MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MONDAY 27 JANUARY 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Report prepared by Tim Hapgood

1. MAIDSTONE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To approve the refined vision and objectives of the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) and consider the work programme for developing the ITS in to a full draft document.

1.2 Recommendation of Head of Planning and Development

1.2.1 That Cabinet approves the refined vision and objectives for the ITS.

1.2.2 That Cabinet approves the work programme for developing the ITS in to a full draft document.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 This section provides the background and context to show how the ITS has developed since the previous draft ITS went out for public consultation in August 2012. Information is provided on the actions taken to review the ITS and refine the direction of the transport strategy and produce a new vision and objectives. It also identifies a programme of further work now required to develop a full draft ITS.

The ITS is a joint document, prepared by both Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council. The existing traffic situation in Maidstone is one of significant congestion on our roads. It is accepted that traffic congestion will increase as the borough grows, so the ITS is designed to minimise this increase and to mitigate the associated impacts on the local economy and air quality. The ITS is also directed towards improving road user safety and education.

1.3.2 **Transport Strategy Development**

1.3.3 The previous draft ITS was based on the results of multi-modal transport modelling commissioned by Kent County Council (KCC) and

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC). The model was used in 2011 and early 2012 to test the impact of planned housing and employment growth, together with background traffic growth, on the local transport network. The previous local plan housing target of 10,080 (to 2026) was used. The baseline data that informed the model was collected in 2007 at inner and outer cordon points around the Maidstone urban area. The data showed that the vast majority of vehicular traffic crossing the outer cordon in the morning peak hour was heading to destinations within the town itself, usually passing through the town centre to destinations including the secondary schools and the hospital. On this basis, the modelling strongly indicated that the provision of strategic highway capacity around the town (for example, the South East Maidstone Strategic Link scheme) would not represent a cost-effective solution to existing and forecast traffic congestion in and around the town centre.

1.3.4 These considerations, together with the significant peak period congestion and poor air quality across the urban area, require the ITS to complement one of the core principles in the NPPF, which is to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. The ITS therefore focuses primarily on demand management measures (such as park and ride services, bus priority measures and enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure), combined with targeted highway capacity improvements at strategic junctions. This will enable people to make informed choices about how and when they travel to and from the town centre and other destinations in the borough.

1.3.5 KCC and MBC jointly identified three transport strategy options to address the impact of forecast trip growth over the local plan period; namely, Option 1: 'Do Minimum', Option 2: 'Radial P&R Sites' and Option 3: 'North / South P&R Spine'.

Transport Strategy Options		
Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
• Thameslink rail services to London; • M20 traffic signals; • Increased bus frequencies on all main radial routes into the town centre to at least every 10 minutes; • Romney Place bus lane;	Option 1 plus: • A229 and A274 inbound bus / high occupancy vehicle lane; • Bus priority measures; • Bluebell Hill park and ride site; • Sutton Road park and ride site; • Linton Corner	Option 1 plus: • Park and ride facilities and services along a north / south spine corridor; • Inbound bus / high occupancy vehicle lanes to support park and ride; • Bus priority measures; • New north west

• Bus priority measures; • Upgrade existing park and ride site facilities; • Walking and cycling infrastructure; and • Travel plans for new development sites.	park and ride site; • Newnham Court park and ride site; • Improved through bus services to key destinations; • Reduction in town centre car parking supply; and • Increase in long-stay parking charges.	express loop bus service; • Improved through bus services to key destinations; • Reduction in town centre car parking supply; and • Increase in long-stay parking charges.

1.3.6 Each of the options was modelled and subject to cost benefit analysis. Option 3 was found to have the most beneficial impact on traffic flows and to represent the greatest value for money. However, concerns over the existing subsidy requirement for park and ride and the capital cost of options 2 and 3 resulted in a modified option 1 being selected for public consultation in the summer of 2012.

