

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL'S
RESPONSE TO THE
DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT'S
SOUTH EASTERN FRANCHISE CONSULTATION**

21 August 2012



INTRODUCTION

1 Kent County Council (KCC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a comprehensive response to the Department for Transport's (DfT) South Eastern franchise consultation.

2 Our response is based on the key recommendations in *Rail Action Plan for Kent*, Kent County Council, April 2011:
<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/council-and-democracy/have%20your%20say/rail-action-plan-for-kent.pdf>

This Rail Action Plan encapsulates all the consultation responses received by us from our stakeholders at every level of governance in Kent, including Rail User Groups and interested individuals, and through our Rail Summits held annually with key stakeholders and rail users.

3 The vision supporting our Rail Action Plan for Kent is encapsulated in *Chapter 5 – Towards the New Franchise: 2014+:*

“This Rail Action Plan for Kent (RAPK) therefore sets out the objectives that KCC wishes to see incorporated in the new franchise. In doing so KCC does not profess to be expert in the operation of the rail network, nor proficient in the most economic allocation of rolling-stock and crew resources. Rather we seek to represent the aspirations of the people of Kent for a new rail service which reflects the needs of our county, drives economic growth, meets the targets of our Growth Areas at Ashford and Thames Gateway (Kent) and of our Growth Points at Dover and Maidstone, and ensures the provision of a reliable, useful, safe, clean and punctual railway which meets the current and future business, education, employment and leisure needs of the people of Kent.”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.2

4 The Rail Action Plan for Kent has been adopted by KCC as a key part of our broader transport policy, and builds on KCC's transport delivery plan *Growth without Gridlock*, Kent County Council, December 2010:

http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/growth_without_gridlock.aspx

5 KCC has also sought agreement for this consultation response from the neighbouring local authorities which are co-members of the South-East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP): East Sussex County Council, Essex County Council, Medway Council, Southend Council and Thurrock Council. The Council will follow a similar process for our response to the Combined franchise consultation, which will run in parallel with this consultation response.



Rail Action Plan for **Kent** 2011



April 2011



KENT COUNTY COUNCIL CONTACT OFFICERS

Paul Crick
Director of Planning and Environment
Kent County Council
Invicta House
MAIDSTONE
Kent
ME14 1XX

T: 01622 221527
E: paul.crick@kent.gov.uk
W: www.kent.gov.uk

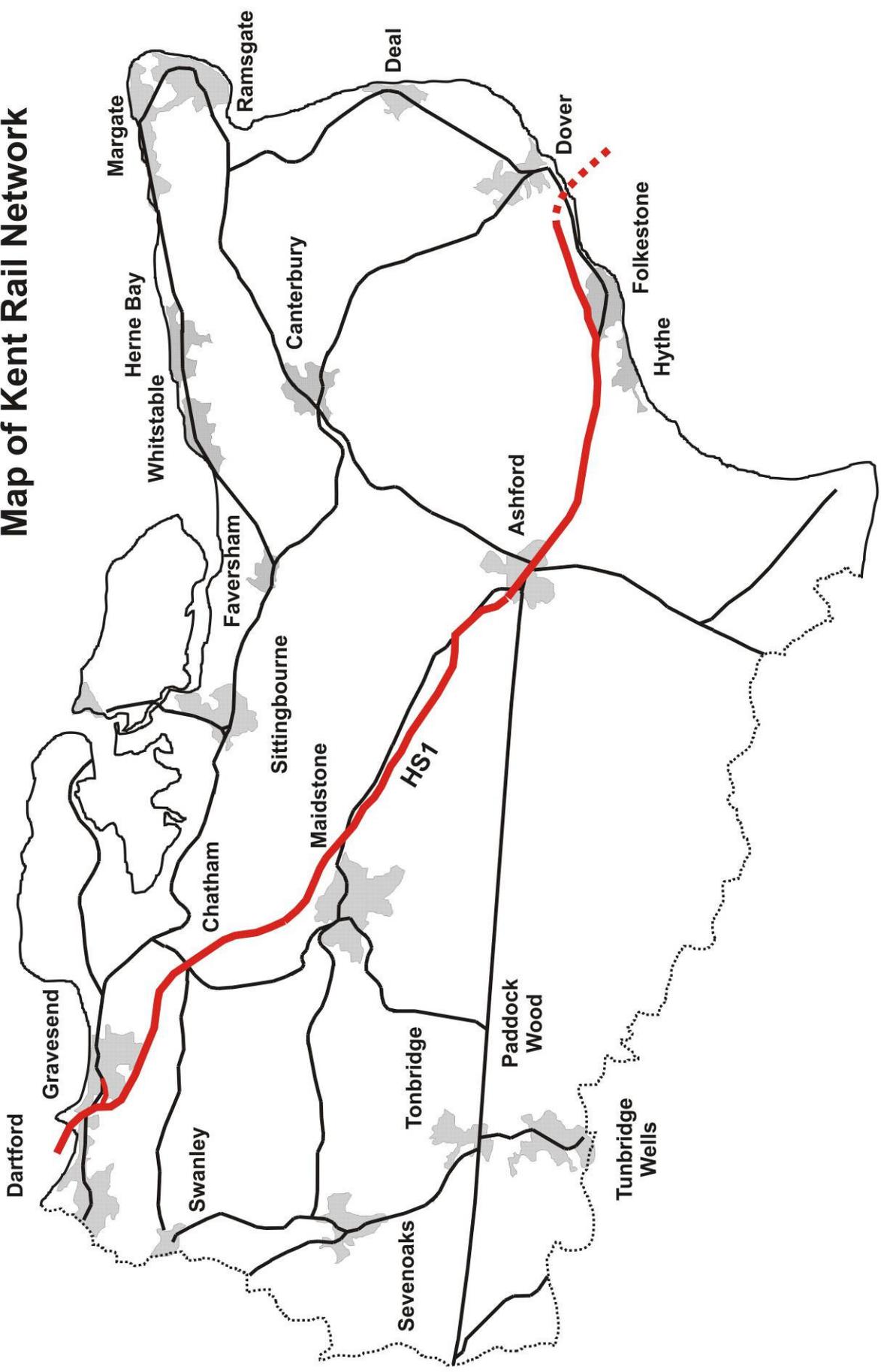
Ann Carruthers
Transport Strategy Delivery Manager
Kent County Council
Invicta House
MAIDSTONE
Kent
ME14 1XX

