

Faversham Town Council's Response to LTP5

While the document *Striking the Balance* aims to address improvements in public transport and promote active travel, we are concerned that the planned investments remain heavily focused on major road-building projects. Some projects, such as the Lower Thames Crossing, may not be cost-effective and could cause significant environmental damage. However, we recognise that improvements at Brenley Corner are urgently needed, regardless of whether the Lower Thames Crossing proceeds.

We strongly support the implementation of on-street electric vehicle (EV) charging, which is critical in older areas of Faversham with limited off-street parking. Additionally, the new opportunities granted to local authorities to manage bus services are not adequately addressed in the plan and should be incorporated before the document is finalised.

The document lacks a clear vision for improving Kent's town centres. Specifically, there is a missed opportunity to slow traffic, expand pedestrian spaces, and enhance safety measures that would encourage walking, wheeling, and cycling. In line with this, providing improvements to the cycling route between Faversham and Canterbury should be prioritised in the Kent LCWIP to promote active travel beyond the town boundaries.

A greater emphasis on improving north-south public transport connections within Kent is necessary. For example, it currently takes two hours to travel from Faversham to William Harvey Hospital by public transport. Similarly, commuting to Maidstone takes longer than traveling to London, often requiring multiple train or bus changes. While upgrading M2 junction 7 is positive, the outdated design of junction 6 presents significant safety concerns, as it is frequently closed due to road traffic collisions.

The plan also lacks ambition in terms of expanding and integrating mass transit systems. Although the focus on shifting international freight from road to rail is encouraging, more attention should be given to domestic rail freight. The railheads at Ridham and Sheerness offer potential for increased rail freight capacity, and a road/rail/maritime freight transfer station could further enhance this.

Expanding the proposed Faversham to Rochester rail shuttle to include Strood would improve rail connectivity across Kent. We also welcome the push for the return of Eurostar services from Ashford and Ebbsfleet. Currently, it can take longer to travel from Faversham to the Eurostar terminal in London than it does to reach Lille from St. Pancras.

The plan seems behind the curve when addressing EV infrastructure, modal shift, and air quality. It relies too heavily on technological advancements rather than committing to real action. For instance, on-street EV charging solutions like Kerbo could help

accelerate the shift to EVs. Furthermore, increased support for community transport services and schemes such as Hiya Car could reduce car ownership while promoting walking, cycling, and public transport.

Encouraging active travel, especially for school children, is critical. Campaigns to promote walking buses and walking to school should be supported by better maintenance of footways, such as cutting back vegetation to provide more pedestrian space. Additionally, the opportunity to make 20mph the default speed limit for new developments should not be overlooked.

Maritime transport is underutilised in the plan. The use of waterways for non-time-sensitive freight could reduce road congestion and potentially use renewable energy sources for transportation. Collaboration with port authorities to ensure proper dredging is necessary to bring these waterways into use.

Finally, we recommend considering improved transport links between Faversham and the eastern Isle of Sheppey. This could enhance connectivity and stimulate economic growth for both areas.

In summary, while *Striking the Balance* addresses important elements of public transport and active travel, it lacks the vision and ambition necessary to make a significant impact on Kent's long-term transportation needs. We urge greater focus on sustainable infrastructure, active travel, and integrated transit systems to ensure a balanced and forward-thinking approach.