

Appendix 1: Draft letter to the Mayor of London

Mr. Boris Johnson
Mayor of London
Greater London Authority
City Hall
London

12 January 2010

Dear Mr Johnson,

Draft Transport Strategy: Bexley Council's Responses

The relevant Members and officers of the London Borough of Bexley have welcomed the publication of the Public Draft of your Transport Strategy (MTS2) and have studied it with interest. The Council's detailed responses are enclosed in the attached schedule and some key comments are offered below for your kind consideration.

Following the publication of your "Way to Go!" document and the Statement of Intent, there was a general expectation that unlike the previous Mayor's transport strategy, MTS2 would be more high level and less prescriptive and was expected to give boroughs increased input to develop the transport solutions that are most appropriate to their local situations. In reality, the current Consultation Draft has been quite similar to the previous MTS, both in terms of the format and contents. It runs to 352 pages and is hardly a 'short and sharp strategic document'. Although the total number of 'Strategic Transport Policies' have been reduced to 35, compared to the 57 in the previous document, there are still 129 'Proposals' to take these policies forward.

MTS2 has been published at the same time as the consultation drafts of the London Plan and the Economic Development Strategy, demonstrating your intention to improve the integration of transport and land use and economic planning. However, it is not clear from the contents of these documents that a joined-up approach has been undertaken in their preparation. Stronger links between policies and actions in the three strategies would be helpful. You will no doubt appreciate that it is essential that the Transport Strategy demonstrates that the transport infrastructure necessary to deliver the Mayor's spatial and economic development strategies will be provided. This is particularly true in a growth area like the Thames Gateway where some areas have very poor public transport accessibility but will be expected to make a major contribution to London's growth agenda.

Bexley has commented separately on all of the strategies and it would be appreciated if comments on all strategies could be taken into account when reviewing the Transport Strategy.

Within the draft MTS2 itself there is not always consistency between identification of the challenges, broader socio-economic issues and consequent policies identified in the earlier chapters and the specific proposals listed in Chapter 5. It is not clear that the proposals in chapter 5 address the earlier analyses as they are still mode based and seen to reflect existing problems rather than planning for the future.

Your intention to work in partnership with the boroughs is particularly welcomed. To be effective, this needs further recognition to overcome the directional approach still inherent in the Strategy.

We agree that the six goals of MTS2 are the key issues that need to be addressed. In regard to the first goal to support economic development and population growth, the Strategy has listed a number of proposals to meet 'the needs of a larger London in 2031' (paragraph 35). This list should not, however, be seen as exhaustive. In our view, there should be another bullet point indicating the recognition of the need for further transport infrastructure improvements, particularly in the Outer London boroughs, to support economic growth.

We welcome your intention to consider network improvements 'whether funded or not'. However, we are concerned that Figure 3 does not include further public transport improvements in the Thames Gateway boroughs, such as Bexley, apart from Crossrail. We would like this reference to Crossrail to be more definitive and strongly advocate the need for the extension to Gravesend via Ebbsfleet. It is therefore essential that the Strategy includes a clear commitment to the extension of Crossrail to Gravesend and that this is also reflected in Map 6.1 of the draft London Plan.

The Strategy has proposed a package of river crossings in east London, in consultation with the relevant London boroughs. Bexley will work with TfL to identify an acceptable package of measures but remains opposed to a fixed link at Gallions Reach.

We welcome your recognition of the 'essential role' of parking and provision for loading in supporting economic development, particularly in Outer London. This is significant, as some Outer London boroughs like Bexley, which share borders with local authority areas outside Greater London, have consistently faced the problems associated with different levels of permissible parking standards. However, although flexibility in setting local parking standards for offices is welcomed, this should be extended to other land uses if required by local circumstances.

Although the analysis for the MTS focused on the outcomes of the committed investment programme until 2020, as indicated in TfL Business Plan and the HLOS (High Level Output Statement) process, you have rightly recognised that 'these investments will not be sufficient to meet London's needs and the Mayor's desired outcomes for 2031'. This is clearly a key issue and the needs and aspiration of Outer London boroughs like Bexley for long-term major transport infrastructure improvements (such as the need to connect the borough to the London Underground network and/or Docklands Light Railway), not yet identified in the MTS, must be seen in this context.

Whilst we appreciate that the previous long-term funding commitments cannot be reversed, we are concerned that the decision to simply continue with the previous Business Plan to 2017 does not seem to ensure that the policies and funding decisions meet the current objectives and priorities as specified in the Mayor's strategies. Most of the committed investment predominantly benefit central and inner London and perpetuate agglomeration in central London at the expense of outer London. It is essential that this imbalance is addressed in the development of the sub-regional plans.

In summary the key elements of the strategy that need to be addressed, from our viewpoint, before the final version is published are:

- The production of a more streamlined document focusing on strategic direction only, and leaving scope for more detailed analyses and proposals separately.
- Ensure consistency between the Mayors strategies, as well as policies and proposals within the Transport Strategy.
- Review all funding even that planned before 2017 to meet the growth agenda in the Thames Gateway and the needs of outer London.
- Acceptance of the pressing need for long-term public transport infrastructure improvements in Bexley, including the borough's aspiration to be connected to the London Underground network.
- Give firm commitment to the Crossrail extension to Gravesend.

- Extend the flexibility for Outer London boroughs to set local parking standards for offices to other use classes.

I hope you will find the above comments and the detailed response appended with this letter constructive and appropriate for careful consideration. The Council looks forward to the publication of your finalised Transport Strategy.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Peter Craske
Cabinet Member for Transport