

## Local Transport Plan 4

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Local Transport Plan, which combines the Local Transport Plan with the County's delivery plan, *Growth without Gridlock*. It is welcomed that the documents are linked together and merged as it will give a clearer understanding of the strategic infrastructure requirements for all levels of priority; strategically nationally significant priorities, Kent-wide schemes, and a number of priorities at the local borough/district level. It is welcomed that LTP4 also creates links to the Kent & Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework (GIF), which outlines the requirements of different types of infrastructure to support future development across the county and at the local level. It also identifies the potential funding gap for different types of infrastructure against known committed funding to help delivery of supporting infrastructure for future development.

The Council's response will discuss general comments on the priorities of the document, before addressing the local priorities of the Sevenoaks District. Further comments that relate to the deliverability of the document will be summarised in a further section.

### General Comments

While the Sevenoaks is not directly affected by a number of strategic proposals, the Council is broadly supportive of the schemes and measures that the LTP4 suggests to improve transport infrastructure within Kent, including a new Lower Thames Crossing, solution to Operation Stack and the transport infrastructure to support growth in the Thames Gateway area. All these strategic national measures are important to relieving congestion on the county's main highways for improvements to the local, regional and national economy.

The Council also supports a number of additional measures for improvements to rail and bus improvements as rail and bus services provide real alternatives for people to reach destinations of leisure, employment and the use of services within town centres. In addition to this, improvements in rail technology and smart ticketing will need to be considered as part of KCC's ambition, to improve journey times and easier travel. For example, Westerham does not have a railway station and to reduce traffic congestion and improve poor air quality the bus service to Westerham's nearest train stations, Edenbridge, Oxted and Sevenoaks needs to be improved and the evening timetable extended. At present the bus service the last bus from Sevenoaks to Westerham on a Saturday is 5.45pm.

The Council wants to ensure that the continued partnership working between KCC, TOCs and local borough/district authorities brings further improvements to rail services including Oyster technology and increasing services through the Thameslink programme. SDC is currently monitoring Transport for London's (TfL) case for rail devolution of the Southeastern Metro services closely, and would suggest that any further discussions for improvement to Metro services between KCC and TfL, also include SDC as it will impact services within the District and further afield.

SDC has also been supportive of KCC's ambition to improve active travel opportunities (i.e. walking and cycling) within new developments, and looks forward to see the development of the Active Travel Strategy, following the recent closure of the draft consultation earlier this year, as improvements made to walking and cycling infrastructure could produce a cumulative impact on the improvement of healthy lifestyles and improvement of air quality. In addition, the Council notes that LTP4 is suggesting a commitment to improving the quality of highways through maintenance and asset management programmes, to ensure that all modes of transport are taken into account.

#### Sevenoaks-specific Comments

SDC notes the description of the Sevenoaks priorities, and welcomes KCC recognising that the District has a number of transport issues which includes high levels of congestion within Sevenoaks Town and Swanley which links to air quality issues along key highway corridors, the high dependency of rail services to/from London and parking concerns.

The Council understands that a number of priority proposals are set out in LTP4 were included, due to their submission to the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) for funding from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) from Local Growth Fund (LGF). SDC welcomes these projects being included within the remit of the LTP4 and wishes to develop these proposals further with KCC and other delivery partners to achieve the package of measures outlined which include, but not limited to:

- Alleviating congestion in Swanley with traffic control measures;
- New railway station and guided busway for Swanley;
- New pedestrian footbridge over the railway line at Swanley to connect the town centre;
- Junction improvements outside Sevenoaks Town station and on the High Street/Pembroke Road junction; and
- Bat and Ball Railway Station improvements.

The Council is currently in the process of producing a new Local Plan, which will set out the development and growth strategy for the District, up to 2035. Evidence gathering is currently ongoing, with a Regulation 18 "Issues and Options" consultation for the Local Plan currently timetabled for Spring/Summer 2017. It is anticipated that Sevenoaks will see a demand for growth over the plan period, not just in terms of residential development, but also for commercial, retail and industrial developments to support a thriving and resilient local economy and high quality places to live.

The Council also has an ambition to unlock growth opportunities within the District, especially within the north of District. SDC commissioned consultants to produce a Master Vision for Swanley and Hextable, which sets out the opportunities for growth for the area over the next 20 years. The Vision sets out an ambitious, transformational growth scenario which incorporates opportunities for housing, employment, education and health provision. Emphasis has been placed on the importance of movement and flows, with sustainable transport and highway improvements. The Vision also includes a recommendation for the

potential “Garden Village” to the east of Swanley and the west of M25, with a “Halt station” servicing the proposed development.

The Vision is currently under consultation, at the time of the writing this response. The document, once finalised, will form an evidence base for the new Local Plan to formulate appropriate planning policy. Any future planning policy will not only account for housing, employment and retail requirements, but help inform the infrastructure and transport provisions necessary for successful delivery. The Council has made a number of submissions to the SELEP with regards to future funding to deliver infrastructure improvements that are necessary for the Master Vision.

