

DRAFT CYCLE STRATEGY

June 2012

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Maidstone '*Maidstone 2020*' was adopted in April 2009 and sets out the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the borough. One of the key objectives of the SCS is to develop an efficient, sustainable and integrated transport system, aligned with objectives set out in the Council's Air Quality Action Plan (2010) and Climate Change Framework (2011-2016).
- 1.2 The Council's draft Core Strategy helps to deliver the spatial element of objectives outlined in the SCS. Policy CS7 sets a target to increase the proportion of trips made by walking or cycling from 12% to 20% of all trips made in the borough by 2026. To increase the proportion of cycling trips made in the borough the Council will focus on the 4 main objectives outlined below:
1. *Creating new links* – seeking new opportunities to extend routes to more people;
 2. *Maintenance of the cycle route network* – looking after what we already have, and improving it;
 3. *Creating a safer cycling environment* – designing safer routes and providing road safety education for cyclists and motorists; and
 4. *Spreading the word* – raising awareness of existing and emerging cycle facilities
- 1.3 An efficient and reliable transport system is vital to ensuring the wellbeing of all those living and working within Maidstone borough. If the transport system as a whole does not operate in an efficient manner, peak time congestion will increase (particularly in the urban area) resulting in an adverse impact on the economy, air quality, people's health and the environment.
- 1.2 The Council recognises that many of the short trips we make could be made by bicycle. Indeed, it is likely many more people would cycle in Maidstone if there were more, better and safer cycle routes and more secure cycle parking facilities.¹ This in turn should have a positive impact on congestion and general

¹ DfT (2009) Analysis and synthesis of evidence on the effects of investment in six cycling demonstration towns - <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110407094607/http://www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland/site/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/analysis-and-synthesis-report.pdf>

wellbeing in the borough as cycling is a healthy, non-polluting and inexpensive mode of transport.

- 1.3 A renewed emphasis on cycling in Maidstone is timely, especially considering recent statistics reveal that the borough has experienced increasing levels of ill health and childhood and adult obesity in recent years. As an example, the Association of Public Health's summary for Maidstone 2011 shows that the percentage of physically active children and adults in Maidstone is significantly less than the national average at 46.2% and 10.7% respectively.² Air pollution in Maidstone is also on the increase and traffic congestion, although decreasing slightly is still an ongoing issue particularly in the urban area. Further statistics are outlined in Appendix 2.

2.0 Context for Producing a Cycle Strategy

- 2.1 A cycle strategy is necessary to identify and plan for improvements to cycling infrastructure and facilities in the borough, with the intention of achieving an increase in the proportion of cycle trips made in the borough. Furthermore, a cycling strategy will provide the basis for making bids for improvements to cycling infrastructure in Maidstone through Kent County Council's Local Transport Plan 3 (2011-2016).
- 2.2 Ideally Maidstone should have a comprehensive cycle network. The current strategy is, however, primarily focussed on the urban area as this is where most short distance car journeys are undertaken and the greatest opportunity for obtaining modal shift therefore occurs.
- 2.3 In the longer term the ideal network would more comprehensively cover the urban area with appropriate 'spokes' to/from the town centre and radial links between these 'spokes' including an outer radial at or close to the edge of the urban area with the proposed Hermitage Lane (Maidstone Hospital) route/s forming its western part. To the south this might be created with routes to serve Cornwallis Academy.

² Maidstone Health Profile 2010 (updated 10 June 2011): <http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=105472>

3.0 Community Engagement

3.1 With support from Kent County Council's Cycling Officer, a Cycling Forum has been re-established in Maidstone in recent months. The Forum brings together officers from the Council, representatives of organisations with an interest in cycling and interested members of the public, to co-ordinate all activities which help to establish, promote and encourage a coherent and safe cycle network.

3.2 Maidstone Cycle Forum's goal is *"to help create a cycle-friendly culture in Maidstone, where residents and visitors of all ages and abilities choose to cycle regularly for those shorter journeys they do not make on foot."* Since its establishment in March 2010, the Forum has completed a number of cycle related research tasks and has provided advice and guidance to officers. This has included:

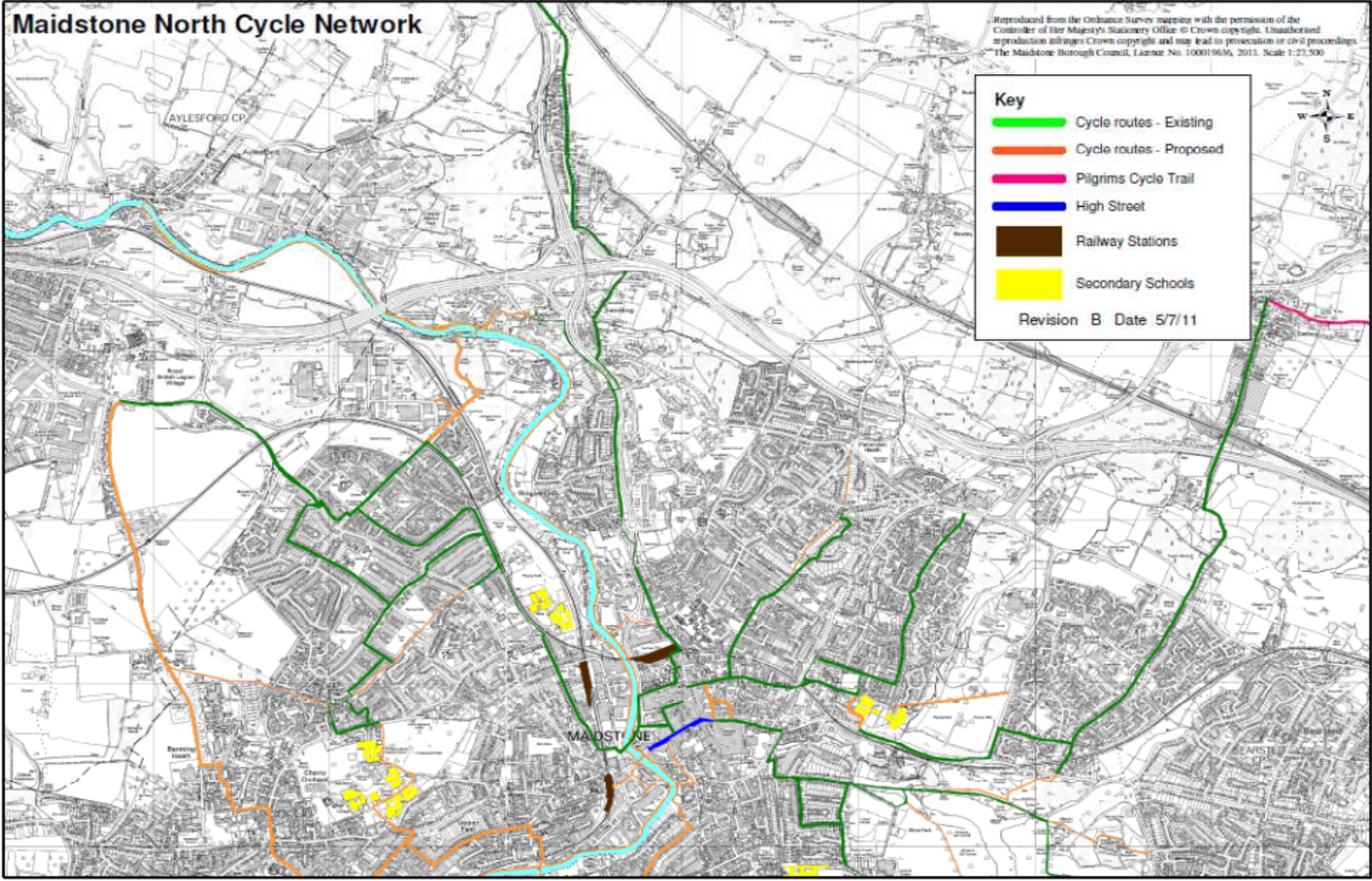
1. Assessment of existing cycling routes in the borough, highlighting issues with surfacing, signage and overgrowth;
2. Assistance with the identification of potential new strategic routes in the borough;
3. Advice and guidance on cycle routes for Mote Park regeneration project
4. Public Rights of Way advice on off-carriageway routes; and
5. Identifying preferred locations for cycle counters and cycle parking in the borough.

