

TECHNICAL NOTE

Job Name: Cripple Street, Maidstone
Job No: 07-505
Note No: TN022
Date: 4th December 2016
Prepared By: TAA / GH
Subject: **Local Plan Commentary**

1. As part of the Local Plan Enquiry for Maidstone District the Inspector has mentioned that possibility that the site at Cripple Street could be considered as a possible Park & Ride site for this approach to the town. Peter Brett Associates have undertaken some technical work in respect of this site, and so have been asked to provide a brief note clarifying the position with respect to the site.
2. **Availability**
 - 2.1. The site is available for use as a Park & Ride site, potentially with some enabling development as set out below. The land is in a single ownership, and has frontage access to the public highway network.
 - 2.2. The landowner is willing to make the site available for a Park & Ride facility for the Council on suitable commercial terms. This is anticipated to be on a long lease basis – to be agreed, but potentially more than twenty years, with the Council paying a rental for the land and then funding the construction of the Park & Ride on it.
 - 2.3. As an alternative, and to assist the Council in delivering the facility, the landowner would be willing to consider a modest amount of enabling residential development on the site to provide funds for the construction of the Park & Ride facility. Preliminary work suggests that a development of between 20 and 30 homes (excluding any affordable housing element to maximise support for the facility) would be appropriate. This would be expected to generate a contribution of around £1.5m towards the scheme, subject to planning and detailed viability assessments.
3. **Park & Ride concept**
 - 3.1. The site lies on the A229 route into Maidstone, from the south. This is a busy approach to the town in the peak periods, and considerable existing congestion occurs to the north of the proposed site. The “Wheatsheaf” junction with Sutton Road, immediately to the north of Cripple Street is a particular congestion hotspot, with two significant commuter routes coming together at this point.
 - 3.2. The junction is traffic signal controlled, and effectively seeks to manage and apportion upstream roadspace into the one-way gyratory system on the approach to

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the town centre. The gyratory has insufficient capacity for peak period traffic too, and so the Wheatsheaf signals effectively provide queue and flow management into the town centre. The existing development constraints prevent significant improvement of this junction, or the gyratory system to the north, to allow greater vehicle capacity on the roads from the south into Maidstone.

- 3.3. Therefore, an important option to provide for growth in the town is to provide alternatives to the car, and facilitate the reduction of demand on the southern approaches to the town. Park and Ride provision would be a good way to do this.
- 3.4. From a users point of view, Park & Ride will be considered in two distinct circumstances – the first is to provide an advantage over congested streets by providing a faster, more reliable route from the outskirts of a town into the centre. This option works well where there are opportunities to provide significant operational advantages and priority to buses as they travel into the town. The second circumstance is where parking provision is limited or expensive in the town – even if opportunities to provide bus priority on route are limited.
- 3.5. York is a good example of the former, whereas some of the Oxford sites are examples of the latter.
- 3.6. In Maidstone the need to manage in-flow towards the town centre would push a strategy towards the latter circumstance. Although some bus priority would be feasible, the main attraction of the Park & Ride at Cripple Street to users would be likely to be the ease and relative cost of parking compared to the town centre.
- 3.7. The effect of this would be to take some traffic off the network, and, critically, to do so before it impacted on the stressed Wheatsheaf junction which is acknowledged to suffer from poor air quality due to congestion.

4. Capacity & Usage

- 4.1. The site comprises 3.1 hectare, and preliminary studies suggest it would accommodate a Park & Ride facility of up to 500 spaces, depending on the detail design, landscape buffers and allowing for an area to be allocated to a small quantum of enabling development if necessary.
- 4.2. Although it is envisaged that the facility would be available to anyone who wished to use it, it would make some sense if the Park & Ride was configured around usage by people who were working in the town. In simple terms, the aim would be to seek to reduce peak period demands on the highway network.
- 4.3. This would be achieved by adopting a charging structure that made the facility especially competitive against town centre all-day parking used by the office and retail workforce. Shoppers tend to access the town centre a little later, when the road network is less stressed, and so the Park & Ride could be established to be less attractive to them.
- 4.4. The site is adjacent to the new Loose Greenway and so provision could be made for cycle parking within the site in order to create an integrated transport offer towards the town centre.