

1.1 The Kent Integrated Transport Strategy

- 1.1.1 Kent County Council is carrying out a consultation exercise on its draft Integrated Transport Strategy. It is not really clear where this latest document fits into the spectrum of already existing plans and strategies such as the South East Plan and the Regional Transportation Strategy. Nevertheless, it seeks to provide a context for future Local Transport Plans and to inform the Local Development Framework process by providing a vision for an integrated transport network for Kent over the next twenty years.
- 1.1.2 The closing date for response was 12 February and I have offered some observations on the draft strategy before that date. A summary of the points made is attached at **Annex 1**. County Council and Borough Council officers have also met to discuss the document just before the response deadline and this provided an opportunity to amplify the earlier submission. I advised the County Council that the response deadline preceded the meeting of this Board by a little over a week and that the comments so far were at officer level. Therefore I sought an understanding that there would be an opportunity to follow up with any further observations the Board might wish to add.
- 1.1.3 The document makes a laudable attempt to provide a longer term context for Local Transport Plans that, until now, have had a life-span of five years. However it also aims to be a key influence on Local Development Frameworks, without recognising that a number of Local Planning Authorities, such as Tonbridge and Malling already have their current LDF at a mature stage of adoption. It prompts a question of what weight would or could be given to this document when the process of adoption is significantly different from the statutory framework for the LDF.
- 1.1.4 The document recognises a number of key transport issues for the Borough but does not transform these into proposals.
- There is considerable development in the Medway valley and also in Tonbridge; the transportation implications of these have already been mapped out through planning consents and in the Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan.
 - Air Quality Management Zones are acknowledged but there is no indication of a positive means of resolving them.
 - There need to be specific measures to deal with deficiencies in rail services on the West Malling line and on the corridor out to Redhill and Gatwick.

- The project to install further Urban Traffic Management Centres only mentions one for Tunbridge Wells when it should include both centres because Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells are indicated as a joint hub in the South East Plan.
- There is no mention of dualling for the single lane stretch of the Snodland bypass.
- There should be specific reference to improved station parking, especially at West Malling and Hildenborough.
- It is interesting to note that there is no sign of any early adoption of congestion charging or parking levies but there is mention of 'variable parking charges'. Given that the stock of off-street parking is almost entirely within the control of the districts and any attempt to reduce demand would have an adverse financial impact on them, there will need to be some more detailed explanation as to how the County Council will be able to use this particular demand management mechanism and how it would meet the drop in income of this Borough Council, for example.
- The text on a Lower Thames Crossing is referenced by an arrow on the associated map in the document indicating a landing place on the south of the River Thames to the east of Gravesend. The strategy should be overt in recognising that such a location would result in traffic impacts well to the south and east and particularly along the A228 corridor and adjoining roads.
- There is the briefest of mentions of enforcement of work place travel plans at new developments that opens up a number of questions about how it would be done, what would the sanctions be, and who would do it and under what powers?
- There is a welcome reference to the County Council, in its role as Highway Authority, going beyond a narrow focus on functional highway matters and contributing towards 'place-making'. This implies a commitment to quality design and layout and creating roads that are attractive as well as being functional. Past experience suggests that this will be a difficult aim to achieve since it inevitably implies greater capital and revenue costs to build and maintain such projects. Nevertheless, it is an aim that we should support if we are to achieve improvement to the appearance and attractiveness of the public realm in this Borough through financial means other than what we can secure from our own Capital Plan or through the planning process.

- 1.1.5 These, together with the comments already forwarded to the County Council transportation team set out in Annex 1, are just a few of the observations prompted by a wide ranging strategic document. The Board may have further thoughts and these can be collated at the meeting. I will then send them to the County Council and confirm the aggregate submission as the formal views of this Council.
- 1.1.6 Irrespective of what weight the final strategy eventually has or whether it has any impact on the LDF process, it presents an opportunity to air and advocate a range of transportation matters that are important to the residents and businesses in the Borough, both present and future.
- 1.1.7 Several copies of the document have been left in the Members' library for reference. It can also be viewed on-line at the KCC website under <http://www.kent.gov.uk/static/transport/integrated-transport-strategy.pdf>