

Appendix A

Kent Community Rail Partnership

Comments on Recommendations of the “Review of Transport in Maidstone Borough – alternatives to using a car.”

November 2015

10 Recommendations

A. *That after the publication of this report a sub group be formed from the beginning of the municipal year 2015, by the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference, to explore:*

- *Alternative methods of transport for the future that will help ease congestion in Maidstone town. This sub-group to take forward research into future alternatives (for example rail halts on the Medway Valley Line, trams) and improving existing forms of transport, and;*

We are supportive this recommendation although mindful of the high cost of new stations/rail halts.

- *Possible European Union funding to fund new transport initiatives.*

We would be happy to support the sub- group in its work and are supportive of its aims.

B. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to carry out consultation with car users to establish why they drive into Maidstone town and what would encourage them to use an alternative mode of transport to get into the town.*

We believe this research would be very helpful in identifying barriers to use of alternative transport. It is something we discuss with visitors to our ‘Pop-up’ Hub events.

C. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to lobby Kent County Council on the reconfiguration of the Maidstone Gyrotory system to ensure safe cycle passages. The design of the gyrotory system should incorporate surface cycle passages (not subways) for cyclists heading in and out of the town from west Maidstone using the A20 and A26.*

In view of its close proximity to Maidstone West station, we would request that the redesign of the gyrotory should ensure easy and safe access to Maidstone West station for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, bus passengers and car users.

We thoroughly support the comment about the need for surface cycle passages for cyclists. In order to encourage cycle use, cycle routes should always avoid unnecessary detours and slopes, thus ensuring that cycling in town is seen as the quickest and easiest means of travel.

Appendix A

We would also ask that the plans should include consideration of the links to Maidstone West station and the gyratory from the new/improved cycle route south along the River Medway which we understand is due for completion in 2016.

In view of the complex nature of the gyratory we believe that clear and comprehensive signage for all users should be catered for in the plans. Directions and journey times to and from Maidstone East and West stations should feature on signage.

It has been pleasing to note the increased number of cycles using the cycle shelters at Maidstone West station, which are frequently full, so we would recommend that support is given for additional shelters be installed at the station.

It is important that sufficient and affordable car parking spaces are available in the vicinity of Maidstone West station in order to maximise use of services, particularly the very valuable High Speed service.

Can fresh consideration be given to the access in and out of the Maidstone West Car park to provide an in and out and prevent the gridlock that frequently happens.

Is the special dial-up parking arrangement in Barker Street for Rail users permanent? Can it be more widely publicised?

D. That the Head of Planning and Development be asked to report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference during the 2015-2016 municipal year on:

- *The identity of potential routes for the provision of cycle ways from rural locations (villages and hamlets) with poor bus services, to bus stops on major routes with a more frequent bus service;*
- *The possibility of creating an orbital cycle and footpath route around Maidstone linking to Maidstone town centre via radial routes such as:*
 - *Len valley to the north of Maidstone*
 - *Medway Valley to the west of Maidstone*
 - *Tovil Nature Park*
 - *The Loose Valley Conservation area*
 - *Boughton Monchelsea, and*
 - *Langley to the east of Maidstone*
- *The costs of firstly providing cycle parking at the end of these routes;*
- *The cost of the longer term aim of developing the cycle route to the cycle parking.*

E. That the Head of Planning and Development be recommended to urgently refresh and update the draft Maidstone Borough Council Cycling Strategy, dated June 2012 and present it to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference in the new municipal year 2015-2016 before taking it for public consultation.

We support this recommendation.

Appendix A

F. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, use the principal proposals from the refreshed Cycling Strategy to inform the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy.

We support this recommendation.

G. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to:

- Proceed with establishing the Maidstone Cycling Forum and ensure it is supported by an officer with responsibility for cycling in their job description;
- Identify a lead member to act as a cycling champion within the authority.

We are aware of the re-established Cycling Forum and its' proposals in relation to the Cycling strategy which we support. We are not aware of the appointment of a lead member or of support being provided by an officer, both of which we would support.

H. That a member of Maidstone Borough Council's Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (PTD OSC), or a member of the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be invited to join the Quality Bus Partnership.

That provision be made for the needs of rail users be included on the partnership to ensure safe secure travel interchange.

I. That the Public Transport Team at Kent County Council at meetings with KCC Highways, raise the following requests and report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference during the 2015-2016 municipal year:

- A definitive list of forthcoming road closures be sent to bus service providers in a timely manner to facilitate compliance with the Traffic Commissioners regulations;

Please could the Community Rail Partnership be added to the distribution list for these closures: kentcrp@sustrans.org.uk It is important that this is shared with all users.

- A set of processes and procedures are established and put in place for communicating road closures to avoid problems when changes to Highways personnel are made;
- A definition of what constitutes an emergency road closure is published and shared with bus service providers.

J. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to re-establish the Maidstone Borough Transport User Group. Membership to include representatives from all public transport service providers, KCC transport planners, MBC officers/members, parish councils, service users and other interested parties to ensure on-going issues with transport and ideas for enhancements to services are communicated and dealt with.

Appendix A

We support this recommendation and would request we are again offered a place on the group.

K. That a Maidstone Borough Council Officer be asked to investigate and report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference Committee during the municipal year 2015-2016 on the progress and lessons learnt from the Medway twilight bus service once the trial is completed.

L. That the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for Community and Leisure in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended, as part of the Parish Charter refresh, to include a section on the powers and opportunities parish councils have in the provision of transport services and capital equipment, such as bus shelters and real time transport information, and funding streams available to them.

We support this recommendation.

M. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year, be recommended to include the potential use of Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy monies to support the provision of bus services, and/or provide capital equipment for bus services in the Borough in the Local Plan.

We would recommend that this be extended to include rail access and services to stations for all, parking at stations (car and cycle).

We believe 106/CIL policy should be flexible to ensure monies can be agreed, when planning consent is given, to improve facilities at and around stations including access and parking that encourages positive use of alternative transport.

A current example of this is Yalding station where a potential new housing development adjacent to the station requires both flood proof access and offers the opportunity to provide access for all to the northbound platform (which can currently only be reached by using the bridge). We are supporting the Parish Council in trying to progress this with Southeastern and Network Rail.

N. That Kent County Council Transport Planning Officers be recommended to make strong arguments where they can to give Section 106 agreements impetus to provide bus services in and around the Borough of Maidstone.

Again, we would recommend that this be extended to include rail services and access to stations, parking at stations (car and cycle).

O. That parishes, residents associations and neighbourhood forums be encouraged by the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, to form groups similar to the East of Maidstone Bus User Group.

P. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of

Appendix A

reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to survey the users of Maidstone East railway station car park to find out their reason for using it to establish how many users were rail passengers and how many were not.

We believe that this will be a very useful survey and would ask to receive a copy of the results if possible.

Q. That the Cabinet Member for Planning Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to:

- Respond to the Department for Transport's franchise consultation, which due in 2016;
- Reduce unnecessary car travel within the borough, this response should request improved commuter and off peak services using high speed trains and Thameslink services to reduce the number of rail users travelling across the borough by car to other stations that offer better service than their local station;
- Continue to promote aspirations for re-securing a Maidstone to Canon Street service.

We strongly support this recommendation and will be involved and responding to DfT franchise consultations.

R. That the Cabinet Member for Planning Transport and Development or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015, be recommended to promote the appointment of a Kent County Councillor for Maidstone and a Maidstone Borough Councillor to the Steering Group for the Medway Valley Line and Kent Community Rail Partnership to ensure Maidstone borough's needs are pursued.

We are delighted that councillors have now been appointed and thank Members for implementing the recommendation. We are already seeing positive signs of improved collaboration on transport initiatives.

S. That Councillor Chittenden investigate how Maidstone Borough can be represented on the South Eastern Public Transport User Group and report back to the relevant new Committee with responsibility for transport and development in their terms of reference from the new municipal year 2015.

T. That the Head of Planning and Development be recommended to ensure Section 106 funding be sought from developers at every opportunity to:

- Support public transport links to and from new developments linking bus and rail services, and;
- Ensure the provision is timed in a way to provide services that increase as occupation of developments increase.

We strongly support this recommendation.

U. That the Chairman of the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee write to Mr Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager, SouthEastern Trains to:

Appendix A

- Establish how parish councils can access funding for improvements to rural rail stations;
- Request he take forward his suggestion to approach Network Rail regarding the possibility of expanding rail station car parks at Bearsted and Headcorn and look into the possibility of extending this to other rural rail stations;
- Request he take forward his suggestion to reduce parking costs at rural rail stations such as Headcorn to discourage rail users from parking in residential areas.

We support this initiative.

V. Maidstone Borough Council, through the Committee with responsibility for transport in its terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year, consider aggregating the Park and Ride Service and Parking Services Budgets to ensure that the access to the Town Centre is managed in a more coherent and integrated manner and to safeguard against possible changes in the regulatory climate.

W. Maidstone Borough Council, through the Committee with responsibility for transport in its terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year, should actively investigate and seek to bring forward an express bus service linked to the Park and Ride service,

We would like to stress the importance of the Footbridge across the Medway which links Maidstone East to Maidstone Barracks which not only provides a rapid link between the rail lines but is also used by many pupils for access to local schools.

Finally, we are keen supporters of the transport delivery group and would be wish to invited back as a member of the group.

For further information or questions, please contact:

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