T: 01622 221615
E: ann.carruthers@kent.gov.uk
W: www.kent.gov.uk

Stephen Gasche
Principal Transport Planner - Rail
Kent County Council
Invicta House
MAIDSTONE
Kent
ME14 1XX

T: 01622 221616
E: stephen.gasche@kent.gov.uk
W: www.kent.gov.uk

Map of Kent Rail Network



RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

The Department for Transport (DfT) consultation questions are shown in bold throughout

The Kent County Council (KCC) responses are shown in normal font throughout

The Rail Action Plan for Kent quotations are shown in italics throughout

Q1 What improvements do stakeholders believe could be made on the [South Eastern] franchise through partnership working between Network Rail and the new operator?

The new operator will need to build on the partnership working which has already commenced between the incumbent operator and Network Rail. The Control Centre, jointly managed by both parties, should continue to function as a joint enterprise.

There is also a need to ensure the delivery of route enhancement schemes such as Ashford to Thanet, phase 1 of which is scheduled for Spring 2013. The new operator will need to commit to the delivery of an improved timetable with reduced scheduled times on this route.

Q2 What, if any, changes to South Eastern services need to be made given the likely changes in demand?

The Rail Action Plan for Kent proposes 15 key recommendations (paragraph 5.4) for the new franchises in Kent. These recommendations are included specifically in our responses to Q4 & Q7 (High Speed), Q6 (Mainline), Q10 (Thameslink), and Q11 (Community Rail Partnership lines).

The new operator will also need to respond to future growth in demand in Kent, especially from stations serving the planned Growth Areas at Ashford and Thames Gateway (Kent) and Growth Points at Dover and Maidstone.

Q3 Are consultees aware of any other rail or non-rail development schemes that might affect the new franchise?

Ashford via Canterbury to Ramsgate

“Network Rail has engaged with KCC in funding GRIP (Governance of Rail Investment Process) 1-2 studies into route enhancement schemes for Ashford-Thanet with the potential of saving up to eight minutes journey time between Ashford and

the proposed Thanet Parkway, which would support opportunities for growth ... by reducing journey times on High Speed and Mainline between London and Thanet;"

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (vi)

KCC is about to engage consultants to develop a business case for a Thanet Parkway station. The aspiration of the Council is for a station which would have a two-fold purpose: to serve a revitalised Kent International Airport (KIA) at Manston; and to serve the wider economy of Thanet District in order to stimulate growth and widen opportunity for education, employment and leisure travel. The delivery of a Thanet Parkway station would be dependent on a combination of funding from Manston Airport, local developers and KCC, and together with the planned Journey Time Improvement (JTI) scheme between Ashford and Ramsgate would deliver a journey time to London City (Stratford) of about one hour from Thanet.

