

Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan (2011-2031) Examination

Inspector: Mr. Robert Mellor BSC DIPTRP DIPDBE DMS MRICS MRTPI

Programme Officer:
Louise St John Howe
PO Services, PO Box 10965,
Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 3BF
email: louise@poservices.co.uk
Tel: 07789-486419

3rd February, 2017

Ms. Barbara Cooper,
Corporate director - Growth, Environment & Transport,
Kent county Council,
Invicta House,
Maidstone ME14 1XX

By email Only

Dear Ms. Cooper,

Bus Lane in Sutton Road, Maidstone – Land Ownership

I refer to your letter of 20 January 2017 in response to my Interim Findings on the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Examination. As requested I have exercised my discretion to accept that letter as evidence and it has been included on the Examination Website with other Examination Documents as ED 121. I will take account of your comments. However I am now seeking clarification on an issue of fact referred to in that letter.

On page 4 of the letter in the second paragraph you state that: *'the County Council does not own or control all of the land to widen the A274, which lies within multiple ownerships'*. You go on to refer to a potential need for compulsory purchase which: *'routinely incurs significant timing delays'* and conclude in the following paragraph that: *'a bus lane is likely to involve a similar or greater delivery timeframe'* [as the Leeds-Langley Relief Road].

In your Council's Statement for hearing Session 12 you advised that, if the business case is established for the Leeds-Langley Relief Road, and if funding is secured and if the design and legal/planning processes are completed: *'it is eminently plausible that the road could be operational as early as 2027'*. In other words 10 years in the future.

I referred to Maidstone Borough Council the issue of land ownership in Sutton Road which you raise and I attach a copy of their response letter dated 30 January 2017.

MBC refers to the genesis of the bus lane in saved Policy T2 of the Local Plan which has included a Sutton Road bus lane since it was adopted in 2000. They then refer to the A275 Corridor Study (Documents TRA 028 and 028A) prepared in 2016 by Mott MacDonald who are highway engineering consultants. The TRA 028A document includes a detailed layout. That scheme is stated to only require works within the Highway (as defined by the Highways Act 1980). However in a couple of cases options are stated to involve some land in a grassed/hedged area that is *'(likely in the ownership of Maidstone Borough Council), and therefore acquisition of the land could be assumed reasonable.'*

I note that the Statement of Common Ground concluded between Kent County Council and Maidstone BC in September 2016 includes the implementation of the following proposed schemes which are relevant to Sutton Road:

'10. Improvements to capacity at the junction of Willington Street/Wallis Avenue and Sutton Road.

11. Package of measures to significantly relieve traffic congestion on Sutton Road and Willington Street.

12. A229/A274 Wheatsheaf junction: Capacity improvements.'

It appears that Item 10 would require carriageway widening and is already incorporated in the Mott Macdonald scheme. Item 12 is not required in order to implement an extended bus lane in Sutton Road. I have not seen a definition of the Item 11 measures.

In these circumstances I am requesting that you identify:

- a) whether or not the bus lane scheme designed by Mott MacDonald south east of the Wheatsheaf Junction is within the highway or on land that is likely owned by Maidstone BC?; and,
- b) if not, what land would need to be acquired to implement the scheme?; and
- c) when would you expect Willington Street/Wallis Avenue junction capacity improvements to be implemented?
- d) would the Willington Street/Wallis Avenue junction capacity improvements require the acquisition of any land outside the highway?

Finally, can you confirm:

- e) the Maidstone BC claim that KCC refused an approach from Mott MacDonald to engage with the A274 Corridor Study which they were carrying out on behalf of Maidstone BC?

Yours sincerely,

Robert Mellor

Inspector
Maidstone Borough Council
Local Plan (2011-2031 Examination)

Enc: Letter from Maidstone Borough Council Dated 30th January, 2017

c.c. Ms. Cheryl Parks, Maidstone Borough Council.