

Appendix I

Growth Without Gridlock – An Integrated Transport Strategy for Kent (Final Draft – November 2009) Swale Borough Council Comments – January 2010

1. This paper gives the comments from Swale Borough Council in relation to the final draft of the Kent Partnerships Integrated Transport Strategy for Kent (ITS).
2. The document outlines a strategic direction for the development of transport infrastructure in Kent. The most notable aspect is the vision for an integrated transport network based upon much improved public transport – particularly buses.
3. The strategy will be used as a basis for future Local Transport Plans (LTP). It is therefore important that the principles of the ITS are embedded early to make sure that they translate into the LTP policies and actually deliver. There will remain a danger that the ITS may become diluted as it translates into the LTP and its competing demands, and that key aspects like the improvement to bus services become eroded and not deliver their true potential.
4. The recent introduction of the new rail timetable has caused a lot of complaint regarding the effect on the original services to London Victoria and Cannon Street. There needs to be a general point in the strategy that where such significant changes are made to the transport infrastructure, while welcome, must also cater for existing users and their travel patterns.
5. An area that does need to be brought to the fore in terms of the much needed improvements to bus services is information, marketing and promotion. Without this, nobody will know of the services and therefore uptake will be below expectations. This is an area that needs considerable effort and the ITS should recognise this and clearly articulate that a comprehensive promotion campaign will accompany the proposed service improvements.
6. The other area that does need further work is integration within the ITS. There is no real sense that the ITS delivers an overall package. A suggestion could be to articulate this within an expanded chapter 12 – A Vision for North Kent. What could be demonstrated here through building upon the integrated transport network already shown, is that freight improvements, controlled motorways with Active Traffic Management, excellent communication/promotion of travel options and so on all come together to realise the benefits of better connectivity, improved access to education/employment by sustainable modes, reduced congestion, improved journey reliability, reduced environmental impact and so on. This creates a more compelling vision and shows how all the different areas within the ITS can work together.

Further specific comments listed below.

Pg 3 and 6 – page 3 talks of a 20 year strategy, but page 6 talks of a 20-25 year strategy. It would be useful to be consistent in describing the strategy's timescale.

Pg 8 – Swale also suffers from deprivation in its rural areas, particularly on the Isle of Sheppey, and is compounded by poor transport links. We would wish to see Swale added into the second paragraph under the rural issues heading.

Pg 11 – Strategic road network – there is no reference to active traffic management (hard shoulder running and so on) for the M2/A2 corridor to improve journey time reliability. Do we need to say something about the potential usage of a High Occupancy vehicle lane on this length?

This section also needs a narrative to indicate the issues at M2 junction 5, which are as equally as important in a sub regional context as those listed. This junction provides the first high quality link to the M20 for traffic heading to and from East Kent. The junction provides the only access to the motorway network for the western half of Swale and so this conflict results in significant peak period congestion. The same is true at the M20 junction 7. These junctions have a strong influence on the strategic network across the County and should therefore be pulled out from the list of junctions for improvement as a very clear need. The improvement of these junctions, and the link between them, could also provide in the longer term an innovative public transport alternative that could contribute to reduced congestion.

Pg 13 – suggest that the description of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road amended to say major employment and development areas. There is also a need to say that further work is needed to deliver the final section of the road, so its real benefits can be realised.

Pg 26 – This page needs to recognise the use of coach commuter services that already exist across north Kent to London. I understand that this is almost unique to Kent, with other similar services not getting the same level of usage that we see here. There is already infrastructure in place that is well used to support this, such as the park and ride facilities at Hempstead, Bean and so on. The network map should reflect that these services already exist and can be built upon. Interurban services are useful at plugging the gap in good north-south rail links, but we should also recognise that they do and can contribute to the use of other modes to access London.

Pg 30 – Swale Borough Council support the development of Kent International Airport at Manston, and are pleased to see that the strategy opposes a new airport in the Thames Estuary

Pg 33 – Sheerness Port – The comments referring to the increase of rail freight will need to be the subject of much more detailed investigation. We would need to fully understand which products are suitable for a transfer to rail, and it is feasible for the origin/destinations of the products are able to use the rail network.

Pg 37 – Effectiveness of school travel plans – while the benefits of having a travel plan are well documented, is the actual modal shift achieved enough? Should we consider a more stretching modal shift target?

Pg 43 – The diagram should also consider showing the use of High Occupancy vehicle lanes on the A2 and other active traffic management approaches on the A2 corridor to manage demand and complete the picture for managing overall transport demand

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