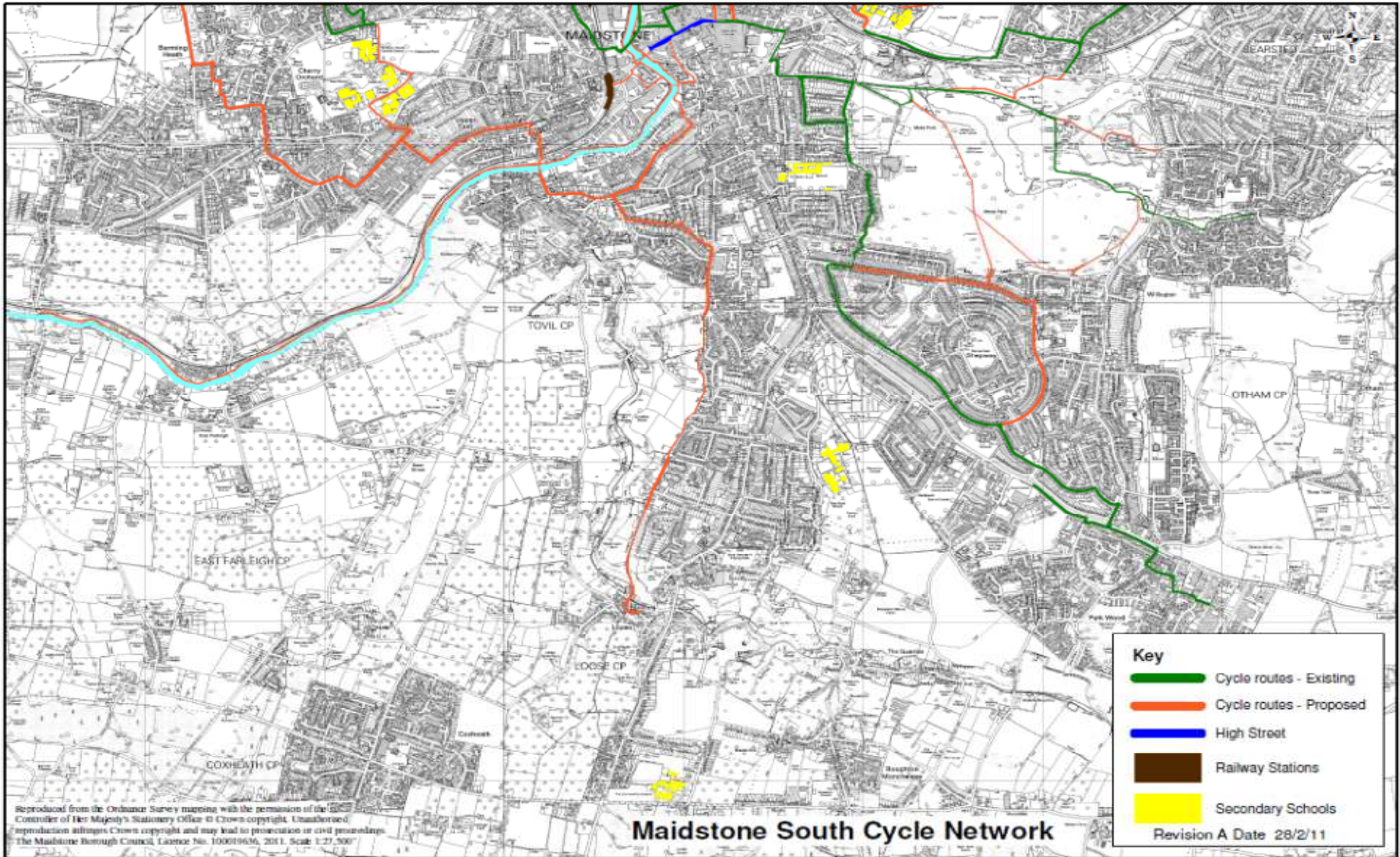
4.0 Cycling in Maidstone Today

Existing Network

4.1 Maidstone's existing cycle network links the town centre to most suburban areas and community facilities, including several schools, Maidstone East train station and Mote Park. The town benefits from a National Cycle Network Route (NCR17) which provides an 11 mile commuter link (approx half off-carriageway) between Maidstone and the Medway towns. At present, NCR17 connects to NCR1 (Inverness to Dover) in Rochester but KCC also have plans to extend the network by connecting to NCR2 (Dover to St Austell) on the South Coast.

4.2 Maidstone also has a Regional Route (RR12) which originates in the town centre and extends along the A20 London Road into Tonbridge and Malling. A section of the route within Maidstone Borough is traffic free and provides good linkages to local schools in the residential area of Allington. Furthermore, from a leisure perspective, there is a recently established route leading from the town centre to Detling village, where it connects to the Pilgrims Way Cycle Route in the North Downs. This provides an excellent cross-district cycling amenity for residents of Maidstone and beyond. A map of the borough's existing cycle routes (split into north and south) is shown below.





4.3 Current Issues:

Connections - Connections across the town centre and to the surrounding rural areas are limited. This is particularly evident to the south of the town centre in Tovil and Loose, and to the west in Fant, where there are no designated cycle routes at present. Furthermore, safe cycle routes connecting residential areas to Maidstone Barracks and Maidstone West train stations are absent, as are connections to the schools and college at Oakwood Park.

Safety - At present, the majority of cycle routes in the borough are on-carriageway. Whilst this increases the likelihood of collisions between cyclists and motor vehicles, it should not affect the safety of cyclists if the design, implementation and maintenance are to a consistently high standard. Providing safer routes for cycling is extremely important, especially considering almost 50 cyclists were either killed or seriously injured on Kent's roads in 2010³. For Maidstone, although there have been no cyclist fatalities in the last number of years, several cyclists have been seriously injured in the borough. A map of crashes involving cyclists is attached in appendix 5.

Secure Parking - Cycle parking is limited in the town centre, local district centres and at Maidstone's train stations. For example, an officer survey of such facilities in 2010 yielded that Maidstone East Train Station, which handles approximately 1.2 million passenger trips every year, has only 6 sheltered bicycle stands and 10 bicycle lockers.

Maintenance and Signage - The maintenance and signage of cycle routes in Maidstone is the responsibility of the Council, Kent Highways Services and Public Rights of Way, depending on the route or type of path involved. It is important that the 'ride quality' and signage on the routes is good and that vegetation is cut back regularly.

5.0 **Future Objectives**

5.1 KCC provides year on year monitoring of cycling trips across Kent from inner urban cordons and automatic traffic counts. There are currently only two fixed

³ Kent Travel Report (2010) <https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/roads-and-transport/road-policies/kent-travel-report/Kent%20Travel%20Report%202010.pdf>

cycle counters for Maidstone, both on A20 London Road. More counters are needed at strategic locations in the urban area to monitor trip data. This will help gauge the success of future improvements to the cycling network.

5.2 In Maidstone, the monitoring of inner cordon cycle counters reveals the rate of cycling more than doubled over a 10-year period beginning in 2000⁴. However, despite this positive trend, statistics show that the rate of cycling is lower now in Maidstone than it was in 2006 and only makes up approx 4% of all trips made in the borough.

