

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

**25 JULY 2012**

### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHANGE, PLANNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Report prepared by Jonathan Morris**

#### **1. DRAFT INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY**

##### 1.1 Issue for decision

1.1.1 To consider the Draft Integrated Transport Strategy for public consultation.

##### 1.2 Recommendation of Director of Change, Planning and the Environment

1.2.1 That Cabinet approve the Draft Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS – attached at Appendix A) and its preferred option, using a 'do minimum plus' basis for further improvements, for public consultation.

##### 1.3 Reasons for recommendation

1.3.1 Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) have prepared the strategy in partnership. The ITS sits beneath the two principal KCC transport strategies:

- Kent Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2016 (LTP)(2011).
- Growth Without Gridlock (2010).

1.3.2 The ITS sets the direction for transport in Maidstone until 2026. It assesses the policy context in which it sits and cross references these with the local context of the existing transport network. Using this baseline, it outlines the transport issues that arise from the development aspirations of the Core Strategy and details in its vision, objectives and action plan for how these will be addressed.

1.3.3 The ITS aims to deliver transport infrastructure and wider reaching transport measures in a way that supports the new development proposed in the Maidstone Core Strategy [and future local plan documents], as well as supporting the residents and stakeholders

that already live and work in Maidstone. Among some of the broader issues, the wider reaching measures of the ITS will seek to:

- Reduce congestion
- Increase the 'people-moving' capacity of the existing transport network
- Promote a shift to more sustainable methods of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport use
- Improve road user safety
- Address air quality issues
- Improve the public realm
- Address climate change issues

1.3.4 MBC and KCC have employed professional, independent transport expertise [from JMP Consultants Limited and Jacobs Engineering Limited] to conduct extensive traffic modelling, parking surveys, park and ride customer satisfaction surveys, cost/benefit analysis, economic impact assessments, environmental impact assessments and a more generalised wider appraisal of the measures and options proposed.

1.3.5 Extensive stakeholder engagement has been undertaken during the preparation of the ITS, including:

- MBC member workshops
- Presentation to the Joint Transportation Board
- Highways Agency consultation
- Consultation with local transport operators
- Local business workshop
- Consultation with the development industry

#### Initial option testing

1.3.6 Four options were developed around the delivery of primary infrastructure measures. These were developed through the modelling of these options with the VISUM traffic model [recognized by both KCC and the Highways Agency as a best practice model] which enables journey times and vehicle flows to be forecast for 2026 [the end of the plan period]. Using the 'Do minimum' option as a baseline for 2026 [see 1.3.7 below] the remaining three options were compared against this in terms of costs, benefits and journey times.

1.3.7 Section 5 of the ITS provides a detailed narrative of the option testing process and details how the primary options were tested, that have in turn evolved into the option recommended in this report:

- '**Do minimum**' – maintaining the existing park and ride network with additional small scale improvements.
- '**Radial park and ride sites**' – an increase in the amount of park and ride locations to six, serving the primary entry/exit routes into and out of town, combined with some bus priority measures.

- **'North/south park and ride spine'** – closure of the existing park and ride sites and the construction of two large park and ride sites with significant bus priority measures to and through the town centre. The sites tested were at M20 junction 6 and Langley Park adjacent to the Park Wood industrial estate.
- **'SEMSL'** – the provision of the South East Maidstone Strategic Link joining M20 junction 8 to a point on A274 Sutton Road between Park Wood and the Five Wents junction.

1.3.8 Section 5 of the ITS explains how the recommended option, do minimum plus, was selected by a process of both elimination and deliverability.

1.3.9 The **'do minimum'** option was not in itself deselected, but was seen to be able to be improved in the longer term with the inclusion of additional elements beyond those already proposed, this is explained below as 'do minimum plus'.

1.3.10 The **'radial park and ride'** option was not selected because the ratio of cost to benefit was not balanced far enough in the benefit category to warrant the capital expense required (£41-56million). The capital expense in itself was seen to be a major obstacle.

1.3.11 The **'north/south park and ride spine'** option was proven to be a successful proposal in cost/benefit terms with significant improvements to the traffic situation, however, following modelling the demand for park and ride sites was proven to be biggest at M20 Junction 7 and the Linton crossroads (A229/B2163). The capital cost for this option was estimated at £53-68million, again a significant constraint to its potential progress.

1.3.12 The **'SEMSL'** option was proven not viable in terms of developer contributions when combined with a dispersed pattern of development as proposed in the Core Strategy. Its cost to benefit ratio was not as substantially balanced toward the benefit category as those provided by the park and ride options. SEMSL could not provide the extra funding for transport demand measures and there was no discernible easing of town centre congestion indicated in the modelling exercises.

