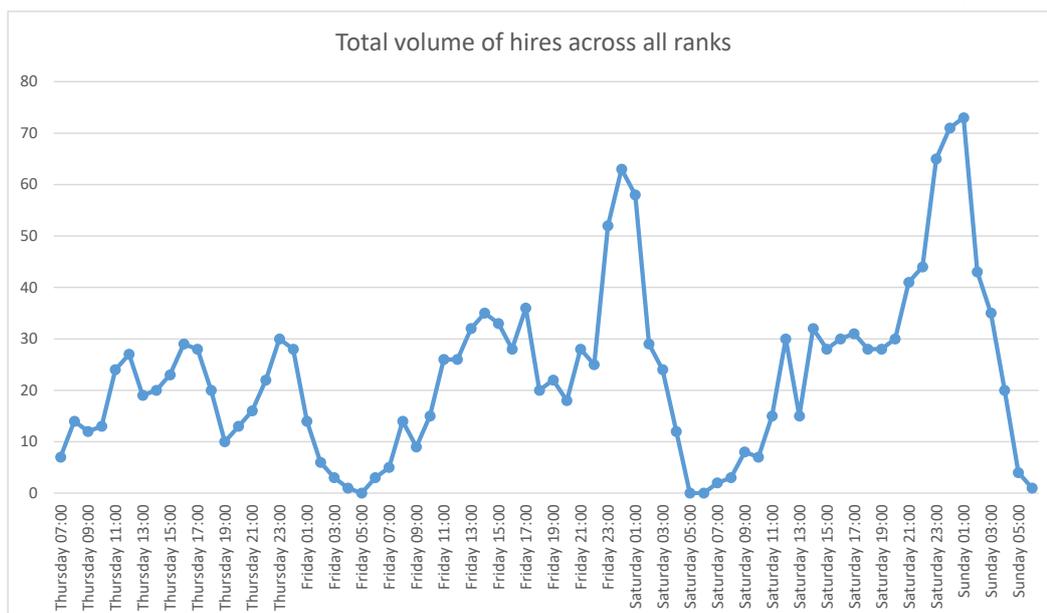
**Figure 5 - Hackney Carriages per hour (with passengers)**



**Figure 6 - Empty Hackney Carriage Departures from each rank**



**Figure 7 - Average time each vehicle spends waiting at the rank each hour**



**Figure 8 – Total volume of hires aggregated across all ranks per hour**

**Table 4 – Summary totals Thursday to Friday**

<b>Thursday - Friday</b>						
Rank location	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks empty	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks with passengers	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks	Total passengers departing the ranks	Average passengers per hackney carriage	Average vehicle wait time at the ranks per hackney carriage (minutes)
<b>Total for all locations</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>10</b>
High Street HSBC	0	0	0	0	0.0	0
Earl Street	0	0	0	0	0.0	0
County Hall	17	34	51	42	1.2	11
King Street	190	26	216	29	1.1	14
High Street	5	277	282	381	1.4	6
Maidstone East	5	45	50	69	1.5	15

**Table 5 – Summary totals – Friday to Saturday**

<b>Friday - Saturday</b>						
Rank location	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks empty	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks with passengers	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks	Total passengers departing the ranks	Average passengers per hackney carriage	Average vehicle wait time at the ranks per hackney carriage (minutes)
<b>Total for all locations</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>7</b>
High Street HSBC	8	26	34	43	1.7	3
Earl Street	0	0	0	0	0.0	0
County Hall	18	17	35	32	1.9	10
King Street	263	32	295	43	1.3	10
High Street	13	472	485	699	1.5	4
Maidstone East	11	63	74	103	1.6	16

**Table 6 - Summary totals –Saturday to Sunday**

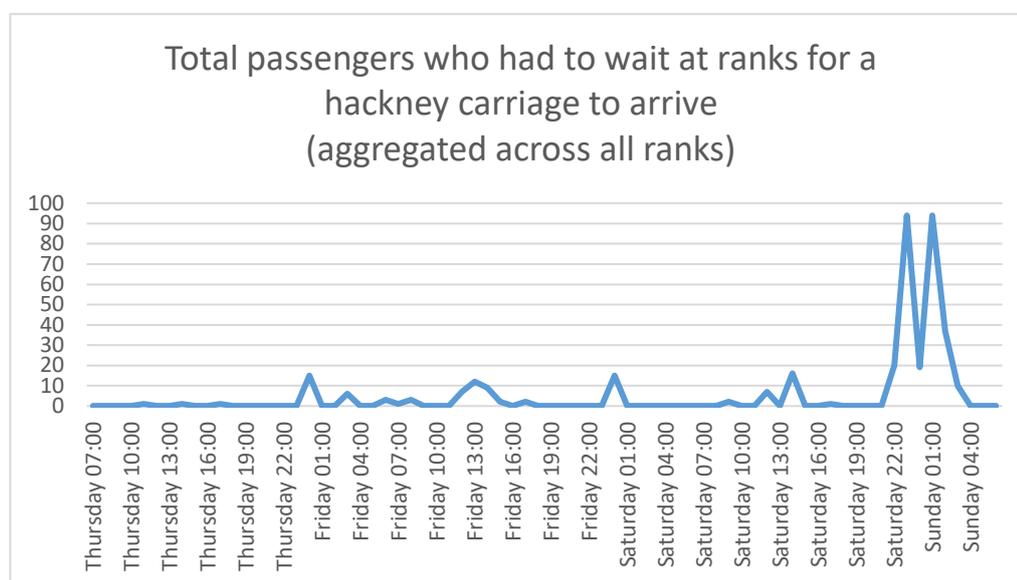
Saturday - Sunday						
Rank location	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks empty	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks with passengers	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks	Total passengers departing the ranks	Average passengers per hackney carriage	Average vehicle wait time at the ranks per hackney carriage (minutes)
<b>Total for all locations</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>1230</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>6</b>
High Street HSBC	4	25	29	41	1.6	3
Earl Street	0	0	0	0	0.0	0
County Hall	14	21	35	38	1.8	2
King Street	234	20	254	23	1.2	11
High Street	9	514	523	958	1.9	4
Maidstone East	5	104	109	170	1.6	7

**Table 7 – Summary totals for all three days surveyed, Thursday to Sunday**

All 3 days					
Rank location	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks empty	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks with passengers	Total hackney carriages departing the ranks	Total passengers departing the ranks	Average passengers per hackney carriage
<b>Total for all locations</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>1676</b>	<b>2472</b>	<b>2671</b>	<b>1.6</b>
High Street HSBC	12	51	63	84	1.6
Earl Street	0	0	0	0	0.0
County Hall	49	72	121	112	1.6
King Street	687	78	765	95	1.2
High Street	27	1263	1290	2038	1.6
Maidstone East	21	212	233	342	1.6

### 4.3 Passenger waiting

The profile of passenger waiting across all ranks is presented in Figure 9. The profile indicates that passenger waiting was concentrated on Saturday night.


**Figure 9 - Passenger Waiting Profile**

#### 4.4 Commentary on results

The rank on High Street accounted for 78% of all hires. The rank on King Street functions primarily as a feeder rank for the High Street rank. Therefore, most of the Hackney Carriages departing the rank on King Street, departed the rank empty, to move on to the King Street / High Street rank, outside Lush.

Whilst the High Street rank has two spaces for waiting Hackney Carriages, it was common practice for Hackney Carriages to move off the rank on King Street en-masse late at night (around 23:30) each night and all then queue on the High Street rank, occupying the road space behind and opposite the rank. .

The volume of hires observed on Thursday was the lowest of the three days observed. The volume of hires on Friday and Saturday were similar. However, there was a higher peak in demand on Saturday night.

The profile suggests an active night time economy.

#### 4.5 Fleet deployment profile

Sample observations were undertaken, during each hour that each rank was active, to estimate the average time between a Hackney Carriage leaving the rank, following a hire and returning to the rear of the rank. This information, coupled with the hourly volume of hires, enables an estimate of how many Hackney Carriages were active, but not waiting at the rank. A representative estimate of the number of Hackney Carriages active but not at the rank, was calculated for each hour, for each active rank.

