

Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee

14 December 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Integrated Transport Strategy

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Steve Clarke, Principal Planning Officer; Chris Berry, Interim Team Leader, Spatial Policy
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the amended draft Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy (attached as Appendix 1) be noted.
2. That Members agree to progress highway junction improvements as noted in para. 2.14 of this report
3. That Members agree to progress the provision of the North West Maidstone Bus Loop
4. That Members agree to progress with the appropriate bus operator the improvement of a frequent bus service from Maidstone town centre, via M20 Junction 7 and Faversham/Sittingbourne/Sheerness.
5. That Members agree to progress improvements to bus facilities at identified railway stations
6. That Members agree to pursue with the relevant owners and operators the refurbishment and possible re-provision of a central Maidstone bus station.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough -

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	14/12/2015

Integrated Transport Strategy

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report follows consideration of the draft Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) at this Committee on 1st December 2015. The draft ITS has been partly amended in the light of Members comments and this report further identifies priority transport actions that will inform the policies of the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan and which promote sustainable transport policies and interventions in support of the development proposed in the Local Plan. However, owing to time pressures there are still further refinements to be made to the emerging strategy and these will be reported to the 13th January meeting of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee.
 - 1.2 As noted previously, an initial ITS was prepared for public consultation in 2012 to support the Maidstone Core Strategy. This draft ITS takes account of present conditions and has been prepared in cooperation with Kent County Council as the local highway authority and will guide the provision of transport infrastructure in all modes throughout the Borough area.
 - 1.3 The draft ITS is presented as Appendix 1 to this report.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Section 80 of the Local Transport Act 2008 gives local authorities, acting jointly, the power to review the effectiveness and efficiency of transport within their area and to propose their own arrangements to support more coherent planning and delivery of local transport. Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council cooperated to prepare a document for public consultation for local transport provision in 2012.
- 2.2 The Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy was first published for public consultation in August 2012. It aimed to set out the future for transport in Maidstone until 2026 and described the policy context, the existing transport networks and the challenges they face. Objectives for transport provision were identified and an action plan proposed to address the requirements for the new development proposed by the Maidstone Core Strategy at that stage.
- 2.3 Following public consultation and as a result of the publication of the NPPF in March 2012, the Borough Council decided to proceed with the preparation of a Local Plan to replace the Core Strategy and this necessitated a major review of supporting documents and policies. This revised draft Integrated Transport Strategy has been prepared to inform and guide transport policies and proposals in the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

Draft Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy

- 2.4 At present, Maidstone Borough faces acute transport challenges, from managing increasing traffic congestion to mitigating the environmental issues associated with transportation, including poor air quality in the urban area. In peak periods, parts of the road network operate at or near capacity and, especially to the south of the Borough, people find it difficult to access the services they need due to the lack of transport options available to them.
- 2.5 The draft ITS comprises eleven main sections as follows:
- Transport Vision
 - Transport Challenges
 - Strategic Priorities
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - Policy Context
 - Strategic Objectives
 - Current Issues
 - Achieving the Strategy
 - Transport Modelling Context
 - Funding, Delivery and Review
 - Action Plans
- 2.6 This draft ITS provides a framework for transport planning and decision making in the Borough, addressing these issues through long term sustainable development of the transport network and alternatives to the use of the private car. The ITS proposes a range of actions for the Borough Council and its partners, including KCC to implement.
- 2.7 The ITS will provide actions to support the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan, taking account of committed and predicted levels of growth in homes and jobs and identifying the transport infrastructure and services necessary to deliver this growth. It will provide a programme of transport interventions for Maidstone Borough, addressing existing and future challenges consistent with national and local transport and planning policies.

VISUM and other modelling

- 2.8 The draft ITS is guided by analysis which includes both strategic (VISUM) and more detailed junction modelling which seeks to assess the impacts of new development on the transport network. Initially, VISUM strategic modelling was used to provide a high level picture of the implications of major network changes, but increasingly specific junction modelling is providing guidance on where mitigation should take place.
- 2.9 Discussions with KCC are continuing with regard to the scope and function of VISUM modelling including the assumptions built in to the model runs undertaken to date. It will be necessary to determine the scope for the sustainable transport actions arising from the ITS which should be incorporated into the assumptions for future VISUM analysis in preparation for the public examination of the Local Plan.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)

- 2.10 Transport intervention measures are also included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which has been prepared alongside the Local Plan. This Delivery Plan is a 'living' document which is and will continually be updated following dialogue with infrastructure providers and close scrutiny of planning permissions and S106 agreements.
- 2.11 The draft ITS is subject to further refinement in cooperation with Kent County Council as the highways authority and specific projects and proposals are identified for implementation within the Borough's IDP which will form a supporting document to the emerging Maidstone Borough Local Plan. It recommends actions for all modes of transport in the Borough, and indicates phasing and funding requirements and sources.

The Action Plans

- 2.12 Actions for each transport mode are identified and summarised in the chart following paragraph 12.3 in Appendix 1 attached (MBC ITS 2011-2031)

Walking and Cycling

- 2.13 The Walking and Cycling Strategy (Appendix 1 Appendix A) has been agreed with KCC and proposes new and improved walking and cycling networks and facilities throughout the Borough. These are related to development proposed in the emerging Local Plan and for the improvement of existing provision throughout the Borough, and have been consulted widely with user groups. Maps will be provided illustrating the proposed interventions.