Both these projects would have a significant effect on the rail service to be operated by the new incumbent. The new franchisee should be required, as a condition of the franchise specification, to serve the Parkway station with both High Speed and Mainline services, and also to deliver the reduced journey times between Ashford and Thanet following the planned delivery of both phases of the JTI scheme by 2016/17.

KCC is also aware of the aspiration of Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor of London to transfer the existing Metro services (which form part of the present franchise) to their London Overground franchise. These services operate either wholly within Greater London or as cross-boundary services (e.g. to Dartford and to Sevenoaks) between Greater London and Kent.

The Council has met with TfL and has formulated a clear policy in respect of this proposal. KCC intends to ensure that:

- (i) The new South Eastern franchise without the existing Greater London suburban services would continue to be a sustainable concern in terms of operational viability;
- (ii) The removal of the suburban services from the franchise would not result in any greater increase in Kent rail fares than the national annual increase determined by the Secretary of State;
- (iii) The DfT would support KCC's requirement for the retention of all the existing (and where available additional) paths by Network Rail for Kent's rail services between the Kent / Greater London boundary and the London termini.

Q4 What increments or decrements to the specification would stakeholders wish to see and how would these be funded?

The Rail Action Plan for Kent makes a specific recommendation for an increment to the specification:

“... also proposed for delivery during the course of the new franchise is an increase in off-peak High Speed service from 1tph to 2tph (divide/join at Ashford) to Canterbury West, Folkestone West, Folkestone Central and Dover Priory;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (xiv)

We are not able at this stage to identify specific funding for this increment to the franchise specification, but we regard it as an essential next step in developing the present High Speed service via Ashford in order to meet the expected growth in leisure and tourism traffic to these East Kent towns, especially to Canterbury. It should therefore be included as an optional future increment for delivery during the period of the new franchise between April 2014 and September 2020.

Q5 Which aspects of the specification, other than those services operating on the HS1 network, would stakeholders wish to see mandated and which aspects of the specification could be left to the discretion of the operator?

The service level on all the Mainline routes in Kent should be mandated for both peak and off-peak operation. The level of passenger demand, even in the off-peak periods, is now at such a level that to do otherwise would risk a serious loss of service for the off-peak passenger were any of these services to be discretionary. It may however be reasonable to make discretionary some of the off-peak services on some of the Community Rail Partnership (CRP) lines where the Rail Action Plan proposes an increment to the present off-peak service, but these routes will form part of the Combined Franchise and will be treated in our response to that consultation.

Q6 What changes to services would stakeholders propose, why and would these provide economic benefit?

Economic Basis of Proposals for Enhancements to Services

KCC is cognisant of the proposed housing growth allocations in the Local Development Frameworks (LDF) in each of the twelve district councils in Kent. These indicative allocations, together with those provided by Medway Council as the unitary authority for the Medway Towns, provide a **total presumed housing growth figure of 117,903 in Kent & Medway by 2026.**

The provision of an enhanced rail network in Kent & Medway will be crucial to meet the needs of this housing growth, to ensure that it is matched by economic development, together with wider education and employment opportunities, for the new population of this region by the end of the first quarter of the 21st century.

The table below sets out details of these indicative housing allocations, all of which will be dependent on planning permissions matching planned LDF growth.

TABLE OF PLANNED HOUSING GROWTH IN KENT AND MEDWAY: 2010-2026

DISTRICT	HOUSING ALLOCATION
Ashford	21,970
Canterbury	7,009
Dartford	15,280
Dover	12,798
Gravesham	5,200
Maidstone	7,357
Sevenoaks	2,400
Shepway	6,695
Swale	10,800
Thanet	4,971
Tonbridge & Malling	5,919
Tunbridge Wells	4,448
Kent Total	104,847
Medway Unitary Authority	13,056
Kent & Medway Total	117,903

Source: The Local Development Frameworks of the 12 District Councils in Kent and of Medway Council

General Principle of Access to London Termini

The Rail Action Plan for Kent establishes an important principle at the start of its list of key requirements for the new franchise:

“There should be a regular peak-period Mainline service to designated West End and City stations on each principal rail route in Kent. By West End is meant Charing Cross or Victoria; by City is meant Blackfriars or Cannon Street. There should also be a regular off-peak period service to a designated West End station from each major town in Kent. In addition there should be

a regular peak and off-peak service to Stratford and St Pancras from stations served by High Speed;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (i)

The principal changes proposed by KCC to the Mainline service specification are set out below. These are presented not simply as a ‘wish-list’ of rail services we would like to have; they are rather a consistent response to the many demands from our stakeholders at every level of governance in Kent, as well as from Rail User Groups and interested and informed individuals.

