

Renewable Energy Select Committee

Supplementary Evidence - Peter Rosevear, Kent Highway Services, Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling Transportation Team

Sustainable Transport Strategy - The Role of Kent County Council in Supporting Maidstone Borough Council's Local Development Framework

Introduction

1. Maidstone Borough Council, as the local planning authority, is required to prepare a Local Development Framework to set a blueprint for growth within the Borough for the period up to 2026.

2. The LDF must fulfil the targets and policies adopted in the South East Plan, which was adopted in May 2009. Kent County Council, as local highway and transport authority, is required to work with planning authorities to facilitate the delivery of the housing and employment targets in their LDFs.

3. Kent Highway Services is working with Maidstone Borough Council to formulate a transport strategy that will achieve the objectives of both the LDF and the County's Local Transport Plan. Maidstone is identified as a transport Hub in the South East Plan, so the measures that will eventually form the Hub Transport Package will address issues that range beyond the boundaries of the Borough. The measures will fit within a study of the M20/M2 Corridor between London and Dover/Channel Tunnel that is currently being carried out under the government's "Delivering a Sustainable Transport System" initiative.

4. The overall transport issues and challenges for the County of Kent are described in its Integrated Transport Strategy "Growth Without Gridlock", which has recently been the subject of consultation with all the Districts and Boroughs.

5. The challenge for the LDF transport strategy for Maidstone is to evolve a package of measures that supports the required growth, and lies within the national, regional, and local policies and guidelines, and also within the practical constraints of the expected low level of future funding from both the public and private sectors.

6. The LDF Core Strategy and the supporting transport proposals are currently being formulated, and are due to go out to public consultation in the late summer of 2010.

Maidstone Context

7. Maidstone Borough has Growth Point status, and is expected to deliver 11,080 new homes in the period from 2006-2026, and stimulate 10,000 new jobs. This development will be mainly centred in and around the town itself.

8. The principle challenge will be to facilitate the required growth over the next 15 years, which will take place on a road network that already suffers severe localised congestion at peak times, leading to lengthy queuing and poor air quality.

9. Government policy is looking for a hierarchy approach that starts with reducing the overall need to travel, improved management of the existing network, the management of future demand, and the promotion of all forms of sustainable transport (walking, cycling, buses, and trains) . The construction of schemes that increase highway capacity are seen as a last resort.

10. KCC and MBC are therefore working together to prepare a package of measures that we believe would support the expected growth and follow the above principles. We recognise that this will be a considerable challenge, and we are keen to explore any innovative measures that might be beneficial.

11. These innovations will come from a variety of sources, including the evolution of technology, partnership working between the KCC/MBC and beyond with the Highways Agency, neighbouring planning authorities, and public transport operators.

April 2010