

Maidstone Bus Station Project

Final Decision-Maker	Economic, Regeneration and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	<i>John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development</i>
Lead Officer and Report Author	John Foster and Chris Inwood
Classification	Public
Wards affected	<i>High Street</i>

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with an update on the results of the recent public consultation survey on the draft designs, for the committee to approve the bus station improvement designs and to go out to tender for contactors and seeks delegated authority for the Director of Finance and Business Improvement to appoint and enter into a building contract with the winning contractor to deliver the project.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To note the results of the public consultation survey set out in Appendix 1
2. To approve the designs of the bus station set out in Appendix 2 and to go out to tender for contractors to carry out the works.
3. That the Director of Finance and Business Improvement is granted delegated authority to appoint and enter into a building contract with the winning contractor.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Economic, Regeneration and Leisure Committee	20 October 2020

Maidstone Bus Station Project

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p><i>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</i> • <i>Safe, Clean and Green</i> • <i>A Thriving Place</i> • <i>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure; Safe, Clean and Green; and A Thriving Place.</i> 	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p><i>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Heritage is Respected</i> • <i>Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</i> • <i>Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</i> • <i>Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</i> <p><i>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability cross cutting objective by reducing the energy used by the bus station.</i></p>	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Risk Management	<p><i>Already covered in the risk section – if your risk section is more than just a paragraph in this box then you can state 'refer to paragraph ... of the report'</i></p>	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The project is funded in the current approved capital programme, with a budget of £1m, along with a further £90,000 in agreed external contributions from partners.</i> 	Paul Holland Senior Finance Manager
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.</i> 	Head of Regeneration

		and Economic Development
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Strategic Local Plan Policy (SP23) and the Integrated Transport Strategy 2011-2031 (ITS) provides a framework for making decisions on transport issues around the borough, specifically addressing problems with the Council's existing transport network and it's long term development. This includes improvements to the bus station. Accepting the recommendation will assist in the delivery of the improvements anticipated by the Local Plan and the ITS. If not already done so, any necessary agreements or contracts entered into must be in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and should be in a form approved by the Legal Services Manager. This is permitted pursuant to the Council's general powers under s.1 of the Localism Act 2011s and 111of the Local Government Act 1972.</i> <p><i>The Council is obliged to comply with the Contract Procedure Rules under Part 3.6 of the Constitution when tendering for and appointing the building contractor together with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.</i></p>	Patricia Narebor, Head of Legal Partnership.
Privacy and Data Protection	<i>The data held for this project is held and processed in accordance with the principles of data protection/GDPR.</i>	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment</i> 	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Improving the appeal of the bus station and therefore using buses in Maidstone is likely to encourage a reduction in car use and therefore improve air quality however this comes at the expense of removing albeit temporarily the experimental cycle lanes on King Street at a time when the public are being</i> 	Public Health Officer

	<i>encouraged to cycle and are cautious to use public transport due to COVID-19.</i>	
Crime and Disorder	<i>The recommendation will not have a negative impact on Crime and Disorder.</i>	Head of Service or Manager
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>On accepting the recommendations, the Council will then follow procurement exercises for appointing a contractor to carry out the works. We will complete those exercises in line with financial procedure rules.</i> 	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

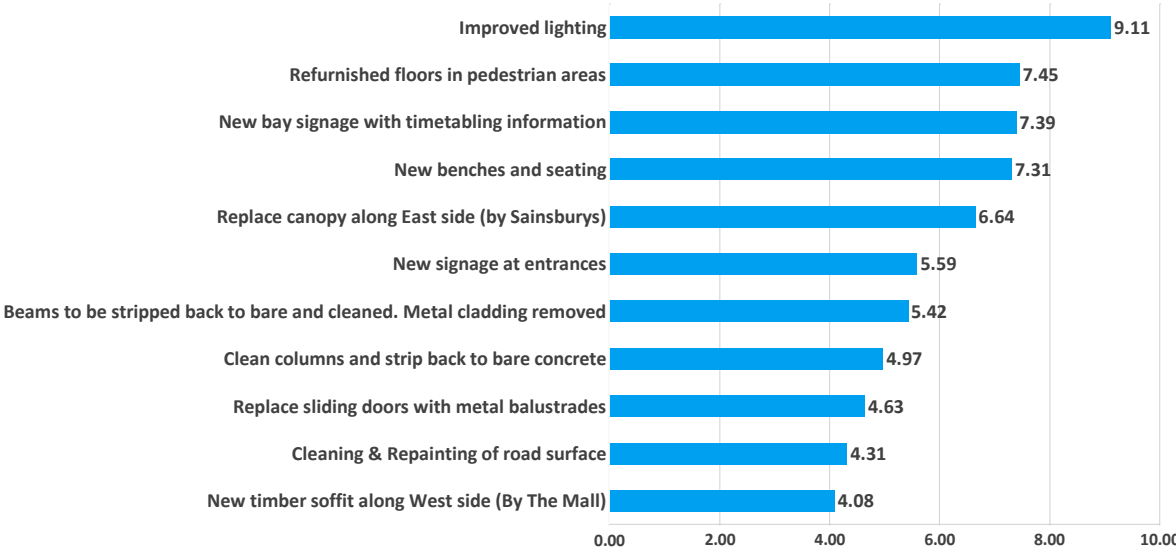
Public Consultation:

- 2.1 Following approval at ERL Committee on the 14th July 20 the council undertook a public consultation survey between 21st July and 17th September 2020 on the improvements proposed for Maidstone bus station improvements for The Mall Chequers Centre shopping centre bus interchange.
- 2.2 The survey was held predominately online due to COVID 19 social distancing, but members of the Economic Development Team attended a static display at The Mall between 10am and 2pm from August 10th through to August 15th.
- 2.3 As reported to ERL on the 14th July the bus station improvements include,
- Cleaning the bus stations columns and stripping them back to bare concrete,
 - Stripping beams back to bare and cleaned,
 - Removal of metal cladding,
 - Refurnishing floors in pedestrian areas,
 - Providing new benches and seating,
 - Improved lighting,
 - New signage at both entrances,
 - New bus bay signage with timetabling information,
 - Refurbishing the canopy along the Eastern side (by Sainsburys)
 - Replacing bus bay sliding doors with metal balustrades,
 - Cleaning & repainting of the road surface, and
 - Installing a new timber soffit along the Western side
- 2.4 The survey asked respondents if they disagreed or agreed with a series of statements, ranging from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree', based on the improvements identified above. The council received 404 responses to the survey, the full survey report can be found in appendix one.

2.5 65.7% responded positively (Very good and Good responses combined) when asked what they thought of the overall proposals to improve Maidstone Bus Station.

2.6 The top priority from across all the groups surveyed was 'Improved Lighting'. In addition to 'Improved Lighting' five further improvements featured in the top three improvements across all the groups surveyed, 'Refurnishing floors in pedestrian areas', 'New bus bay signage with timetabling information', 'New benches and seating' and 'Refurbishing the canopy along the Eastern side (by Sainsburys)'

Priorities for Improvement Graph One:



2.7 Female respondents were more positive about the impact of the proposed improvements in that it may encourage them to use the facilities more in the future than the males surveyed.

2.8 The top three improvements from those that answered with a disability are improved lighting, new bay signage with timetabling information and new benches and seating

2.9 A breakdown of the top three priorities by age group can be found in the table below,

Table One Top Three improvements by age group:

Top Three Improvements					
	18 to 34 years	35 to 44 years	45 to 54 years	55 to 64 years	65 years and over
1.	Improved lighting	Improved lighting	Improved lighting	Improved lighting	Improved lighting
2.	Refurnish floors in pedestrian areas	New benches and seating	Replace canopy along East side	New Benches and seating	New bay signage with timetabling information

3.	New benches and seating	New bay signage with timetabling information	Refurnish floors in pedestrian areas	Refurnish floors in pedestrian areas	Refurnish floors in pedestrian areas
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2.10 The three top themes arising from additional comments received focussed on questioning whether the bus station is in the wrong place, air quality concerns from poor ventilation and bus fumes and a general feeling that the bus station was dirty.

Comments indicate support for public art at the bus station, depicting the local area and designed by local artists. The councils Arts and Culture Officer will use the survey's findings to support an external funding bid to contribute to the budget for this work and community engagement.

In response to the statement "I am more likely to use the bus station, in the future, if these improvements are carried out" 49% of responders agreed, 34.5% were neutral and 16.5% disagreed. Interestingly Responders aged 18 to 34 were significantly more likely be positive about their future use of the bus station following improvements that the age groups aged 45 years and over.

There were 222 comments from respondents to the question 'Are there any other improvements to the Bus Station that you would like us to consider? There were only 31 comments classified as being generally negative, relating to comments that the proposals were not good value for money, or that they should go further as the proposals were just superficial improvements.

With almost two thirds or 65.7% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the proposals, there is clear overall public support for the council to deliver the improvement scheme. The survey results and feedback have not resulted in the need to amend the draft designs.

2.11 Since the architect presented the stage 3 designs to ERL Committee on the 14th July work has progressed on producing more detailed designs. The councils Employers Agent continue to refine the costs through this process to ensure the designs stay within the identified budget. See appendix Two Stage 4 Design

2.12 The council and its Employers Agent are currently putting together the tender documentation to identify a contractor to carry out the works. The following programme will be followed:

- Date of Tender Issue – 21 October 2020
- Tender Clarifications Deadline – 12 November 2020
- Client Project Team Clarification Response Deadline – 19 November 2020
- Tender Return Date – 26 November 2020 (5- week and 1 -day duration)

- Tender Evaluation Period – 26 November 2020 – 10 December 2020 (2-weeks duration)
- Internal Review and Approvals – 10 December 2020 – 17 December 2020 (1-week duration)
- Inform Tenderers of Outcome – 17 December 2020
- Contractor Appointment – 17 December 2020 – January 2021 (note 2- week Christmas shut down period)
- Contractor Mobilisation and CDP Design – January 2021 – February 2021 (note period included as part of below Contract Period)
- Contract Period – January 2021 – May 2021 (16- week duration)

2.13 There would be significant challenges for a contractor to price the works accurately and manage passengers, staff and shoppers if the bus station were to remain open during these works. The programme therefore includes a 12- week period in the new year in which the bus station will be closed and the bus stops relocated onto King Street. This will require the temporary removal of some of the experimental cycle lanes currently active on King Street.

