

Mr Mellor

Date: 18 July 2016
My ref: CP

Dear Mr Mellor,

**Maidstone Borough Local Plan Examination:
INSPECTOR REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE UNDER
PREPARATION.**

Further to your letter of 11 July 2016 I am pleased to update you in regard to the questions you raised as set out below.

Integrated Transport Strategy

The Integrated Transport Strategy is intended to form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. Following consultation on the draft Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) the Minutes of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee (SPSTC) Meeting on 14 June 2016 record that the ITS is to be separated from the Walking and Cycling Strategy. Amended versions of both documents would be presented to the Joint Transport Board in July and then come back to the SPSTC for final approval for adoption and published 'later in 2016'.

Qn 1 Is that final approval and adoption expected to be before or after the examination hearings in October-December?

A jointly authored report was presented to the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board on 13 July for discussion relating to areas of common ground on transport matters, and the Integrated Transport Strategy.
<https://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s49773/Integrated%20Transport%20Strategy.pdf>

Thereafter the two strategies will be proposed to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee (MBC) and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport (KCC) for adoption. The meeting of SPSTC is scheduled for 13 September 2016, allowing the adoption of the strategies prior to commencement of the examination hearings.

Further Transport Modelling

According to the Transport Topic Paper at paragraph 3.62 [SUB006], further transport modelling is to be undertaken using the Do Minimum (DM) scenario at the year 2031 but with the development of 18,560 dwellings in accordance with the Local Plan assessment of Objectively Assessed Needs. This would allow comparison with the Do Something 4a and 4b scenarios. The model run is scheduled 'prior to September 2016'.

Paragraphs 3.25 and 3.67 of the Transport Topic Paper acknowledges that Highways England had indicated that the VISUM model was unsuitable for assessing the impacts of the Local Plan on the motorway network. Following a meeting on 18 May 2016 MBC was working towards the agreement

of alternative methodology with HE and Kent CC involving localised modelling at M20 Junctions 5-8. This work is to be completed 'prior to September 2016'.

Qn 2 When would the results of that modelling be available in a report?

The Council has received the headline data outputs for the 'Do Minimum' to 2031 (18560) scenario, and anticipates an updated forecasting report sometime later this month. Initially this was scheduled for completion in early July but the Council is yet to receive the report, and is in contact with KCC to ascertain when this will be received. It will be available prior to the commencement of the examination hearings.

The modelling report relating to the Maidstone M20 motorway junctions has been commissioned and initial scoping of the methodology has been undertaken. A key staff member at Highways England who must sign off the methodology has been absent and so the agreed methodology is yet to be finalised. Consultants are primed to undertake the modelling as soon as the methodology is agreed; traffic counts and data sourcing have been completed. Subject to early agreement of the methodology by Highways England, the reporting will be available before the commencement of the examination hearings, and it is the aim of the Council to progress a Statement of Common ground with Highways England to this end. I hope to be able to provide further clarification of timescales next week.

Local Transport Plan 4 and 'Growth without Gridlock' document

The Kent CC Local Transport Plan 3 runs until December 2016 and is to be replaced by Local Transport Plan 4. The Kent CC document 'Growth without Gridlock' is also to be 'refreshed'.

Qn 3 What are relevant dates for publication and or consultation on these documents?

Information on the website of Kent County Council suggests a decision will be made regarding the publication of the Local Transport Plan 4, incorporating Growth Without Gridlock on 23 January 2017. <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IIId=29055&Opt=0>

Following up with officers at KCC they have advised as follows: "Under the Local Transport Act 2008, it is a statutory requirement for KCC to have a Local Transport Plan (LTP) in place, although the Act does allow Local Transport Authorities the freedom to replace LTPs as and when they see fit rather than requiring a five year planning horizon as stipulated in the previous legislation (Transport Act 2000). KCC is taking the opportunity to replace LTP3 and combine it with the transport delivery plan Growth without Gridlock, which was published as a standalone document in 2010.

The draft LTP4 will be subject to a statutory 12-week public consultation alongside an Environmental Report (part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment) from late July until late October. The exact date is to be finalised pending confirmation of printing dates and completion of the Environmental Report. Following consideration of consultation responses and the findings of the Environmental Report, a revised LTP4 will be taken to Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 12th January 2017, to Cabinet on 23rd January 2017 and taken to full County Council for adoption on 16th March 2017."

Transport Seminar

As it appears that there will be significant new transport evidence that will not be available until September the draft hearings programme now includes a Transport Seminar at which the new evidence can be presented and explained. The seminar will be held in public but will not involve discussion by Representors. That will be held over to subsequent hearings.

Qn 4 Would MBC and KCC/HE please prepare a Statement of Common Ground as soon as they are in a position to do so and before that seminar?

It is the aim of the Council to have an agreed Statement of Common Ground between the three parties in place prior to the commencement of the examination hearings. The precise timing of the securing of this statement is contingent on the early return to work of the key personnel from Highways England as referenced in the earlier response to question 2.