1.3.7 Responses to the public consultation exercise on the ITS were collated to help inform its development. Responses ranged from those related to specific development sites and areas linked to the local plan, which will be considered through the planning process, to general comments regarding the overall strategy and specific comments regarding particular measures and actions. In terms of the issues raised, these varied from the need to tackle traffic congestion (approximately 12% of respondents), whilst not forgetting the needs of motorists, improving public transport provision including park and ride (approximately 23% of respondents), carefully considering town centre parking and enhancing walking and cycling infrastructure (approximately 12% of respondents). The need to ensure the strategy is deliverable and funding sources are identified was also raised.

1.3.8 In October 2012, the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) resolved that the level of forecast journey time increase on arterial routes associated with option 1 was not acceptable. In order to progress the ITS, it has therefore been necessary for officers to review and redefine the available options. At the meeting of the JTB in January 2013, an Informal Member Group (IMG) was established to progress the ITS and address the JTB's concerns.

1.3.9 **Transport Strategy Review**

1.3.10 The technical studies completed to date, together with the outcome of the public consultation exercise and the resolution of the JTB, demonstrate that any 'Do Minimum' option would not satisfactorily address existing or forecast congestion. They also provide a strong indication that deliverable and cost-effective demand management measures, such as a north/south park and ride spine with bus priority measures on routes serving the sites, should continue to form the basis of the ITS.

1.3.11 These principles were accepted by the IMG, which agreed to recommend that new and /or enhanced park and ride services should feature in the revised ITS, alongside measures to increase highway capacity at strategic junctions in and around Maidstone. The IMG also expressed a clear view that any measures to increase the attractiveness of non-car modes should not disadvantage car or freight traffic.

1.3.12 On the advice of the IMG, KCC and MBC officers visited colleagues at Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council to view the city's new park and ride service and associated bus priority measures, and to discuss the critical success factors which could be applied in Maidstone. The meeting strengthened the findings of the earlier modelling exercise that a small number of large, purpose-built park and ride sites serving distinct catchment areas offer the strongest prospect of becoming commercially viable in the medium term. The park and ride service would also need to include bus priority measures along the route to provide journey time savings.

1.3.13 Alongside the enhanced park and ride facilities, highway capacity and pedestrian accessibility improvements at the Maidstone bridges gyratory are also proposed. The preferred option, which was endorsed by the JTB in October 2013, is to progress the previous 'A229 Through Link' scheme, involving the provision of two northbound lanes on the eastern side of the River Medway.

1.3.14 **Defining the Transport Strategy Framework**

1.3.15 It is considered that the ITS review exercise provides a sound basis on which to progress and develop a transport strategy framework. There are a number of essential elements to the strategy, which are then supported by discretionary elements.

1.3.16 The essential elements include:-

- A more targeted park and ride service, with new and / or improved sites in the vicinity of M20 junction 7 and at Linton Crossroads on

the A229 corridor to the south of the town, aimed at long-stay commuters into the town centre;

- Bus priority measures in tandem with the enhanced park and ride service;
- Highway capacity improvements at the bridges gyratory and at other key junctions in and around the strategic development areas of north west Maidstone, south east Maidstone and M20 junction 7, to improve journey time reliability and air quality;
- Increased bus service frequencies (to at least every 7 minutes) on radial routes serving Maidstone town centre;
- Walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on improved wayfinding, safer crossing points at the town centre gyratory, and improvements to the River Medway towpath;
- A car sharing initiative in partnership with local employers; and
- A refreshed town centre parking strategy, which will look to increase long-stay car parking charges and reduce car parking supply to promote the use of park and ride, and a reduction in short-stay car parking to prioritise shoppers and visitors.

1.3.17 The discretionary elements include:-

- A reduced town centre long-stay parking supply;
- A Maidstone public transport smartcard, similar to London's oyster card;
- A new park and ride service on the A229 corridor linked to the route 101 bus service, in partnership with Medway Council;
- Inbound bus and / or High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on the A229 Royal Engineers Road and / or A229 Loose Road corridors; and
- Greater use of the River Medway as a transport corridor.

