

Transport Assessments

Guidance Note

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Introduction

1. This Guidance Note is intended for applicants preparing planning applications for strategic and major developments in Medway. It will introduce the new Medway Aimsun Model and an optional protocol for its use in Transport Assessments (TAs).

In summary, the protocol involves:

- a preliminary recommendation by officers;
 - collaboration between officers and the applicant;
 - a licencing arrangement for the use of the model itself; and
 - impartial validation on behalf of the council.
2. Collaborative working will ensure that the council can effectively plan for growth, while the potential advantages may result in a more efficient planning process, leading to increased confidence, reduced costs and higher quality developments.

Growth

3. The North Kent Strategic Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (March 2015) established the development needs for housing, employment and retail in Medway to 2035:
 - 29,500 homes;
 - 155,000m² industrial land;
 - 164,000m² warehousing land;
 - 50,000m² office space;
 - 35,000m² comparison retail space; and
 - 10,500m² convenience retail space.
4. The scale of growth in Medway is challenging; the resident population is forecast to increase by one-fifth to 330,220 in 2035. Residents have stated their concerns about traffic generation and congestion during early rounds of consultation for the new Local Plan.

Local Plan

5. The council is preparing a new Local Plan to provide direction on the future growth of the area for the period up to 2035. The aim of the new Local Plan will be to ensure that Medway grows sustainably, to provide land for housing, employment, infrastructure and services, whilst protecting the area's environment and heritage. Subject to outcomes of an independent examination by a planning inspector, it is anticipated that the new Local Plan will be adopted in 2020.

Medway Aimsun Model

6. The council commissioned the new Medway Aimsun Model in 2016. The model covers the Medway road network, including the next major junction. The model has been built in Aimsun, enabling the simultaneous modelling of traffic impacts and possible mitigation strategies at the macro (i.e. whole road network) and micro (i.e. localised) scale.
7. The 2016 base year model is complete; it is the authoritative transport model for Medway, having been subject to calibration and validation by Highways England.
8. Note that the model does not have mode split functionality, however this could be addressed through future investment.
9. Committed developments and other highways schemes have been incorporated in order to undertake the Strategic Transport Assessment, i.e. part of the transport evidence base to support the new Local Plan. Future year reference cases to 2035 have been developed in line with the current stage of work towards the new Local Plan.
10. The council commissioned an Interim Assessment to support the most recent Local Plan consultation. This was a macro assessment, based on developments with planning permission and other broad locations with the potential for development up to 2035. This assessment demonstrated that congestion will increase significantly, although it did not include any mitigation or sustainable transport initiatives which will be identified through the new Local Plan.
11. This Guidance Note sets out how the model can be used in TAs.

National planning policy and guidance

12. The protocol set out at page 4 is supported by national planning policy and guidance.
13. The National Planning Policy Framework states that:

'All developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment. Plans and decisions should take account of whether:

- *the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure*
- *safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people*
- *improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.'*¹

¹ NPPF Para 32

14. This is reinforced by Planning Practice Guidance, which sets out key principles for TAs, including the need to ‘build on existing information wherever possible’ and be ‘tailored to particular local circumstances’.² Planning Practice Guidance states that:

*‘It is important to give appropriate consideration to the cumulative impacts arising from other committed development (i.e. development that is consented or allocated where there is a reasonable degree of certainty will proceed within the next 3 years). At the decision-taking stage this may require the developer to carry out an assessment of the impact of those adopted Local Plan allocations which have the potential to impact on the same sections of transport network as well as other relevant local sites benefitting from as yet unimplemented planning approval’.*³

15. Planning Practice Guidance highlights the ‘need for, scale, scope and level of detail required of a Transport Assessment or Statement should be established as early in the development management process as possible ...’.⁴ This is the first stage of the protocol set out at page 4.

