

STRATEGIC PLANNING SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

7th February 2017

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

Yes

Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning Sustainability & Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mark Egerton, Planning Policy Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

- Consider the initial findings of the high level options appraisal
- Instruct officers to undertake a study to investigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities within the borough and;
- Agree to consider a future report to the committee once an options appraisal has been undertaken and preferred options identified.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

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

Improved bus interchange facilities would play a key role in improving transport provision within the borough which will support the adopted Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy. Better facilities would help to improve the quality of bus service in Maidstone and the surrounding area. This may help to improve bus patronage which is one of the mitigation measures in the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy in support of the level of growth set out in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	7 th February 2017

Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report presents initial findings regarding a high level appraisal of future improvements to bus interchange facilities in the Borough, with a focus on Maidstone Bus Station. It considers potential further work through a study to investigate selected options and sites in more detail and generate preferred options, using specialist transport planning input, as appropriate.

1.2 Members are asked to:

- Consider the initial findings of the high level options appraisal
- Instruct officers to undertake a study to investigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities within the borough and;
- Agree to consider a future report to the committee once an options appraisal has been undertaken and preferred options identified.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Officers and transport consultants have been asked to undertake a high level scoping exercise of options to improve bus interchange facilities in the Borough, with a focus on Maidstone Bus Station. The request aligns with Maidstone's draft Local Plan (Paragraph 17.140), as well as the adopted Integrated Transport Strategy, which includes 'Action PT13: Work towards an improved bus station in Maidstone town centre'. This initial scoping exercise is the first step in a process which seeks to establish a preferred option with the following initial aims:

- Improve bus interchange facilities in Maidstone, including the bus station
- Improve air quality and reduce noise pollution
- Improve the quality of bus services in Maidstone
- Increase bus patronage
- Improve ease of movement for buses
- Support the growth of the town

2.2 The high level appraisal has initially considered sites in Maidstone which may be suitable for further analysis as bus interchange facilities. Inputs to the study have been sought from several different Maidstone Borough Council services, including Planning Policy (including transport planning consultants), Economic Development and Property.

2.3 There is a clear link between potential future bus hubs and improvements to the existing bus network. A study would not necessarily seek to replace the existing bus station, but consider a range of sites which could be suitable for some form of interchange facility, whether this be a full station or a

small cluster of bus stops (bus hub). This would also include consideration of upgrading Maidstone Bus Station, which is owned by Capital and Regional who also own The Mall Shopping Centre. It is worth considering that the bus station acts as an operational terminus, although the high street is the place where most people catch buses.

- 2.4 In many scenarios a 'hub and spoke' model would apply where a primary focus for bus services would be complemented by smaller bus hubs fulfilling secondary purposes. Potential sites would therefore need to fulfil one or more services and functions in order to be suitable either as a single resource for bus operation or as part of a wider network of sites. Consideration will also need to be given to the potential function of a hub to facilitate interchange with other forms of movement e.g. rail services. A range of service options and functionalities for each potential site has been drawn up, as presented in the below table:

Service Options	Functionality (of individual sites)
Existing bus station only	Bus station
No bus station, bus hubs only	Single supplementary hub
New bus station only	Part of hub network
Bus station plus hub	Layover area
Bus station plus hubs	Interchange facility (multi-modal)

- 2.5 The following assumptions have also been drawn up, which could also inform the study and inform discussions with stakeholders:

Service Provider Requirements (not necessarily at one site)	Assumptions
Bus parking facility	Bus Operators continue to operate in same way
Not bus maintenance	Same network
Layover area / spare bus parking	Similar frequencies
Welfare area(s) / public toilets and food facilities	Same vehicles
Seating areas and bus stops	Armstrong Road remains for Arriva (offices, staff area, maintenance etc)
Some overground facilities to reduce noise / air quality impacts	Bus franchising not likely to happen in the short term

- 2.6 Following specialist transport planning input, an initial twelve sites have been considered for bus interchange facilities. These have been subject to a high-level assessment against the following criteria:

- Location
- Size and area
- Service options and functionality
- Impact on bus operations

- Planning issues / development constraints
- Land ownership
- Accessibility in terms of highways, pedestrian and cycling
- Environmental factors
- Cost

2.7 The below summary presents the twelve sites and the main considerations for each of them, when assessing their potential suitability for bus interchange facilities.