5.3 The Council aims to increase the proportion of trips made by walking or cycling from 12% to 20% of all trips made in the borough by 2026, and will focus on the 4 main objectives outlined below to achieve this:

- 1 *Creating new links* – seeking new opportunities to extend routes to more people;
- 2 *Maintenance of the cycle route network* – looking after what we already have, and improving it;
- 3 *Creating a safer cycling environment* – designing safer routes and providing road safety education for cyclists and motorists; and
- 4 *Spreading the word* – raising awareness of existing and emerging cycle facilities

6.0 Action Plan

Objective 1: Creating New Routes and Linkages

6.1 The Council will aim to improve route continuity by joining routes across the town centre where possible, and by ensuring new routes provide linkages to key destinations throughout the borough's urban area. This cannot be done in isolation, and attention must focus on ensuring these routes are safe, well maintained and easy to follow. The Cycle Strategy must also be flexible enough to allow any new housing and employment sites developed during the lifetime of the Core Strategy to be integrated into the cycling network.

⁴ Kent Travel Report (2010) <https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/roads-and-transport/road-policies/kent-travel-report/Kent%20Travel%20Report%202010.pdf>

6.2 Detailed recommendations for new and improved routes in the urban area are included (with supporting maps) below and will be delivered through a combination of Community Infrastructure Levy, Section 106 development contributions and bids for external funding. An estimated cost for each route improvement is included in Appendix 4. The proposed schemes listed are colour coded to provide context to whether the Council consider the routes are deliverable in the plan period, or whether they should remain as long term aspirations.

6.3 List of Recommended New Routes and Linkages

NOTE

Schemes in **GREEN** are considered deliverable in the Plan period

Schemes in **BLUE** are long-term aspirational routes

Central Urban Area

1. Connection from White Rabbit roundabout to riverside towpath using James Whatman Way, which will incorporate access to site of Kent Library and Archive Centre
2. Connection from existing route on High Street to route on Union Street using Wyke Manor Road and Church Street
3. Improvements to existing cycling infrastructure in the town centre (i.e. signage, barriers, surfacing) on St Faith's Street, Medway Street, Pudding Lane, Fairmeadow underpass, junction of Buckland Road and St Peter's Street (Travelodge).
4. Improving cycle connections across Maidstone town centre. This will include the High Street to Maidstone West Train Station and better linkages from the south east to High Street.

North/Northwest Urban Area

1. Improving the riverside towpath from the town centre (Millennium Bridge) to Allington Lock. This will require signage, widening and surfacing works
2. Linking existing cycle route on Buckland Lane to Hermitage Lane via Giddyhorn Lane and public footpath KB18 at the northern boundary of Maidstone Hospital – requires signage and works to public footpath – i.e. widening and surfacing

3. Linking Castle Road to Forstal Road via Allington Lock – requires signage
4. Creating new cycle access to rear of 20/20 business park from Castle Road using public footpath KB40. This will require improvements to public footpath – i.e. widening and surfacing.
5. Hermitage Lane Area – potential to collaborate with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council to develop a link from Maidstone Hospital to Barming Train Station, and possibly onwards to junction with A20 London Road – this would require signage and constructing a cycle lane
6. Hermitage Lane Area – new link from roundabout at Maidstone Hospital to junction of Queens Road and Tonbridge Road – using Tarragon Road – requires signage
7. New link from Oakwood Park to Tovil. See also south west (2)

North/Northeast Urban Area

1. Improved off-carriageway connection to Penenden Heath on public footpaths from junction of Curzon Road/Park Ave across Heathfield Road to Penenden Heath Road
2. Improving public footpath KH2 (rear of Invicta Grammar School) from Vinters Road to New Cut road and making it more suitable for cycling – requires signage, widening and possible surfacing works
3. Connecting Vinters Road to cycle path on A20 Ashford Road via Huntsman Lane
4. Improvements at Vinters Road to allow for two-way cycling path – requires works to footpath to create space for cycle lane

South/Southwest Urban Area

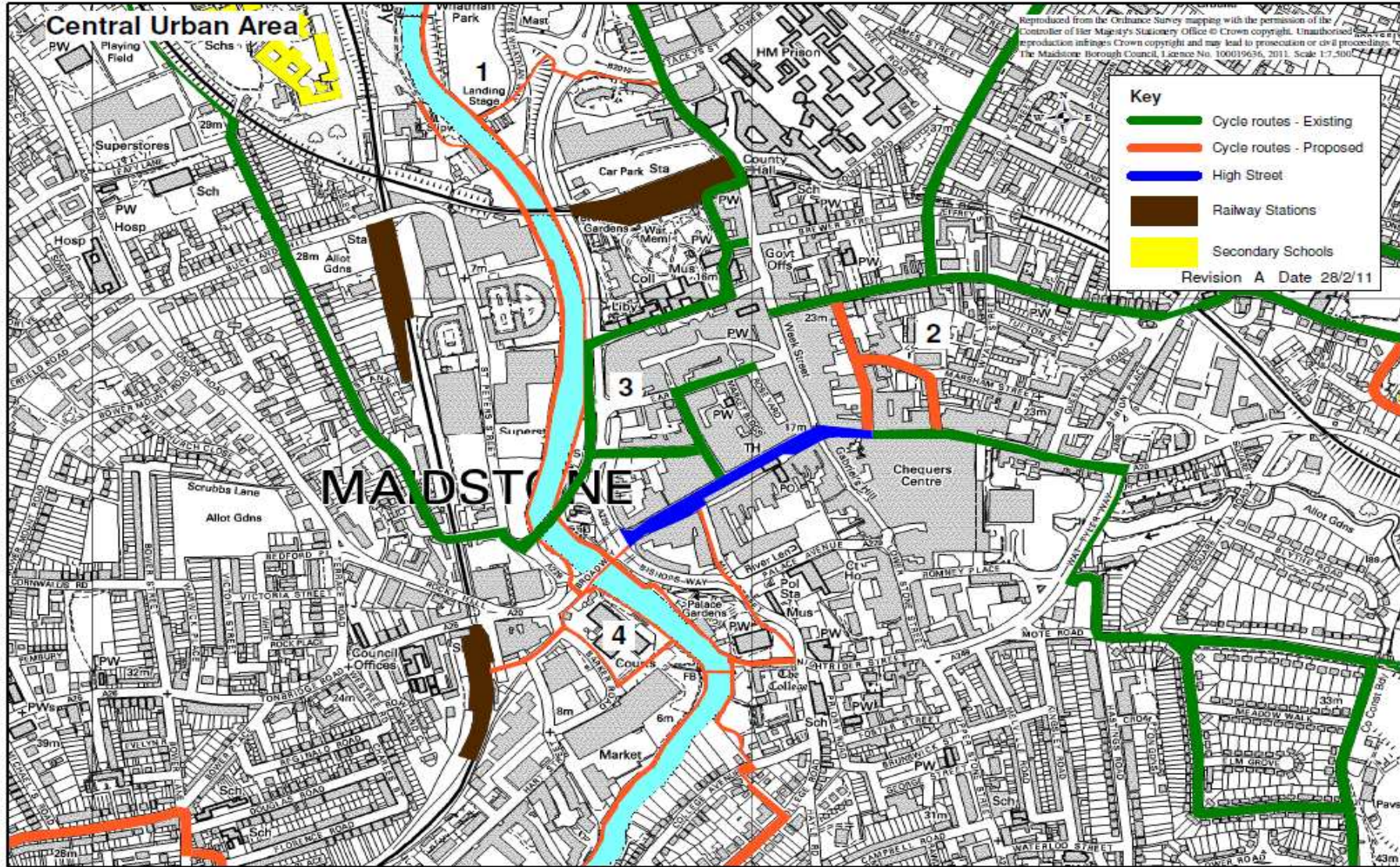
1. Linking Maidstone High Street to Loose village via College Road, Courtenay Road, Postley Road and public footpaths (KB 22, 33, 49 & KM 52/3) from Postley Road to Old Drive and Kirkdale Road, Loose – requires new signage and works to public footpath – i.e. widening and improved surfacing
2. Linking Church Road and Tovil Hill to Oakwood Park via Wharf Road, Bower Lane, Upper Fant Road, Whitmore Street, Milton Street and Tonbridge Road – requires signage and minor improvements at rail crossing

