

<b>Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	Briefing on Kent County Council's consultation on the draft Local Transport Plan for Kent (LTP5)
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<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To note the content of the consultation; and</li> <li>2. To note Swale Borough Council's views on the consultation document.</li> </ol>

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to brief members on the contents of the draft Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5).
- 1.2 LTP5 is Kent County Council's (KCC) emerging fifth Local Transport Plan (LTP) to replace the fourth plan the Council adopted in 2017 called Delivering Growth without Gridlock (2016-2031).
- 1.3 KCC were successful in securing over £400m of investment with partners to deliver the proposals in Delivering Growth without Gridlock, and although some of the priorities remain undelivered, work is continuing to secure their delivery.
- 1.4 Much has changed since the adoption of Delivering Growth without Gridlock and the Government has therefore instructed Local Transport Authorities to prepare new plans by the end of 2024. These changes have affected how and when people travel, why they travel, what transport operations and networks can provide, and also the priorities that national and local government have for travel and transport. For example, one of the government's Levelling Up ambitions is that local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.
- 1.5 KCC's new plan will help the government to understand the pipeline of proposals, the funding required, and the contribution these will make to national policy goals and targets such as reducing carbon emissions.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 A Local Transport Plan is a requirement for Local Transport Authorities, such as Kent County Council, under the Local Transport Act 2000 (as amended in 2008). The Act says each Local Transport Authority must develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within their area. KCC must carry out work to implement the policies within the Plan.
- 2.2 KCC are considering how Kent's transport network will need to change long into the future linked to estimates of population growth up to c.2040 as well as national targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from transport by 2050. How long the new Local Transport Plan lasts will depend on other wider changes between now and those time horizons, as well as the success KCC have in delivering the new Plan's proposals for improving transport in Kent.
- 2.3 The Local Transport Plan focuses on both county-wide transport challenges and proposals, and new transport infrastructure investment across different places in the county. Those proposals are under development and will be in the full Local Transport Plan.
- 2.4 The Local Transport Plan will not be proposing detailed changes to any bus or rail services, however, proposals in the Plan may enable new services or improved services to occur in the future if the funding KCC need to deliver new infrastructure to enable that can be found.
- 2.5 District Councils also establish their Transport Strategies in order to make it clear to Kent County Council what their preferences are for how transport should change and develop in their areas. KCC take the Districts' Transport Strategies into account as they develop the Transport Plan. Swale had started developing a transport strategy as part of the Local Plan Review.
- 2.6 The challenges in Kent that KCC have identified as needing addressing are:
- Kent's highways assets are in a phase of managed decline which in turn risks them becoming less resilient to new pressures.
  - Traffic is causing congestion, poor air quality and negatively impacting Kent's economy.
  - Transport challenges in Kent arise from how the existing population of 1.6 million people and 70,000 businesses in the county choose to travel as well as traffic generated by new developments being built.
  - Some indicators of public health, such as obesity and life expectancy, have been worsening.
  - The financial viability of the public transport service has declined due to cost pressures and changes in passenger demand.
  - Kent's international gateways need government leadership – the impacts which arise and affect our local communities and the national economy cannot be resolved entirely by Kent local authorities.

- Related to all the previous points, carbon dioxide (CO2) emission reductions from management and use of the road network are forecast to remain at too high a level compared to the reduced levels needed to contribute towards reducing the worst effects of climate change.
- More funding is needed and KCC need to know what funding it will have over the next few years so it can improve transport in Kent.

2.7 The Ambition of the Local Transport Plan is:

We want to improve the health, wellbeing, and economic prosperity of lives in Kent by delivering a safe, reliable, efficient, and affordable transport network across the county and as an international gateway. We will plan for growth in Kent in a way that enables us to combat climate change and preserve Kent’s environment. We will do this by delivering emission-free travel by getting effective dedicated infrastructure to electrify vehicles, increase public transport use and make walking and cycling attractive. This will be enabled by maintaining our highways network and delivering our Vision Zero road safety strategy.

2.8 The diagram below shows the proposed policy outcomes, intending to ensure Kent’s networks are future-proof, resilient and meet user needs.