Furthermore, the Council received a planning application for the redevelopment of Swanley Town Centre (SE/16/02666), which is currently under consideration. The proposal seeks to develop housing within the centre, as well as the provision of new retail, commercial and community space.

Therefore, there should be further considerations for transport links to support high quality developments and future areas for employment use. SDC wishes to suggest the following scheme that should be included within the local priorities for Sevenoaks District:

- The inclusion of cycling infrastructure as a “future scheme” – the Council has had its Cycling Strategy in place since 2012 and outlines a number of routes within Sevenoaks Town, Edenbridge and Swanley. The Council believes that the inclusion of “cycling infrastructure” would further the KCC Active Travel agenda, as well as improving air quality and the promoting healthier lifestyles. The project should be defined as a “future scheme” as funding sources are currently unclear.
- A sustainable transport measures package for Swanley as a “future scheme” – the area of Swanley and Hextable has been recognised as a growth area within the District, due to its excellent connections to London and the rest of the country through rail and the M25. A Masterplan for the area has been produced and at the time of this response, is currently being consulted upon. Greater opportunities for walking and cycling infrastructure could be realised, as well as improvements to rail services to/from London via Thameslink services, as well as considering the proposal of a localised “Swanley Congestion Plan” which would look at measures to reduce congestion, rather than simply managing it. As the Masterplan is a 20 year vision for the area, the eventual plan will be used as an evidence base for the new Local Plan. Funding would most likely come from a number of sources including private developers, central and regional funding, as well as the potential use of contributions that are collected via the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) mechanism.
- Improvements to rail services as a “future project” – rail services are important to the District, as they service commuters to and from London. Talks of rail devolution to the Metro and suburban rail services will impact the Sevenoaks District, as well as the introduction of Oyster technology to Swanley, with the potential at Dunton Green and Sevenoaks.

- The reinstatement of the Tonbridge to Gatwick (via Edenbridge) rail service as a “future project” – there is a longstanding ambition to improve the rail links between Kent and Gatwick Airport, which could increase the number of passengers travelling to the airport by rail. Historically, there has been a substantial effort to link central and east Kent to West Kent train links, to improve access to London and Gatwick. As those links improve, consideration must be given to the Tonbridge to Gatwick connections.
- Upgrading the Uckfield line to accommodate a second Brighton Mainline Rail Service (BML2) as a “future project” – the upgrading of the line would allow for greater capacity not just for the District, but regionally, as rail capacity remains a hotly contested issue.
- Improved transport links in Westerham including Public transport improvements to and from Westerham to Sevenoaks, Oxted and Edenbridge, Improved cycling routes linking Westerham to neighbouring villages and towns. 20 mph zones in and around village schools and high Streets along the A25 and Increase use of park and ride schemes, where possible. In particular, whilst the A25 does become congested when there is an incident on the M25 this is not the sole reason for congestion. Parts of the A25 are congested on a daily basis and Westerham can have gridlock on a weekly basis. The reliance on private car use is a main contributing factor to the congestion and air pollution issues and this needs to be addressed.

#### Further Comments on LTP4

While the Council is eager to see a number of the measures delivered to support anticipated growth within the District, there are a number of reservations and comments that LTP4 has not addressed with little or no commentary.

One of the main concerns that the Council has is the historic lack of investment within the West Kent region, despite steady, relative growth in recent years, both attributed to a natural increase population and migration of workers coming out of London. There is growing pressure for increased housing development within the region, as it is perceived West Kent house prices are cheaper than the London equivalent. The West Kent region is popular for its current connections to London and the rest of the country through rail and highway links, yet they are slowly reaching capacity, especially at peak times.

As a result, the pressures are compounded and creating strain on the existing infrastructure. A lack of infrastructure investment within the West Kent region, especially Sevenoaks, has resulted in increases in traffic congestion and eventual decrease in air quality. The GIF identifies a funding deficit for transport-related infrastructure of around £38 million. However this figure may increase once housing and employment growth within the Local Plan process.

Further to this, while the Council appreciates that there are cuts to funding streams and its own funds, there is little commentary to how the County Council proposes to deliver on the number of projects that are contained within LTP4. Further discussion on this issue would be appreciated for all local authorities within Kent.

Additional concerns that SDC have include the following:

- Air quality is only mentioned under Active Travel but there appears to be a lack of commentary on Air Quality on other major routes and other Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). The Equality Impact Assessment does not mention Air Quality or the effects of congestion or alleviation of congestion on improving air quality – surely improvements to congestion and increasing active travel options would have a health benefit to some groups?
- Greater consideration of some groups within the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) should be given on all proposals within the document (e.g. young people, the elderly/disabled) as this will have a bearing to the effective implementation of public transport options and other measures.
- There is little mention of transport improvements for rural communities across the County, especially where public transport improvements are critical to ensuring mobility of some areas of society which do not have high dependency on a private vehicle.

Nevertheless, despite some concerns, Sevenoaks District Council is broadly supportive of the Local Transport Plan 4: *Growth without Gridlock*. It sets out a clear vision and delivery plan to what infrastructure within Kent will be provided and how it will be provided for.

