

Medway Valley A228/A20 Corridors Outline Public Transport Strategy.

1.0 Scope of the Strategy.

1.1 This note is prepared to inform the parallel M20 Junction 3-5 Study undertaken by the Highways Agency. The area of interest includes the A228 corridor from Holborough to Kings Hill and the A20 Corridor from West Malling to Maidstone. It includes key development sites at Kings Hill, Leybourne Grange, Holborough Quarry and Peters Village and Aylesford.

1.2 In developing any improvement schemes for the M20 it is important that an integrated approach is adopted and that there is a complementary package of public transport improvements and improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists on the County road network. This also needs to be matched by a sustainable pattern of new development and measures to reduce the number of car trips in the peak hours.

2.0 Existing Situation

Existing Public Transport Services

2.1 West Malling Railway Station

2.1.1 The area benefits from rail services operating from West Malling railway station which lies close to the existing A228 bypass. From here there is a regular half-hourly service to London Victoria via Bromley and a less frequent service to Charing Cross and an hourly off peak service to Cannon Street. To the east the rail services provide direct connections to Maidstone and Ashford, where rail services to Europe are available.

2.1.2 As well as taxi services, there is a shuttle bus service linking West Malling railway station with West Malling and Kings Hill. Most rail passengers though arrive by car and many park at the station car parks and at other locations in the area.

2.1.3 Consultants Babtie have undertaken a study to look at the need for additional parking space and enhancements to bus interchange arrangements at West Malling station.

2.1.4 Analysis of post code data for the station car park and season ticket shows the majority of users are relatively local i.e. Kings Hill, West Malling or Leybourne/ Ditton. The car park is full to capacity on weekdays and there is some overspill parking in the local area.

2.2 Medway Valley Railway Line

2.2.1 To the north and east of Leybourne the Medway Valley railway links Strood in the Medway Towns with Maidstone. Along its northern section the railway runs close to the A228 on its eastern side and has intermediate stations at Cuxton, Halling and Snodland. Further south the A228 and the railway diverge and there are intermediate stations at New Hythe and Aylesford. This

route is currently unattractive to commuters because of the need to change at Strood and then progress to London by the slower North Kent Line.

2.2.2 To the south, the line continues along the Medway Valley via Maidstone, East Farleigh, Nettlestead and Yalding to Paddock Wood where passengers are able to change for services to Tonbridge, London and Guildford to the west and Ashford to the East.

2.2.3 There is currently a basic hourly service between Maidstone and Paddock Wood with some additional trains in the AM and PM peaks. The service from Maidstone to Strood is half hourly.

2.2.4 The County Council is looking at ways to improve services on the Medway Valley railway in partnership with local district authorities, the train operator and Network Rail. A number of potential Rail Passenger Partnership bids are being considered for this line. The line has been identified in the M25 Orbit Study as part of a possible south orbital rail link from the Medway Towns to Reading via Tonbridge and Redhill.

2.3 Existing Bus Services

2.3.1 Seven main bus routes serve the Leybourne and West Malling area. The following provide a minimum hourly weekday service from outlying areas such as Kings Hill and Snodland to Maidstone: -

Service 71 Snodland via Larkfield and Lunsford Park.

Service 72 Kings Hill via West Malling and A20

Service 76 Leybourne via A20

Service 70 Borough Green via Offham and West Malling

Service 58 Trottiscliffe via Birling, Leybourne, West Malling and East Malling

All these services use the A20 corridor into Maidstone that has been designated as a Quality Bus Partnership Corridor and will therefore be given priority for public investment opportunities. The services converge at the Spotted Cow at Larkfield to provide a 10-minute frequency service between Larkfield and Maidstone.

2.3.2 Service 151 provides an hourly weekday service along the A228 corridor between Chatham Maritime and Tunbridge Wells. Service 123 provides a frequent shuttle service between West Malling railway station, West Malling, Kings Hill and Mereworth timed to coincide with the arrival and departure of key rail services at the station.

The Trottiscliffe service utilises Castle Way and Park Road at Leybourne and the Chatham Maritime to Tunbridge Wells service is routed along Castle Way.

2.3.3 Interchange between bus and rail services at West Malling railway station is generally poor. Only the Kings Hill shuttle bus links directly with the station. This service however, is relatively slow as it is routed through the village centre. Kent County Council is considering a possible bid for rural bus challenge funding for the shuttle service building in more innovative demand responsive elements to the route. New low floor mini-buses will provide an enhanced, more attractive link and will cater better for mobility impaired people seeking

employment in Kings Hill. In tandem, improvements to West Malling station will be considered, possibly with RPP funding.