The Council believes that each of these measures, in their different ways on different routes, would provide economic benefit to the county - by maintaining existing or creating new links to the City to widen employment opportunity and stimulate growth; or by encouraging off-peak leisure travel and increasing opportunities for higher education and leisure travel.

North Kent Line via Sittingbourne and Faversham to Ramsgate

“Journey times on Mainline between stations on the North Kent line and Victoria / Cannon Street have been greatly increased with the new timetable – there needs to be a realignment of the station stopping pattern to reduce these journey times;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (v)

KCC would want the new franchise specification to require this change, but would leave the decision as to how this reduction in journey times was achieved to the Department for Transport (DfT). The new franchise operator would then be required to deliver a faster off-peak service on this route in accordance with the DfT's franchise specification.

“Connectivity at Sittingbourne between the Sheerness branch and High Speed / Mainline services needs to be improved, removing the existing long connection periods;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (iv)

The proposed re-alignment of the North Kent service during the off-peak period should also facilitate an improvement in connectivity at Sittingbourne between the Sheerness branch and High Speed / Mainline services. This should also be eased by changes to the track layout recently delivered by Network Rail between Sittingbourne and the junction for the Swale branch, which will permit two-way working on the down line along this section of route.

Maidstone East via Ashford and connections to East Kent & Hastings

“Connectivity at Ashford between Mainline from Dover / Folkestone and Mainline via Maidstone East has already been improved off-peak towards London from the December 2010 timetable change – this principle should now be applied to peak periods in both directions;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (iii)

“The present level of service provided on the Maidstone East line is completely unacceptable, and the new franchise must address this omission above all else – initially there should be an hourly service all day between Maidstone East and Blackfriars (using paths currently allocated to half of the First Capital Connect service from Sevenoaks via Otford) so as to provide a direct service all day to the City; this should be replaced by an all day half-hourly Thameslink (Key Output 2) service to Blackfriars, Farringdon, St Pancras and north from 2018, with the Maidstone East line becoming the principal Kent route for the full Thameslink service south of the Thames;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (viii)

The realignment of the paths used by the service on the Maidstone East line should be introduced in tandem with the proposed changes to the North Kent line, which would facilitate this change by exchanging train paths between Swanley and Victoria. This would then deliver one of the key recommendations of the Rail Action Plan: to improve connections between the Maidstone East line and all routes beyond Ashford, which are currently very poor and the cause of long delays for passengers.

At the same time as this realignment, KCC would want to see the new franchise specification require the new incumbent to provide an all-day City service between Maidstone East and Blackfriars from 2014, using paths currently allocated to half of the Thameslink service from Sevenoaks via Otford. This would be replaced by the full Thameslink service in December 2018.

The reason that the Council is determined to see this temporary change in 2014 is that stations on the Maidstone East line have suffered through their loss of direct services to the City since the December 2009 timetable change. Maidstone, the county town of Kent, West Malling, the large commercial and residential development of Kings Hill and Borough Green are all significant locations which require a direct service to City stations, and the Council’s proposals would deliver this outcome from 2014 if this requirement were to be included in the new Combined franchise specification (this outcome is also referred to in our response to the Combined consultation).

Sevenoaks via Tonbridge & Tunbridge Wells to Hastings

“The Cannon Street service from Hastings via Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks should be retained and not replaced by new Thameslink (Key Output 2) service in 2018 which would anyway only operate as far south as Tunbridge Wells ... ; the planned reduction in paths to Cannon Street post-2018 from 25tph to 22tph should be met by an equitable reduction in Cannon Street services between Metro and all Mainline Kent / Hastings services;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (x)

KCC agrees with the strong representations the Council has received from the MPs, Councils and Rail User Groups representing these important commuter stations in West Kent. There have also been strong representations from East Sussex County Council and from many stakeholders in Hastings. The original proposal contained in the Kent RUS, to partly replace the existing Cannon Street service with a branch of the Thameslink service as far as Tunbridge Wells, now appears to have been withdrawn.

The Council welcomes this apparent change of heart, and recognises especially the importance of a direct link between these stations and Cannon Street near where many commuters have their offices. KCC would therefore expect the franchise specification to retain a requirement for a full Cannon Street service at these locations.