1.3.18 The development of the transport strategy framework as shown above allowed the vision and objectives for the ITS to be redefined with the aim of making them more concise and targeted.

1.3.19 **A Transport Vision for Maidstone**

1.3.20 The transport vision for Maidstone set out in the draft local plan states that "by 2031, Maidstone will have a transport network that supports a prosperous economy and provides genuine transport choices to help people make more journeys by sustainable modes such as public transport, walking and cycling. The transport network will promote Maidstone town centre as a regionally important transport hub and will

have sufficient people and goods-moving capacity to support the growth projected by the local plan to 2031. The borough will have a safe environment for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists and its air quality will be better with more low carbon vehicles travelling on our roads. Both the rural service centres and Maidstone town centre will be better connected to facilities and employment within the borough. Strategic links to locations outside of the borough will be improved, and destinations such as London will be more accessible. Overall, Maidstone will be a better place to live with an enhanced quality of life supported by an improved transport network".

1.3.21 **Transport Objectives**

1.3.22 The transport objectives for the borough and how these will be achieved are as follows:

1.3.23 **Ensure the transport system supports the growth projected by Maidstone's local plan and facilitates economic prosperity**

1.3.24 This will be achieved by:

- Integrating transport and land use planning to support sustainable development, particularly in the growth areas identified in the local plan;
- Securing travel plans and appropriate developer contributions to ensure that the impacts of new development are adequately mitigated;
- Securing construction environmental management plans to minimise the impacts from new developments during construction;
- Investing in better public transport provision, in partnership with commercial bus and rail operators;
- Improving walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on routes across the River Medway and the town centre gyratory;
- Enhancing the accessibility and safety of the borough's transport network;
- Highway capacity improvements at the Maidstone bridges gyratory and at other key junctions in and around the strategic development areas of north west Maidstone, south east Maidstone and M20 junction 7; and
- Facilitating the safe and efficient movement of goods and servicing trips across the borough.

1.3.25 **Manage demand on the transport network through enhanced public transport and park and ride services and walking and cycling improvements**

1.3.26 This will be achieved by:

- An enhanced park and ride service, with new and / or improved sites in the vicinity of M20 junction 7 and on the A229 corridor to the south of the town, aimed at long-stay commuters into the town centre;
- Bus priority measures on park and ride routes in tandem with the enhanced service;
- Increased bus service frequencies (to at least every 7 minutes) on radial routes serving Maidstone town centre;
- Inbound bus and / or High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on the A229 Royal Engineers Road and / or A229 Loose Road corridors;
- Improved walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on routes across the River Medway and the town centre gyratory; and
- Securing travel plans and appropriate developer contributions to ensure that the impacts of new development are adequately mitigated.

1.3.27 **Improve highway network capacity and function at key locations and junctions across the borough**

1.3.28 This will be achieved by:

- Highway capacity improvements at the Maidstone bridges gyratory and at other key junctions in and around the strategic development areas of north west Maidstone, south east Maidstone and M20 junction 7.

1.3.29 **Manage parking provision in the town centre and the wider borough to ensure it is fair and proportionate and supports demand management**

1.3.30 This will be achieved by:

- A refreshed town centre parking strategy, prioritising shoppers and visitors;
- Giving consideration to a reduction in town centre long-stay parking supply;
- Utilising town centre parking tariffs to encourage a shift to sustainable modes of transport such as park and ride; and
- Reviewing the residents' parking zones to ensure they are fair, simple and meet the needs of all road users.

1.3.31 **Improve transport choice across the borough and seek to influence travel behaviour**

1.3.32 This will be achieved by:

- Implementing an Influencing Travel Behaviour (ITB) programme;
- Securing travel plans for new development in order to influence their associated travel behaviour patterns;
- Improved walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on routes across the River Medway and the town centre gyratory;
- A high-profile car sharing initiative in partnership with local employers;
- Introducing a Maidstone public transport smartcard, similar to London's oyster card; and
- Greater use of the River Medway as a transport corridor.