Site	Key Considerations
Maidstone Bus Station (The Mall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus operations set up to support station • Existing highway network set up and centrally located • Good terminus location • Required investment • Owned privately
Maidstone East Station (short term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located well for town centre and would improve rail to bus interchange • Arriva keen to increase number of services stopping at station • On highway nature of bus stops may impact on highway • Land not owned by MBC
Maidstone East / Royal Mail Redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large site suitable for a number of facilities • Requires Network Rail car park to be part of redevelopment proposal • Creation of a public transport hub for Maidstone to support growth of town • Land allocated for a bus station or facility would reduce commercial space for the site
King Street On Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing highway network suitable and centrally located • On highway option, potential impact on traffic flow • Opportunity to improve urban realm on Kings Street close to existing bus station. Create Gateway to town centre • Not suitable if bus station remains in current configuration
Medway Street car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site owned by MBC • Small constrained site could only support a small hub • Current car park onsite is well used / revenue source for MBC • Not visible from the town centre • Known planning constraint (sewer)
Sittingbourne Road car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not centrally located and existing highway access not suitable • Site owned by MBC • Current car park onsite is well used / revenue source for MBC

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displacement of parking following Park and Ride closure
Mote Road car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not centrally located • Site owned by MBC • Current car park onsite is well used / revenue source for MBC • Highway access not suitable for buses
The Broadway Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved bus connections with Maidstone West station • Lidl likely to leave site, bus interchange could be included in any redevelopment • Not well located for town centre
Armstrong Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up to support Arriva bus operations • Limited space for additional facilities • Not centrally location • Not suitable for a terminus
Newnham Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for a range of bus facilities (hub, layover area etc) • Not located centrally in town or close to rail stations • Bus hub / station would be attractive if more retail was developed at the site • Significant impact on existing bus operations for all operators
Sittingbourne Road Park and Ride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large site with highway infrastructure set up for bus operations • Not located centrally in town or close to rail stations • Would require the re-routing of a number of bus services • Pedestrian and cyclist severance issues

2.8 Based on the results of the initial high level appraisal, further analysis of the following sites is recommended as part of the study, given that there are clear negative impacts of taking forward the other sites:

- Maidstone Bus Station (The Mall)
- Maidstone East Station (short term)
- Maidstone Eats Station / Royal Mail Redevelopment
- King Street On Street
- The Broadway Centre
- Sittingbourne Road Park and Ride site

2.9 Further investigation of potential sites will also take place as part of the study and the above does not represent a definitive list. It is proposed that the study would initially take forward the above aims, service options and functionalities for potential sites, assumptions, assessment criteria and sites themselves. If the Committee instruct Officers to produce the further study, it is proposed to undertake detailed scoping (sites, nature of sites etc) and generation of preferred options. This will include discussion with Kent County Council, Arriva, Capital and Regional plus other interested stakeholders. Although this will consider all elements of the scope, a focus will be on the link between potential future bus hubs and improvements to

the existing bus network. It is proposed to present findings of this exercise to Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee, with further recommendations.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 There are two primary options available to Councillors.
 - 3.2 The first option is to consider the findings of the high level options appraisal and decline to take forward the proposed study.
 - 3.3 The second option is to instruct Maidstone Borough Council Officers to lead a study to investigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities within the borough and to consider a future report to the committee once an options appraisal has been undertaken.
 - 3.4 If the second option is chosen, the study would use transport planning consultants and will include discussion with Arriva, Capital and Regional plus other interested stakeholders.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is for Members of the Committee to instruct Officers to lead a study to investigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities in the town. The study will allow full consideration to be given to bus interchange facilities in the borough, including options other than improving the existing bus station.
 - 4.2 A future report would be taken to the committee, once an options appraisal has been undertaken and preferred options identified.
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5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 If the Committee instruct Officers to undertake the further study, it is proposed to undertake detailed scoping (sites, nature of sites etc) and generation of preferred options. This will involve commissioning transport planning consultants to undertake transport modelling and include discussion with Arriva, Capital and Regional plus other interested stakeholders, followed by revisions. Budgets have not been set aside to undertake and deliver this project. Corporate Leadership Team will sign off funding once there is more clarity as to the intended course of action.
 - 5.2 It is proposed to present findings of this exercise to Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee, with further recommendations.
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6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Improved bus interchange facilities would play a key role in improving transport provision within the borough which will support the adopted Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Risk Management	There are no significant risks associated with investigating preferred options for improved bus interchange facilities	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Financial	Work to establish preferred options would be undertaken in house and by specialist transport planning consultants. Budgets have not been set aside to undertake this work. Corporate Leadership Team will sign off funding once there is more clarity as to the intended course of action.	Mark Green, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	Work to establish preferred options would be undertaken in house and by specialist transport planning consultants.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Legal	No specific implications arise from this report.	Estelle Culligan, Interim Head of Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	Improved bus interchange facilities would benefit all sections of the community.	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	Improved bus interchange facilities would potentially help deliver various forms of sustainability benefits, including improvements to air quality	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Community Safety	Improved bus interchange facilities would potentially help deliver improvements to community safety	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)

Human Rights Act	There are no specific impacts or issues	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)
Procurement	Specialist consultant advice will be required. Consultants would be appointed in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development) & Mark Green, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Asset Management	The proposed study would consider sites that are included in the Council's property portfolio	Rob Jarman (Head of Planning and Development)

7. REPORT APPENDICES

7.1 No appendices are attached to this report.