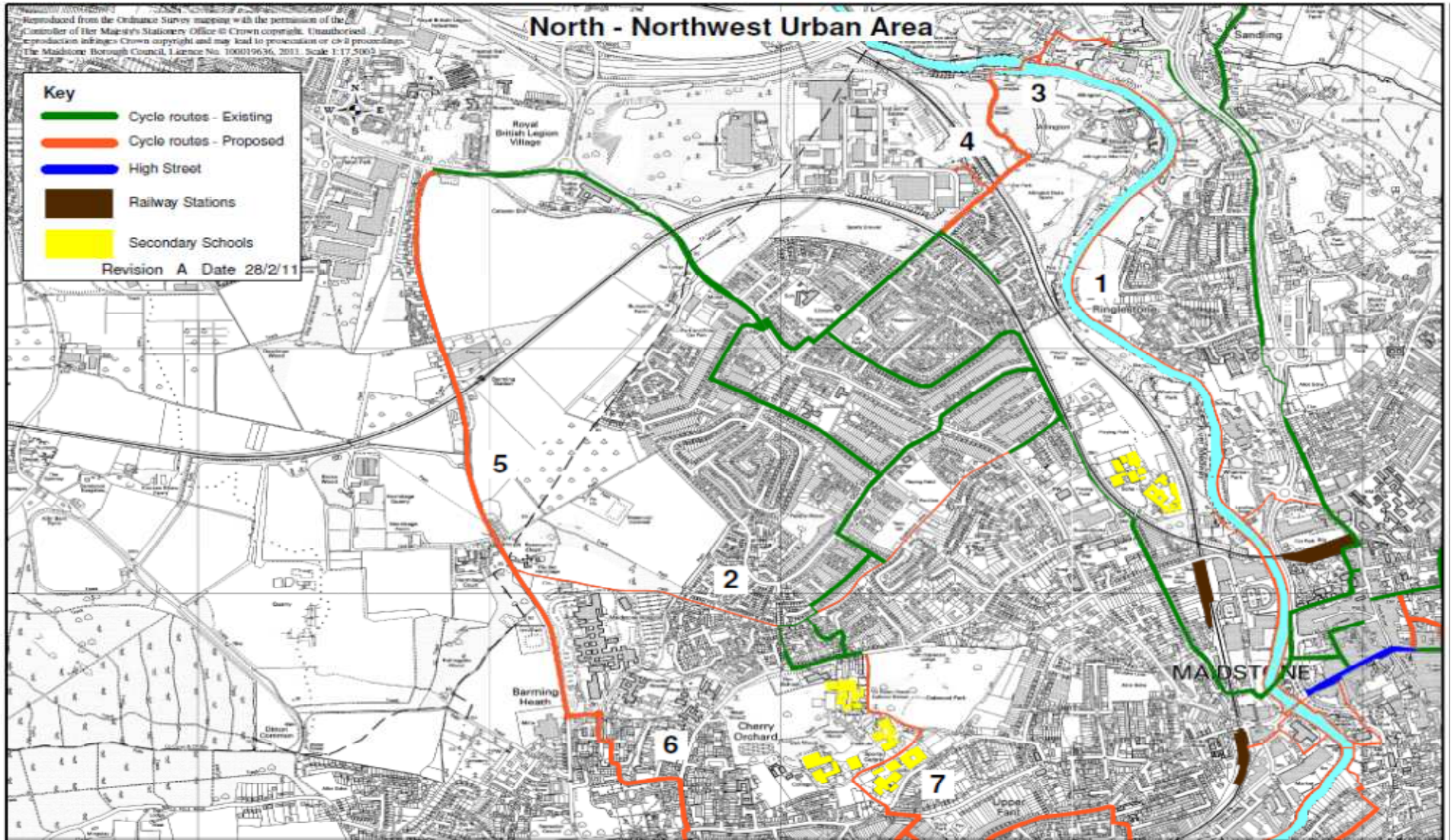
3. Long term aspiration to collaborate with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, KCCs Public Rights of Way team, KCCs Medway Valley Countryside Partnership team, Valley of Visions Landscape Partnership and the Environmental Agency to link Allington Lock to Aylesford and Maidstone Town Centre to Tonbridge along an improved dual-use riverside towpath – requires major works to towpath in terms of widening & surfacing.