Both KCC and Arriva have expressed their willingness to work towards relocating the bus stops temporarily to King Street. KCC have asked that MBC fund the removal and reinstatement of those elements of the temporary cycle lane needed to allow the buses to stop on King Street. Further meetings are planned to work through the details. It remains a risk however until this has all been agreed.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Options:

Do nothing

Without this investment the Bus Station will continue to deteriorate. Capital and Regional, the owners of the Mall Shopping Centre including the Station, have no incentive to invest in the Bus Station as it fails to produce a return on investment. The condition of the Bus Station will reflect badly on Maidstone Town Centre and the Council and customer use of bus services may even decline, leading to greater car use, increased congestion and poorer air quality. The public consultation survey results do not support this option.

Do minimum

Replacing the sodium lighting with LEDs lights to improve the dull and intimidating environment has been investigated as a do minimum option. This was rejected as not making a sufficient impact in terms of ambience, passenger facilities or passenger information required to trigger the desired modal shift and

encourage bus patronage. The public consultation survey results do not support this option.

Do something

Relocating the bus station to an alternative site in the Town Centre has been explored in the Tri Study in 2018 (see paragraph 6.4). The lack of available land or property in appropriate locations, together with the restrictions on access due to Maidstone's one-way system has resulted in this option being rejected.

Do optimum

The complete redevelopment of the Mall incorporating a new bus station has been explored with the owners Capital and Regional. There is a significant viability gap for this option which is no longer being considered.

Stage Four Designs

Progress and deliver the stage 4 design options as set out in the public consultation survey and Appendix two.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The preferred option is the one set out in Appendix 2. All main stakeholders are in support of this approach. It offers a relatively straight forward solution to radically enhance the Bus Station environment focused on the user experience which will make it more attractive, and potentially increase bus patronage in support of the strategic priorities in the Integrated Transport Strategy. The proposed improvements have been taken to public consultation with 65.7% of respondents responding positively (Very good and Good responses combined) to the scheme.

5. RISK

A complete risk assessment has been produced for the project right through to completion in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. The main risks include.

1. The Bus station must remain operational during the works with any impact during construction on bus services being kept to an absolute minimum, and the safety of the public and construction workers must be maintained at all times.

To mitigate this risk the bus station will close for a 12- week period in the new year with the bus stops relocated onto King Street. Officers are working with Kent County Council on the temporary removal of some of the experimental cycle lanes currently active on King Street to accommodate the move. It remains a risk however until this has all been agreed.

2. Contractor cost certainty in tender responses, due to the continued operation of the bus services during the construction programme. As

above this is being mitigated by the temporary closure of the bus station for 12 weeks and relocation to King Street.

3. Risks to existing users of the Mall Shopping Centre during construction. The contractor will ensure that all relevant fire exits are retained throughout construction and that emergency pedestrian access at both bus station entrances and the Sainsbury's side are maintained.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 67.7% of those who completed the recent public consultation survey responded positively (Very good and Good responses combined) when asked what they thought of the proposals to improve Maidstone Bus Station.
- 6.2 On the 14th July 2020 ERL Committee resolved that the draft designs be approved for public consultation.
- 6.3 The 13th January 2016 version of the Integrated Transport Study (ITS) recognises the need for an improved bus station for Maidstone Town Centre.
- 6.4 On 22nd January 2018 the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation committee resolved that improvements and potential investment into Maidstone bus station be investigated. This decision was informed by tri-study prepared by consultants WSP entitled "Maidstone Tri-Study – Bus Interchange Study, Town Centre Parking Strategy, and Park & Ride Study" (November 2017) which considered a bus interchange study, parking strategy and a study into the current Park and Ride arrangements. The bus interchange study concluded that the bus station is in the optimum location to serve the town centre and therefore recommended improvements to the existing station.
- 6.5 On 28th March 2018 Policy and Resources Planning committee resolved that the project be funded in part from proceeds of the Business Rates Retention Pilot.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Publish the Invitation to Tender contractor documents commencing after ERL Committee approval in October.
 - 7.2 Tenders appraised and contractor selected.
 - 7.3 Work with Capital and Regional, Kent County Council and bus operators to manage the communications around the temporary closure of the bus station
 - 7.4 That the Director of Finance and Business appoints and enters into a building contract with the winning contractor.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- *Appendix 1: Bus Station Improvements Survey Report*
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None