Equally important is the principle set out in the Rail Action Plan that the necessary reduction in paths to Cannon Street during and following the re-building of London Bridge should be equitably distributed between all Metro and Mainline routes, and not imposed on just one route as was originally envisaged.



Q7 Do respondents feel that there are other destinations that domestic high speed services could serve that would support regional and national economic growth?

High Speed via Folkestone, Dover, Deal & Sandwich

“The extension of High Speed from Dover Priory to Ramsgate via Deal / Sandwich should also be included in the new franchise specification as this can be delivered within existing rolling-stock resources;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (ii)

KCC entered a funding agreement with the incumbent operator to finance the extension of three up peak High Speed services and two down peak High Speed services from September 2011. This agreement has now been extended to the end of the current franchise period, 31 March 2014, with three trains in each direction and a reduction in revenue subsidy to reflect the higher than expected revenue from increased passenger use of the new service. The present operator will also provide a fourth AM peak service at no additional charge from September 2012.

The Council, in response to representations from the local Rail User Group and other stakeholders, now proposes that the new franchise specification should include a requirement for this High Speed service to operate all day. This would undoubtedly support the regional economic growth so urgently needed in this part of Kent, where unemployment is among the highest level in the county. The provision of an all-day High Speed service between London St Pancras, Folkestone, Dover, Deal and Sandwich should encourage access to London employment and education opportunities for residents from East Kent, and also the location by businesses in this part of Kent bringing new local employment opportunities.

High Speed from Maidstone West

“... High Speed peak period services along the Medway Valley line from St Pancras via Stratford, Gravesend and Strood to Maidstone West [commenced] from May 2011 – the new franchise should include this service all day, with additional stops at Maidstone Barracks and Snodland to fill the serious gap that exists in rail provision for the county town of Kent;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (ix)

KCC welcomes the introduction by the present operator of High Speed services from Maidstone West to Stratford and St Pancras. The Council now proposes that the new franchise specification requires this

service to operate all day, in order to provide a much faster rail link to London than exists now on the Maidstone East line.

KCC also accepts that it may not prove possible to deliver both this enhancement of the High Speed service from the West station and the earlier than planned City service from the East station at the same time (2014). If a choice has to be made between them, the Council's overriding priority is for the Maidstone East line to be linked to the City all day as early as possible. The Council believes that this is the most essential service to be delivered in order to stimulate growth in the local economies of Maidstone and Kings Hill by widening employment opportunities in these locations.

Q8 How might better use be made of the capacity currently available?

The existing capacity of Kent's rail routes to the London termini is fully utilised at peak periods, with the exception of some limited spare capacity on the approach to the south-east side of London Victoria. It would be possible to redistribute existing paths, e.g. by exchanging paths between Mainline services from Victoria to the North Kent line and those from Victoria to the Maidstone East line.

KCC has also stated that we would expect a re-alignment of Cannon Street services, so that all Metro and Mainline services shared equitably the necessary reduction in paths into Cannon Street from 25tph to 22tph once London Bridge station has been re-built.

Q9 What steps might bidders be expected to take to meet passenger demand and what might be the most appropriate mechanisms for managing demand?

High Speed Off-Peak via Ashford to Canterbury, Folkestone & Dover

KCC would expect bidders to be cognisant of predicted growth in demand at specific locations on the network. For example, our response refers to the future need to increase the off-peak High Speed service to Canterbury (as well as to Folkestone and Dover), specifically to meet the anticipated continued growth in leisure and tourism travel. The Council would expect bidders to employ demand forecasting models used elsewhere in the rail industry, and to specify their intended level of service to meet future growth.

One of the most effective mechanisms for managing growth in demand would be the use of shoulder-peak pricing. This would require the delivery of a new fares structure, which divided the operating day on Monday to Friday into three periods: high-peak, shoulder-peak, and off-peak. Such a fares policy should encourage a shift in travel patterns from high-peak (arriving in London before 1000) to shoulder-peak (arriving in London between 1000 and 1100) for those commuters who can vary their start and finish times at work.

It should also encourage a shift in off-peak leisure and shopping travel from the current earliest off-peak journeys (arriving in London just after 1000) to a new later off-peak arrival of after 1100. In other words, passengers would pay not according to their income but according to their chosen time of travel, and the new fares structure would redistribute travel so that the demand for peak travel was more accurately matched by the supply of peak train capacity.