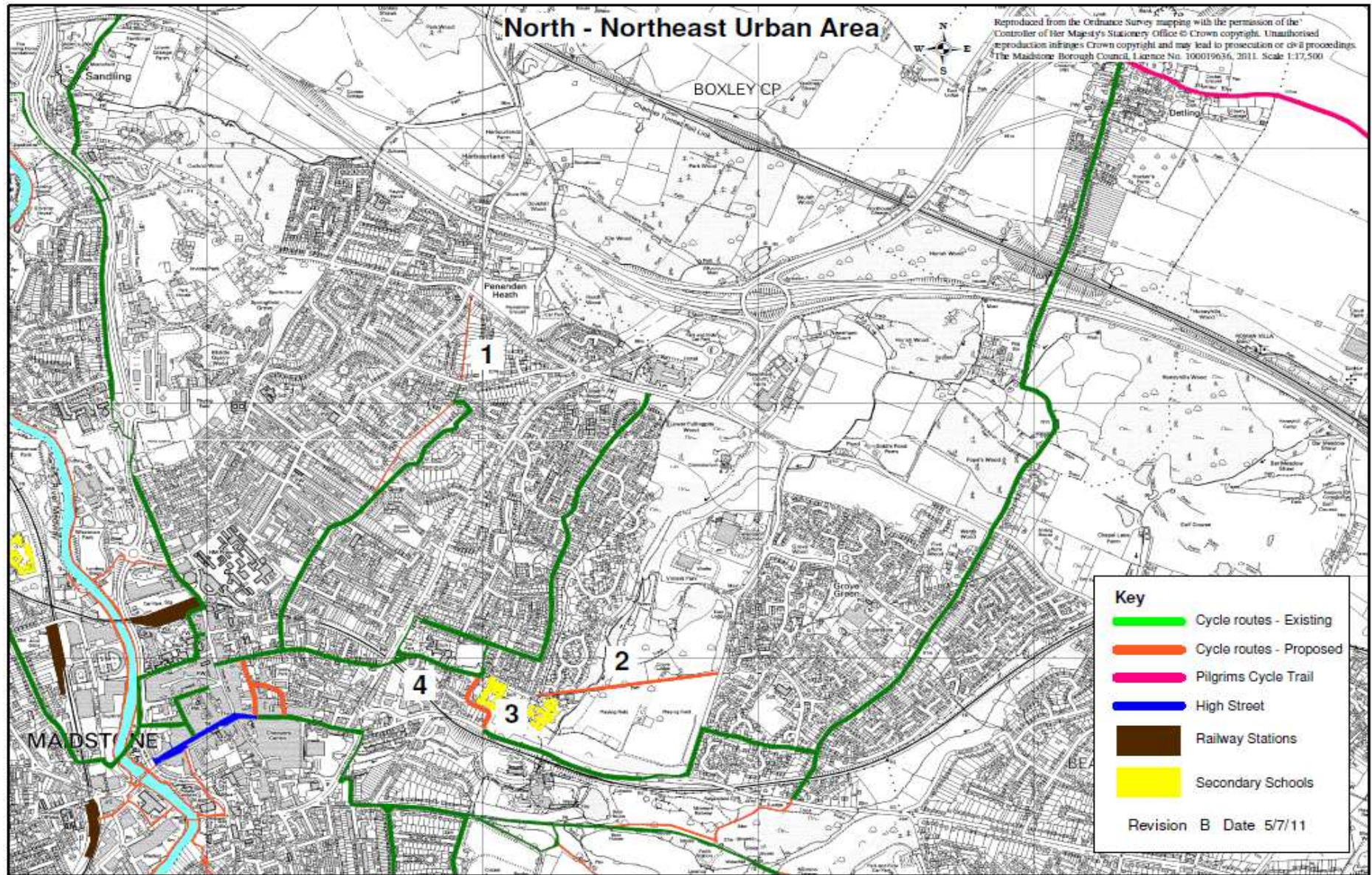
South/Southeast Urban Area

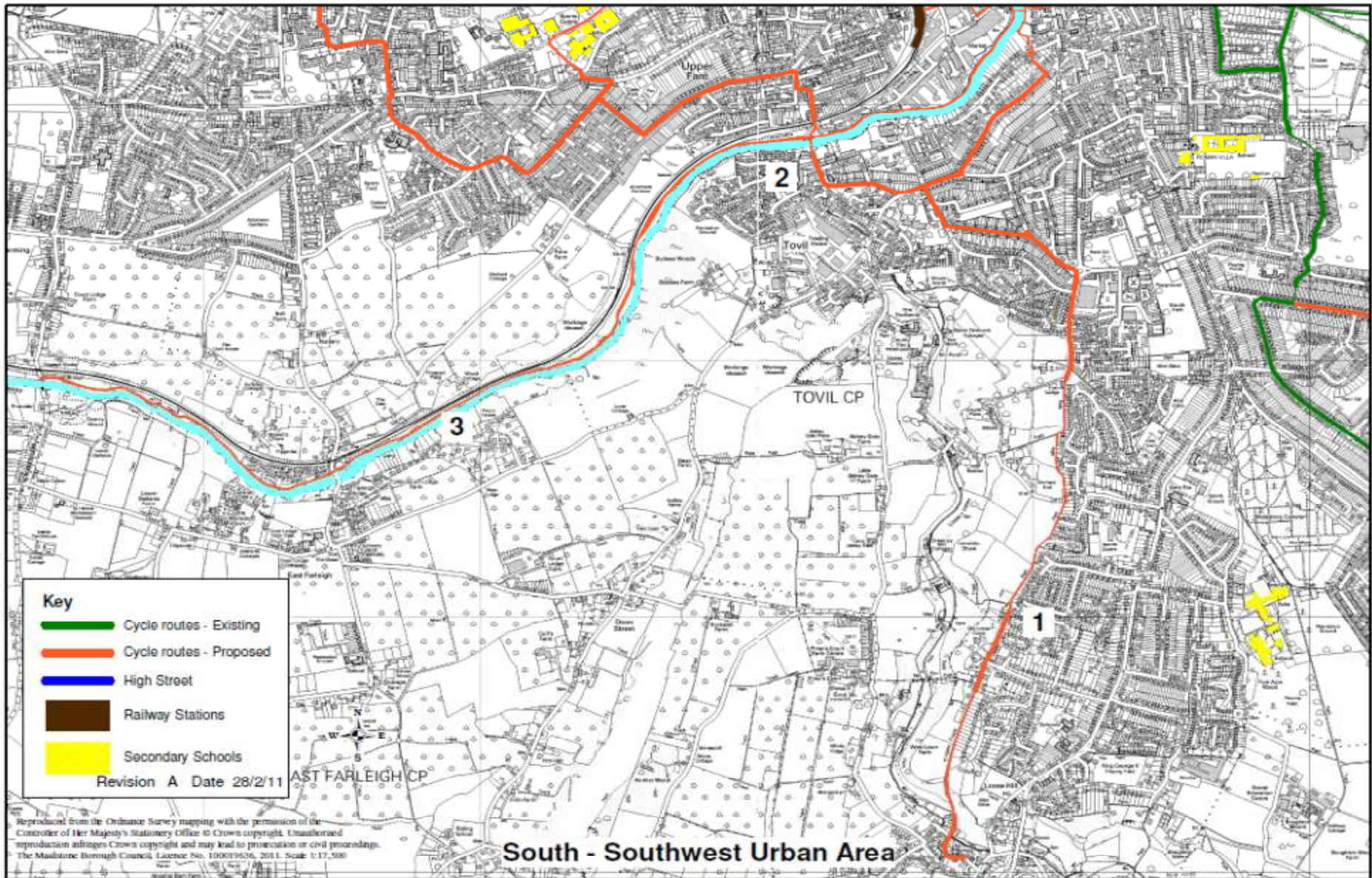
1. Improved cycle link from Mote Park to Weaving Street across Ashford Road. May require Toucan crossing on A20 Ashford Road
2. New connection from south exit of Mote Park to Plains Avenue and onwards via Oxford Road and Worcester Road to meet existing Shepway/Parkwood route at Middlesex Road – requires signage
3. Signing new route into Mote Park via Mote Gardens from Willington Street/Madginford Road junction – requires signage

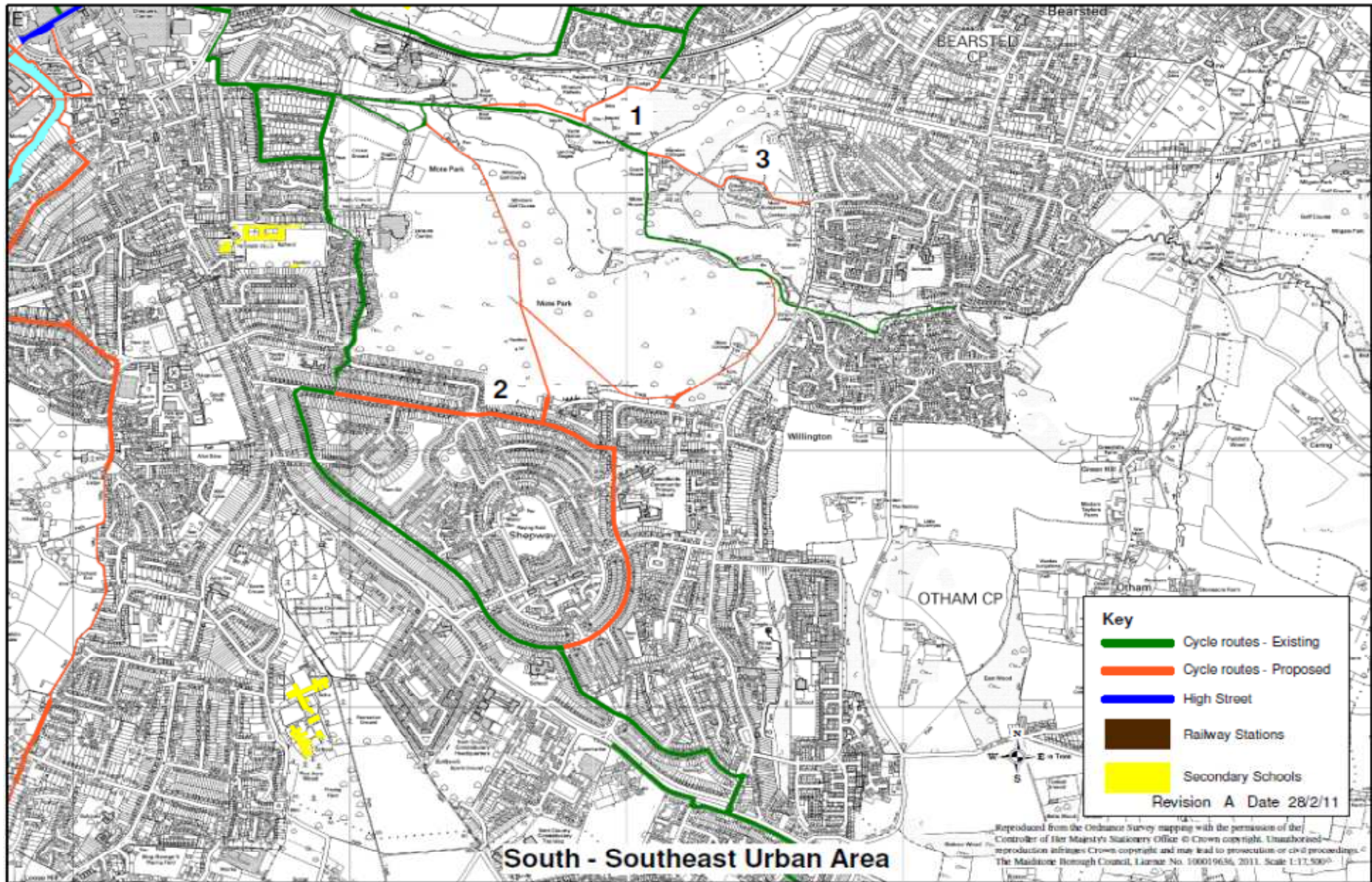
Supporting Maps: Existing Cycle Network Including Recommended New Routes and Linkages