1.3.33 **Improving strategic links to Maidstone across the county and to wider destinations such as London**

1.3.34 This will be achieved by:

- Investigating the feasibility of a new park and ride service on the A229 corridor linked to the route 101 bus service, in partnership with Medway Council;
- Improved train service frequency and capacity to London through working with central government and the train operating companies; and
- Working with the Highways Agency to continue to enhance Maidstone's strategic road network connections.

1.3.35 **Ensure the transport network provides inclusive access for all users**

1.3.36 This will be achieved by:

- Reducing traffic dominance and severance;
- Improving road safety across all modes;
- Encouraging modes of transport that are affordable and easily available to everyone, such as walking, cycling and public transport;
- Improving the provision of transport information; and
- Removing physical barriers and ensuring transport modes are accessible to all users.

1.3.37 **Address the air quality impact of transport**

1.3.38 This will be achieved by:

- Implementing the Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan and Low Emission Strategy;
- Encouraging the take up of low carbon vehicle technology; and
- Providing the necessary supporting infrastructure to enable the use of low carbon vehicle technology.

1.3.39 **Next Steps and Timetable**

1.3.40 It is considered that the data derived from existing strategic transport modelling is now out of date. The previous modeling work was based on a housing figure of 10,080 and a future year of 2026. The housing figure is set to change significantly and in order to ensure the local plan is supported by a robust and sound transport evidence base it is considered necessary to undertake a new strategic transport modeling exercise once a new housing target and distribution strategy has been agreed.

1.3.41 The new modeling will factor in the trips generated by any housing and employment sites allocates in the draft local plan, and will cover the plan period 2011-2031. However, notwithstanding the fact that new modeling will be undertaken, the results of the previous modeling exercise combined with recent data obtained from transport modeling undertaken for the strategic sites in the south east and north west of the urban area, is considered robust enough.

1.3.42 On this basis, a number of steps need to be taken to develop the ITS further and to gain agreement to undertake a new public consultation exercise. The actions to be taken and approximate timings are as follows:

- **Action:** Agree a brief for carrying out the strategic transport modeling work based on a new agreed housing target, distribution strategy and package of transport mitigation measures.
- **When:** Spring 2014.

- **Action:** Undertake strategic transport modeling work to understand the transport impact of the proposed local plan growth. Test the package of transport mitigation measures in order to identify the measures required to manage the identified transport impact.
- **When:** Spring 2014.

- **Action:** Based on the outcomes of the modeling work, refine the ITS and develop an action plan. Produce a full draft ITS document and bring it to Scrutiny and Cabinet for agreement to go out to public consultation.
- **When:** Spring / Summer 2014.

- **Action:** Carry out public consultation of the draft ITS.
- **When:** Summer 2014.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 Not progressing the ITS would undermine the robustness and soundness of the evidence base of the emerging local plan.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 **For Maidstone to have a growing economy –** the ITS, in support of the local plan, will allow the council to have more certainty over the transport network and its function and capability to support growth. This in turn will foster confidence that the borough is a more attractive place to locate for residents and business.

1.5.2 **For Maidstone to be a decent place to live** – the ITS and local plan are in essence tools to allow Maidstone borough to continue to be a decent place to live.

1.6 Other Implications

1.6.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	X
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	

1.6.2 Financial – progressing the ITS will have financial implications. The transport modelling work proposed will be accommodated by the local plan budget.

1.6.3 Environmental / sustainable development – the ITS will support the delivery of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan aims and objectives. The plan is written to deliver environmental / sustainable development as a key aspect.

1.7 Relevant Documents

1.8 None

1.8.1 Appendices

1.8.2 None

1.8.3 Background Documents

1.8.4 None

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?			**THIS BOX MUST BE COMPLETED**
Yes	X	No	

If yes, this is a Key Decision because: It affects all wards and parishes.

Wards/Parishes affected: All wards and parishes.