Q10 What destinations on the current South Eastern network do respondents think should be served by Thameslink core services and what is the rationale for those services?

Thameslink to Maidstone East; and to Sevenoaks via Swanley

“ ... initially there should be an hourly service all day between Maidstone East and Blackfriars (using paths currently allocated to half of the First Capital Connect service from Sevenoaks via Otford) so as to provide a direct service all day to the City; this should be replaced by an all day half-hourly Thameslink (Key Output 2) service to Blackfriars, Farringdon, St Pancras and north from 2018, with the Maidstone East line becoming the principal Kent route for the full Thameslink service south of the Thames;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (viii)

KCC has argued in the Rail Action Plan for Kent that from the start of the new South Eastern franchise, or in practice at some point between April and December 2014, half of the present jointly operated First Capital Connect (Thameslink) / Southeastern Railway service from Blackfriars to Sevenoaks via Bat & Ball should be diverted to Maidstone East. While this would cause a reduction in frequency between Swanley and Sevenoaks, it would introduce a long awaited City service to Maidstone, West Malling, Kings Hill (via bus link) and Borough Green.

This service would then be replaced by the planned full Thameslink service in December 2018 and would revert to Sevenoaks. KCC also supports the inclusion of this service via Bat & Ball as a full part of the Thameslink franchise, to be transferred from joint operation with Southeastern Railway between April and December 2014.

Maidstone East is the most important destination for Thameslink in Kent, but operationally it may be deemed appropriate to transfer the whole of the Maidstone East line service to the new Thameslink franchise from December 2018. If it were to be transferred, the retention of part of this service to Victoria would be essential, as this is still the preferred London terminal for the majority of the Maidstone East line's passengers.

The rationale for serving Maidstone East by Thameslink services is that the stations on this line need to be connected again to City stations, and a through Thameslink service would link this line with Blackfriars, City Thameslink, Farringdon and St Pancras (low level) stations. It would also facilitate a natural approach to Blackfriars from the south via the Catford loop and Loughborough Junction rather than via London Bridge, which would ease the pressure on the demand for Thameslink paths via London Bridge following the re-building of this busy London station.

KCC will also include the question of which rail services in Kent should become part of the Thameslink franchise in the Council's response to that franchise consultation.

Q11 What improvements would respondents like to see made to other South Eastern services, what is the rationale for them and would these provide economic benefit?

Ashford via Tonbridge and Edenbridge to Gatwick Airport

“Through Gatwick – Tonbridge – Ashford hourly all day service in partnership with Gatwick Airport Ltd and operator of new franchise for Southern operating area could commence in 2015 – not part of IKF but would affect route between Tonbridge and Ashford; KCC will continue to work with Gatwick Airport Ltd, Network Rail and existing franchisee to deliver this objective;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (xi)

KCC strongly supports the delivery of a through rail service between Kent and Gatwick Airport. The Council believes that this is an essential requirement of the new Kent rail map from 2015 onwards. It should be included as a service requirement in the new South Eastern franchise specification; it is also included in our response for the Thameslink franchise consultation as the service could be operated by either franchisee.

This is one of the 5 most important key recommendations in the Rail Acton Plan, as the Council regards a direct rail link to Gatwick as an essential prerequisite to stimulate the economy by improving airport access for employment and leisure.

At least initially the Council would want to have an hourly frequency at the same minutes past each hour all week. The service would serve Ashford International (for connections with all East Kent stations and with the potential for links to Manston Airport via a future Thanet Parkway station, and also with international services to the continent); Tonbridge (for connections with all West Kent stations); Edenbridge; Redhill (utilising the new platform to be constructed on the west side of

this station as part of Network Rail's High Level Output Specification (HLOS) for Control Period 5 (CP 5) where the trains would reverse); and Gatwick Airport (which will have gained an additional platform 7 to alleviate capacity constraints).

From 2015 onwards Class 377 rolling stock, in the form of 4-car electrical multiple units (EMUs), will start to be released from service on the existing Thameslink franchise as new Siemens built Thameslink stock is brought into service. Three of these sets would be required to provide the initial service, operating an hourly frequency with a round running time of about 150 minutes and with about 30 minutes combined layover at both termini.

The Council cannot emphasise too strongly the critical importance of this rail link, which has the full support of Gatwick Airport Ltd's Airport Surface Access Strategy (ASAS), their consultants ARUP, the Gatwick Diamond Business Association, British Airways, and GATCOM. To connect both the key stations of Ashford in the east of the county and Tonbridge in the west of the county with Gatwick would transform Kent's accessibility to and from London's second airport, which has itself identified its capacity to grow its market share of the south-east's air passenger traffic within the airport's existing terminal and runway capacity. KCC is determined not to lose this once in a generation opportunity.