- 6.4 Aside from the more strategic aspects of the cycle network, the Council will also aim to improve cycling as a leisure pursuit. This will need a renewed focus on improvements to the riverside path along the River Medway, where the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and Valley of Visions Landscape Partnership Scheme are already investigating the feasibility of developing a riverside shared use cycle/pedestrian path between the Medway Towns and Tonbridge, via Maidstone.
- 6.5 DfT Research has shown that many more people cycle for leisure purposes and there is still a suppressed demand for more off-carriageway leisure cycling facilities. For some people the gain in confidence riding off-carriageway for pleasure leads to them trying cycling as a means of transport at other times. However, the experience must be good and the benefits in terms of cost and time be to their advantage or they quickly give up.⁵

Action Point 1: When new routes are developed in the urban area, the priority will be to 'fill in the gaps' in the existing network with an emphasis also on providing safe and continuous linkages to known destinations (transport hubs, shops, schools, work places) and leisure routes. A further priority will be to link new development sites (large scale housing and employment) to the existing cycle network and to ensure these developments are designed to incorporate cycling throughout, including adequate and carefully designed parking provision.

Objective 2: Maintaining the Cycle Route Network

- 6.6 In order to increase levels of cycling, the Council acknowledges it is important to have a cycle network that is safe and offers an attractive alternative to using motorised transport. Therefore, routes should be unimpeded by street furniture, pavement parking and other obstructions. As highlighted in Local Transport Note 2/08 (see appendix 3), it is also important to ensure that surface defects should be repaired before they become a hazard, vegetation should be regularly cut

⁵ DfT (2010) Cycling City, Cycling Towns
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110407094607/http://www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland/cycling-cities-towns/>

back to preserve available width and sight lines, and routes should be regularly swept to prevent punctures. This is particularly important on off-carriageway routes.

Action Point 2: The Council will work closely with Kent Highways Services, Public Rights of Way and the Sustrans Volunteer Rangers to ensure frequent and regular maintenance of all cycle tracks in the borough.

Objective 3: Improving Cycle Security and Parking

- 6.7 Sufficient secure cycle parking is essential if people are to be encouraged to cycle. Existing parking facilities have been assessed in Maidstone by the cycle forum and gaps in provision noted to prioritise improvements. This information has been included in Appendix 3.
- 6.8 If a cycle is to be used frequently there has to be a secure storage area close to the usual exit of a property. A cycle locked in a shed at the end of a garden is less likely to be used than one stored close to the front door. It is essential that new residential properties and other developments have sufficient storage for cycles and this should be managed via the development control process in the same way as car parking is managed.

Action Point 3: Secure cycle parking will be encouraged in all new developments, both new build residential and employment and change of use. Secure cycle storage must be provided in all new dwellings in the urban areas of the borough. Cycle parking close to amenities in the town will be improved and kept under review to ensure adequate provision.

Objective 4: Promoting a Cycling Culture

- 6.9 The Council recognises that cycle routes alone will not dramatically increase the levels of cycling in the Borough. Action to create a pro-cycle culture is needed in a range of areas which include land use planning, transport and traffic planning, regeneration, leisure, health and education. Promotion of cycling will not only

involve improved engineering measures and safety but also training, publicity and raising awareness.

- 6.10 The survey and mapping of existing facilities provides the ideal opportunity to produce leaflets and maps to let residents and visitors know where the various cycle routes go and where they can safely park. This information will be made available to download from the council's website and will also be made available at Maidstone's visitor information centre, tourist attractions, hotels, large employers and schools. Additional information such as places to stay and places to visit by cycle will also be displayed on the maps.
- 6.11 Travel Plans (for large employers, schools and new housing developments) provide an opportunity to improve levels of cycling and cycling facilities in the borough. Travel Plans consist of a package of measures designed to suit specific transport needs. Such plans will be encouraged as they can include commitment to improving cycling facilities like secure parking, bicycle lockers or the provision of shower facilities for large employers. Kent County Council has recently produced new best practice guidance on travel plans.⁶

Action Point 4: *The Council will actively promote cycling and the work Kent County Council do in developing school travel plans and business travel plans.*

⁶ New Ways to Work – Best practice guide for preparing travel plans in Kent 2011
<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/roads-and-transport/getting-around/Travel%20Plan%202010.pdf>

Appendix 1: Supporting Policy Overview

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf>

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It replaces over a thousand pages of national policy (previous Planning Policy Statements & Guidance) with around fifty, and provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

The NPPF lists 12 core land-use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. One of the core principles states that patterns of growth should make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

Local Transport Note 2/08 'Cycle Infrastructure Design' – Department of Transport (2008)

[http://www.bv.com.au/file/Cycling%20Infrastructure%20Design%20Dept%20Transport%20Oct%202008\(1\).pdf](http://www.bv.com.au/file/Cycling%20Infrastructure%20Design%20Dept%20Transport%20Oct%202008(1).pdf)

This Note sets out core requirements for the design of cycling infrastructure and lists these requirements under the headings *Convenience, Accessibility, Safety, Comfort and Attractiveness*. The following paragraphs taken from Note 2/08 cover these five core requirements in more detail.

Convenience: Cycle networks should serve all the main destinations. Routes and key destinations should be properly signed and made available on street maps. Routes should be unimpeded by street furniture, pavement parking and other obstructions. Delays for cyclists at signalled crossings should be minimised. Trip end facilities should be clearly marked, conveniently located and appropriate for the likely length of stay. Designers should consider the future ease of maintenance, including access to vehicles for sweeping, trimming grass verges and surface and lighting repairs along off road routes.

Accessibility: Cycling networks should link trip origins and key destinations, including public transport access points. The routes should be continuous and coherent (type and colour of surfacing may be used to stress route continuity as appropriate). Routes should be provided into and through areas normally inaccessible to motor vehicles, such as parks and vehicle restricted areas

Safety: Not only must infrastructure be safe, but it should be perceived to be safe. Traffic volumes and speeds should be reduced where possible to create safer conditions for cycling and walking. Opportunities for redistributing space within the highway should be explored, including moving kerb lines and street furniture, providing right turn refuges for cyclists or separating conflicting movements by using traffic signals. The potential for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists should be minimised. Cycle parking should be sited where people using the facilities can feel safe.

Comfort: Infrastructure should meet design standards for width, gradient and surface quality, and cater for all types of user, including children and disabled people. Cyclists benefit from even, well maintained and regularly swept surfaces with gentle gradients. Dropped kerbs are particularly beneficial to users of wheelchairs, pushchairs and cycles, and tactile paving needs to be provided to assist visually impaired people.

Attractiveness: Aesthetics, noise reduction and integration with surrounding areas are important. The environment should be attractive, interesting and free from litter and broken glass.

