

From: David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Phil Lightowler, Director Highways and Transportation

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, 8th September 2022

Subject: Transport for the South East consultation on its Strategic Investment Plan

Decision: n/a

Classification: Unrestricted

Past pathway of paper: n/a

Electoral division: All divisions

Summary: Transport for the South East (TfSE) is the non-statutory sub-national transport body covering 16 local authorities from Kent round to Berkshire, five local enterprise partnerships plus representatives of district & borough authorities, protected landscapes and national delivery agencies.

TfSE are consulting on a draft Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). The SIP provides a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory interventions in the coming three decades. TfSE, lacking in any powers to deliver the SIP, intends it to act as a blueprint for investment. Constituent members of TfSE, such as KCC, will be asked by TfSE to adopt the SIP for delivery. It is important the TfSE SIP represents fully KCC's own ambitions for the county.

KCC's consultation response makes clear that we are broadly supportive of the long-term investment programme for the region as the proposed level of investment would deliver a sustained improvement in transport. The investment TfSE seeks must be additional to that funding KCC already requires for highways and transport.

KCC is supportive of several the proposals in the SIP as they are reflected in KCC's Local Transport Plan. Some proposals will need substantial further development before KCC can support proposals. Given the constraints of the powers and funding of TfSE, and KCC's wider priorities concerning local transport provision e.g., maintenance, road safety etc., some elements of the draft SIP are unlikely to be delivered and that should investment be forthcoming from government, we are likely to have other priorities before those detailed in the draft SIP.

Our consultation response encourages TfSE to focus on securing funding for development of the SIP and work with KCC and government to ensure funding is available and passed to the most appropriate delivery organisation. Until this happens and feasibility, costs estimates, and business cases can be developed, it will remain challenging for KCC and TfSE to deliver the SIP's planned outcomes.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed response by Kent County Council, attached in Appendix 3, to the Transport for The South East consultation on its draft Strategic Investment Plan.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Transport for the South East (TfSE) is a sub-national transport body bringing together leaders from across the local government, business, and transport sectors to speak with one voice on the region's strategic transport needs. Kent County Council (KCC) has been a constituent member of TfSE since taking part in its founding in 2017. The area covered by TfSE is included in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 TfSE is governed by a Partnership Board, which brings together representatives from the sixteen constituent local transport authorities, five Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), district and borough authorities, protected landscapes, National Highways, Network Rail and Transport for London (TfL). KCC is represented on the board by Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Dan Watkins.
- 1.3 TfSE established a transport strategy which was agreed by the Partnership Board in July 2020, following adoption also by constituent members including KCC – section 10 concerning Background documents provides links to this and other related decisions. The TfSE transport strategy sets out a 2050 vision for the development of the South East transport system, which includes a commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050, at the latest.
- 1.4 TfSE led preparation of the draft SIP, with input from constituent members and its transport forum which captures views from a far wider set of transport stakeholders such as lower tiers of government, bus and rail user groups, environmental groups, businesses and so on (the full membership of the TfSE forum is included in appendix 1). As TfSE has developed its SIP, the feedback KCC has provided has been taken on board in some instances, however in the recent lead up to the draft SIP's publication, not all KCC's feedback was reflected due to time constraints. As such the consultation response reiterates some feedback KCC has already passed to TfSE to ensure it is addressed prior to the final SIP TfSE composes.
- 1.5 The draft SIP covers the whole region but also focuses on in discrete areas where there are common travel corridors and challenges. More detailed evidence bases were established in Area Studies considering orbital and radial movement corridors and thematic studies (covering the future of mobility and freight). As such, KCC's consultation response is focused on the detail within the Kent, Medway, and East Sussex portfolio of investment proposals. The KCC consultation response also addresses broad policy interventions (known as "global interventions") in the draft SIP. These interventions are effectively policies needing delivery by national government that TfSE have explored to address challenges that apply across the whole region.

- 1.6 TfSE embarked on the preparation of the draft SIP with funding support from Government and in a context of Government's decision not to progress with the establishment of TfSE as a statutory sub national transport body. TfSE had formerly been rejected in an application in autumn 2020. KCC took a decision to continue to support TfSE in the activity to prepare the draft SIP earlier this year (Decision 22/00023 – see section 10 for link to the related published documents).
- 1.7 KCC's Local Transport Plan remains the key statutory plan for local transport within the county and our view is that the focus of TfSE should be on supporting KCC with delivery of that and in leading on agreed cross-boundary programmes and proposals.

