

**Agenda Item No:** 7  
**Report To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> July 2016



**Report Title:** **Extending Bus Services into Park Farm South and East, Kingsnorth**

**Report Author:** Lois Jarrett – Head of Development Strategic Sites and Design

**Portfolio Holder:** **Cllr Bradford – Cabinet Member for Health, Parking & Community Safety**

<b>Summary:</b>	This report seeks authority to commit developer contributions to extending the existing B-line bus service into Park Farm South and East, Kingsnorth, and recommends the use of funding already held by the Council for this purpose.
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**Key Decision:** YES

**Affected Wards:** Park Farm South, Park Farm North, Weald East

**Recommendations:** **The Cabinet be asked to:-**

- (i) Agree the bid made by KCC for the expenditure of c.£255,000 of SPG6 monies on the provision of the new service.**
- (ii) Authorise the Corporate Director (Law & Governance), in consultation with the Director of Development, to conclude a Funding Agreement for a single up-front payment to KCC in the sum of £240,000 for the agreed bus service for the agreed period, upon appropriate terms and conditions including those set out in para. 9.**

**Policy Overview:** SPG6 Providing for the Transport Needs of South Ashford, LDF Core Strategy 2008, Park Farm South and East adopted Development Brief 2001, Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000.

**Financial Implications:** The monies are already held by the Council for expenditure on infrastructure that is in accordance with SPG6. Some additional officer time is involved.

**Risk Assessment** NO – most of the risks are carried by other parties, but see section on enforcement.

**Equalities Impact Assessment** NO

**Other Material Implications:** None

**Background Papers:** None

**Contacts:** [lois.jarrett@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:lois.jarrett@ashford.gov.uk)– Tel: (01233) 330246

## **Report Title: Extending Bus Services into Park Farm South and East, Kingsnorth**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Members agreement to the expenditure of SPG6 monies on the new B line service into this development.

### **Background**

2. The original Outline Planning Permission for the c.780 new dwellings comprising Park Farm South and East, issued in 2005, contained provisions for the use of an agricultural accommodation bridge spanning the A2070 and Hastings Railway for a bus/pedestrian/cycle link between Park Farm South and Park Farm East. It also provided for a bus/pedestrian/cycle link road between Park Farm East and Cheesemans Green. The 2005 Outline Planning Permission was subsequently renewed by Members with the same provisions relating to these matters. Nearly all dwellings are now complete and occupied.
3. All significant developments within a 5 minute drive time of J10 of the M20 have been required to make a contribution to the Councils South of Ashford Transport Fund (SATS fund) created pursuant to the policies set out in SPG6 "Providing for the Transport Needs of South Ashford". When contributions are received, 80% is refunded to Taylor Wimpey for the outlay they expended on upgrading J10 some 7 years ago. 20 % is retained by the Council in a separate fund to be spent on other projects outlined in SPG6. One of these projects is extending a bus service through into Park Farm South and East, and in due course up into Cheesemans Green when the link road described above is completed (currently anticipated in late 2016).
4. This is a complex scheme involving numerous legal, financial and technical issues. This report outlines the expenditure that is needed in order to extend the existing bus service serving the older parts of Park Farm through into Park Farm South, over the accommodation bridge and into Park Farm East.
5. The matter was first considered by the Cabinet in July 2014 but a decision was deferred in order to address the required parking controls and for the necessary Traffic Regulation Order to be sealed by Kent County Council. This order was sealed and came into force on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2016, and the restrictions will form part of the scheme currently being drawn up by KCC.

### **Provision of the new route**

6. The B-line bus service (B1/B2) currently serving the older parts of Park Farm is a 20 minute service running between 6am and 7.30pm Monday to Friday, between 7am and 9.49 pm on Saturday and hourly between 10.30am and 8.38pm on Sunday. The route it takes is a one-way loop which at its closest point to Park Farm South and East takes in the mini roundabout at Moat

Meadow (marked with a red circle on the map at Appendix 1). The service is currently largely commercially viable.