## Swale's Views on the Consultation Document

- 2.9 The LTP5 is very high level so sets out the direction of travel and the aspirations but does not contain any detailed proposals, which often drives residents' and stakeholders' interest and engagement. The following points are the main key issues that officers raised in Swale's response to the consultation.
- 2.10 Swale Borough Council would like to continue to work closely with KCC moving towards the next stage of the LTP5 and the next stages of our Local Plan in order to ensure that sustainable and active travel are fully embedded within both documents and that funding mechanisms are identified. We will also need to ensure that our existing road infrastructure is maintained and fit for purpose.
- 2.11 We were pleased to see that KCC have considered the effect of their plan on carbon emissions to tackle climate change and we hope that they continue to do this as the proposals are worked up in more detail as what is needed is meaningful suggestions as to how those targets will be met, and the volume of reduction of traffic needed. To seriously reduce carbon emissions, this needs to be an extremely ambitious plan reflecting a complete change of mindset about transport.
- 2.12 The documents states that KCC do not yet know how much funding will be required to deliver the full Local Transport Plan so we will be keen to see the fully costed proposals, and funding streams, for all of the proposed transport infrastructure investment in the full Local Transport Plan next year. We have some concerns that the document states that the Government does not require that the plan be constrained by current budgets, which is at odds with Local Plans, which need to show that any required infrastructure is deliverable.
- 2.13 We were pleased to see the priority concerning achieving an Environmental Step Change. However, there is no ambition to reduce the volume of private car mileage or speeds which is the largest contributor to transport sector carbon emissions. Hopefully this will come in the next stage of the LTP.
- 2.14 A significant source of noise and air pollution (and highways degradation) in our towns is the vast fleet of home delivery vans. As part of the LTP we would like to see Kent's towns with parcel consolidation centres, enabling carriers to deliver to one location, generally using the strategic road network, and then smaller EVs and cargo e-bikes making the 'last mile' delivery to customers.
- 2.15 As set out above, the LTP5 will not be proposing detailed changes to any bus or rail services. But the proposals in the Plan may enable new services or improved services in the future, if the funding for such can be found. In our view, this narrower perspective hampers the potential for delivery of a fully integrated sustainable transport system. Rail travel appears to be underplayed within the document; with only international passenger journeys mentioned and not journeys within Kent and from Kent to London and other regions. This is a key part of sustainable travel so it is recommended that this section is expanded on in the next draft.

- 2.16 Swale would like the LTP5 to look into the possibility of reopening the rail heads for freight at both Sheerness and Ridham in order to remove some freight off the roads in order to reduce road congestion and improve air quality.
- 2.17 The recent changes to bus services are of great concern to SBC and would welcome the opportunity to work with KCC to ensure that services suit the needs of our local residents and Swale's commitment to active and sustainable travel, whilst also being economically viable.
- 2.18 From an Active Travel England (ATE) perspective, they regard LTP5 as a key indicator of the LTA's commitment to rebalance streets away from motorised traffic to walking, wheeling and cycling. This rebalancing will not only improve trip mode choice, it will help residents to escape the financial stress of car ownership, reduce wear and tear on the declining infrastructure as well as all the other obvious positive impacts. We understand that ATE will use Local Transport Plans for future funding bids so we need to ensure that the document is positive for Swale and includes a suite of projects to assist with the implementation of active and sustainable travel in the borough.
- 2.19 The document is currently highways focused, despite the statement in the document that the "highways are in managed decline". We look forward to seeing more focus on sustainable and active travel measures and intra-urban travel and sustainable solutions for Kent's rural communities through measures such as service hubs in the larger villages, and upgrades to public rights of ways to link the villages to each other and their nearest town. There is a need for complete multi-modal networks to deliver modal shift; off-road cycle routes delivering you into a fast- moving stream of traffic are not very valuable.
- 2.20 The full response can be seen in Appendix I.

### **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 The proposal is to continue to engage with KCC as they work on more detailed proposals for Swale as they prepare for the next stage of consultation in 2024 and to ensure it aligns with the aspirations and proposals within the emerging Local Plan.

### **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 The alternative is to not engage with the process of the LTP5, however, this could negatively impact on sustainable development across Swale as Kent County Council are the Highway Authority and it is best practice to work with them to deliver the required transport infrastructure for Swale's existing residents and the emerging Local Plan. It is therefore not considered an appropriate option.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 KCC wanted to hear from as many stakeholders as possible about whether the emerging plan is proposing the right ambition and the right policy outcomes and objectives to achieve this ambition. Feedback will help KCC to understand the transport challenges faced in Kent and ensure their ambition for the future of Kent's transport network is stretching but realistic, focusing on the right outcomes and objectives to make journeys better within our county whilst supporting the delivery of net zero by 2050.
- 5.2 KCC will consider the feedback they receive and then write the full draft Local Transport Plan, which will be consulted on next year. This will illustrate where in Kent their priorities are for delivering improvements.
- 5.3 The consultation closed on 18<sup>th</sup> September, so Swale's response was submitted under the delegated authority of the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, and the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning.
- 5.4 Immediately following the meeting, officers will submit any further commentary agreed by members of the Planning and Transportation Working Group to KCC with a request for consideration alongside Swale's substantive response.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposals will help to deliver two objectives of the Corporate Plan: Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges and Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all
Financial, Resource and Property	The financial implications are unknown until the next stage of the consultation when the costed proposals will be available and the funding mechanisms will be identified by KCC
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Collaborative working will help to secure delivery of the key projects identified in the LTP5 and deliver the environmental benefits identified in the strategy
Health and Wellbeing	Collaborative working to secure delivery of the key projects identified in the LTP5 will improve the health and wellbeing of residents through improved air quality and physical fitness through increased walking and cycling

Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage

## **7 Appendices**

7.1 I: Swale Borough Council's submitted response to the consultation

## **8 Background Papers**

None