To illustrate this process, the following example is used. Say the average time taken to return to a rank, following a hire, is 18 minutes. At the rank, there are 5 hires per hour. Therefore, on average, a hire occurs every 12 minutes (5 per hour). In this example, at the start of the hour, the first hire occurs. After 12 minutes, the second hire occurs, at this point, the first vehicle hired has not yet returned to the rank. So, once the second hired vehicle has left the rank, two vehicles are travelling and not at the rank. After 18 minutes, the first vehicle returns to the rank, leaving one vehicle travelling and not at the rank. After 24 minutes total elapsed time, the next hire occurs and so, once again, two vehicles are travelling and not at the rank. This process continues and the number of vehicles travelling, having been hired, varies between one and two. An average number of vehicles active, away from the rank can thus be calculated as:

$$\frac{(\text{number of hires per period}) \times (\text{average return time, in minutes})}{(\text{length of period in minutes})}$$

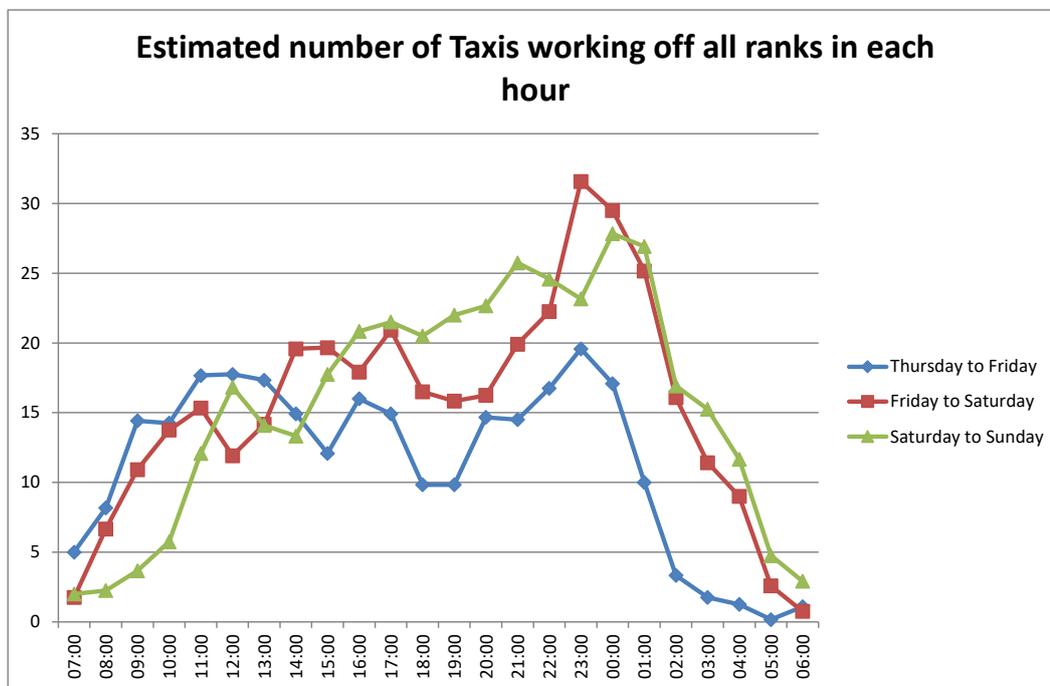
$$= \frac{5 \times 18}{60}$$

$$= 1.5 \text{ Hackney Carriages (average)}$$

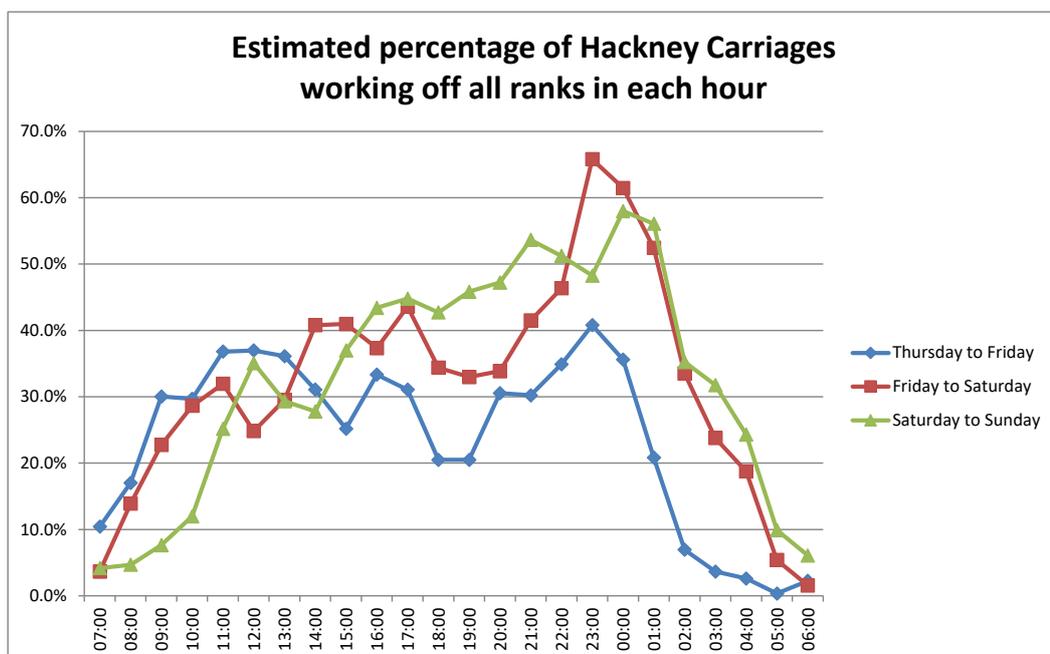
This calculated number of Hackney Carriages active and away from the rank, can be added to the average number of Hackney Carriages waiting at the rank, to derive the number of Hackney Carriages working from each rank, in each hour.

The calculated number of Hackney Carriages working from each rank, was aggregated across all ranks, for each hour observed.

The number of Hackney Carriages working in each hour is presented in Figure 10  
 The proportion of the fleet working in each hour is presented in Figure 11.



**Figure 10 - Estimated number of Hackney Carriages working each hour**



**Figure 11 - Estimated proportion of the Hackney Carriage fleet working each hour**

As one may expect, the greatest proportion of the fleet was operating on Friday and Saturday nights, during periods of greatest demand. The proportion of the fleet operating during the morning and afternoon on Thursday and Friday was consistent with the responses provided by trade feedback.

The total number of hires observed over the three days of survey, was 1,676. If we divide this total by the 48 Hackney Carriages in the fleet, this averages 35 hires per vehicle over three days. This level of activity (a little more than one hire per hour, assuming average shift durations of around 8 to 10 hours). This level of activity would not be sufficient to sustain the full Hackney Carriage fleet, working full time, on rank based hires alone. Therefore it is likely that either some of the trade are operating on a part time basis, or some also obtain hires through pre-booking, either directly or through a private hire operator. Feedback from the trade indicates that some drivers do undertake pre-booked hires derived from sources other than rank hire.

#### **4.6 Comparison with 2019 survey results.**

Demand at the Maidstone East Railway Station rank was lower in 2022 than in 2019, on Thursday and Friday. However, on Saturday, the 2022 patronage was higher than in 2019. Over the three days surveyed, the patronage at the Maidstone East Railway Station rank was lower in 2022 than in 2019.

Patronage at the High Street rank (Outside Lust) was higher on each of the three days surveyed, in 2022, than in 2019.

Across all ranks, the total number of hires observed in 2022 was higher than in 2019.

During periods of peak demand on Friday and Saturday nights, there were more hackney carriages working from the ranks in 2022 than in 2019.

#### **4.7 Passenger queuing**

Passenger waiting occurred at Maidstone East Railway Station, High Street and County Hall locations.

During weekday daytime periods, occasional passenger waiting occurred, primarily at the Maidstone East Railway Station rank. Passenger waiting generally followed the arrival of a train.. On Saturday night, persistent passenger queues formed at the High Street rank.

The incidence of queuing at ranks around Maidstone is taken into account when calculating the Index of Significant Unmet Demand (ISUD).

#### **4.8 Wheelchair users**

The number of wheelchair users obtaining Hackney Carriages at ranks, was recorded. This provides a useful insight into how much reliance wheel chair users place on obtaining Hackney Carriages without pre-booking the service.

One wheelchair user hire was observed. The observed hire occurred on the King Street rank.

## 5 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

### 5.1 Public consultation questionnaires

A public attitude survey was undertaken using an online survey. A total of 114 responses were received to the online survey.

The terms Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle are used in relation to these specific vehicle types.

Respondents were asked if they had made one or more trips by hackney carriage or private hire vehicle in Maidstone in the last three months. Responses were as follows:

Yes	77%
No	23%

In order to establish a level of respondents' knowledge, regarding differences between how Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles may be hired, the questionnaire included questions asking respondents to indicate the ways in which a Private Hire Vehicle and a Hackney Carriage may be hired.

20% of respondents indicated methods other than pre-booking, as ways in which to hire a Private Hire Vehicle. The other methods indicated included hailing a passing vehicle, hiring a Private Hire Vehicle waiting on the street or in a car park and hiring one off a rank. In comparison with other surveys, this result demonstrates a relatively good understanding of the differences between Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles.

The differences between how each type of licensed vehicle may be hired, were explained to respondents within the survey.

Results of the survey are presented in the following tables.

