

To: Maidstone Joint Transportation Board
By: KCC Transport Strategy
Date: 30 July 2024
Subject: Local Transport Plan 5 – Public Consultation
Classification: Information Only

Summary: This report updates Members on the public consultation on Kent County Council's new Local Transport Plan 5. The consultation runs from 17 July to 8 October 2024.

Following consideration of the feedback from the public consultation, the aim is that it will be ready for County Council to vote on its adoption later this year.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the new Local Transport Plan 5, which is a statutory plan as set out in the 2000 Transport Act (and as amended by the 2008 Local Transport Act). The Local Transport Plan (LTP) carries weight in the planning system and so is given due regard in decision making. As such, the new plan requires the approval of the full County Council.
- 1.2 Kent's previous LTP (Delivering Growth without Gridlock) was adopted in 2017, with a horizon year of 2031. However, since then, there has been substantial delivery of its proposals as well as significant change in government policy and the challenges Kent faces.
- 1.3 It is therefore time to produce a new LTP that refreshes the County's transport policy and scheme proposals ready for future funding opportunities as they might arise, especially with a new government.

2. Plan development

- 2.1 In September 2021, work commenced on the new plan, such as developing a new ambition for transport in the county, and the outcomes and objectives for the Plan to achieve. Its development has been supported by a KCC cross-party Member Task and Finish group.
- 2.2 In the summer of 2023, the Cabinet Member resolved to consult on an *Emerging* LTP so that members of the public, businesses, and any other interested parties could have their say on the direction of the new Plan.
- 2.3 The key findings from the consultation were that 80% of respondents had some degree of support for the new ambition. The majority also supported the outcomes and objectives. A total of 77% of respondents, including all twelve district councils, stated that climate change and reducing transport's contribution towards carbon emissions was either 'very important' or 'important'.
- 2.4 The ambition consulted on in the *Emerging* LTP has therefore been retained and states:

We want to improve the health, wellbeing, and economic prosperity of lives in Kent by delivering a safe, reliable, efficient and affordable transport network across the county and as an international gateway. We will plan for growth in Kent in a way that enables us to combat climate change and preserve Kent's environment.

We will do this by delivering emission-free travel by getting effective dedicated infrastructure to electrify vehicles, increase public transport use and make walking and cycling attractive. This will be enabled by maintaining our highway network and delivering our Vision Zero road safety strategy. These priorities will ensure our networks are future-proof, resilient and meet user needs.

2.5 Following the consultation on the *Emerging* LTP last year, the Plan's outcomes were amended and are:

1. The condition of our managed highway network is brought up to satisfactory levels, helping to maintain safe and accessible travel and trade.
2. Deliver our Vision Zero road safety strategy through all the work we do.
3. International travel becomes a positive part of Kent's economy, facilitated by the county's transport network, with all the negative effects of international haulage traffic decreased.
4. International rail travel returns to Kent and there are improved rail and public transport connections to international hubs.
5. Deliver resilient transport, future-proofed for growth and innovation, aiming for an infrastructure-first approach to reduce the risk of highways and public transport congestion due to development.
6. Access to Kent's historic and natural environment is enhanced.
7. Road-side air quality improves as decarbonisation of travel accelerates, contributing towards the pursuit of carbon budget targets and net zero in 2050.
8. A growing public transport system supported by dedicated infrastructure to attract increased ridership, helping operators to provide more and invest in better services.
9. Health, air quality, public transport use, congestion, and the prosperity of Kent's high streets and communities will be improved by supporting increasing numbers of people to use a growing network of dedicated walking and cycling routes.
10. The quality of life in Kent is protected from the risk of worsening noise disturbance from aviation.

2.6 After the consultation on the *Emerging* LTP, the proposals that constitute the long-term capital programme were developed and updated and are now the subject of this consultation on the draft full LTP (although there is further opportunity to comment on the ambition, outcomes, objectives etc. as well).

3. Local Transport Plan 5 proposals

3.1 The aim has been to develop a balanced set of proposals that reflect a range of solutions to addressing the challenges Kent faces. These challenges range from the underfunding of our highways assets (resulting in a substantial maintenance backlog), congestion and poor air quality, a growing population, declining financial viability of public transport, and the impacts on Kent arising from having such important international gateways.