7. This bid for funding to extend the service into Park Farm South and East has been made by KCC following agreement at the Quality Bus Partnership (QBP). The extension to services that will be implemented with Stagecoach consists of the following elements,
  - (a) An increase in service frequency to 15 mins on Mondays to Saturdays within existing operating hours.
  - (b) An extension to the route to take in Bluebell Road, the accommodation bridge, a turning facility on the east side of the A2070/railway (marked with a blue circle on the map at Appendix 1) and a loop back to serve the remainder of the original Park Farm (new part of route shown with a red line).
  - (c) Two way services around the original Park Farm.
8. In order to achieve this a scheme is currently being progressed by KCC Engineers to incorporate all of the requirements in line for delivery of the bus service.
9. The cost of implementation of the parking controls has been estimated at c.£5,000 and will be met from the SPG6 fund. The additional bus stops and clearways in the older part of Park Farm will be designed by KCC in consultation with Stagecoach and ABC, and when agreed would be implemented in the usual way. The cost is estimated at c.£8,000. Enforcement of parking restrictions in bus stop clearways is carried out by ABC and will be covered with current resources. The main item of expenditure is support for the new service at £240,000. This is broken down into support of £100,000 in the first year, £80,000 in the second year and £60,000 in the third year. Following that, Stagecoach are expected to undertake to run the service until 31 March 2020, subject to passenger targets being met and costs not increasing significantly, without support even if not totally viable at that stage. The Borough Council will need KCC to enter into a Funding Agreement with us, similar to those that we have used with various Parish Councils in the past when s106 money has been handed over to them for delivery of the infrastructure for which the contribution was charged. This would require them to use the money for the agreed bus service for the period, and to repay any money not spent on so doing; also to provide us with bus ridership and farebox information.
10. These sums total £253,000, however agreement to spend up to £255,000 is sought in the event of any cost overruns (on the CPZ/new stops) or unforeseen actions being needed. On 10 March 2014, 26 letters were sent to SATS partners and contributors asking for any comments they might have on the proposed expenditure from the SPG6 fund. Only one response was received from the Church Commissioners for England. This did not raise any issues with the proposed expenditure, but reiterated a request to Legal Services for information on the SATs fund. This information has now been sent.

11. Discussions are ongoing with KCC over the various technical requirements and the enforcement of the restrictions on the bridge. This will form part of the scheme that is currently being designed.

### **Risk Assessment**

12. The financial risks for the Council are low as the works are being funded from developer contributions. KCC will enter into the contract with Stagecoach and manage and monitor it along with their other contracts for bus services supported from public funds.
13. In terms of other risks, this Council's role in bringing the extension to this service forward is mainly limited to providing funding – design and implementation is largely the responsibility of others.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

14. Not relevant to the consideration of S106 funding release. However, bus services do increase the options for travel available to those without a private motor car.

### **Other Options Considered**

15. There are two potential alternatives. The first is that no support is given to this scheme. This would mean that either the scheme would not go ahead at all, or that it would wait for a very long time until financial viability of the service was achieved. However, it is a key tenant of SPG6 that Green Transport Measures are introduced within the SATS area so that the pressure on J10 is eased if at possible.
16. The second is that the route runs via Church Hill. However, the cost savings are negligible whereas journey times are significantly increased and Stagecoach have indicated they would not support such a route. The route along with the restrictions was considered by the Joint Transportation Board and the preferable route as detailed within the report was supported.

### **Consultation**

17. Residents and the Parish Council were consulted on the details of the Planning applications in 2001 and 2011. The issue has been considered by the Quality Bus Partnership, which this Council is represented on, on three occasions. SATS partners have been consulted.
18. The three Ward Members affected have also been consulted. Two have responded. The main concerns raised were with regard to the implementation of the parking controls so that buses can get through and implementing effective enforcement measures in the bridge – both these concerns have been considered through the Joint Transportation Board, the correct arena for such concerns to be dealt with.

## **Implications Assessment**

19. The report addresses all the financial and legal issues as known and the risks.

## **Handling**

20. It is proposed that this Councils' main involvement will cease once funding is drawn down by KCC other than the ongoing enforcement aspects.

## **Conclusion**

21. This service is needed to meet the needs of residents in the new areas of Park Farm and has been envisaged from the start. The proposed expenditure is fully in accordance with the Council's policy as set out in SPG6. The key unknown at present is how restrictions on the bridge will be enforced, and that will be the subject of future reports to Members.
22. The proposals meet other policies regarding reducing reliance on the private motor car and reducing congestion at J10.

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

23. Cllr Bradford - 'The extension to this route, providing a service to Park Farm South and East, has been planned for many years. The current bus service has proved to be viable and has therefore reduced the reliance by residents on the motor car. This extension will improve the bus provision for all users and I fully support the release of funds to facilitate it.'

**Contact:** Lois Jarrett Tel: 01233 330246

**Email:** [lois.Jarrett@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:lois.Jarrett@ashford.gov.uk)

**Appendix 1** - route extension