#### Further option testing

1.3.13 These results led to the testing of two further options:

- **Hybrid option** – retaining the north south concept with a link through town, however, with different sites at M20 Junction 7 and Linton crossroads (A229/B2163) and with fewer priority measures.
- **Do minimum plus** – building on the do minimum as already tested and implementing further measures, some taken from other options.

1.3.14 To ensure sites were available to deliver the hybrid option, a call for sites was issued from 18 May 2012 to 22 June 2012 seeking expressions of interest for developing park and ride sites that would address the demand that the '**hybrid option**' sought to satisfy. One site in each location was proposed, however, the likely high land acquisition costs similar to those detailed for the two previous park and ride options, and significant planning issues relating to landscape and biodiversity impacts meant that neither part of the option could proceed. The M20 Junction 7 is constrained in large parts due to the setting of the Kent Downs AONB, as well as a designated local wildlife site (LWS). The location at Linton crossroads is primarily constrained due to its location in the countryside south of the Greensand Ridge escarpment and issues relating to the inter-visibility with the Linton conservation area. If the site at Linton Crossroads were to be developed it would also lead to unacceptable coalescence between rural settlements with each other and the urban area.

#### Do minimum plus

1.3.15 The '**do minimum plus**' option was selected because the measures included were proven to be deliverable and appropriate to achieve the aims outlined at 1.3.3. Importantly, this option makes best and most efficient use of the existing infrastructure.

1.3.16 The elements of '**do minimum plus**' can be delivered in conjunction with the Core Strategy strategic land allocations (utilising section 106 agreements and possibly CIL depending on further advice) at the north west and south east strategic locations, as well as through the future implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

1.3.17 In detail, the '**do minimum plus**' option seeks to implement:

- Retention and enhancement of the existing park and ride sites.
- Northbound bus lane on A274 Sutton Road between Willington Street and the Wheatsheaf junction (funded by a mixture of section 106 agreements and CIL).
- Bridge gyratory bypass scheme to assist town centre traffic flow (funded by integrated transport block funding).
- Improvements to the M20 junctions 5, 7 and 8 (funded by a mixture of section 106 agreements, CIL and integrated transport block funding).
- Improvements to Bearsted Roundabout and New Cut Roundabout
- The widening and upgrade of Bearsted Road to a dual carriageway between Bearsted Roundabout and New Cut Roundabout
- Constructing bus priority measures on New Cut Road and the junction with Ashford Rd
- Improvements to the Coldharbour roundabout at M20 junction 5 (funded by a mixture of section 106 agreements, CIL and integrated transport block funding).

- A subsidised shuttle bus between the Strategic Development Location at M20 Junction 7 and the town centre
- Improvements to the roundabout entering the 20/20 industrial estate at Allington (funded by a mixture of section 106 agreements, CIL and integrated transport block funding).
- Improvements to the Fountain Lane/A26 Tonbridge Road junction (funded by a mixture of section 106 agreements, CIL and integrated transport block funding).
- A new pedestrian crossing over B2246 Hermitage Lane to improve access to Barming Rail Station
- Improvements to the B2246 Hermitage Lane/A20 London Road junction (funded by a mixture of section 106 agreements, CIL and integrated transport block funding).
- Constructing a new access road between Gore Court Road and Bicknor Wood to provide sufficient access to the new strategic site north of Bicknor Wood
- Widening Gore Court Road between Bicknor Wood and White Horse Lane
- Capacity improvements to the A274 Sutton Road/Willington Street junction (funded by a mixture of section 106 agreements, CIL and integrated transport block funding).
- Capacity improvements to the A20 Ashford Road/Willington Street junction (funded by a mixture of section 106 agreements, CIL and integrated transport block funding).
- Public realm improvements in the town centre (funded by a mixture of CIL and integrated transport block funding) to encourage more walking.
- Implement the Maidstone Cycling Strategy to improve existing and create new cycle routes through the borough
- Implement travel demand measures including raising long stay (4+ hours) council parking tariffs by 50% to encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of travel

1.3.18 Discussions have been had with the Highways Agency (HA) regarding the above junction improvements and the impacts on the M20 and M2. The HA has not raised any objections. Arriva, the primary bus operator in Maidstone, has also been engaged in discussions with officers and there is agreement that the proposed improvements to the bus network, such as increased bus frequencies, can be delivered. This includes current enhancements to bus routes on A20 London Road that are already operating 7 min bus frequencies throughout the day.