2.3.4 The developer of Kings Hill is actively promoting an Integrated Transport Strategy through a partnership approach. For residents making longer journeys and for employees and visitors to the development, bus services are already in operation linking Kings Hill with the surrounding centres of population and with the rail station at West Malling, thereby enabling longer distance travellers to make their complete journey by public transport

2.4 Medway Gap Package Funding.

2.4.1 Local Transport Plan funding has already been identified for various improvements related to public transport, pedestrians and cyclists mainly on the A20 corridor. 2002/3 is the second year of the five-year programme with an accepted spend of some £200,000 per annum. The first phase of improved cycleway provision has already been completed with the intention of completion of a continuous cycleway along the A20 from Kings Hill and West Malling to Maidstone by 2006.

2.4.2 Initial work for public transport investment is being focussed on bus stop and shelter improvement and the provision of real time information along the A20 corridor. Extension of the existing GPS system will provide bus priority at traffic signals.

2.4.3 Consultants Babtie have been commissioned to investigate the scope for additional bus priority measures along the A20 from Castle Way to Allington with particular emphasis on the junctions.

2.5 Maidstone Urban Package Funding.

2.5.1 There has already been significant investment in bus priority measures on the A20 corridor within the Maidstone Borough area. Dedicated bus lanes have already been provided on significant lengths of the A20 between the Allington Park and Ride site and Maidstone Town Centre. Further improvements to bus stops and real time information are proposed. A Bus Quality Partnership with Arriva already exists and the route is serviced by high quality low floor buses.

3.0 Future Developments.

3.1 Proposed A228 Leybourne and West Malling By-Pass.

3.1.1 Planning permission has been granted for an improved dual carriageway link between M20 Junction 4 and the Tower View junction at Kings Hill. This scheme includes a new bus-only link between the West Malling By-Pass and West Malling Railway Station. The scheme is likely to be part funded by the Phase 2 development at Kings Hill and in the light of the provisional acceptance of the County Council's Local Transport Plan bid, the scheme is due to be completed in 2006/07.

3.1.2 The improved bus access/egress to the station from the completed A228 Leybourne and West Malling Bypass scheme will provide a more direct and faster bus route from Kings Hill to West Malling Station. In addition, new and adapted bus services associated with existing and proposed developments along the A228 north of the station will be able to provide high quality bus/rail interchange via the proposed bus only link from the bypass. Bus services using Castle Way, Leybourne would benefit from congestion free operation resulting from the removal of through traffic by the bypass and by the provision of bus priority at the A20 Castle Way traffic signal junction.

3.1.3 New cycle and pedestrian links will be provided between Kings Hill, West Malling, the station and the A20.

3.2 Major Development Sites.

3.2.1 There are on-going discussions with developers of the key sites at Kings Hill, Leybourne Grange, Leybourne Lakes, Holborough and Peters Village. Each will need to play its part in improving bus services, railway station interchange and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

3.2.2 Significant residential developments are also likely in the Aylesford area with the possibility of further developments at the major retail and industrial park at Quarry Wood. Enhancements to bus service 58 are proposed to link Aylesford Station, residential areas, Quarry Wood, Maidstone Hospital and Maidstone Town Centre. A secondary access onto Hermitage Lane from the Quarry Wood development is being considered to relieve pressure on the A20/ Mills Road junction and to provide a through route for buses and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists.

3.2.3 Details of potential contributions that will be required from each of the key development sites are set out the appendix to this strategy.

4.0 Proposed Public Transport Strategy

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 Key junctions within the local road network are already at capacity and a significant change in modal split will be required if future development at Kings Hill and Leybourne Grange and along the A228 corridor to the north of the M20 is to be accommodated. More effective use of road space needs to be made, particularly on the A228/A20 corridors.

4.1.2 Examination of local Origin and Destination data shown that there are three key aspects of demand for travel in the area associated with journeys to work, schools and local facilities.

a) Commuting to London from existing residential areas at Kings Hill, West Malling, Ditton, Larkfield, Aylesford, East Malling and Leybourne. This is locally focussed on West Malling Railway Station but there are also a significant number of car trips to Paddock Wood Station from this area. (The Medway Valley line generally provides for more local trips because of the lack of direct links to London.)

b) Movements to and from Maidstone Town Centre along the A20 corridor.

c) Movements to and from the Medway Towns along the A228 corridor.

There is some demand for reverse commuting from South East London and South West Kent to Kings Hill and other local employment sites.

4.1.3 The following elements of the proposed Strategy are aimed at:

- a) encouraging sustainable commuting by promoting better integration of bus and rail services and interchange arrangements at local railway stations
- b) Improving access and facilities at railway stations for all users.
- c) reducing the need to travel by the planning of mixed developments with local employment and facilities
- d) maximising the effective use of the A228 and A20 corridors, by promoting bus priority and cycle lanes.
- e) encouraging walking and cycling.
- f) a partnership approach to future transport investment.