Active Travel Strategy (2010) – Department for Transport/Department of Health

<http://www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/cycling/activetravelstrategy/pdf/activetravelstrategy.pdf>

This strategy outlines the importance of cycling and walking for health, accessibility, and the reduction of carbon emissions. The report highlights the fact that 66% of journeys are less than 5 miles (a distance easily covered by a half hour cycle) and over half of these journeys are made by car.

Active Communities: Cycling to a better quality of life (2009)

<https://member.lgiu.org.uk/whatwedo/Publications/Documents/Active%20Communities.pdf>

This report was produced by the Local Government Information Unit to encourage local authorities to take the lead to make cycling a priority in their community through funding and planning. The report advises that local communities can be targeted and engaged in cycling through the use of local cycle groups, cycle forums and local media campaigns.

South East Plan (2009) – Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East*

The South East Plan (SEP) sets the strategic planning context for decision makers in South East England for the period to 2026. It incorporates the Regional Transport Strategy and covers 55 district and borough councils, 12 unitary councils and 7 county councils. Local development documents (e.g. Core Strategy) must be in general conformity with the Plan.

Policy T2 (core transport policy) of the Plan advocates that policies and proposals set out in local development documents and local transport plans should include policies to achieve a rebalancing of the transport system in favour of sustainable modes based on an integrated package of measures including improvements in the extent and quality of pedestrian and cycle routes.

*Note: The 'South east plan', issued in May 2009 by the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), is due to be abolished in the near future. No set date as yet. The archived drafts and background documents for the SEP are on the National Archives website. See link below:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100528142817/http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/>

Kent County Council: Local Transport Plan 3 (2011-2016)

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/roads-and-transport/road-policies/local-transport-plan-3/final-ltp3.pdf>

Local Transport Plans (LTPs) are the method by which local authorities secure funding for local transport improvements. The preparation and adoption of a LTP is a statutory requirement under the Local Transport Act 2008. Kent County

Council (KCC) has previously produced two LTPs covering the periods 2001-06 and 2006-11 respectively.

The strategy approach for LTP3 has been to develop five themes, which are:

- Growth without Gridlock
- A Safer and Healthier County
- Supporting Independence
- Tackling a Changing Climate
- Enjoying Life in Kent

The Plan proposes to allocate a proportion of the budget to each of the five themes and, within these themes, to focus the investment in the areas where the challenges associated with each theme are most acute. Schemes will then be prioritised using a value for money assessment. Cycling is linked to all the themes listed above and KCC aims to provide a comprehensive cycle network for residents and visitors to Kent over the lifetime of the Plan.

Kent Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP, 2007-2017)

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/environment-and-planning/public-rights-of-way/countryside-access-improvement-plan.pdf>

The CAIP includes the current condition of the entire Public Rights of Way network in Kent and identifies key objectives regarding network management. The overall vision is targeted towards increasing the usage and enjoyment of public rights of way.

CAIP Objective	Description
N3	Increase provision for off-road cycling and mountain biking activity
I4	Produce and distribute information on cycling and horse riding
I7	Work in partnership to improve regional/national/international awareness of walking, cycling and horse riding opportunities in Kent, to directly support tourism objectives
D4	Develop multi-user routes that allow walking, cycling and horse riding from towns to wider countryside
	Wider Countryside

ST2	Identify and investigate where the public rights of way network can be provide safe and alternative routes to avoid having to walk, ride or cycle on busy roads
ST3	Develop the public rights of way network to support the County Council's 'Healthy Schools initiative

Local Policy

Maidstone Sustainable Community Strategy (2009-2020)

<http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/PDF/Sustainable%20Community%20Strategy%20for%20Maidstone%20Borough%20adopted%20april%202009.pdf>

The purpose of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is to set the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of a local area in a way that contributes to sustainable development. The SCS acknowledges that congestion in the borough is becoming an increasing problem and that one of the principles of an Integrated Transport Strategy must be based on giving genuine transport choice including sustainable transport modes like cycling.

Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) 2010

<http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Finalised%20Maidstone%20Town%20Action%20Plan%20Dec%203rd%202010.pdf>

The Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) sets out a series of measures which target both confirmed hotspot areas and areas currently under investigation in order to reduce NO2 emissions to within European air quality objectives. Furthermore, the AQAP also sets out measures for Borough wide air pollutant emissions reductions supporting the aims of the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Carbon Emission Reduction action Plan and the Council's carbon emissions reduction targets.

Within the AQAP there are measures promoting the uptake of all forms of active transport including cycling and there are measures to increase the role that travel planning plays for business, schools and the public sector.

A Health Impact Assessment of the measures within the AQAP was carried out and it confirmed that, if fully implemented, the AQAP would provide a significant and positive benefit to the health and wellbeing of residence within the borough.

Core Strategy

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is produced by Maidstone Borough Council, and ultimately will replace the saved policies of the Local Plan (2000). The LDF will comprise a number of documents, including a Core Strategy and Development Delivery Local Plan.

Draft Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy states that the urban area's cycle network connects some residential areas within the town centre but connections across the urban area are limited. The provision of adequate, attractive and safe walking and cycling routes with adequate cycle parking will be incorporated within a cycling strategy, which will form part of an Integrated Transport Strategy for Maidstone.

CS7 explains that developing a network of cycle routes in the borough requires integration with a comprehensive and extended scheme. It proposes that Maidstone's Integrated Transport Strategy, which will provide the background evidence for the objectives set out in Policy CS7, aims to increase the proportion of trips made by walking or cycling from 12% to 20% of all trips made in the borough by 2026.

Integrated Transport Strategy

The strategy's main aim is to provide the necessary transport infrastructure to support the development aspirations of the Core Strategy and in doing so will address the issues associated with each mode in a holistic way. This strategy adopts an integrated approach that recognises that transport issues are inherently linked to one another, but that they are also part of the wider planning challenge. Measures to improve walking and cycling as a means to manage traffic congestion are detailed in the ITS.

Drafted by MBC and KCC in partnership, the ITS will look at how we can begin to encourage a shift in travel behaviour away from sole use of the private car –

with its particular economic, social and environmental costs - towards more sustainable modes of transport where appropriate.

Appendix 2: Supporting Statistics

It is necessary to encourage an improvement in the level of cycling in the borough as it is a healthy, non-polluting and environmentally friendly mode of transport. It is also timely because, as outlined below, recent statistics reveal that Maidstone is now experiencing increasing levels of ill health, childhood and adult obesity, traffic congestion and air pollution.

Physical Activity and Health: One of the most important positive impacts transport has on health is providing the opportunity to be physically active as part of daily life through walking and cycling. This sentiment is echoed by the South East Public Health Observatory, where it states that “physical activity has major beneficial effects on most chronic diseases, by preventing or limiting the progression of disease, and by improving physical fitness, muscular strength and mental wellbeing.”⁷

Physical activity is particularly important for preventing obesity, which has tripled in the last 25 years and has often been described by the Chief Medical Officer as a “health time bomb”. The Association of Public Health’s summary for Maidstone 2010 shows that the percentage of children in reception year suffering from obesity is higher than the national average at 10.3%. This figure increases to an average of 16.5% for primary school children in year 6 and to 26.5% for adults, figures which are also greater than the national averages.⁸ By leading an active life, both children and adults can significantly reduce their risk of premature death due to obesity related illnesses.

Environmental Pollution and Health: The South East Public Health Observatory report (2008) explains that local air pollution has many potential negative impacts on health, many of which are exacerbated by road traffic. Transport related air pollution increases the risk of mortality, particularly from cardio-pulmonary causes. It also affects health in a number of other ways, including non-allergic respiratory disease and allergic illnesses such as asthma.