**Regarding your last trip in a licensed vehicle, was this a Hackney Carriage or a Private Hire Vehicle?**

Response	Proportion
Hackney Carriage	49%
Private Hire Vehicle	45%
Don't know	6%

**How do you normally obtain a hackney carriage within this area?**

	Proportion
Hired at a rank	63%
Hailed in the street	5%
Booked by telephone	27%
Book online or via a mobile app	5%

**For what reasons have you used hackney carriages or private hire vehicles in the Maidstone Borough area? (please list all reasons in the last 3 months)**

	Proportion
Medical	18%
Leisure	45%
Work	19%
Education	5%
Shopping	24%

**What was the approximate time of day of your last licensed vehicle trip?**

	Proportion
Morning	19%
Afternoon	26%
Evening	25%
Night	21%

**Regarding your last trip in a licensed vehicle, could you rate the following aspects of the trip with a rating of 1 to 5? With 1 being poor and 5 being very good.**

Aspect	Average rating
Cleanliness of the interior	3.8
Cleanliness of the exterior	3.7
General condition	3.7
Driver helpfulness	3.5
Driver appearance	3.6

**Regarding your last trip in a licensed vehicle, how much was the fare paid?  
(Face to face survey)**

The most common fares paid were in the range £5 to £15. The average fare paid was £13.53.

**How frequently do you travel by Hackney Carriage, as opposed to Private Hire Vehicles in Maidstone Borough? i.e. with a taxi sign on the roof**

	Proportion
Never	15%
Less than once a month	41%
A few times a month	20%
Once per month	4%
Once a week	11%
Almost daily	8%

**Regarding the number of Hackney Carriages in Maidstone, do you feel there are:**

	Proportion
Not enough	33%
About the right number	31%
Too many	16%
No opinion	20%

**What improvements (if any) would you like to see to Hackney Carriages services in Maidstone Borough?**

The following suggestions were made. These are listed in descending order of frequency.

- Cheaper
- More available
- Uber / App booking
- More ranks
- Better customer service levels
- Vehicles which are easier to get in and out of.
- Newer vehicles
- Accept short distance hires
- Smarter dressed drivers
- Better local knowledge
- Cleaner vehicles
- Able to pay by card
- Move the rank away from King Street
- Better signage
- Clearer information for the different legal methods of hiring a hackney carriage versus a private hire vehicle.
- More women drivers
- Maidstone coat of arms on the door

**Have you experienced any problems with the local Hackney Carriage service? (indicate as many as apply)**

<b>Problem identified</b>	<b>Proportion</b>
No problems experienced	37%
Driver issues	25%
Cleanliness	10%
Position of ranks	12%
Delay in getting a taxi	33%
Price	4%
Estimated price was wrong and worked out double the price of private hire	1%
Expensive	1%
Accessibility - difficult to get in and out of	1%
One of the doors didn't open so had to walk out into busy high street to get in	1%
Design of vehicle	6%
It is frustrating when the bus does not turn up and no taxi's either to get home	1%
Some taxi drivers refuse to take card as they incur a cost. Some refuse to take you as the journey isn't worth their while and would rather refuse to take you and wait for some to come along who needs to go further	1%

Respondents were asked to expand on the circumstances of the difficulties that they faced. The following comments were received:

*Hardly any hackneys available at 2 or 3 am*

*When they try charge more than usual.*

*The taxi drivers are rude disrespectful and have little to no English*

*Not being able to pay by card*

*Lack of English*

*Causing an obstruction to traffic in King Street and parking illegally in the bus lane.*

*They always claim its time and a half all the time why I choose to use private hire...*

*I had lost property and I couldn't trace the taxi.*

*There is not a raised kerb at the High Street Taxi Rank - that is illegal, shame on Maidstone BC for not providing a raised kerb there for wheelchair access.*

*New style cab with sliding doors. Difficult to use and driver should assist if they are not powered.*

*Midnight on a Saturday night wouldn't take me home as distance not far and not enough money in the fare. Absolutely disgusting and so very wrong in a time when anything could happen I had to walk home which took me half hour in the dark on my own.*

*Outside lush, two taxis waiting neither one would take me to Bearsted. I walked to another taxi rank further up the road. Asked the taxi driver would he take us and he said yes. He then said that he saw us get refused a ride through his mirror and said some taxi drivers won't do the small journeys and accept card due to the cost they incur. My concern is if you are in town late at night and could get stranded they don't care. Due to the park and ride and bus cuts I may as well walk into town and get a taxi home as the buses don't turn up and the cost of a one way ride in a taxi is cheaper than a family on a bus.*

*Pushy. When we told them we would go elsewhere after asked them for a rough price and were told extortionate amount.*

*Tried to charge a fee for paying by card*

*Not displaying correct tariff*

*Tried to get into a taxi and they said no they are not going that way which was weird*

*I am finding an increasing amount of drivers suddenly have their card machines "are not working". It's very frustrating as we are not encouraged to use cash as a society anymore. This is especially prominent in the evening and I have to try and find a cash point in town when getting off the train at Maidstone East. We all know why they are doing it but if it carries on I will start to use the Apollo mini cab app.*

*5.45pm High Street rank. 18/08/2022*

*Rude driver, who obviously didn't want to do a short trip. End of day.*

*Due to most of their space in the high street being blocked off now. not many park up during the day in fear of getting a parking ticket. Delaying me getting a taxi.*

*A regular thing has been that many drivers don't always know how to carry wheelchair users safely. I use them due to the unreliability of the bus service to my area. Some will ram the chair if it doesn't go up the ramp right away, some take corners like they're at Brands Hatch, causing my unsecured chair to tip. One occasion I even had a taxi driver say I was too fat for the ramp (I weigh 73kg and have a lightweight manual chair). These are not isolated incidents and happen almost every time, but I don't have much choice if the bus service is now very unreliable (one occasion waiting 2 hours for a bus). This happens regularly.*

*Taxis were on school run so there was a long wait for one to be free*

*Last time on my journey when I said I was paying with card they said we only accept cash. When I said that previously I paid by card they said oh it's just not working today. Then I listened as they happily took the next customer who was*

*paying with card as it was a longer journey. Get rid of Hackney carriages in Maidstone as they are greedy and offer poor service whilst the private firms actually offer a good service.*

*Taxi booked by phone has not arrived x 2*

*Some only use app booking this is not acceptable*

*Had issues with driver about my wheelchair he didn't understand how to load me securely and there was a language problem*

*Being at Boots and having limited mobility and needing a car that is too far away. [Hackney carriage cannot approach Boots].*

*Driver tried to charge me twice via apple pay*

*Drivers are unhelpful, cabs dirty. I'm sure it's not an easy job but they don't appear to have any pride in their vehicles and therefore no value /respect or customers.*

*When asked to get from Maidstone town centre to School lane via Shepway estate driver still chose to go along Ashford Road which adds another £2-£3 to the journey.*

**What would encourage you to use Hackney Carriages or use them more often (top two reasons)**

Reason	Proportion of respondents
Better vehicles	19%
Better drivers	23%
Better located ranks	37%
More Hackney Carriages I could phone for	24%
More Hackney Carriages I could hail or get at a rank	32%
Cheaper	7%
More competitive pricing vs private hire	1%
card payment	1%
Price	5%
App	2%
Council to raise kerb height to legal limit at Taxi Ranks	1%
Drivers who will accept your fair even if it's a short journey	1%
Safer	1%

**Do you consider yourself to have a mobility impairment, or do you know someone who has a mobility impairment?**

	Proportion of respondents
No	60%
Yes. Someone I know needs a wheelchair accessible vehicle	16%
Yes. Someone I know needs an adapted vehicle but not a wheelchair accessible vehicle	6%
Yes: I need a wheelchair accessible vehicle	4%
Yes. I need an adapted vehicle but not a wheelchair accessible vehicle	1%

Are there any locations where you would like to see new taxi ranks?

	Proportion of respondents
Yes	32%
No	32%
Don't know / no opinion	35%

**If you would like to see new taxi ranks, where should these ranks be?**

Union Street, High Street by pizza hut  
 More in the main town centre  
 Mote park  
 In rural areas  
 Maidstone Hospital  
 Lower High Street  
 Maidstone West Station  
 By the Odeon  
 St Peter's Street for the shops there and at Eclipse Park.  
 Earl street  
 Lockmeadow, Chequers Bus area  
 Outside Lockmeadow cinema complex  
 Top of Week Street  
 Where new things are being built such as the new M&S & Next area. Or over By Smyths toy shop. That way i can get there & get a taxi home.  
 Barming station  
 Fremlin Walk area  
 Pudding Lane kind of area

**How would you rate the level of service provided by Hackney Carriages in Maidstone Borough? Please rate from 1 to 5 with 1 being very poor and 5 being Very good.**

The average rating was 3.4.

