

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Report To: Joint Transportation Board

Date: 28th July 2010

Report Title: Draft Maidstone Borough Transportation Strategy

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Summary:

This brief interim report describes progress towards a Borough Transportation Strategy, particularly its relationship with the MBC Local Development Framework Core Strategy, and identifies the current timescale for more detailed consultation with the Board

Decision: Report for Information and Comment

Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: Members of this Board will be invited to comment and contribute to a transport strategy that will support future development in the Borough when the appropriate local development targets have been clarified

Financial Implications:

The measures that will emerge into the final version of the strategy will be funded from a variety of sources, including Kent County Council (via the Local Transport Plan), Maidstone Borough Council, and developers.

Purpose of the Report

1. Members are invited to identify their issues and concerns regarding progress on transportation matters.

Background

2. Kent Highway Services and Maidstone Borough Council have been working together on the evolution of a Transportation Strategy that would both support the expectations of growth identified in the LDF Core Strategy and also identify the various continuing strands of transportation work across the Borough.
3. The LDF will set out the planning authority's development expectations for the period up to 2026. The revocation by the government in early July of the South East Plan, which previously identified targets and policies for

the LDF, requires that the Borough Council now identifies development targets which it believes are more locally appropriate. The SEP target for housing was 11,080 new homes to be built in the period 2006-2026. Of this total, some 2,000 have already been built, and a further 3,000 have received planning permission, which would leave sites to be allocated for 6,000 if the target was to be carried forward. However, MBC has yet to reach conclusions on its preferred level and location of both housing and employment development. Whereas we had expected to be able to report a Draft Transport Strategy to this meeting of the Board, the currently evolving situation regarding the national planning system has delayed the Core Strategy process.

4. Once conclusions have been reached by the planning authority on a preferred development scenario (or possibly potential options), a draft transport strategy to support its delivery can be finalised. This would be subject to discussion by Members before accompanying the Core Strategy out to public consultation in the autumn. This timescale is dependent on the implications of any further policies, advice or guidelines being issued by the government (or possibly the Planning Inspectorate).
5. At the time of writing, it is therefore very difficult to confirm the measures that would be included in the transport strategy. There will inevitably be very serious issues to deal with, particularly the limited funds that will be available for infrastructure. The existing conditions on the road network show congestion at peak times in the town and around the motorway junctions. Whatever level of growth is expected to take place, there will be increasing pressure on the highway and transport networks. A balance must be found that would allow us to manage this pressure to prevent ever increasing congestion without deterring the inward investment that would encourage the town to thrive.
6. It would be appropriate for this Board to receive a full report at its next meeting, or at any appropriate intermediate date, to allow Members to debate the emerging strategy in relation to the development aspirations that the Borough Council will adopt.

Views of Local Members

7. All members representing Maidstone wards will be invited to comment, both through this Board and/or through the wider consultation in the autumn

Views of Statutory Consultees

8. All stakeholders and interested parties will have the opportunity to make representations in the autumn

Conclusion

9. Most of the issues on the highway and transport networks are not new, and many have been the subject of much discussion at this Board and elsewhere. The opportunity now exists to set these issues into the context of the Borough Council's long term spatial planning objectives, and seek to coordinate public

and developer funding streams towards potential solutions. The discussion will begin in detail when the Borough's local development aspirations have been confirmed.

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