The agreement of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board to the co-authored report (see response to earlier question) illustrates the progress that has been made in reaching an agreed position with Kent County Council as lead highways authority. This is further reflected through detailed discussions between both Maidstone and Kent Council officers prior to submission of the Local Plan and more recently, under the Duty to Cooperate. The minutes of the meeting between MBC and KCC on 12 May are appended to this letter along with the agreed list of priority schemes that resulted; these are included in the Integrated Transport Strategy.

Housing Numbers

In an email of 22 June 2016 the Council informed me that a revised Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was in preparation with a final report due by 5 August 2016.

Qn 5 Is that still on track?

Firstly, it is important for me to clarify that the Council is not preparing a revised version of its comprehensive Strategic Housing Market Assessment (HOU 002).

The Council is aware that, after the submission of the Local Plan, the ONS issued 2014-based sub national population projections. These have been followed by 2014 based household projections issued by CLG on 12th July.

As part of its preparation for the Examination hearings, and as overall good practice, the Council has commissioned an analysis of the implications of these latest projections. I must emphasise that the fact this work has been commissioned does not mean that the Council considers that the housing target in the submitted Local Plan should change as a consequence.

The findings are due to be issued to the Council in early August as previously advised, after which the Council will then wish to consider the findings as it prepares its statements for the Examination. My strong preference is that the findings should be presented as part of the Council's response to your Issues & Matters, as appropriate, and not in advance and in isolation. I hope this is to your satisfaction but please let me know if you require us to take a different approach.

Heritage

Historic England did not make detailed representations on heritage matters, citing a lack of time. In an email on 18 June 2016 I was informed that MBC is in active discussion with Historic England with matters to be resolved by 'early July'.

Qn 6 What progress has there been with such discussions and when will their outcome be made available?

Historic England provided a statement of the comments it would have made on the Local Plan, had it been in a position to do so, in a letter dated 9th June 2016. The Council responded by letter, dated 17th June 2016, and HE has provided a further reply dated 30th June 2016. I understand from Historic England that they have provided copies of all these letters to the Programme Officer. The Council is still considering whether to further correspond with Historic England or whether the matters will be best dealt with at the Examination itself. I will keep you informed if there are any further relevant discussions with Historic England.

Flood risk

The Environment Agency has objected to the allocation of housing on the former Syngenta site at Yalding and has stated that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2008 is out of date. The SPSTC meeting on 18 April 2016 was informed that the SFRA is to be updated.

Qn 7 What progress has there been with the SFRA update and when will it be available?

The Council has commissioned Jeremy Benn Associates to undertake a review of its existing SFRA (2008, Mott MacDonald) and to update any sections now out-of-date because of changes in planning legislation, policy and guidance, more recent flood events, and to take account of the recently completed Medway catchment flood risk modelling undertaken for the Environment Agency. This will also include climate change allowances as per the updated National Planning Practice Guidance of February 2016. Once completed in draft the report will be shared with the Environment Agency with a view to reaching a Statement of Common Ground in advance of the examination hearings. The consultant has also been commissioned to explore detailed site specific mitigation measures for the site allocations where the Environment Agency has expressed some concerns, including the Syngenta site at Yalding. Both reports are expected to be completed and published in advance of the examination hearings.

Minerals


Kent CC is concerned about the possibility of development sterilising mineral reserves and conflicting with the provisions of the adopted Minerals Plan. The SPSTC meeting of 14 June 2016 was told that a Joint Position Statement is to be prepared.

Qn 8 When will that statement be available?

The Joint Position Statement has now been drafted and sent to KCC for agreement and signing following a number of discussions between both parties to seek common ground and an agreed way forward. It is anticipated that this will be in place in early August.

I trust that you will find this information helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further clarification should you require it.

Yours sincerely



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Duty to Cooperate Meeting with KCC Highways

Thursday 12 May: 9am

Room 6B Maidstone House

Attendees: Rob Jarman (MBC); Andrew Thompson (MBC); Tay Arnold (MBC); Steve Clarke (MBC); Paul Goodenough (MBC); Tim Chapman (MBC); Brendan Wright (KCC); Stephen Whittaker (Amey); Julian Howes (Mott MacDonald)

1: Welcome and purpose of meeting.

RJ explained the scope of the meeting and the intended outcomes from it and the need to keep it strategic.

2: Proposed highway interventions in the Local Plan and draft ITS

SC gave an introduction to the schemes contained in the appendix and explained that these were what MBC had put forward for inclusion within LTP4. AT added that all schemes were included in the IDP and it was within this document where more detail was provided as to how far advanced each scheme was and any funding sources.

The group reviewed the list of 24 schemes and agreed it subject to the below amendments (**SC to update**):

13. A229 Loose Road/Armstrong Road junction: Capacity improvements – BW updated that the next stage is for Andy Westwood to work up a detailed scheme and then consult on it.

23. Bus prioritisation measures on the A274 Sutton Road from the Willington Street junction to the Wheatsheaf junction, together with bus infrastructure improvements. – The group agreed to rewording of the summary of these improvements. SC will update it to say:

Bus improvement measures on the A274 Sutton Road from the Willington Street junction to the Wheatsheaf junction.