4.2 Integration

4.2.1 The new bus link from West Malling by-pass to West Malling railway station will secure faster and more reliable connecting services operating to an integrated timetable. It will provide the opportunity to extend the shuttle bus service to link with existing and proposed residential areas to the north and east. If a successful rural bus challenge bid could be obtained, a significant benefit for disabled people will be achieved through the introduction of easy access mini-buses. This could be further enhanced by through-ticketing arrangements and the display of real-time bus arrival times at the station. The associated footway/cycleway facilities will provide direct links to the station and integrate the rail and pedestrian/cycle networks as well as significantly improving the safety and attractiveness of cycle travel between the A20 cycle lanes, Leybourne, West Malling and Kings Hill.

4.2.2 The mixed-use development at Kings Hill, that incorporates housing, education, employment, shopping and leisure, will reduce the need for motorised travel. Sustainable travel choices between these facilities are provided by an extensive network of footways, cycleways and public transport routes. The developers will be encouraged to adopt Travel Plans and control parking in order to further minimise car trips. Higher density development will be encouraged, where a good and frequent public transport service exists. Many of the other developments in the area are residential in nature and on brownfield sites. There are already significant industrial and commercial employment opportunities in the area and developers will be encouraged to contribute to a sustainable pattern of development.

4.3 Bus Service/Route Improvements

4.3.1 There needs to be a step change in the quality, reliability and frequency of bus services if future growth in people movement in the area is to be accommodated. A “Medway Valley Metro” image needs to be promoted, with high quality vehicles in readily recognised livery. Easy access is particularly important in this regard.

4.3.2 The A20 is a key public transport corridor linking significant existing and proposed developments with the centre of Maidstone. It is essential that bus priority measures be further improved along this corridor. Significant improvements will be required at a number of junctions to avoid excessive delay for bus passengers and additional lengths of bus lane need to be provided.

4.3.3 Quite radical bus priority measures are likely to be required at key junctions like A20/A228 (when by-passed), A20/Lunsford Lane, A20/New Road/New Hythe Lane, A20/ Ditton Corner, A20/ Mills Road (Quarry Wood), A20/ Hermitage Lane and A20/ Coldharbour Lane roundabout. Consultants Babtie have been commissioned to investigate proposals on this corridor and other feeder routes including the A228. Potential solutions could include such options as guided bus or high occupancy vehicle lanes on the A20 and A228 and are likely to require some land acquisition.

4.3.4 The County Council will also continue to develop measures to improve bus stops by way of improved shelters, raised kerbs, removal of bus lay-bys (to improve access and avoid delays for buses) and provision of real-time information. Bus operators will provide high quality buses where this is commercially viable.

4.3.5 The existing GPS system will be extended to provide bus priority at traffic signals.

4.3.6 The Medway Towns Urban Area is a significant generator and attractor of vehicle movements. There is an existing bus service 151 between Medway and Tunbridge Wells via the A228 but this visits a number of villages on route. A more direct express service is required between the Medway Towns and Kings Hill and will be the subject of discussions with Medway Council.

4.3.7 The existing park-and-ride site at junction 3 of the M2 is to be expanded as part of the M2 widening scheme. This could provide a useful catchment site to pick up trips between the Medway Towns and key employment sites including Kings Hill and various sites at Aylesford. The primary use of the site as a pick up point for London coaches and for car sharing will continue. The Highway Agency should consider similar facilities adjacent to the M20, consistent with the orbital coach network suggested in the M25 Orbit Study. Such a site at Junction 5 of the M20 could, subject to a new station on the Medway Valley Line, serve a dual function of coach-based and rail-based park-and-ride site. A group of such sites along the M20 and M2 could provide a very positive contribution to a reduction in the number of trips on the motorway and local road network.

4.4 Improvements to the Railway Services, Station and Interchange arrangements.

4.4.1 The County Council will continue to work with the Rail Authorities to develop more frequent and better quality train services. West Malling Station in particular has the potential to become a major bus/ rail interchange with direct access off the A228 West Malling By-Pass. Improvements to the interchange arrangements may be eligible for RPP funding but this will need to be matched

by investment from the train operators in the fabric of the stations. Bus/rail through ticketing arrangements will also need to be improved.

4.4.2 General improvements to the frequency of services and the quality of rolling stock are required on the Medway Valley Line. More direct links to London, Tonbridge and elsewhere need to be developed consistent with the concept of a possible south orbital link. Additional chords are required at Strood and Paddock Wood. The completion of the Channel Tunnel Rail-link and Thames Link 2000 should provide additional capacity on the North Kent Line.