⁷ SEPHO: Choosing Health in the South East – Road Transport and Health (2008)

⁸ Maidstone Health Profile 2010 (updated 28 July 2010) available at: www.apho.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=92227

Since the majority of air pollutants in Maidstone borough relate to traffic emissions, anything the Council can do to avoid unnecessary journeys and relieve the strains on our local road system is of benefit. An Air Quality Management Area was established in the borough in 2001 based on exceedences of the harmful air pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide NO₂. Levels of NO₂ have risen and fallen in the borough since 2001 but now remain at their highest mean level (54mg/m³) since the AQMA was established. The Council aims to reduce this figure to an annual mean of less than 40µg/m³, which makes a further case for increasing levels of cycling in the borough.

Traffic Congestion: With planned growth in the borough set to increase the population of Maidstone by approximately 20,000 between 2006 and 2026 it is inevitable that the demand for journeys across the borough, particularly at peak times, will increase as a result. Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy (2010) notes that congestion in the borough is becoming an increasing problem, particularly due to school trips, and seeks an annual reduction of 1% in the rate of children taken to school by car, which stood at 34% in 2010.

Department for Transport (DfT) research shows that cars were used for 64% of all trips made and 78% of the distance travelled in the UK in 2010. Cycling accounted for only 2% of all trips made. Clearly, travel by private automobile is still seen as something inherently more desirable than travel by bike. The DfT research also notes that 24% of car traffic at morning peak time is now taken up with the school run. This statistic is particularly important considering a journey of 2.5 miles should only take approximately 15 minutes by bicycle and the fact that only 1% of primary school children and 2% of secondary school children cycle to school.⁹

⁹ DfT National Travel Survey (2010) available at:
<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/national-travel-survey-2010/nts2010-01.pdf>

Appendix 3: List of Existing and Proposed Cycle Parking Facilities

Town Centre (Existing)

Location	Cycle Parking Provision
Town Hall, Bank Street	2 stands - unsheltered
High Street (below cannon)	5 stands - unsheltered
Earl Street	6 stands - unsheltered
St Faiths Street, Outside Royal Albion pub	4 stands - unsheltered
Palace Avenue, near Gala Bingo	4 stands - unsheltered
Sainsbury's (Romney Place)	6 stands - unsheltered
Church Street (Trinity)	10 stands - unsheltered
KCC Sessions House Plaza	5 stands - unsheltered
KCC Invicta House Plaza	4 stands - unsheltered
St Peters Street (Wickes)	5 stands - unsheltered
St Peters Street (ASDA Living)	10 stands - unsheltered

Town Centre (Proposed)

Location	Cycle Parking Provision
Maidstone Gateway (High Street)	1 stand
Chequers Centre (entrance at High Street)	3 stands
Chequers Centre (entrance at Gabriel's Hill)	4 stands
Week St at junction with Union St	3 stands
Week St at junction with Brewer St	2 stands
Town Hall (High St/Bank St)	3 stands
Earl Street (close to Fremlin entrance)	3 stands
Maidstone Museum/Brenchley Gardens	6 stands
Lockmeadow market	3 stands
Broadway Shopping Centre	2 stands
B & Q (Hart St)	3 stands

Urban Area – Excluding Town Centre (Existing)

Shopping Location	Cycle Parking Provision
Grove Green Tesco's, Bearsted	0
Junction of Ware Street, Thurnham Lane and Yeoman Lane	0
Shops on Ashford Road between Yeoman's Lane and Church Lane	3 cycle stands – not sheltered
Tesco Express on Ashford Road	3 cycle stands – not sheltered
Shops on Ashford Road next to junction with Cavendish Way	0
Shops on Deringwood Drive, Downswood	0
Shops on Willington Street by junction with Woolley Road	0
Woolley Road Shops	0

Parkwood Parade Shops	0
Northumberland Avenue Parade Shops	0
Junction of Old Loose Hill and Loose Road Shops	0
Junction of Cripple Street and Loose Road Shops	0
Junction of Courtenay Road and Brenchley Road Shops (Courtenay Stores)	0
Lidl on Tovil Hill	0
Tesco on Farleigh Hill	0
Lloyds Pharmacy on Tonbridge Road	0
Junction of Queens Road, Fant Lane and Tonbridge Road Shops	0
Tesco Express on Tonbridge Road	3 cycle stands – not sheltered
Junction of Hermitage Lane/ Taragon Road Shops	0
Mid-Kent Shopping Centre, Newbury Avenue, Allington	8 cycle stands – not sheltered
Shops at Junction of Boxley Road, Sandling Lane and Penenden Heath	0

Train Stations - In Town Centre (Existing)

Station	Cycle Parking & Storage Provision
Maidstone Barracks	0
Maidstone East	6 cycle stands – sheltered – 10 cycle lockers
Maidstone West	5 cycle stands – not sheltered

Train Stations Outside Town Centre (Existing)

Station	Cycle Parking & Storage Provision
Bearsted	3 cycle stands – not sheltered 4 cycle stands – sheltered
East Farleigh	0
Harrietsham	0
Hollingbourne	0
Lenham	4 cycle stands – not sheltered
Marden	3 cycle stands – sheltered
Staplehurst	10 cycle stands - sheltered

Appendix 4: Cost Estimates for Route Improvements

Central Urban Area

Route Objective	Brief Route Description	Type of Infrastructure Required	Estimated Cost
1	Connecting Sandling Road to Medway riverside towpath	Toucan crossing/signage	25K
2	Connecting High Street to Union Street via Wyke Manor Road	Signage/road markings/removing barriers	5k
3/4	Town Centre Infrastructure Improvements	Signage/surface improvements/junction realignment	250k

North/Northwest Urban Area

Route Objective	Brief Route Description	Type of Infrastructure Required	Estimated Cost
1	Medway riverside towpath improvements	Signage/widening/surfacing	15K
2	Connecting Hermitage Lane with Giddyhorn Lane via public footpath KB18	Signage/widening/surfacing	40K LSTF bid
3	Connecting Castle Road with Forstal Road	Signage	5K
4	Creating new access to rear of 20/20 business Park from Castle Road	Widening/surfacing/signage	25K
5	Hermitage Lane improvements	Requires collaboration with Tonbridge & Malling BC	£150k
6	Connecting Maidstone Hospital to Queens Road Via Tarragon Road	Signage	5K
7	Connecting Oakwood Park to	Signage and	

	Church Road, Tovil	improvements at rail crossing. Crossing of Tonbridge Road yet to be finalised	
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North/Northeast Urban Area

Route Objective	Brief Route Description	Type of Infrastructure Required	Estimated Cost
1	Improved connections to Penenden Heath	Signage/surfacing/removing steps at end of public footpath	50K
2	Improvements to public footpath KH2 (rear of Invicta Grammar School)	Surfacing/widening/signage	100K
3	Connecting Vinters Road to A20 Ashford Road	Potential to be done as part of junction improvement scheme	
4	Improvements to Vinters Road to allow contra flow cycling	Widening and resurfacing footpath	100K

South/Southwest Urban Area

Route Objective	Brief Route Description	Type of Infrastructure Required	Estimated Cost
1	Connecting town centre to Loose village	Surfacing/widening paths/signage/possible toucan crossing	200K
2	Connecting Church Road (Tovil) to Oakwood Park	Signage and improvements at rail crossing. Crossing of Tonbridge Road yet to be finalised	
3	Connecting Maidstone to Tonbridge via Medway riverside	Long term aspiration involving collaboration with KCC, Tonbridge &	

	towpath	Malling BC and the Environment Agency	
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South/Southeast Urban Area

Route Objective	Brief Route Description	Type of Infrastructure Required	Estimated Cost
1	Improved connection from Mote Park to Weaving Street	Surfacing/signage	20K
2	Connecting south exit of Mote Park to Plains Avenue	Signage	5K
3	Connecting Wellington Street to Mote Park via Mote Gardens	Signage	5K

Appendix 5: Cycle Crash Statistics for Maidstone Urban Area (2008-2011)