² Planning Practice Guidance - Para: 007 Reference, ID: 42-007-20140306 (6 March 2014)

³ Planning Practice Guidance - Para: 014 Reference, ID: 42-014-20140306 (6 March 2014)

⁴ Ibid

Protocol

16. The protocol will enable collaborative working between the council and applicants:

<p>1. Preliminary recommendation</p> <p>Integrated Transport will consider the potential use of the model according to criteria.</p> <p>The criteria will be in line with Planning Practice Guidance⁵, including the planning context of the proposal, road network capacity, road trip generation and safety implications.</p> <p>The planning officer will discuss the preliminary recommendation with the applicant at the pre-application meeting / at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Clearly it would be at the applicant's discretion whether to accept the preliminary recommendation or to undertake a TA based on independent modelling. However, please note, the model will enable the council to assess and potentially contest TAs based on independent modelling. The advantages in using the model have been set out below.</p>
<p>2. Pre-application</p> <p>Subject to the preliminary recommendation, the applicant and council officers will discuss the intentions, expectations and opportunities for the TA at pre-application stage / at the earliest opportunity. This may form part of a Planning Performance Agreement.</p> <p>The appropriate study parameters (i.e. area, scope and duration of study) will need to be agreed between the applicant and the council. Highways England will be consulted at this stage if the scheme is likely to impact the Strategic Road Network.</p>
<p>3. Licence</p> <p>The council will issue a copy of the model under a unique licence number for the applicant to use in the TA.</p> <p>Subsequent planning applications for the same site will need to be based on the latest version of the model. Therefore, each licence will be strictly tied to a planning application. The council will need to maintain the integrity of the model by discouraging unlicensed distribution, which could lead to TAs based on superseded versions of the model.</p> <p>TAs must carry the allocated unique licence number for validation.</p>
<p>4. Transport Assessment</p> <p>The applicant will appoint a suitable consultant to undertake the TA. The council will share a list of approved companies to assist applicants in appointing a suitable consultant, if required.</p> <p>The council will liaise with the applicant's consultant to ensure that committed developments and proposed site allocations have been included as appropriate.</p>
<p>5. Impartial validation</p> <p>Modelling outputs will be validated by a consultant appointed from an approved group of companies on behalf of the council and made available to Highways England.</p>

⁵ Ibid

Fee structure

17. The fee structure (excluding VAT) is set out below:

Application type	Licence	Impartial validation	Total
Strategic	£6,100	£3,900	£10,000
Major	£3,600	£2,900	£6,500

18. This is likely to be arranged under a Planning Performance Agreement in the first instance. Note the council reserves the right to revise the exact fees periodically.

19. Strategic developments comprise:

- 50 or more residential units; or
- 5,000 sqm floorspace and over; or
- development on a site of 2 ha or more; or
- proposals requiring an Environmental Assessment

Major developments comprise:

- 10 to 49 residential units; or
- 1,000 to 4,999 sqm floorspace; or
- development on a site of 2 ha or less.

20. The council has made a substantial investment to develop the model. The licence fee will be allocated to the ongoing maintenance costs of the model, e.g. annual updates to baseline datasets. Highways England will be consulted to ensure that the model remains fit for purpose.

21. In addition to the licence fee, the applicant will meet the costs of impartial validation on behalf of the council. This will be chargeable once the planning application has been received and validated. The council will expect the implications to be considered at the macro scale to inform strategic infrastructure planning. The council will be responsible for this appointment. Modelling outputs will be made available to Highways England.

Advantages for applicants and the council

22. The protocol may result in a more efficient planning process, leading to increased confidence and reduced costs. Clearly applicants will not need to develop an independent model and, in most instances, there will be no need to undertake traffic surveys; the baseline has been established in the model. However, traffic surveys for minor roads in the vicinity of the proposal may be necessary.
23. The outputs, such as computer simulations, could be used in communicating the impacts and any proposed mitigation measures to Members and the general public.
24. The simultaneous modelling at the micro and macro scale will enable applicants to demonstrate the impacts on the Strategic Road Network to Highways England. This will also enable the council to understand the wider, cumulative traffic impacts of development; this could be used to inform strategic infrastructure planning, e.g. to support regional and national bids for funding.
25. This collaborative process will ensure that the council can effectively plan for growth, while the site-specific mitigation and design considerations may result in higher quality developments.

Contact

Please send enquiries to: planning.policy@medway.gov.uk