1.3.19 Overall, the '**do minimum plus**' option is expected to require a capital investment of **£38m** however this sum is not expected to be only funded through developer contributions (see 1.3.22 below). In particular, Action 30 regarding the construction of the Bridge

Gyratory Bypass Scheme is expected to cost £4.8m and this will be funded solely by KCC through its Integrated Transport Block Funding.

#### Funding

- 1.3.20 The funding and delivery plan within the ITS identifies the funding sources for the schemes as included above. This also details when each of the schemes should be implemented. Reading sections 6 and 7 of the ITS in conjunction with one another, there are a number of further schemes that can be implemented in conjunction with the 'do minimum plus' option. Identifying and securing the funding of these schemes is a pre-requisite to their delivery.
- 1.3.21 To reinforce the deliverable nature of the ITS and the Core Strategy/Local Plan Maidstone Borough Council, with Swale Borough Council, has jointly commissioned Peter Brett Associates to undertake viability testing of proposed strategic development sites and of the Core Strategy/Local Plan as a whole. The results of the viability testing will feed into the preparation of the CIL charging schedule, which sets the level of contributions that developments pay. Importantly, the charge has to be set for any development to be viable after making its contribution.
- 1.3.22 In addition to funding secured through section 106 and CIL, additional/alternative revenue sources are available. These sources include:
- Integrated transport block funding – capital funding paid to KCC on an annual basis by the Department for Transport (DfT). This is the primary means by which the measures identified in the LTP are funded.
  - Revenue funding – the formula grant paid to local authorities by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on an annual basis. MBC and KCC could potentially allocate a portion of the formula grant towards ongoing costs such as concessionary fares and socially necessary bus services e.g. rural services that might otherwise be commercially unviable. The 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review confirmed that this grant would be reduced by a total of 28% over the period 2011/12 to 2014/15.
  - New homes bonus – the match funding mechanism whereby Central Government matches the council tax raised from new properties and empty properties brought back into use. The bonus is paid in the first six years that the property is available.
- 1.3.23 As part of the work towards the viability testing and CIL charging schedule, the council will need to prioritise transport improvements alongside other infrastructure schemes that have been identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The consideration of these factors in a holistic manner, taking into account additional and alternative sources of funding, will allow the council to determine

which other schemes listed in section 6 can be implemented alongside those from the **'do minimum plus'** option.

Performance monitoring

1.3.24 The ITS will need to be performance monitored in the short and longer terms to measure the success or otherwise of implemented schemes and to allow MBC and KCC to adjust the strategy as necessary. Working with each other and with relevant delivery partners and stakeholders, the ITS will be measured against 12 targets included in the performance monitoring plan at section 8 of the document. The targets may be added to or removed in the longer term as a result of periodical reviews.

1.3.25 **'Do minimum plus'**, the recommended option, is the pragmatic option. Iterative testing of the other options indicates that it is also considered the only truly deliverable option in the context of the Core Strategy/local plan in that it seeks to maximise, through modifications and improvements, the efficiency of the existing infrastructure.

1.4 Alternative action and why not recommended

1.4.1 Alternative actions and the reasons for not pursuing them are detailed in the main body of the report.

1.5 Impact on corporate objectives

1.5.1 The ITS supports the objectives of sustainable community strategy and strategic plan for economic growth and a decent place to live.

1.6 Risk management

1.6.1 The ITS is required to support the Core Strategy and without it the Core Strategy would be found to be unsound. The development proposed by the Core Strategy would otherwise be undeliverable.

1.7 Other implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	
3.	Legal	X
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	X
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	X
6.	Community Safety	X

- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

X

- 1.7.2 Financial: The ITS involves a large amount of Council funding to implement.
- 1.7.3 Legal: Legal agreements will need to be secured from new development to implement the ITS.
- 10. Equality Impact Needs Assessment: The ITS has an objective of improving accessibility within the borough and so impacts on equality.
- 11. Environmental/Sustainable Development: The ITS has a large contribution to make to the improving of air quality within the borough and also impacts on residential amenity
- 12. Community Safety: The ITS will improve road user safety across the borough
- 13. Asset Management: The ITS involves a large capital spend program essentially creating new assets

1.8 Relevant documents

1.8.1 Appendices

1.8.2 *The Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy 2012 - 2026*

1.8.3 Background documents

NONE



**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

July 2012

This is a Key Decision because: Affects all wards and parishes

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Wards/Parishes affected: ALL