2. Consultation response concerning the investment priorities of the SIP

- 2.1 The SIP sets out eight investment priorities against which a highly ambitious portfolio of transport infrastructure improvements is set. The priorities (included in appendix 2) are supported by KCC and reflect a range of key challenges for the transport system in the county as it does for the region and nationally.
- 2.2 The SIP is, however, relatively silent on the substantial transport challenges facing Kent and KCC as a Local Transport and Highways authority, and which we understand face TfSE's other constituent members. The SIP must be updated to reflect these pressing challenges and draw attention to the criticality of addressing those before the proposals in the SIP can become priorities. Indeed, without addressing these challenges to strengthen the foundations of local and strategic transport in the county and wider region, we do not believe the SIP can achieve its aims and the value delivered by the sought investment would be lower than currently forecast by TfSE.
- 2.3 To address this the SIP must be amended to reflect, if not recite, the following key point – that a ninth investment priority is needed worded to the effect of "Reversing decline" or "Steadying our networks". This investment priority would call for funding for programmes that are not reflected in the TfSE SIP but reflected in existing constituent member strategies and plans such as KCC's Highways Asset Management Plan, the Bus Service Improvement Plan etc., as these are pre-requisite for achieving the TfSE transport strategy.
- 2.4 Without this as an investment priority, it should be clear to TfSE that achieving the outcomes intended from the other investment priorities will be undermined. The TfSE estimate of investment needed, at £48bn over the period to 2050, must clearly be presented as *additional to* and not instead of the funding its constituent members including KCC have already estimated as necessary to deliver Highways Asset Management Plans and Bus Service Improvement Plans. We understand through our work with TfSE that this perspective is understood and appreciated; however, it must be more strongly reflected in the final SIP before KCC can adopt it.

3. Consultation response concerning the packages of intervention for the Kent, Medway, and East Sussex area

3.1 The draft SIP sets out packages of interventions across highways, rail, mass transit and active travel – the full list of which is included in Appendix 2. The draft SIP also divides the whole region into areas with common challenges. As such, Kent has a unique package of proposed infrastructure improvements that are distinct from areas such as the Solent and Sussex coast, or West Thames (covering Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey). Due to their proximity and shared, cross-boundary transport networks and corridors (e.g., the Southeastern train network, A21 Hastings to Sevenoaks, M2 etc.) the Kent package is presented with Medway and East Sussex. Nonetheless, the specifics within the KCC boundary are clearly set out and our consultation response limits itself to comment on those, with proposals in Medway and East Sussex left to those authorities except where clear impacts or synergies exist for KCC.

3.2 Detailed below in each section are the critical points reflected in the draft KCC consultation response. Further detailed comments are included in the full KCC consultation response which is in Appendix 3.

3.3 Highways package

3.4 The content of the SIP reflects the priority schemes we are progressing for our managed road network and those we are supporting development of by National Highways for the strategic trunk road network. Those proposals collectively form the most expensive package of works within the Kent boundary (the rail enhancements package has a higher total cost but includes high-cost proposals associated with the High Speed network in the Medway unitary area).

3.5 We also welcome the recognition of the need for investment into finding alternatives for management of the Port traffic, including better management of flows from across the country into Kent based on Port capacity and lorry parking capacity. We look forward to enjoying the continued support of TfSE in our own efforts on these matters.

3.6 The presentation of the highways package in the SIP must be improved and corrected before submission to Government in 2023. Whilst the package correctly carries as priorities improvements to both the A20/M20 corridor and the A2/M2 corridor, in line with KCC's promoted bifurcation strategy for port traffic, the schematic mapping of the package misses out the Brenley Corner to Dover A2 corridor and the M20/A20 corridor from Maidstone to Dover. This must be added to ensure the spatial depiction of the SIP proposals in the Kent area is correct.

3.7 Railways package

3.8 Recognising the long-term nature of the SIP, we concur with the broad range of rail network proposals within the 30-year horizon, with many aligned to the current Kent Rail Strategy and schemes KCC continues to work in partnership on making the case for, such as extending Crossrail to Kent. There are a range of station interchange proposals which would entail entirely new stations, and which are in challenging locations to deliver based on the initial assessments

conducted. Nonetheless, they may warrant having their feasibility further investigated and KCC encourages TfSE to make use of its further funding settlements to progress those studies with the input of KCC, the District and Borough Councils and the rail industry such as Network Rail, Southeastern and the DfT.