**Please choose which one of the following features would do most to improve ranks in Maidstone?**

	Proportion of respondents
Seating	13%
Lighting	16%
Shelter	22%
Signage	23%
Don't know / no opinion	22%
Cleaner	1%
Better wheelchair access	1%

**What would you say is the principal factor which limits your use of Hackney Carriages?**

	Proportion of respondents
Cost	5%
Lack of availability using Apps	1%
Lack of availability	5%
Lack of seating at ranks	1%
Use buses	4%

**Would you welcome the provision of taxi marshals at ranks?**

	Proportion of respondents
Yes	10%
No	6%
Don't know / no opinion / no response	84%

If you would welcome taxi marshals, what location or locations would be most appropriate for taxi marshals to operate?

Respondents indicated that marshals would be welcome at night, at the following locations:

King street  
 Maidstone East Station  
 High Street

**Thinking back to times prior to the spread of Covid-19 and comparing your use of licensed vehicles at that time, do you feel that your use of licensed vehicles now is different to the level of use prior to Covid-19?**

	Proportion of respondents
I use licensed vehicles less now, compared with prior to Covid-19	25%
No difference	61%
I use licensed vehicles more now, compared with prior to Covid-19	14%

**Reasons for using licensed vehicles less now included:**

*Cost*

Reduced availability

Don't go out as much

The wait times are too long

Don't go out so much ,

Very many shops, bars and facilities on the High Street & Week Street have shut down. I like many very many other people don't have reason to come into the town centre anymore.

I rarely use Maidstone East train service as I work from home post pandemic.

**Reasons for using licensed vehicles more now included:**

*Lifestyle changes*

*Cleaner than busses and more reliable.*

*Because the lack of the park and ride. I'm not sure if there will be a question for this but it is increasing difficult to book a taxi from a private hire company in school time as they all have bookings with schools. You can't get a private taxi any time near the beginning of the school day or end.*

*Illness has caused me to be unable to drive but need to attend hospital appointment and buses are just too unreliable*

*My mobility has changed so now need a taxi to save walking so far from bus stops*

*Used to live much closer to town and had own car*

*Bus service has been cut*

*My sister is classed as very vulnerable and unable to wear a face mask so it is much safer for her to travel by hackney than go by bus*

*Because of limited mobility*

*I've changed jobs and need to be across town quicker than a bus allows*

**Respondents were asked if they had wanted to hire a hackney carriage in the last three months at a rank or by hailing and given up or made alternative arrangements for travel because none were available?**

Respondents who answered yes, were asked to provide further information regarding where and when they had been unable to hire a hackney carriage at a rank. 38% of respondents offered valid locations for where they had been unable to hire a hackney carriage.

***Have you wanted to book a Hackney Carriage specifically, as opposed to a Private Hire Vehicle, by telephone or online, for immediate travel, in the last***

**three months and had to make alternative arrangements because a Hackney Carriage was not available within a reasonable time?**

18% of respondents indicated that they had tried to hire a hackney carriage by telephone and none were available.

**If the answer to the previous question is yes, how long approximately was the wait time quoted?**

	Proportion of respondents
Up to 30 minutes	1%
30 minutes to 1 hour	3%
Over 1 hour	6%
No Hackney Carriages available	9%

**Do you have regular access to a car?**

	Proportion of respondents
Yes	67%
No	33%

**Are you a permanent resident or student in Maidstone?**

	Proportion of respondents
Yes	86%
Student	2%
No	11%

**Is the respondent Male 1 or Female 2**

	Proportion of respondents
Male	37%
Female	57%
Prefer not to say	4%
Not applicable	1%

**Which of the following age groups do you fall into?**

	Proportion of respondents
16 – 30	23%
31 – 55	42%
56+	33%

**Respondents were asked if they had any other comments that they would like to make, regarding Hackney Carriage services. The comments made are listed below:**

*If hackney carriage drivers conducted themselves a little better, meaning attitude and dress code maybe the public will feel they are more approachable, also some don't accept card, I appreciate there is no bylaw but this is 2022.*

*Make it like others use of car as Hackney easy to flag down and quicker access, where meets demands*

*Whenever I go through town I always see at least 10 taxi's waiting at the rank. It seems as though covid has affected a lot of taxi drivers as there is less work for them and they are not busy. A taxi driver told me that they barely make any money and said that it is hard to survive by doing just taxi.*

*Allow Uber to come to Maidstone "*

*The only viable answer to this issue is to reinstate Uber's license in Maidstone. Maidstone's own taxi provision is clearly nowhere near sufficient to meet demand and I doubt ever will be - Uber and its competitors are the best alternatives to meet demand and reduce car usage in the town.*

*Maidstone needs Uber it's just too expensive without it, the loss of attraction to the town is because of this for younger people*

*More enforcement and stricter enforcement of the regulations is needed and taxis need to stop parking and waiting illegally. Stop them ripping off customers with fake fares*

*Allow Uber in the borough brings business to the borough and more employment opportunities if there was Uber in Maidstone I'd be a part time driver.*

*Due to lack of proper signage and no road markings the High Street Taxi Rank does not stand out at all therefore only those people with local knowledge know where it is, visitors and tourists have very little chance whatsoever of ever actually finding the Hackney Carriage Taxi Rank. Visitors and strangers are much more likely to be picked up by uninsured or unlicensed vehicles or else the dodgy minicabs that drive up and down and circle around to steal fares off the street than an actual proper Maidstone Hackney Carriage Taxi actually because of that lack of signage and road markings on the Taxi Rank.*

*Minicabs from all of the Maidstone based companies race up and down the High Street, Pudding Lane and King Street at breakneck speed ignoring bus lane restrictions to break the law, albeit the speed limit is 20mph, in order to pick up and drop off their fares illegally. To disguise their illicit practice some of those minicabs even routinely unscrew and remove their Licence Plates entirely for the whole duration at weekends, they then screw them back on for weekday use.*

*Big thank you to the Hackney Carriage Drivers they are definitely much undervalued Key Workers! They provide a fantastic Great service to the whole community.*

*Please make a sheltered taxi rank at East station / County hall area even if you change the small car park next to Brenchley Gardens into a taxi rank with accessible free phones and shelter.*

*The shortage of any taxis when school runs are being done needs to be addressed.*

*Patient transport tend to use private cabs to pick up clients from hospital one day one such driver moaned about how much he was going to get for this journey all the way home drove me mad.*

*I am grateful for the iconic Hackney cabs in Maidstone as they helped me during covid times when I desperately needed to go to the hospital and they were always there and happy to help whilst the private hire were not available.*

*Taxi drivers must support single woman with a fare home*

*It amazes me that regular bus services have been cancelled leaving OAPs without a vital bus service. They have free bus passes and no bus. Those without cars are stranded and can't afford a taxi fare.*

*Some of these drivers or companies seriously need looking into!*

*More private hire cabs needed in area. I miss Uber!*

*Bring back Uber*

*Cost of private hire and Hackney carriages are making it almost impossible to use them regularly.*

*I would rather take a Hackney carriage as I feel safer. There are many licenced cabs in Maidstone but feel unsure with some of the drivers.*

*Maidstone definitely needs more accessible private hire vehicles. Not just wheelchair vehicles.*

*Some Hackney cabs in cars and black cabs seem old and chuck out a lot of black smoke. Should limit them to say. No older than 4 years old..*

*The drivers are scruffy, smoke and just sit in cabs on the street. Not approachable*

*They are way to expensive. I won't get them because of this. Plus a lot of the drivers are very abrupt and rude.*

*Yes please. Drivers need to be educated on carrying wheelchairs. The older style with the fold out ramps need to be maintained better. The newer style are better, but drivers still don't seem to know how to carry a wheelchair safely. 99% of the time, my chair is unrestrained (mostly because drivers have no idea how to restrain the chair) so when they take corners, I often find the chair tipping. I've reported one, once because after asking several times to take the corners more gently, he continued to take them rough causing my chair to tip and a few times hitting my head on the window (thankfully no injury, but still) the bus service to Penenden heath is worse than ever with buses often not even turning up, so when I'm tired from self propelling round town, Hackney's are often my only choice. Would be nice if drivers knew what they were doing and were a little more polite.*

*Only that if I'm in town I'll use a Hackney Carriage and if I'm booking, I call Cavalier or Express and their drivers know the area unlike some others.*

*We're fortunate to have this service but how they make a living with the current fuel prices heaven knows.*

*If I knew the costs I might consider more"*

*Give us a proper public bus service not one run so as to look good !,*

*I do feel that some of the Hackney drivers need more training in loading wheelchair users safely as some don't seem to know how to strap a wheelchair in their vehicle*

*I am stuck in my house because of limited mobility and can't afford a taxi.*

*I don't understand the taxi service in town. There have been countless times when a wait for any taxi has been over an hour. As a single female, I don't want to walk home in the dark, but it's either that or go back into the venue I was at. In that time people buy you more drinks or whatever, and you end up on a bender rather than going home. The other thing is that sometimes I get offered a huge minibus, because I'm first in the queue, when there's a whole group of people waiting. It would be better if Uber, bolt, Lyft etc were available*

*Drivers are rude and not engaged. Cabs are dirty and unreliable. I would not be happy for my elderly mother to use either black cab or private hire as she needs a small amount of assistance/or extra time to exit a vehicle and drivers have so little respect that it would make her feel very uneasy. It would widen / enrich her life if we could use taxis to collect her and take her to town/groups but after a few rude drivers in dirty cars who were unwilling to assist passengers she won't use any local services.*

*I use Express for Private Hire as the drivers are smart and polite*

*I don't use taxis much myself but very concerned for an elderly friend who had to give up driving. She would like to use taxis for medical appointments and afternoons out, and can afford to so pretty often. But afternoons out are impossible because all taxis booked for school run and medical appointments often clash with morning school run. No provision for what*

*must be quite common needs and wishes for a large category of the population.*

## **5.2 Public consultation key features**

Understanding of the differences between hackney carriages and private hire vehicles was relatively good.

