

The Director of Development
South East England Regional Assembly
Berkeley House
Cross Lanes
Guildford
Surrey

Contact Steve Humphrey
Direct line 01732 876256
Email Steve.Humphrey@tmbc.gov.uk
Fax 01732 876317
Your ref
Our ref PTL5/SH
Date 12 March 2008

Dear Sir

**MEETING OF THE SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD –
13 MARCH 2008**

I write with respect to the report being considered tomorrow by the Regional Transport Board and in particular to the recommendation in respect of the A21 Tonbridge-Pembury scheme. The particular recommendation that causes the Borough Council concern is the proposed advice to the Secretary of State that "the Board wishes to review the timing of the scheme as part of the refresh". This seems inevitably to point towards a delay and re-programming of the scheme.

The A21 Tonbridge-Pembury dualling has been a highway scheme of strategic importance to the region as outlined in the report for very many years now. It is currently programmed to commence in 2010/2011. Any delay in that programme would seriously harm the functioning of the A21 in its role as part of the strategic network linking the M25 with the south coast.

The practical daily effect of this section of the A21 remaining unimproved is to continue the very significant levels of congestion that not only harms the strategic purpose of the A21, but has over the years had an increasingly detrimental affect upon the functioning of Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.

What is not mentioned in the report is the fact that Tonbridge is identified as a Regional Transport Hub in the Regional Transport Strategy. Moreover, Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells is a designated Regional Hub in the South East Plan giving a wider policy emphasis to secure appropriate economic development and improved accessibility. In pursuing this hub status in Tonbridge town centre and in Tunbridge Wells there are plans being actively pursued for considerable economic development that must go hand-in-hand with accessibility improvements. The current problems on the A21 give rise to a substantial diversion of traffic through Tonbridge town centre which will inhibit the local efforts to improve accessibility and therefore detract from the regional priority now given to the Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells Hub. It will specifically cause potential harm to the functioning of the new regional hospital facility proposed at Pembury.

In summary the delay for the A21 improvements would be highly detrimental to the achievement of regional transport and development objectives and I would wish that you make these views known to members of the Board when they are considering these matters at the meeting on the 13 March.

Yours sincerely

Contact
Direct line
Email
Fax
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Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure

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