- 3.9 There are a small number of proposals which KCC does not regard as priorities and would not support investment in at the expense of other interventions or particularly the funding of existing local transport priorities. For example, the proposed Ebbsfleet southern rail access, Bakerloo line extension (for the purpose of releasing train paths from London metro routes to and from Hayes to destinations further afield into Kent), or the High Speed proposals within the 'enhanced rail package' given all are dependent on an expanded High Speed train fleet as a pre-requisite.
- 3.10 Given the above and the significant economic benefits the High Speed services have brought to mid and east Kent, KCC's consultation response calls for the expansion of the High Speed train fleet, as it has lobbied for since 2020.

3.11 Mass transit

- 3.12 The Mass transit package addresses primarily bus networks: however, it also includes ferry-based travel. Each is addressed in turn as follows.
- 3.13 We support the bus enhancement proposals within the SIP; however, as with the active travel package as detailed further below, the SIP is too selective in respect of where bus enhancements should occur. Most major towns of Kent are listed, however there are other town locations missing such as Paddock Wood, Tonbridge, Swanley etc. We recommend that the SIP promote bus enhancements across the whole county, and in doing so would capture the scope for improving coverage and availability of rural bus services. We also view that the SIP must include a proposal for the full delivery and funding necessary for the KCC BSIP and this be reflected in the investment calculations. This is a pre-requisite for KCC adopting the final SIP.
- 3.14 TfSE should also note that the viability and feasibility of long-term expansion of the Fastrack network in north Kent into areas such as Medway will need to be developed. We recommend that TfSE work with KCC to identify those priority elements of the unfunded parts of the current BSIP and utilise remaining funding to support KCC and other constituent members in the development of proposals.
- 3.15 Concerning ferries, we wish to highlight that we have no plans as KCC to introduce ferry services as detailed in the SIP. We are unclear the intended delivery body and operating model for the proposed ferry services and remain unconvinced that these proposals are priorities for achieving the outcomes of the TfSE transport strategy or the policy goals across all tiers of government.

3.16 Active Travel

- 3.17 We welcome the recognition of the importance of active travel within the SIP; however, the package as presented lacks development to accurately represent

the requirements, the costs and the benefits likely associated with delivering active travel improvements county-wide. Some specific locations are listed in the packages such as Dover, Maidstone, and Canterbury and some intra-urban routes are similarly listed taken from Sustran's long term strategy for the National Cycle Network. There are proposals within towns across Kent – for example within Thanet, Dartford, Gravesend and Ebbsfleet, Sevenoaks and so on.

3.18 We therefore recommend that the focus of the TfSE SIP remain on the strategic cross-boundary network improvements for active travel, whilst active travel improvements within the county is kept to the detail of proposals W3 and W4 concerning 'Kent urban cycleways' and 'Kent inter-urban cycleways' respectively and expanded to include pedestrian improvements. KCC and the District and Borough Councils will be developing comprehensive proposals for urban areas and inter-urban corridors across the whole county through Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plans (LCWIPs). That work will be the best articulation of what is required and where and should be the basis on which funding for the county's active travel plans be derived from.

3.19 The current forecast of £400m across the TfSE Kent Medway and East Sussex area is likely to be insufficient over the 30 years of the SIP horizon to achieve the extent of improvements desired or necessary to meet the objectives and policy goals held across all tiers of government. It equates to £13.3m per annum, which split shared across the three authorities brings the value for Kent close to the level of funding recently received per annum through the Active Travel Funding (ATF) tranche 1 to 3.

3.20 As we look to the future, the number and extent of proposed active travel schemes will likely increase across the county as will KCC's ability to deliver. The estimate of £400m should either be front loaded to the first 15 years of the SIP, or the volume of funding estimate will likely need to double to at least around £800m over the 30-year period, likely substantially more to achieve government targets on active travel in urban areas and carbon budget and net zero targets.