Hackney carriages were used for around half of licensed vehicle trips and the majority of hackney carriages were hired from ranks. However, a significant proportion of hackney carriage hires are undertaken by telephone bookings.

The ratings applied to different attributes associated with hackney carriages are slightly above average. However, it should be borne in mind that respondents to online surveys are often driven by a desire to highlight a bad experience.

The most popular suggestion for improvements to hackney carriage services was to reduce the cost of using the service. This is fairly common amongst unmet demand surveys.

Availability of hackney carriages was a recurring issue identified by respondents. In particular, availability during school run times and late at night were identified as periods when availability is particularly low.

Some respondents complained that some drivers refused short distance hires and refused to take card payments, or charged extra if a card was used to pay a fare.

The ability to properly secure wheelchairs was raised as an issue by multiple respondents.

Poor language skills was identified as an issue associated with some drivers.

## 6 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

### 6.1 Background

In order to gather information from a variety of sources and gather views of the taxi industry and levels of service from different perspectives, consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders. These included representatives of groups or organisations which use taxis, or undertake related activities and representatives from the taxi business itself.

### 6.2 Licensed vehicle trade consultation

An online questionnaire was created and links to the questionnaire distributed to members of the trade.

9 questionnaires were returned from members of the trade.

7 responses were from Hackney Carriage Drivers, 1 response was from someone who indicated that they are involved in the trade but don't normally drive. Another respondent indicated that they don't normally drive.

Responses, where applicable, have been quantified according to the respondent type.

86% of hackney carriage drivers were also hackney carriage owners.

Each driver was asked to estimate, over a year, how many hires they picked per week.

	Up to 10	10 to 20	21 to 30	31 to 40	41 to 50	51 to 60	61 to 70	71 to 80	81 to 90
From Ranks				14%	29%	43%	14%		
Flag Downs	86%								
Telephone bookings	71%	14%							
Regular Contracts	57%	14%							

The responses indicated that drivers undertook a mix of rank hires and pre-booked hires. The mix between pre-booked and rank based hires varied by driver. The incidences of flag down hires was low.

The respondents were asked **how many years they have been involved in the licensed vehicle trade in Maidstone Borough**. Results are shown below.

	Hackney Drivers
0-3 years	0%
3-5 years	14%
6-10 years	29%
11-15 years	0%
16-20 years	14%
Over 20 years	43%

**Do you normally subscribe to a radio circuit, or similar, for bookings:**

	Hackney Drivers
Yes	14%
No	86%

**Do you have personal clients who call you, text you or otherwise message you directly to hire your services? For example, using a phone number from cards distributed.**

29% of drivers indicated that they did have clients who booked their services directly.

**Drivers were asked how many hours they worked each week.**

Two of the respondents indicated up to 24 hours per day several days per week. Discounting these responses, the weekly hours ranged from 35 to 63 hours per week.

**During a typical week, approximately how many journeys do you pick up which require carriage of a wheelchair?**

	Hackney Drivers
None	14%
1 – 5	43%
6 – 10	14%
11 – 20	14%
More than 20	14%

**Drivers were asked if they had any regular clients who used wheelchairs.**

14% of respondents indicated that they did have regular clients who used wheelchairs.

**Drivers were asked if, besides wheelchair users, they had any regular clients with mobility impairments**

43% indicated that they did have regular clients with mobility impairments.

**Drivers were asked whether they were a member of any formal or informal groups to share information about where hackney carriages may be required, such as if you are the last hackney carriage at a rank and a large group has arrived at the rank looking for hackney carriages. For example**

**WhatsApp group, or Facebook group. If yes, could you tell us about the type of group and how it generally works?**

No drivers were members of any such group.

**In relation to normal practice throughout the year, which of the following ranks or locations would you normally work from at different times of day?**

Hackney Carriage Drivers

	Morning 7:00 – 12:00)	Afternoon (12:00 – 18:00)	Evening (18:00 – 21:00)	Late evening (21:00 - 23:00)	Night (23:00 - 07:00)
King Street	71%	71%	57%	43%	43%
High Street	57%	57%	71%	57%	43%
Barker Road	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pudding Lane	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
St. Faith's Street	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Earl Street	0%	14%	0%	0%	0%
Maidstone East Railway Station	29%	29%	43%	29%	43%
Week Street (outside County Hall)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Bottom of High Street				14%	

**The Hackney Carriage trade tends to focus on one or two ranks or locations at certain times of day, leaving other ranks unattended. Some ranks are rarely or never served by Hackney Carriages. Can you suggest any reasons that some ranks are not used and any measures which may be implemented to improve service at these ranks?**

All the respondents felt that there was no demand at the ranks, other than High Street, King Street and Maidstone East railway station. There were often vehicles parked on some of the other ranks, so they couldn't be used, even if there was customer demand.

**Is there enough rank space in Maidstone Borough?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
Yes	14%	100%	100%
No	86%		

**Do you think new ranks are required?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
Yes	29%		
No	71%	100%	100%

Suggestions were made for new ranks on The High Street, Hospitals, Hazlitt theatre and the bottom of Gabriel's Hill

**Are there any ranks in Maidstone Borough which need more space?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
Yes	71%	100%	
No	29%	0%	100%

The most popular suggestion for more space was on King Street. Suggestions were also made for more space on High Street and Week Street.

**Prior to reading this questionnaire, were you aware that Maidstone Borough enforces a numerical limit on the number of Hackney Carriages in Maidstone Borough?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
Yes	86%	100%	100%
No	14%		

**Did you drive a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle in Maidstone Borough, prior to the spread of Covid - 19?**

All drivers indicated that they had driven hackney carriages prior to the spread of Covid-19.

**How does demand for hires now compare with the level of demand prior to the spread of Covid-19?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
There is less daytime demand and less night time demand now	29%	0	0
There is less daytime demand and similar level of night time demand now	14%	0	0
There is around the same level of daytime demand and less night time demand now	14%	0	0
There is around the same level of daytime demand and similar level of night time demand now	43%	0	0
more demand 24/7	0%	0	100%

**How do the hours that you work as a licensed vehicle driver now compare with the hours that you worked prior to the spread of Covid -19? Please choose the answer which is most relevant to your circumstances.**

	<b>Hackney Drivers</b>	<b>Don't normally drive</b>	<b>I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle</b>
0			
I work a different mix of day and / or night time hours now and for more hours each week	14%	0%	0%
I work the same or similar mix of day and / or night time hours and for around the same number of hours each week	71%	0%	100%
I work the same or similar mix of day and / or night time hours and for more hours each week	14%	0%	0%

**Are there sufficient Private Hire Vehicles in Maidstone Borough to meet current levels of demand?**

	<b>Hackney Drivers</b>	<b>Don't normally drive</b>	<b>I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle</b>
Yes, too many	29%		
Yes, generally sufficient	43%		
No, not during all periods			100%
No opinion	29%	100%	

**Are there sufficient Hackney Carriages in Maidstone Borough to meet current levels of demand?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
Yes, too many	86%7		
Yes, generally sufficient	14%		100%
No, not during all periods		100%	
No opinion			
Don't know			

**Should Maidstone Borough Council remove the numerical limit on the number of Hackney Carriages?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
Yes		100%	
No	100%		100%

**Is the supply of wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriages adequate for the level of demand from wheelchair users?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
Yes	100%		100%
No		100%	

**Is the supply of wheelchair accessible Private Hire Vehicles adequate for the level of demand from wheelchair users?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
Yes	86%	100%	
No			100%

**If the limit on the number of Hackney Carriages in Maidstone Borough were increased, which, if any of the effects would occur?**

	Hackney Drivers	Don't normally drive	I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle
More work for drivers	0%	100%	
Less work for drivers	100%		100%
A drop in standards	86%		100%
Standards would be improved		100%	
There would be safety implications	43%		
There would be enforcement implications	57%		
More revenue			
Less revenue	71%		
Exasperate shortage of Taxi Rank spaces and cause traffic congestion within Pedestrian Zone	14%		