4.4.3 Snodland needs to be improved as a hub station to serve the new developments at Holborough and Peters Village. Aylesford station should be similarly improved in relation to Kings Hill and existing and proposed residential developments at Aylesford. Improved bus feeder services will also need to be provided.

4.5 Encouraging Walking and Cycling.

4.5.1 A network of pedestrian and cycle routes is being developed based on main spine routes along the A20 and A228. Feeder routes to residential areas, schools and employment sites will be provided. Developers will be required to provide safe networks of paths within new developments and facilities for cyclists, including secure parking and showers and lockers for cyclists at employment sites.

4.5.2 The County Council will continue to work with the schools to develop Safer Routes to School projects. These will promote health and safety and minimise the number of car trips associated with the school run.

4.6 Partnership Approach to Future Transport Investment.

4.6.1 The current level of LTP package funding will not be sufficient on its own to deliver the step change in Public Transport provision in the area. A partnership approach with developers, Transport Operators, local Councils and the various Government Agencies will be required if the development potential of this area is to be realised. The studies currently in progress need to identify the overall cost of an integrated package of road and public transport improvements.

Medway Valley A228/A20 Corridors Public Transport Strategy

Appendix: Potential scheme funding

Introduction

Each of the key development sites in the Medway Valley Area to make specific contributions to improvements to sustainable forms of transport. These proposals need to be co-ordinated in order to develop complementary networks of pedestrian, cycle and bus routes in the Medway Valley Area.

The County Council will work in partnership with the Highways Agency, the Borough and Parish Councils, developers, transport operators and the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) to fund appropriate improvements. It will also seek enhanced transport package funding through Local Transport Plan bids to Central Government.

Contributions will be sought by the Local Highway Authority from specific developments as outlined below. There will, by necessity, need to be a flexible and phased approach. However, improvements will be focussed on the A228 and A20 corridors with improved links to railway stations. The railway stations and rail services will also need to be improved in partnership with the train operators and the SRA.

The development of the A20 as a bus priority corridor costing some £5m will require contributions from a number of sources including Transport Plan Package funding and contributions from the key development sites.

Funding of necessary road improvements in relation to site access and the impact of development on the local road network will be considered separately but will take into account the benefits of the sustainable approach described in the strategy

Specific Development Sites – Likely Requirements for Contributions.

Kings Hill

Mixed Use Development Employment and Housing.

- Bus only link from West Malling By-pass to Railway Station.
- Enhancements to West Malling Station and development of rail bus/ interchange in partnership with Connex, Network Rail, County and Borough Council and other developers.
- Off site public transport improvements. (part service enhancements and part infrastructure improvements A20 corridor). Including enhanced peak hour bus service from Kings Hill to Maidstone via West Malling Station.

- Improved cycle and pedestrian routes from Kings Hill to West Malling and A20
- Local Safety Improvements particularly focussed on pedestrians and cyclists.

Leybourne Lakes. (Housing)

- Extension of existing half- hourly service 71 to site.
- Improved cycle and pedestrian links to Tesco, New Hythe Station (Medway Valley Line), new country park and Snodland village via new Toucan crossing of the A228.

Housing at Holborough Valley

- Improved cycle and pedestrian links to Snodland Town centre and railway station and Halling.
- Partnership funding of improvements to Snodland Railway Station and improvements to services on the Medway Valley line.
- Through ticketing arrangements for the Medway Valley Line.
- Contributions towards improved 151 express service Medway –Holborough- West Malling Station- Kings Hill.
- Service 70 improved to 20 minute frequency in the peak hours.
- Contributions to bus priority measures on the A20 corridor to Maidstone.

Leybourne Grange. (Housing)

- Bus Service Improvements
Service 123 Extension from West Malling Station to Leybourne Grange.

Service 70 group to Maidstone extended to Leybourne Grange.

Service 58 (Trottiscliffe to Maidstone) diverted via site.

- Improved pedestrian and cycle links to Castle Way, Leybourne and West Malling Station via A20.
- Contributions to bus priority measures on the A20 and or improvements to West Malling railway station.

Peters Village Housing Development

- Bus feeder services from Peter Village to Snodland Station.
- Enhancements to existing bus services to Wouldham and Burham.
- Contributions towards improved 151 express service Medway –Holborough- West Malling Station- Kings Hill.
- Contributions to bus priority measures on the A20 corridor to Maidstone.

Quarry Wood Retail Park - potential non -food retail development.

- Enhanced bus link between Aylesford – Quarry Wood- Maidstone Hospital – Maidstone via new access to Hermitage Lane.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle links.
- Improved bus penetration within the site.
- Contribution to bus priority measures on the A20.