4. Consultation response concerning the “global” or national packages of intervention promoted by TfSE

4.1 The TfSE SIP proposes 6 interventions applied on a region wide basis but likely requiring national Government led action including through new legislation. TfSE have proposed these interventions in the SIP as they are not unique to the TfSE region but are challenges faced nation-wide. Nonetheless, TfSE recognises that without also addressing these further 6 interventions, the outcomes of its transport strategy are unlikely to be fulfilled. The interventions are:

- 4.1.1 Decarbonisation
- 4.1.2 Public transport fares
- 4.1.3 New mobility
- 4.1.4 Road User Charging
- 4.1.5 Virtual access
- 4.1.6 Integration

- 4.2 Only brief descriptions are given for each in the SIP, with no detail of proposals provided. TfSE are seeking our views on the interventions and whether we feel any, or all, are important for the SIP to support.
- 4.3 In respect of road user charging, KCC recognises the forecast decline in tax receipts from fuel duty as vehicle use shifts to battery electric and hydrogen vehicles. We also recognise demands on the road network and the challenge of finding sufficient funds to maintain it whilst also decarbonising transport to combat climate change. Road user charging, depending on its design, could aid addressing those challenges and optimise use of the finite road network. No details are provided about the form of road user charging within the TfSE proposals and as such it is not possible to pass further comment at this stage. Ultimately it will depend upon the form and function of any future tax or charges regime for using vehicles or roads. How receipts are hypothecated (e.g. whether dedicated to local highways and public transport or consolidated centrally in Treasury budgets for cross-departmental spending) will also be an important factor in KCC's considerations of any proposals by TfSE or Government.
- 4.4 As with much of the content of the draft SIP, KCC will also be aided further in its considerations once it completes development of its new Local Transport Plan, which is underway.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with our consultation response or arising from the TfSE SIP development. KCC contributes £58,000 per year to be a member of TfSE which is funded by the constituent authorities' contributions and annual grant from the DfT.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 The TfSE SIP is accompanied by an Integrated Impact Assessment which includes some consideration of equalities impacts. The assessment is relatively high level reflecting the lack of development and detail of the specific proposals held in the SIP. Nonetheless the balance of positive and potential negative impacts is recognised. Given the TfSE SIP is a non-statutory document and TfSE has no power to implement the SIP, we are satisfied that the equalities implications at this stage are understood.
- 6.2 Should we adopt and progress a specific proposal in the SIP, we will apply KCC's rigorous equalities impact assessment processes before making any necessary decisions to implement the proposal.

7. Governance

- 7.1 KCC is a member of the TfSE Partnership Board, its Senior Officer Group and its working groups, and will continue to feedback and make the case for the proposals in our consultation response to be adopted by TfSE.
- 7.2 A decision will be taken by the Leader of KCC in early 2023 for potential adoption of the SIP if we are satisfied with its content once we have received

the final SIP from TfSE following their consideration of all responses to this consultation on its draft.

- 7.3 The KCC draft response to the TfSE consultation on its draft SIP (Appendix 3) will be submitted by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport following consideration and endorsement or recommendations by the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The draft SIP sets out a highly ambitious series of interventions and proposals for the region, including within Kent. This ambition needs to be set upon a firm foundation of a well-funded and effective local transport network, reflected in KCC's existing strategies such as its Highways Asset Management Plan and Bus Service Improvement Plan. The SIP must be updated to reflect the need for this and call for it as part of its call for investment from Government.
- 8.2 The draft SIP needs to focus the efforts of TfSE on strategic, cross-boundary transport improvements and acknowledge and refer to the work underway by KCC to establish priorities at the local transport level across the county.
- 8.3 Once TfSE has addressed KCC's consultation response, a decision will be made by the Leader of KCC in early 2023 concerning adopting the TfSE SIP and endorsing its submission to Government.

9. Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed response by Kent County Council, attached in Appendix 3, to the Transport for The South East consultation on its draft Strategic Investment Plan.

10. Background Documents

- The TfSE consultation documents are available to view here: <https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/useful-documents/draft-strategic-investment-plan-for-the-south-east/>
- Kent County Council's response to Transport for the South East's draft Proposal to Government: <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s91339/Item%2015%20-%20Report%20-%20KCC%20Response%20to%20Transport%20for%20the%20South%20East%20Proposal%20Consultation.pdf>
- Kent County Council's response to Transport for the South East's draft Transport Strategy for the South East: <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s95532/Item%209%20-%20Report%20-%20Transport%20for%20the%20South%20East.pdf>
- Past decision relating to KCC adoption of TfSE Transport Strategy and bid for statutory status available to view here: ROD 20/00100: <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s97556/20-00010%20-%20ROD.pdf>

- Past decision relating to KCC continued support of TfSE to establish the draft SIP available to view here: [Decision - 22/00023 - Transport for the South East - KCC Participation \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

11. Contact details

Report Author(s): Joseph Ratcliffe, Transport Strategy Manager joseph.ratcliffe@kent.gov.uk	Relevant Director: Phil Lightowler, Interim Director of Highways and Transportation philip.lightowler@kent.gov.uk
--	--