Public Transport

- 2.14 The primary public transport actions proposed in the ITS are as follows:
- the provision of a new 'looped' bus route in north-west Maidstone
 - major enhancement of the route between Maidstone, M20 Junction7 and Faversham/Sittingbourne and Sheerness
 - bus prioritisation measures along certain radial routes, primarily near key junctions
 - refurbishment and possible redevelopment of a central Maidstone bus station.
- 2.15 Local enhancement of existing bus services, such as to the rural service centres, will aim to improve links to the town centre and its railway stations. Actions will also seek to upgrade the facilities at village train stations to improve rail interchange services, and the improvement of signage to transport facilities.
- 2.16 Complementary and appropriate measures will be introduced to improve the quality and reliability of bus services. Recent initiatives with Arriva and KCC are leading to the promotion and introduction of a range of access improvements, including online ticketing and information, and mobile apps. Improvements may also include MBC involvement in the refurbishment or

provision of a major new bus facility associated with the regeneration of the Mall Chequers Shopping Centre.

Parking

- 2.17 The key action is to manage parking in the urban area to promote the use of public transport and reduce long stay parking and the effective use of space. This forms part of a coordinated approach to encourage modal shift whilst recognising that the appropriate provision of short-stay car parking is vital in ensuring the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre.

Highways and the current position

- 2.18 MBC will work with KCC to deliver a package of highway improvements throughout the Borough which will add capacity at key junctions to the benefit of both public transport and car users. Detailed junction modelling is continuing to demonstrate the improvements that can be made to the existing network, which is important given that approximately half of the objectively assessed for housing (18,560) has already been consented and in some cases completed. Through negotiation with developers, S106 money has been secured for a number of highway improvements relating to housing delivered in the early part of the plan period (which commenced on 1 April 2011). This quantum of delivery coupled with the dwelling numbers attributed to broad locations for the last five years of the plan period (2026-) and a modest windfall allowance of just over 1000 dwellings, accounts for a significant proportion of the overall housing need for the borough throughout the plan period to 2031. The strategy outlined below, is crucial in ensuring this growth is adequately mitigated.
- 2.19 An agreed package of priority highways improvements with KCC seeks to improve network capacity and efficiency to accommodate the quantum and location of development allocated in the emerging Local Plan. These are set out in the detailed appendix to the report to the Maidstone Joint Transport Board meeting on 7 December.
In addition improvements are required to station concourses at the Rural Service Centres of Marden and Staplehurst to facilitate enhanced bus services serving these stations.
- 2.20 Plan making is a continuous process. Following the adoption of the emerging Local Plan, monitoring work will begin in order to test the effectiveness of the strategy and policies and if appropriate responding to changes in circumstance. It may be that as a result, further work is undertaken to justify the need for an alternative transport strategy which may include a Leeds – Langley bypass if this is shown to deliver clear net benefits compared with other tested alternative options. Such work would need to include, as a minimum, route analyses, construction and delivery costings, cost / benefit analysis and ecological / environmental surveys as well as engagement with interested parties, in particular Highways England. Conceivably a strategic infrastructure project such as this could be delivered by the highways authority prior to end of the Local Plan period in 2031.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The ITS sets the direction for transport in the Borough, in line with the emerging Local Plan period which runs until 2031. It assesses the existing and emerging local policy and networks and outlines transport issues that arise from the development implications of the emerging Maidstone Local Plan and sets out the detail, in objectives and actions plans, of how these issues will be addressed.
- 3.2 The ITS aims to deliver transport infrastructure and wider reaching transport measures in a way that supports new development as well as supporting the residents and stakeholders that already live and work in the Borough. The ITS aims to introduce sustainable transport measures and policies to reduce congestion, promote a shift to public transport, walking and cycling and improve road safety, air quality and the public realm.
- 3.3 The ITS forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Maidstone Local Plan in that it sets out the main priorities and elements of policies for sustainable transport provision in the Borough, and the requirements for developers and agencies with regard to transport infrastructure to support planned development.
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4 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 4.1 Following Members consideration of the draft ITS, further work will be undertaken with KCC to refine the proposals and establish the priorities for interventions and actions.
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5 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The adoption of the ITS will assist in the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities	Head of Planning & Development Rob Jarman
Risk Management	A key risk to the Local Plan programme relates to the Council's ability to provide a package of sustainable transport measures alongside the infrastructure necessary to support planned growth	Head of Planning & Development Rob Jarman
Financial	The cost of VISUM modelling to-date has been agreed to be	Section 151 Officer &

	funded jointly by MBC and KCC. The cost will be met from the existing budget.	Head of Finance and Resources
Staffing	Specialist transport consultants have been engaged to assist in the delivery of the strategy, funded through the existing agreed budget.	Head of Planning & Development Rob Jarman
Legal	The draft ITS has been produced as part of the robust evidence base for the emerging Local Plan.	Team Leader (Planning) Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	An integrated transport strategy that tackles transport challenges through a combination of modes will take into account the needs of all groups including those without access to a car. An alternative strategy reliant on highway improvements will not promote equal access to employment, services and social opportunities and is likely to lead to increased social exclusion amongst lower income groups in particular.	Policy & Information Manager Anna Collier
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The implementation of an integrated transport strategy to promote sustainable travel where possible will encourage a reduction in single occupancy car travel and in turn a reduction in congestion and carbon emissions relative to a 'do minimum' situation. An alternative strategy reliant solely on highway improvements is likely to generate more traffic than the additional capacity provided, increasing congestion and carbon emissions.	Head of Planning & Development Rob Jarman
Community Safety	N/A	Head of Planning & Development Rob Jarman
Human Rights Act	N/A	Head of Planning &

		Development Rob Jarman
Procurement	Consultants are used to prepare specialist or technical evidence to support the local plan and are appointed in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures	Head of Planning & Development Rob Jarman & Section 151 Officer
Asset Management	N/A	Head of Planning & Development Rob Jarman

6 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Draft Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy
- Appendix 2: Draft Walking and Cycling Strategy

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None