24. A typical 10 minute bus frequency on main radial routes into Maidstone Town centre – the group agreed to reword this due to KCC concerns of the practicality of achieving this on the radial routes.:

An objective of a typical 10 minute bus frequency on main radial routes into Maidstone Town centre.

BW also requested that A20 Willington Street also be added as it is part of the Maidstone Integrated Transport package. All other schemes within the ITP are already listed.

3: Walking and Cycling Strategy.

The group agreed that the way forward for this strategy was as a stand alone document, separate from the ITS. The group agreed that it would be taken to JTB in July with any changes from the consultation incorporated. It would then be taken to SPS&T in August.

4: VISUM - benefits and limitations

The group discussed the outcomes of the meeting with Highways England on 12th April. JH has requested clarification from Amey as to whether the motorway junctions have been specifically modelled. SW agreed to provide this. The scope of the modelling to be undertaken by Mott MacDonald will be discussed in detail on 18th May. It was agreed to extend the invite to include SW – SC to forward invite.

BW raised concerns about how we reconcile the different approaches to the modelling on the strategic and local networks. The outputs may not be wholly comparable as the motorway modelling will be a stand alone assessment with different assumptions. RJ requested that SC add 'Consistency' to the agenda for the meeting on 18th.

SW confirmed that they are working on providing the information requested by JH regarding the modelling assumptions. The next piece of modelling work to be undertaken is carry out a further run of 'do minimum to 2031' which will include the full OAN as well as committed funded schemes. The previous run had included the Gyratory improvements as a committed scheme BW confirmed that Amey had received the commission but to progress this piece of work it will be necessary to agree whether any additional schemes may need to be accounted for. SC to arrange the scoping meeting with KCC/MM/MBC for week commencing 16th May.

The group raised concerns that there was a risk that this new modelling would be inconsistent with DS4. SW confirmed that he would need to look at what had been included in that run to properly assess the impact of these new schemes being included in the new 'do minimum'. JH requested that if we are looking again at 'do something' could the issues previously picked up be resolved in advance e.g. how new developments access the Highway. RJ confirmed that the immediate priority for MBC was to have the 'do minimum to 2031'. The group agreed that as this modelling run did not require any strategic decisions it was unlikely that it would need to go to JTB.

SW and BW agreed for consistency to produce a technical note to cover the 2022 'do minimum' and 'do something' model outputs that went into the JTB report. This will be produced after the 2031 'do minimum' run.

5: AOB

RJ requested an update on the Bus Station. PG confirmed that the aim was still to develop a scheme that could be put forward to bid for LEP funding. A site visit is planned on 25th with Arriva. PG confirmed that Steve Pay will be attending to represent KCC.

Appendix: Agreed list of schemes resulting from Duty to Cooperate Meeting

12-05-16

Appendix
Highway improvement schemes and junction capacity improvements
M20 Junction7 area and NE Maidstone
1. Traffic signalisation of the M20 Junction 7 roundabout, widening of the coast bound off-slip and creation of a new signal controlled pedestrian route through the junction.
2. Capacity improvements and signalisation of A249 Bearsted Road roundabout and capacity improvements at New Cut Road roundabout.
3. Provision of a new signal pedestrian crossing and the provision of a combined foot/cycle way between these two roundabouts.
4. Upgrading of Bearsted Road to a dual carriageway between Bearsted Road roundabout and New Cut Road roundabout.
M20 Junction5 area and NW Maidstone
5. Interim improvement to M20 junction 5 roundabout including a white lining scheme.
6. Traffic signalisation of M20 junction 5 roundabout and localised widening of slip roads and circulatory carriageway.
7. Provision of an additional lane at the A20 Coldharbour roundabout.
8. A20 London Road/B2246 Hermitage Lane junction: Capacity improvements.
9. A26 Tonbridge Road/Fountain Lane junction: Capacity improvements.
SE Maidstone
10. Improvements to capacity at the junctions 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.
13. A229 Loose Road/Armstrong Road junction: Capacity improvements
14. A229 Loose Road/Boughton Lane/Cripple Street Junction: Capacity improvements.
15. A20 Ashford Rd/Willington Street Junction: capacity improvements
Rural Service Centres and Larger villages
16. A229/B2163 Linton Crossroads: Junction capacity improvements.
17. A20 Ashford Road, Harrietsham: Highway improvements to include carriageway narrowing, reduction of the speed limit and pedestrian crossing facilities.
18. A274 Mill Bank/Kings Road junction Headcorn: Junction signalisation.
19. A229 Station Road/Headcorn Road/Marden Road junction, Staplehurst:

Capacity improvements.
20. B2015 Maidstone Road/B2162 Hampstead Lane junction, Yalding: Capacity improvements.
Public Transport Committed Improvements
21. Redevelopment of Maidstone East railway station to provide significant improvements in passenger access and facilities and improved interchange with public transport.
22. Improvement/replacement of Maidstone Bus station.
23. NW Maidstone Bus-loop serving Allington/new development on Hermitage Lane and Maidstone Hospital.
24. Bus improvement measures on the A274 Sutton Road from the Willington Street junction to the Wheatsheaf junction.
25. An objective of a typical 10 minute bus frequency on main radial routes into Maidstone Town centre