**Do you feel that any of the following factors limit the use if Hackney Carriages?**

	<b>Hackney Drivers</b>	<b>Don't normally drive</b>	<b>I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle</b>
Use of mobile APPs for booking licensed vehicles	57%		100%
Use of mobile phones to call for private hire vehicles	43%		
Use of mobile APPs for booking licensed vehicles	57%		100%
Security	14%	100%	
Public transport alternative	14%	100%	
Use of mobile phones to call for private hire vehicles	43%		
Cost	29%		

**Do any of the following issues need to be addressed?**

	<b>Hackney Drivers</b>	<b>Don't normally drive</b>	<b>I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle</b>
Improve language skills	71%		100%
Customer service by 'some' drivers	14%		
Improve knowledge of the area	29%		
Increased driver training	14%		
Improve driver testing	14%		
Drivers association support	14%		
Make sure that new drivers have people skills	14%		

**What features, facilities or improvements would do most to improve taxi ranks in Maidstone?**

Toilet,  
 Drivers monthly news and updates.  
 Bigger signposts.  
 Proper taxi shelters

**Is customer care adequate?**

Yes 78%  
 No 11%  
 Maybe 11%

**What improvements to customer care would have the largest beneficial effects for taxi drivers in Maidstone?**

The following suggestions were received:  
*Customer care courses*  
*Helping customers in and out of cabs with their shopping.*  
*Need to Increase Hackney carriage vehicles*  
*Lost property office.*  
*Drivers get out of their car's and offering help .*  
*Mobile app for ease of access to customers*

**Are any of the following criteria an issue for the licensed vehicle trade in Maidstone?**

	<b>Hackney Drivers</b>	<b>Don't normally drive</b>	<b>I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle</b>
Increasing expense of fuel	86%	100%	100%
Lack of drivers	0%	0%	100%
Excessive working hours	29%	0%	0%
Congestion	43%	100%	0%
Private Hire minicabs driving within the Pedestrian Zone	14%	0%	0%
Environmental considerations	29%	0%	0%
Road works	14%	0%	0%

**Would you welcome the provision of Taxi Marshalls at ranks?**

	<b>Hackney Drivers</b>	<b>Don't normally drive</b>	<b>I am involved in the trade but don't normally drive a licensed vehicle</b>
Yes	57%		100%
No	43%	100%	
Don't know/no opinion	14%		

Suggested location for taxi marshals was on High Street at night.

Respondents were asked if they drove a vehicle which was used by more than one driver. The responses were as follows:  
29% of Hackney Carriage drivers indicated that there were multiple drivers.

### **6.3 Other comments and inputs.**

In addition to the questionnaire responses summarised above, which focussed on specific and numerical responses, drivers were also asked if there were any more comments that they would like to make.

Additional comments have been presented in this section.

The Hackney Carriage Trade has enough drivers but the Private Hire side is suffering. Many drivers can barely speak a word of English and could be more helpful to elderly customers.

Many Private Hire minicab vehicles completely remove their Plates to illegally ply for hire within the Pedestrian Zone. Private Hire vehicles are not allowed to enter the Pedestrian Zone by law but do so regularly to pick up fares illegally.

Because of Not Enough Hackney Carriage vehicles in Maidstone, some owners of the Hackney vehicle charging driver to rent the vehicle £400 a week , which is wrong , Even same type of vehicles to rent in London it costs for the driver only £240 a week. Also people always says there are not enough Hackney Carriage vehicles in Maidstone. for this reason They don't get taxi from the rank, So council should increase the Hackney carriage vehicles in Maidstone.

Saturday nights enforcement

It would better if, in the high street, there is a camera which operates day and at night time to prevent private cars coming into town. They cause safety concerns and congestion.

#### **6.4 Non Trade Consultation**

Views on the taxi trade and taxi services were sought from user groups, representing elderly and disabled groups, hotels and licensed premises, transport providers, police and other stakeholders that it was felt should be consulted.

The consultee groups and individuals were as follows:

Kent Primary Care Trust, Chamber of Commerce, Maidstone Disability Action Group, Maidstone Activity and Skills Group, Maidstone Mind, Citizens Advice Bureau, Age UK (Maidstone), SAGA, Involve, Maidstone Women's Centre, local Sheltered Housing Schemes and Care Homes, Arriva, Network Rail, Local bus and coach companies, .Council representatives for Transport, Roads and local businesses. Pubs, clubs and hotels were contacted by telephone. The businesses contacted were in a variety of locations from town centre locations to rural locations, within the licensing area.

Feedback was generated through a combination of, email and telephone contact.

Most hotels and licensed premises, within Maidstone town, indicated that they or their customers generally called one of the Private Hire Operators to book a vehicle, as opposed to specifically ordering Hackney Carriages. It was normally the case that customers made their own arrangements. Generally, respondents felt that there were licensed vehicles available for customers when required. Some felt that availability late at night was more limited than it used to be. But that there were always taxis available at the ranks on the High Street and Maidstone East station, even late at night.

Licensed premises in rural locations indicated that customers faced some difficulty obtaining a licensed vehicle at some times. This was attributed to rural location and the distance a vehicle would need to travel to pick up a fare. Hires are generally arranged in advance.

Supermarkets all had Freephone booking services available in the shop and had not indicated that they were aware that any customers ever faced difficulty hiring a licensed vehicle.

At the hospital, licensed vehicles could be hired through a Freephone service. No difficulties were known.

Some issues were raised on behalf of elderly users, mobility impaired users or minority groups. These issues primarily related to the availability of licensed vehicles during 'school run' times in the morning and afternoon.

The cost of travel is a concern for some. However, availability was generally felt to be good for regular users, with the exception of periods in the mornings and afternoons when school contracts were undertaken by licensed vehicles.

Availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles was not raised as an issue. There is a preference by some elderly and mobility impaired users to use private hire saloon cars, rather than the larger wheelchair accessible vehicles, owing to boarding difficulties and comfort on the journey.

No Police response was received.

## **6.5 Summary of trade and stakeholder consultation**

The Hackney Carriage trade appear to derive the majority of trade from rank hires, rather than pre-booked hire.

The some hackney carriages carry wheelchair passengers fairly regularly.

Responses from the trade agree with the rank survey results that there are effectively three active rank locations, these are King Street, High Street and Maidstone East Railway Station. No drivers acknowledged use of the layby at County Hall, despite evidence from the rank survey videos.

There was some corroboration of feedback that there is a shortage of drivers in Maidstone and some suggestion that the private hire vehicle fleet is more significantly affected by the driver shortage, than the hackney carriage fleet.

## 7 DETERMINATION OF UNMET DEMAND

### 7.1 Evaluation of unmet demand and its significance

It is first important to define our specific view about what constitutes unmet demand. Our definition is when a person turns up at a taxi rank and finds there is no vehicle there available for immediate hire. This can lead to a queue of people building up, some of who may walk off, whilst others will wait till a vehicle collects them. Later passengers may well arrive when there are vehicles there, but because of the queue will not obtain a vehicle immediately.

There are other instances where queues of passengers can be observed at taxi ranks. This can occur when the level of demand is such that it takes longer for vehicles to move up to waiting passengers than passengers can board and move away. This often occurs at railway stations but can also occur at other ranks where high levels of passenger arrivals occur. We do not consider this is unmet demand, but geometric delay and although we note this, it is not counted towards unmet demand being significant.

The industry standard index of the significance of unmet demand (ISUD) was initiated at the time of the introduction of section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act as a numeric and consistent way of evaluating unmet demand and its significance. The ISUD methodology was initially developed by a university and then adopted by one of the leading consultant groups undertaking the surveys made necessary to enable authorities to retain their limit on taxi vehicle numbers. The index has been developed and deepened over time to take into account various court challenges. It has now become accepted as the industry standard test of if identified unmet demand is significant.

The index is a statistical guide derived to evaluate if observed unmet demand is in fact significant. However, its basis is that early tests using first principles identified based on a moderate sample suggested that the level of index of 80 was the cut-off above which the index was in fact significant, and that unmet demand therefore was such that action was needed in terms of additional issue of plates to reduce the demand below this level, or a complete change of policy if it was felt appropriate. This level has been accepted as part of the industry standard. However, the index is not a strict determinant and care is needed in providing the input samples as well as interpreting the result provided. However, the index has various components which can also be used to understand what is happening in the rank-based and overall licensed vehicle market.

ISUD draws from several different parts of the study data. Each separate component of the index is designed to capture a part of the operation of the demand for taxis and reflect this numerically. Whilst the principal inputs are from the rank surveys, the measure of latent demand comes from the public on-street surveys, and any final decision about if identified unmet demand is significant, or in fact about the value of continuing the current policy of restricting vehicle numbers, must be taken fully in the context of a careful balance of all the evidence gathered during the survey process.

The present ISUD calculation has two components which both could be zero. In the case that either are zero, the overall index result is zero, which means they clearly demonstrate there is no unmet demand which is significant, even if other values are high.