- 3.2 The LTP includes proposals that are network-wide (affecting more than one district) and those that are district-specific. There are proposals across the Strategic Road Network (motorways and trunk roads managed by National Highways), the rail network (managed by Network Rail and High Speed 1), the Local Road Network (managed by KCC), the bus network, and the walking and cycling network.
- 3.3 It should be noted that KCC's Bus Service Improvement Plan and Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan contain the detailed proposals for those networks. The new Local Transport Plan reflects their planned outcomes and furthers the argument for funding to support their delivery.
- 3.4 The table in Annex 1 lists the strategic proposals across the different transport networks.

4. Funding

- 4.1 The proposals set out in the Plan cannot be funded by the Council alone and so the LTP sets out a range for the anticipated cost of its delivery. Historically, funding has been achieved from competitive bidding for bespoke funding pots. Our track record of success in being awarded funding to deliver LTP proposals puts us in a good position to respond to future funding opportunities, whether they are competitive or not.
- 4.2 It should also be remembered that in many instances the funding to develop the proposals into final schemes will also need to be sought externally, well ahead of any delivery on the ground. This development funding alone can be many millions of pounds for major schemes.

5. Engagement with the district councils

- 5.1 Discussions have taken place at officer level with all districts throughout the development of the Plan. These occurred prior to the 2023 consultation, and more recently on the details of their local transport strategies and infrastructure requirements. All district councils responded to the 2023 consultation on the *Emerging* LTP and their feedback has been considered in those discussions with officers.
- 5.2 The specific proposals for Maidstone borough are shown in Annex 2 of this report.

6. Public consultation

- 6.1 The public consultation on the draft full Local Transport Plan 5 commenced on 17 July and ends on 8 October 2024. Alongside the Plan, there is a Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Equalities Impact Assessment, which are also open to comment. There is also a "You Said, We Did" document that demonstrates how the responses to the previous consultation on the *Emerging* LTP have been considered.
- 6.2 There are up to two public exhibition events in each district so that members of the public can drop in and talk to the team about the Plan and its proposals, as well as respond to the consultation directly. Advertising and press releases are being used throughout the consultation to encourage a good response rate. Stakeholders have been informed directly, as have those signed up to the Kent County Council consultation email list.
- 6.3 The consultation is hosted online on the Let's Talk Kent website but all information is available in alternative formats if requested.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 This report is for Members' information. All interested stakeholders and the public are encouraged to respond to the consultation on Kent's new draft Local Transport Plan at www.kent.gov.uk/ltp5.
- 7.2 Following the consultation, all responses will be analysed and considered as the final plan is developed for the County Council, who will vote on whether to adopt it. The aim is that this will take place later in 2024.

8. Contact officers

The following officers can be contacted on 03000 418181

Joseph Ratcliffe
Mark Welch
Katie Pettitt

Transport Strategy Manager
Principal Transport Planner
Principal Transport Planner

Annex 1 - Balance of strategic network-wide proposals across the transport mix

Strategic road network	Local road network	Public transport network	Walking and cycling network
<p>Lower Thames Crossing M2 Junction 1 capacity A282 (M25) Junction 1A capacity M2 Junction 4 capacity and local development connections M2 road capacity enhancement M2 Junction 7 (Brenley Corner) capacity enhancement South Canterbury A2 junction access enhancements A2 Dover Access / Duke of York and Whitfield improvements International haulage traffic management M25-M26-A21 East-facing slips A21 Kipping's Cross enhancements Trunking: A229 and A249 between M2 and M20</p>	<p>Maintaining the road network Road Safety Vision Zero A229 Blue Bell Hill North Thanet Link Alkham Valley Spitfire Way junction improvements Sandwich bypass improvements A2 Gravesend Local Junctions A228-A264 corridor improvements – West Malling to Tunbridge Wells Development Management principles Supporting the shift to electric vehicles through new charging points</p>	<p>Freight gauge enhancement for international traffic Maidstone mainline journey time improvements Gatwick access improvements Dover / Folkestone High Speed journey time improvements International rail passenger services for Kent Sturry and Canterbury West corridor improvements Local rail services Bus Service Improvement Plan (county-wide) Thameside Fastrack network growth Dover Fastrack network growth Mobility as a Service Cycle Hire trials Shared transport hubs (Mobility Hubs) Elizabeth line extension to Ebbsfleet Opposition to Gatwick expansion</p>	<p>Public Rights of Way Improvements</p> <p>Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, including:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">15 initial route corridors for focusing improvements on cycling 15 initial walking zones for focusing improvements on walking and wheeling</p> <p>...helping to deliver improvements on corridors that are also beneficial for district aspirations.</p>

Annex 2 – Maidstone’s borough-specific proposals

