

Proposer Name(s)	Cllrs Brian Clark, Clive English, Richard Conyard
Proposer topic (What)	Maidstone's Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS)
Description and Reason for Review (Why?)	<p>The council is in the latter stages of the Local Plan Review, an update to the Local Plan adopted in 2017.</p> <p>However, Maidstone's Integrated Transport Strategy, identified to mitigate the impact of planned housing in the Local Plan has been left largely undelivered with many identified schemes left on hold or without agreement on design. The agenda for the August 2023 JTB included an update on the ITS which was largely a cut and paste from previous agendas and no officers were present to discuss the ITS in the meeting (which has attended by many members of the public who were told their registered questions could not be answered in the meeting).</p> <p>Maidstone's Strategic Plan 2019 to 2045 highlights the "Integrated Transport Strategy" as a building block for the Strategic Plan. The Plan's section "Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure" states: "Between 2023-28 we will place particular importance on:" [Section 1.3] Working with partners to get strategic infrastructure planned, funded and delivered.</p> <p>While this may be MBC's strategic plan, MBC has shared no overarching plan for delivery of the ITS to borough members or to residents.</p> <p>The ITS component of the Local Plan, 2017, includes a list of junctions for improvement funded by SELEP and Developer funding (£8.9m SELEP, £10.55m overall – source: SELEP). With inflation considerably higher than when the ITS was initially developed there is a high risk that funding will no longer stretch to fully delivering the program given the the time taken to this point. https://www.southeastlep.com/project/maidstone-integrated-transport/</p>
Link to: Council's Strategic	Maidstone's Strategic Plan 2019 to 2045 Maidstone's Adopted Local Plan 2017

<p>Plan National/Regional priorities Executive Priorities</p>	<p>Integrated Transport Package (SELEP) https://www.southeastlep.com/project/maidstone-integrated-transport/</p>
<p>Desired Outcome(s) (Outcome)</p>	<p>While KCC, the highways authority has undertaken modelling and has proposed designs for junction improvements in the Integrated Transport Strategy, it is Maidstone Borough Council that is responsible for the overall delivery of the Local Plan for housing.</p> <p>Given this, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review progress of the ITS focusing on each of the junction improvements identified, including cost, deliverability, progress against initial plan and cost / benefit. Consider MBC's performance, in its ownership role, in progressing and auditing delivery of the ITS to date, alongside of MBC's local plan housing delivery. - Consider MBC's role in holding the highways authority to account for any delivery delays (against the original delivery dates agreed with SELEC). - Consider the potential impact of any delays on other infrastructure projects. - Review the reallocation of MBC ITS funds to Hall Road in Tonbridge and Malling in preference to other MBC infrastructure needs (eg. Improvements to the A26 Fountain Junction). - Review how the council considered the impact on woodland, and other habitats, or heritage features, such as at Willington Street/ A20 (Mote Park), A249 / Bearsted Road and widening of A20/M20 junction 5. At these sites, significant tree cover and other semi-natural vegetation has been lost (or is proposed to be lost) without space for replacement. - Review the coverage and adequacy of ecological surveys in relation to the ITS schemes and Biodiversity Net Gain (including KCC's assertion that there isn't need to deliver BNG because the schemes are Permitted Development).

- Review the delay and cost associated with the purchase of the Wheatsheaf Public house and the overall cost / benefit to the junction improvement.
- Consider the history and public response to the closure of Cranborne Avenue (including the agreement to remove this proposal from the Local Plan adopted in 2017 and ITS at that time) and its subsequent reinstatement.
- Develop an overarching plan along with a “lessons learned” document to inform similar infrastructure projects, especially those aligned with future local plan updates and those projects involving both MBC and KCC (or other infrastructure providers)
- Consider efficiency of the Maidstone JTB as a forum for the progression of the ITS

Furthermore the following will be considered:

The current ITS focuses exclusively on creating addition road and junction capacity. This effectively creates 'stacking space' rather than addressing the root causes of the congestion i.e. too much development allied to a great reliance on the private car for short journeys. Several of the schemes are without agreed designs to move forward as there are concerns about delivering suitable benefit to cost.

A more progressive approach supporting active travel options, such as safe and pleasant walking routes, and high-quality public transport would bring multiple benefits for the Borough and attract increased central funding. With a roundabout scheme at Hall Road now looking unlikely, and junctions such as the Swan without an agreed plan there may be opportunities to reallocate planned funding on progressive measures.

Moving traffic enforcement has also mitigated to some extent similar problems in the Medway Towns, enhanced road safety and ensured public transport works more effectively. It is very strange that the ITS doesn't consider this technical innovation for Maidstone town centre, where bus

	lane, yellow box and traffic controls are flagrantly ignored to everyone's detriment.
Approach (How, When and Who)	Initially 6 monthly meetings
Review Timescale (when)	Review to be planned for completion during this administrative year
Link to CfPS effective scrutiny principles	This review will provide greater transparency, accountability and will encourage greater involvement of members and the public in governance. Congestion in Maidstone is a major concern for residents and many feel MBC is ineffective in delivering mitigation alongside of housing delivery. The time it has taken to deliver the ITS package compounds this view, making this area a good candidate for member scrutiny.
Officer Support	Strategic Planning Manager Director Local Plan Review Head of KCC Highways