Community Rail Partnership

"KCC also calls on the DfT to require the new franchisees for the Southeastern and Southern operating areas to be required as part of the new franchise agreements to work with their respective CRPs, in order to ensure the development of these rural lines in Kent and their continued increase in patronage."

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 2.11

The other area in which KCC would wish the new franchise operator to improve the county's rail services is along the rural railway lines which are supported by the Kent Community Rail Partnership (CRP). The new franchisee should be required to work with the existing Kent CRP, which is effectively supported and managed by Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK), and to invest in the partnership to grow demand on the both the Medway Valley and Swale lines.

There remains scope for substantial improvement in the quality and appearance of the stations on these lines, in the cleanliness of the trains, and in the presence of staff to check tickets and charge fares for passengers who board at the majority of unstaffed stations along both CRP routes. The new franchisee should be required to engage positively with the existing CRP, and to build on the partnership work already started by further improving these essential rural rail services.

Ashford - Gatwick Airport in 2015?



Q12 Do respondents feel that Folkestone Harbour branch line and station should be kept open and maintained or would the rail industry be better investing the monies in other rail schemes?

There is no realistic prospect of regular passenger services operating again on the Folkestone Harbour branch. The transfer facilities for passengers travelling on the Venice Simplon Orient Express (VSOE) are now well established at Folkestone West station, and it would not be feasible to operate a heritage railway between the Harbour station and the old Folkestone East sidings as there is no public access at this location.

KCC supports the objective of Shepway DC that is seeking to achieve the implementation of a deliverable, high quality proposal for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Folkestone Harbour and Seafront area. Policy SS6 of the Shepway Core Strategy supports a mix of commercial, residential and leisure uses on the harbour site, including the land currently leased by Network Rail on which the Harbour branch line is located. Network Rail should therefore submit a formal closure notice for the branch line including Folkestone Harbour station so that the planned development of this part of Folkestone can realise its full potential.

Q13 How would you like to see performance information published?

KCC would expect performance information to be provided separately for each sector of the new franchise operation, i.e. High Speed, Mainline and Metro services. The information should show train service punctuality and train service reliability separately for each of these three sectors, and measure performance in each category against agreed targets for the period reported. The incumbent operator groups High Speed and Mainline performance together, and only separates out the performance of Metro services. The format is shown below:

Mainlines and High speed	Target	Period average	Annual average	Threshold for season ticket discounts
Train service punctuality <i>(percentage of peak hour trains arriving within five minutes of their advertised arrival time)</i>	85.0%	88.9%	89.7%	82.0%
Train service reliability <i>(percentage of the advertised train service actually operated)</i>	99.0%	99.5%	99.3%	98.0%

Metro	Target	Period average	Annual average	Threshold for season ticket discounts
Train service punctuality <i>(percentage of peak hour trains arriving within five minutes of their advertised arrival time)</i>	89.5%	91.8%	92.6%	86.5%
Train service reliability <i>(percentage of the advertised train service actually operated)</i>	99.0%	98.7%	98.7%	98.0%

Source: *Southeastern Railway Performance tables, March 2012*

Q14 How frequent should its publication be?

The quarterly reporting of performance information is appropriate and meets the needs of stakeholders. It is also a reasonable reflection of varying performance according to seasons.

Q15 What level of disaggregation of performance do you believe is reasonable?

Please see response to question 13 above.

Q16 What are the priorities that respondents consider should be taken into account with providing passenger experience of using these services?

Passenger feedback has consistently raised the need for improvement to customer information and customer service at stations. These issues must be priorities for the new franchisee, offering a better customer experience of train departure information and delays, and also offering reassurance through the presence of uniformed station staff.

The new franchisee must also focus on the equally important issues of reliability, frequency, cleanliness of trains and stations, value for money off-peak fares and security. Passengers should feel safe and informed, and all these priorities should contribute positively to the overall customer experience of travel by train.

Q17 What do stakeholders see as the most important factors in improving security (actual or perceived) and addressing any gap between the two?

The presence of CCTV cameras that work is one of the most effective deterrents to crime. Equally important is the presence of staff on board trains, both to check tickets and to reassure passengers with a uniformed presence. The new franchise operator would be expected to enhance the provision of CCTV on all trains operating on the South Eastern franchise, and to increase the level of on-board ticket checking and revenue protection officers to combat fraudulent travel.

