

ASHFORD AREA TRANSPORT STUDY
TOWARDS A TRANSPORT STRATEGY

12.0 CONCLUSIONS

12.1 Ashford is planned to be an area of significant growth. Previous studies have identified that the town could double in size. The aim is to build development and an expanded Ashford which is sustainable, particularly in terms of transport provision. Indeed, previous studies have indicated that a step-change in transport provision will be needed if the growth is to be achieved.

12.2 A strategic transport study, the Ashford Area Transport Study (AATS), has therefore been undertaken as the first part of the overall strategy development process. The overall aims of the study have been to:

- i) develop an integrated, multi-modal transport strategy for inclusion in the Local Development Framework (LDF) and with an horizon year of 2031;
- ii) develop transport strategies that support current and future sustainable developments within the study area;
- iii) reduce the impact of transport on the environment and promote social inclusion;
- iv) assist in developing a spatial strategy that minimises car use and the need to travel; and
- v) which provides the basis for the funding and implementation of the strategy alongside preliminary phasing plans for development and infrastructure.

12.3 This report sets out the key conclusions from the study. We started by describing existing travel in Ashford, noting how this is dominated by the car. We went on to consider the overall levels of growth envisaged by Ashford's Future and some of the key transport issues arising from this. Our Section 4.0 then sets out the strategy development process.

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- 12.4 A key output from the study is a recommendation on the locations of land-use development that are most likely to achieve sustainable travel patterns and which are most likely to assist with the viability and delivery of a new transport system needed to secure growth. This is considered in Section 5.0 which recommends a land-use strategy based on an expanded town centre and two large mixed-use development areas to the south-east and south-west of the town.
- 12.5 Our analysis of the key uses affecting modal split set out in Section 6.0 confirms the conclusions of the Ashford's Future study, ie. that a 'carrot and stick' approach will be needed, combining high quality public transport with disincentives to use the car.
- 12.6 We then go on to consider the various components of the strategy to be delivered by 2021, dealing with parking, local public transport, the role of rail and highway capacity improvements in Section 7.0 to 10.0 respectively.
- 12.7 Our proposals for parking include parking restraint in the town centre and on development sites, significantly increased town centre parking charges and three park and ride sites.
- 12.8 We recommend the 'backbone' of the local public transport system should be a new transit scheme running along two corridors from the town centre to the south-east and south-west of the town. We do not specify a particular system or technology as we consider a system specification is the appropriate way forward. We do, however, make some suggestions as to what the vehicles may look like at 2031.
- 12.9 Other elements of the local public transport system are considered and we make recommendations for new bus services, increases in the frequency of existing bus services, supporting infrastructure improvements and suggest that a new bus/rail interchange or public transport hub is created.

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- 12.10 In terms of rail, our analysis indicates containment of travel within the town as a result of the balance between workers and jobs. Rail is therefore expected to play a limited role although we have identified issues where further intervention is needed and consider that the proposed station at Park Farm should remain within the strategy.
- 12.11 Our analysis of traffic flows and road capacity identifies the need for various but generally localised improvements. We do not foresee a need for any major new strategic highway provision other than M20J10A, but do recommend new links between M20 and A2070 Hamstreet Bypass and A28 Chart Road and A2042/Ashford Road. These will generally serve development but also assist with the management of traffic on the wider road networks.
- 12.12 Delivery is a key issue for the transport strategy and we consider land-use and transport phasing in Section 11.0. We then estimate the costs of the transport strategy to be c.£166 million (with various exclusions noted in the text). We go on to consider funding and conclude that we consider the strategy is fundable from both public and private sectors, with a large proportion from the private sector by way of developer contributions.
- 12.13 Our deliverability analysis considers the proposed major public transport system in some detail. There are many issues associated with this but our overall conclusion is that a new high quality system should be capable of delivery.
- 12.14 Overall, we conclude that the land-use and transport strategy proposed will create sustainable development and travel patterns and will result in a transport system that offers genuine alternatives to the car, allows traffic to be managed and, importantly, is worthy of the growing and expanded Ashford.