The first component which can be zero is the proportion of daytime hours where people are observed to have to wait for a taxi to arrive. The level of wait used is when the average wait time for any passengers who have to wait for a taxi to arrive is greater than one minute. The industry definition of these hours varies, the main index user counts from 10:00 to 18:00 (i.e. eight hours ending at 17:59). The present index is clear that unmet demand cannot be significant if there are no such hours. The only rider on this component is that the sample of hours collected must include a fair element of such hours, and that if the value is non-zero, review of the potential effect of a wider sample needs to be considered.

The other component which could be zero is the test identifying the proportion of passengers which are travelling in any hour when the average passenger wait (for all passengers) in that hour is greater than one minute.

If both of these components are non-zero, then the remaining components of the index come into play. These are the peakiness factor, the seasonality factor, average passenger delay, and the latent demand factor.

Average passenger delay is the total amount of time waited by all passengers in the sample, divided by the total number of passengers observed who entered taxis.

The seasonality factor allows for the undertaking of rank survey work in periods which are not typical, although guidance is that such periods should normally be avoided if possible particularly as the impact of seasons may not just be on the level of passenger demand, but may also impact on the level of supply. This is particularly true in regard to if surveys are undertaken when schools are active or not.

Periods when schools are not active can lead to more taxi vehicles being available whilst they are not required for school contract work. Such periods can also reduce taxi demand with people away on holiday from the area. Generally, use of taxis is higher in December in the run-up to Christmas, but much lower in January, February and the parts of July and August when more people are likely to be on holiday. The factor tends to range from 0.8 for December (factoring high demand level impacts down) to 1.2 for January / February (inflating the values from low demand levels upwards).

There can be special cases where summer demand needs to be covered, although high peaks for tourist traffic use of taxis tend not to be so dominant at the current time, apart from in a few key tourist authorities.

The peakiness factor is generally either 1 (level demand generally) or 0.5 (demand has a high peak at one point during the week). This is used to allow for the difficulty of any transport system being able to meet high levels of peaking. It is rarely possible or practicable for example for any public transport system, or any road capacity, to be provided to cover a few hours a week.

The latent demand factor was added following a court case. It comes from asking people in the on-street questionnaires if they have ever given up waiting for a taxi

at a rank in any part of the area. This factor generally only affects the level of the index as it only ranges from 1.0 (no-one has given up) to 2.0 (everyone says they have). It is also important to check that people are quoting legitimate taxi rank waits as some, despite careful questioning, quote giving up waiting at home, which must be for a private hire vehicle (even if in taxi guise as there are few private homes with taxi ranks outside).

The ISUD index is the result of multiplying each of the components together and benchmarking this against the cut-off value of 80. Changes in the individual components of the index can also be illustrative. For example, the growth of daytime hour queueing can be an earlier sign of unmet demand developing than might be apparent from the proportion of people experiencing a queue particularly as the former element is based on any wait and not just that averaging over a minute. The change to a peaky demand profile can tend towards reducing the potential for unmet demand to be significant.

Finally, any ISUD value must be interpreted in the light of the sample used to feed it, as well as completely in the context of all other information gathered. Generally, the guide of the index will tend not to be overturned in regard to significant unmet demand being identified, but this cannot be assumed to be the case – the index is a guide and a part of the evidence and needs to be taken fully in context.

## 7.2 Calculation of ISUD variables

**APD:** The average delay is determined by calculating the total passenger delay as aggregate passenger delay minutes, then dividing by the total number of passengers, including those who did not suffer any delay. Factors are calculated as weekly equivalents by multiplying the Thursday results by 4 plus Friday, and Saturday data. The aggregate delays in passenger minutes was 2,531 minutes. If we divide by the total number of passengers observed, (4,234), the resultant average delay of 36 seconds equates to an APD value of 0.60 minutes. **APD = 0.60**

**PF** There was no sharp short term peak in demand on the days surveyed, which was several orders of magnitude greater than normal demand levels during other periods. Therefore the profile was deemed to be not highly peaked. **The PF value is 1.0.**

**SSP** Week day, daytime hours are deemed to be between 10.00 am and 6.00 pm. The data from Thursday and Friday observations was analysed to determine whether there were any occasions when passengers were delayed by more than one minute on average, at any rank. The calculated value was 7.9%, **SSP value = 7.9**

**GID** The percentage of taxi users travelling in hours where the average passenger delay exceeds one minute was assessed. The proportion of passengers travelling in hours when the average passenger wait for all passengers exceeded one minute was 10.4%. **GID = 10.4**

**SF** Due to the nature of these surveys it is not possible to collect information throughout an entire year to assess the effects of seasonality. Experience has suggested that taxi demand does exhibit a degree of seasonality

and this is allowed for by the inclusion of a seasonality factor. The factor is set at a level to ensure that a marginal decision either way obtained in an “untypical” month will be reversed. This factor typically takes a value of 1 for surveys conducted in September to November and March to June, i.e. “typical” months. It takes a value of 1.2 for surveys conducted in January and February and the longer school holidays, where low demand the absence of contract work will bias the results in favour of the Hackney trade, and a value of 0.8 for surveys conducted in December during the pre-Christmas rush of activity. For this study, a factor of 1.0 is assumed. **SF = 1.0**

**LDF** Latent Demand Factor. This is derived from the public attitude interview survey results and provides a measure of the proportion of the public who have given up trying to obtain a taxi at either a rank or by flagging down. It is measured as 1+ proportion giving up waiting. The inclusion of this factor is a response to the latest DfT guidance requiring an estimate of latent demand. The latent demand factor was derived from face to face surveys and through the online surveys. The results from the face to face surveys are normally treated as the more robust indicator of latent demand. However, it is prudent to also consider the latent demand value obtained from the online survey as a sensitivity test. The latent demand value obtained from the online surveys was 38%

**LDF = 1.38**

The ISUD value was calculated as follows, using the variables derived for this study.

$ISUD = APD \times PF \times SSP \times GID \times SF \times LDF$

**$ISUD = 0.60 \times 1.0 \times 7.9 \times 10.4 \times 1.0 \times 1.38 = 68.0$**

Where the ISUD value is less than 80, it is generally considered to be an indicator that there is no unmet demand for taxis which is significant. The ISUD result indicates that there is no significant unmet demand.

### **7.3 Consideration of wider factors.**

The ISUD value of is an indicator that there is some unmet demand. However the value falls below the level which would suggest that the level of unmet demand is significant. However, this should not be taken in isolation. Other available evidence should also be considered.

There was relatively little passenger queuing observed, except on Saturday night.

There were complaints regarding availability. These complaints indicated that there was limited availability late at night on Saturday night and during school run times. This feedback corroborates the information from the rank surveys.

The online indication of latent unmet demand related principally to late night availability at the High Street rank. Examples of periods when passengers had to wait, were captured during the rank surveys. There was no indication from stakeholder or public consultation, that there were any other factors which would suggest that the level of unmet demand is higher than that observed and assessed within the ISUD assessment.

The calculated ISUD value and lack of significant passenger queueing outside the Saturday night peak, suggests that there is **no significant unmet demand**.

## 8 MYSTERY SHOPPER SURVEY

### 8.1 Background

A mystery shopper survey was commissioned as part of the Maidstone Hackney Carriage Unmet Demand Survey. The mystery shopper survey was undertaken in June 2022. The survey consisted of an able bodied mystery shopper survey, undertaking short distance trips and guide dog user test purchases and attempts to hire private hire vehicles without being pre-booked.

#### Short distance journey mystery shopper surveys

Two surveyors undertook the majority of the mystery shopper test purchases. An additional surveyor, a guide dog user, assisted with the guide dog test purchases. The test purchases were undertaken at a variety of times of day, to test service during day time and at night. It is important to avoid alerting the trade that a mystery shopping survey is being undertaken, in order to sample normal levels of service. If drivers on a rank spot the same person or people undertaking multiple trips over a short period of time, then they may wonder why. If the observation is discussed with other drivers, they may be alerted to a potential mystery shopper survey. In order to mitigate the risk of surveyors being recognised or remembered, test purchases were spread amongst different ranks. In Maidstone, there are three ranks in effective operation for the majority of the time. This feature presented some additional logistical challenges

When test purchases were undertaken the Hackney Carriage vehicle license number was recorded and used to check whether the same Hackney Carriage was present at the rank for subsequent test purchases. By avoiding undertaking a test purchase when a previously sampled Hackney Carriage was present on the rank, close to the first position on the rank, the risk of raising suspicion was mitigated. On occasions when previously surveyed Hackney Carriages were further back on the rank, the risk was judged to be low and sample purchases undertaken.

A total of thirty-five test purchases were made. A common feature to most of the purchases was that the driver number was not visible to the passenger.

One of the purposes of undertaking short distance test purchases, is to test for refusals to accept the fare. Refusals can occur if drivers have been waiting for extended periods at the rank and the prospect of a small fare as reward for the long wait, is unattractive. However, licensing conditions do not allow drivers to pick and choose such a fare purely on the grounds of the value of the fare.

