



Environment and Transport Select Committee
11 September 2013

Surrey Rail Strategy

Purpose of the report: Policy Development and Review

After receiving a presentation on the draft Surrey Rail Strategy, Members requested that the final version of the strategy come back before the committee for comment.

Introduction:

1. Surrey needs world class rail infrastructure to encourage sustainable economic growth and to ensure that Surrey remains globally competitive. We also know that Surrey residents suffer from overcrowding and a relatively poor rail service in some areas.
2. The objective for the Surrey Rail Strategy is to identify proposals for strategic investment that the county council could either deliver itself, or work with others to deliver, including lobbying for central Government support. The active support of Members would help to ensure that options in the Surrey Rail Strategy are implemented.

Background:

3. Consultants (Ove Arup & Partners Ltd) were appointed in November 2012 to write a Surrey Rail Strategy (the strategy), as part of the Surrey Future initiative.
4. The strategy (Annex 1) provides a framework through which the county council and partners can:
 - a. Develop future rail policy, service and infrastructure initiatives
 - b. Respond to consultations e.g. rail franchises and aviation reviews
 - c. Lobby to influence national rail policy and planning
 - d. Support wider council growth initiatives.

5. It also provides an opportunity to review Surrey's position on rail services. It replaces the outdated Rail Services Strategy in Local Transport Plan 1 (2001/02 – 2005/06) and will be part of the Surrey Transport Plan (LTP3).
6. The strategy has been informed by extensive engagement with the rail industry and has been subject to a three month public consultation. This included Local Committee meetings and stakeholder workshops. For detailed information on the consultation, including a brief overview of the responses, see Annex 2.

Issues and analysis:

7. At the start of the study the key issues affecting rail in Surrey were identified. Feedback from stakeholders and detailed analysis suggests that over the medium-long term the rail network will simply not be able to cope with the increasing demands placed upon it.
8. Overcrowding is already a problem in many areas. Without investment it is likely to get worse, with significant problems expected on the South West Main Line; serving stations including Woking.
9. The issues are outlined in a detailed Issues Paper and summarised in the strategy document. They include:
 - a. Inadequate car parking at certain stations,
 - b. Poor connections to other modes of public transport,
 - c. Infrequent services from Camberley, Bagshot and Frimley,
 - d. Poor access to Gatwick and Heathrow airports,
 - e. Inadequate access to local employment centres, such as Guildford.
10. The strategy outlines options that will help to mitigate these problems.

Options:

11. Options were identified for service and/ or infrastructure improvements that could address the identified issues. These underwent a rigorous assessment process to arrive at a short list of preferred options. All the options are outlined in a detailed Options Paper.
12. Three priority options were identified in the draft Surrey Rail Strategy because they have the potential to have a major impact in Surrey. These were Crossrail 2, the North Downs Line and access to airports.

Crossrail 2 (long term)

13. Crossrail 2 has the potential to bring significant benefits to Surrey. The exact nature of the scheme has yet to be agreed, with a recent consultation asking respondents to choose between two preferred routes – a 'regional' and a 'metro' route.

14. The regional route has the potential to provide a significant capacity increase on the South West Main Line. This will enable additional trains into London Waterloo. This will benefit commuters and boost the local economy because there are likely to be more frequent, less overcrowded and faster services into London from stations in Surrey.
15. Surrey County Council responded to the recent Crossrail 2 consultation expressing support for regional route with certain caveats. The County Council's response to the consultation is attached to this report (Annex 3).

North Downs Line (medium term)

16. The North Downs Line is the last significant stretch of non-electrified line left in Surrey. Train lengthening and electrification between Reigate and Guildford, will improve east-west connectivity and allow faster and more frequent services to Guildford, Reading and Gatwick Airport. Electrification and upgrading would also allow for current Southern and South Western services to extend to the North Downs Line.

Access to airports (medium to long term)

17. With two of the UK's major airports on Surrey's borders, access to airports is considered to be a major issue. Further work on access to airports has been commissioned. This will identify the infrastructure improvements needed to address existing surface access issues to the airports and the improvements needed to regional and local links in the event of additional runway capacity at Heathrow and/ or Gatwick Airport.

Access to stations (car parking) (short term) and access to London from Camberley, Bagshot and Frimley (medium to long term)

18. It was suggested that two further issues be prioritised as the strategy is implemented; access to stations (including car parking) and access to London from Camberley, Bagshot and Frimley.
19. Problems with parking at certain rail stations, and the consequent impact on the surrounding roads, featured strongly in the consultation responses. Several stations around the county were highlighted. Further work is needed to quantify the problem, where the most significant problems are located and, if appropriate, consider further action in consultation with the rail industry. This work needs to be set in the context of an integrated transport system which includes links to other forms of transport such as bus (including the timing and frequency of services) and walking/ cycling.
20. Poor connections to London from Camberley, Bagshot and Frimley were identified as a key problem during the issues analysis. The consultation responses also strongly emphasised the need to address this issue. This is a long term scheme because additional services can only be incorporated on the South West Main Line when other options – Crossrail 2 – have been implemented. But there are potential short term measures that the strategy suggests should be explored to improve connections.

Implementation:

21. In terms of timescales the priorities can be placed in the following order:
 - a) Access to stations - short term
 - b) North Downs Line - medium term
 - c) Access to airports - medium to long term
 - d) London - Camberley, Bagshot and Frimley - medium to long term
 - e) Crossrail 2 - long term
22. Further actions are outlined in detail in the short, medium and long term action plans. These have implications for communities across the county.
23. None of the options can be implemented by Surrey County Council alone. Surrey County Council will need to work with partners, including Surrey Boroughs and Districts and the rail industry, to implement the strategy.
24. Some actions are relatively 'simple' and do not need additional resource, for example, Surrey County Council can begin lobbying Government now for further improvements on the North Downs Line. Other actions are more complicated and require additional resource.
25. A delivery plan will be completed which will outline how Surrey County Council and partners will implement the strategy. This will be integrated with the congestion programme, subsequent work on surface access to airports and the existing Surrey Transport Plan.

Conclusions:

26. The Surrey Rail Strategy is a means to ensure Surrey has the rail infrastructure needed to drive economic growth and remain competitive. It seeks to address the lack of capacity and inadequate services across the county.

Recommendations:

27. The Committee is asked to comment on the draft Surrey Rail Strategy.

Next steps:

The strategy will be considered by the Cabinet on 24 September 2013.

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Sources/background papers:

Annex 1: Surrey Rail Strategy

Annex 2: Surrey Rail Strategy: consultation overview

Annex 3: Crossrail 2: Surrey County Council consultation response.