Q18 What is important to stakeholders in the future use and improvements in stations?

“The County Council would also expect to see ongoing improvements to the station environment (cleanliness, comfort, security, information, customer service etc) and to integration with other modes of transport (i.e. the whole journey experience);”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (xiii)

KCC has set out its expectations of the whole station environment in the Rail Action Plan. The important point here is that the station environment should contribute positively to the whole journey experience. Stations should be clean, comfortable and secure, with good public transport and other local information and with timetables available for local connecting bus services.

Q19 What priorities would respondents give to car parking and cycling facilities at locations where these are fully used?

“... there is also a pressing need for increased parking capacity at many stations, coupled with on-street parking controls by local authorities on roads in immediate vicinity of stations;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (xiii)

KCC has argued for increased parking capacity at stations where demand already exceeds supply, but there is often no more railway land available for additional parking at these locations. At stations where existing capacity for car parking and cycling facilities are fully utilised, the Council would expect the franchise operator to promote access by bus and on foot, and also by better provision for ‘kiss and ride’.

KCC also expects special consideration to be given to car parking arrangements at rural stations. There are several locations in Kent, of which Charing and Pluckley are but two examples, where charges are

so high that the car parks are under used and the surrounding roads in the villages are full of parked cars all day. At these stations the new franchisee should reduce charges to a minimum level, reflecting the rural nature of the location and the need to bring rail passengers' cars off the surrounding roads and into the mainly empty station car parks.

The new franchise operator should be encouraged to carry cycles on trains. This is an increasingly popular mode of travel and must be preferential in many ways to car parking at the station. However, on most trains the spaces in which cycles can be stored is very limited and often in the way of other passengers. On some trains with disabled toilets there is good space available for cycles, but otherwise they are often left by the doors and interfere with access and egress by other passengers.

While space on board trains is at a premium, ideally trains should have greater capacity to carry cycles, provided that other passengers were not inconvenienced. There is also a need for increased cycle storage capacity at stations by more intelligent storage options, such as double deck cycle racks.

Q20 What sort of ticketing products and services would you expect to see delivered through 'smart' technology on this franchise?

“KCC intends to lobby Government to ensure that a requirement to introduce Smartcard ticketing is included in the new IKF. This would provide the potential for integrated bus/rail ticketing;”

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (xii)

The Rail Action Plan sets out the Council's expectations for Smartcard ticketing in the new franchise. There should be a requirement for the new operator to develop the use of Smartcard ticketing for its own rail services, and also to ensure that Smartcard technology is used to develop inter-modal Smartcard ticketing for joint bus and rail travel within the South Eastern franchise area, and eventually for rail travel between franchise operators.

KCC would also expect there to be a requirement in the new franchise specification for the franchisee to provide free tickets on South Eastern services for passengers travelling to or from either Ebbsfleet International or Ashford International for travel on Eurostar services on that date. This facility used to be paid for by Eurostar but was withdrawn when the international rail operator withdrew the funding; the new franchise should require restoration of this facility to be funded by the new franchisee.

Q21 What local accessibility and mobility issues do stakeholders see and how they might be addressed?

KCC would expect the new incumbent to work closely with Network Rail to ensure the delivery of a more accessible railway network in Kent. This would involve continued improvement to, and greater public awareness of, the accessibility of High Speed and Mainline trains to people whose mobility is impaired.

A programme of continued improvement of on-board facilities needs to be matched by further delivery of the 'Access for All' programme by Network Rail, which has already seen the installation of a fully accessible station bridge at Staplehurst and elsewhere, and which should be extended to other Kent stations as funding in Network Rail's CP5 permits.

Q22 What environmental targets would stakeholders like to see within the franchise specification?

"KCC also intends to seek assurances from the DfT and the rail industry that all available options to acquire modern rolling stock, both electric and diesel, are explored, so as to provide the new Integrated Kent Franchise, and other franchises serving the county, with sufficient resources which will enable it to deliver the enhanced rail service for Kent set out in this Action Plan."

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, paragraph 5.4 (xv)

The Council would expect to see a target for the reduction of energy consumption at stations and other railway buildings. The Rail Action Plan sets out the Council's aspirations for the delivery of new rolling stock, or of newly acquired stock (e.g. class 377 from Thameslink), which should reduce the amount of electricity consumed per train mile, and so contribute to a reduction in energy used by the new franchisee.

APPENDIX: Tables of Proposed Rail Service Specification

(Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, Appendix 2)