The majority of hires were conducted as one would hope, with good levels of service. The drivers engaged with the surveyors satisfactorily and checked the location of the destinations given, as appropriate.

For some of the hires, drivers pointed out that the destination was a short distance away, with the implication that the passenger could just walk. Some drivers did appear to be grumpy with accepting a short distance fare. These drivers were very much in the minority.

One driver refused to take the surveyor on a short distance journey. The passenger was passed on to the next driver in the queue at the rank. The second driver on the rank accepted the fare. However, upon arrival, the fare shown on the meter was £4.20. The driver refused to give change from £5, stating that the “minimum fare was £5”.

All journeys with a guide dog were completed successfully and all drivers were helpful with boarding the blind passenger and dog.

Throughout the surveys, the surveyors were on the lookout for private hire vehicles waiting at the side of the road, or in car parks, which could be approached for a hire attempt. Throughout the surveys, any private hire vehicles seen, moved on to the next hire, immediately after dropping off passengers. So, no private hire vehicles were approached.

## **8.2 Summary**

Almost all of the sample hires were as one would hope to encounter. The single issue which affects all of the hires undertaken, was the lack of visibility of the driver number in each vehicle. In some licensing areas, the driver number is displayed in the vehicle as a copy of the driver’s badge, with photograph. In such areas, vehicles with multiple drivers display multiple badges. There may be a case in Maidstone for introducing a practice that copy driver badges are displayed in a position visible to the passengers.

The two notable hires were one driver refusing a short distance hire and another driver who over charged for a trip.

## 9 RESPONSES TO DFT BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE 2010

Annex A of the Best Practice Guidance (BPG) provides a list of useful questions to help assess the issue of quantity controls of Hackney Carriage licences. This chapter takes the form of a response to each question based on the evidence identified earlier in this report. BPG questions are shown in bold italic with responses following in normal type.

***Have you considered the Government's view that quantity control should be removed unless a specific case that such controls benefit the consumer can be made?***

This report has considered benefits which the retention of quantity control can provide.

***Have you recently reviewed the need for your policy of quantity controls?***

Yes, this report forms a review of the need for the policy of quantity control of hackney carriages at this point in time in the Maidstone Borough Council area.

***What form did the review of your policy of quantity controls take?***

This current review follows the DfT Best Practise Guidance April 2010 in undertaking a full review of the current situation in regard to the policy towards hackney carriage vehicle limits. It includes:

- A review of the background policies of the Council
- A rank survey program to identify current demand and supply
- Public consultation with people in the streets of Maidstone
- Stakeholder consultation with all groups recommended by the DfT Best Practise Guidance as far as people were available and willing to comment.
- Trade consultation with representatives of the trade

***Who was involved in the review?***

This review was included direct discussion with the following respondents:

- Representatives of elderly and disabled groups,
- Representatives of minority groups
- Hotels and licensed premises,
- Transport providers,
- Police,
- Local supermarkets
- Council department representatives.

***What decision was reached about retaining or removing quantity controls?***

The decision regarding quantity controls is the subject of the final chapter of this report and is a matter for decision by the committee appointed to make such decisions on behalf of the Council.

***Are you satisfied that your policy justifies restricting entry to the trade?***

The survey provides some justification for restricting entry and this forms part of the collection of material which is considered when deciding whether to retain a limit.

***Are you satisfied that quantity controls do not:***

- **Reduce the availability of taxis**
- **Increase waiting times for consumers**
- **Reduce choice and safety for consumers**

At the present time, there is a good availability of hackney carriages in the Borough, for the majority of time. Demand exceeds supply for relatively brief periods within the context of overall demand.

***What special circumstances justify retention of quantity controls?***

The present operation adequately meets the needs of the majority of travellers requiring their service in the area.

***How does your policy benefit consumers, particularly in remote rural areas?***

A small proportion of Maidstone Borough can be classified as rural. However, none of these locations have taxi ranks and all tend to be served by private hire operations. Therefore, service in rural areas is generally unaffected by the policy relating to limiting hackney carriage numbers.

***How does your policy benefit the trade?***

Retention of a limit would retain some added value of having a hackney carriage vehicle licence which would, in turn, encourage some investment in the trade. Removal of the limit could result in more part time working in the trade and fewer experienced professional drivers working in the trade.

***If you have a local accessibility policy, how does this fit with restricting taxi licences?***

We are not aware of any local accessibility policy, and current evidence suggests the demand for wheel chair accessible vehicles is effectively catered for by the current Hackney Carriage fleet which is fully wheel chair accessible and capable of carrying the majority of wheelchair types in common usage.

***When did you last assess unmet demand?***

Unmet demand has been regularly reviewed, with this study preceded by earlier surveys.

***How is your taxi limit assessed?***

In this and all previous studies the limit has been assessed using industry standard techniques.

***Have you considered latent demand, ie potential customers who would use taxis if more were available, but currently do not?***

Yes.

***Are you satisfied that your limit is set at the correct level?***

This is a matter for decision by the Council committee based on evidence presented in the 2016 unmet demand survey. The results of the survey suggest that the current limit is sufficient to cater for demand at most times.

***How does the need for adequate taxi ranks affect your policy of quantity controls?***

The availability of rank space does not dictate the level of the limit applied, nor whether a limit should be retained.

***When consulting, have you included all those working in the market, consumer and passenger (including disabled groups), groups which represent those passengers with special needs, local interest groups, eg hospitals or visitor attractions, the police, a wide range of transport stakeholders, eg rail/bus/coach providers and traffic managers?***

Yes, all appropriate consultees have been taken into account.

***Do you receive representations about taxi availability?***

No

***What is the level of service currently available to consumers including other public transport modes?***

At the present time, rail, bus and licensed vehicle services in the area are generally considered to be good.

## 10 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 10.1 Unmet demand

Analysis of the taxi rank survey data and consultation data indicate that there are normally sufficient Hackney Carriages available to cater for demand during most periods. Whilst there was some passenger queuing observed at various times this was not sufficient, in the context of all passenger volumes in a week, to be deemed significant.

The level of unmet demand is not significant, with respect to the ISUD index calculation.

### 10.2 Trade feedback

A concern voiced by the trade related to available space on the King Street rank.

Relatively few issues were raised by the trade, when compared with other surveys in other areas.

### 10.3 Public and stakeholder consultation issues

In general, the public and stakeholders appear to be largely content with Hackney Carriage services, with the proviso that there was limited availability at times. Comments were received highlighting both good and bad attributes associated with the trade.

There was some feedback indicating that public consultation respondents had experienced refusals by drivers to undertake short distance hires. This was corroborated by the test purchases undertaken, which sampled one refusal and one over charging incident, which lends corroborative support to related feedback from the public.

Some members of the public felt that operation of Uber or a similar online licensed vehicle operator would provide additional availability of licensed vehicles at peak times and provide cheaper fares. It would appear that some members of the public felt that Uber were not allowed to operate in Maidstone. It is understood that there is no restriction for Uber operating in Maidstone, should they choose to do so and become suitably licensed. Uber and other operators, rely on the availability of licensed vehicle drivers to operate licensed vehicles. It is likely that Uber and others would face the same limitations as other licensed vehicles operators, currently operating in Maidstone, when seeking licensed vehicle drivers to join their systems.

When considering the public feedback, it is worth clarifying that all licensed vehicles are operated as commercial enterprises. There is a perception by some members of the public that licensed vehicles are operated by the local authority, who should be able to determine when and where (within the licensing area) licensed vehicles should operate. However, the business owners and drivers determine where and when they operate and the local authority have no direct influence on where and when licensed vehicles are operated.

## 10.4 Recommendations

Whilst there is evidence of some unmet demand, the level of unmet demand is below the level which would be significant. Therefore, the survey has concluded that there is **no significant unmet demand** for Hackney Carriages in Maidstone .

There is adequate spare capacity in the fleet to cater for short term fluctuations in demand, such as bank holidays and end of month weekends. There is adequate capacity in the fleet to cater for further growth in demand should it occur.

Driver shortages, particularly amongst private hire businesses, is likely to limit the capacity of private hire vehicles to meet peak demand for pre-booked hires. Consequently, unmet private hire demand is likely to have spilled over to hackney carriage demand at the ranks. Over time, it is likely that private hire driver numbers will increase and private hire capacity will increase. This is likely to take some demand away from rank based hires in the future.

Not all of the Hackney Carriage fleet are actively seeking hires solely from the ranks. Some rely on other sources of hires to supplement income. There is not sufficient demand from the ranks to sustain the whole existing Hackney Carriage fleet solely from rank based hires.

There is no significant unmet demand. Therefore, there is no compelling need to increase the number of Hackney Carriage Licences, on the basis of public benefit.

On this basis the authority has discretion in its hackney licensing policy and may either:

- Maintain the current limit
- Issue any number of additional plates as it sees fit,
- Remove the numerical limit