

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

08 September 2008

**Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure
and the Head of Transport and Development**

Part 1- Public

Matters For Information

1 PROVIDING FOR AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

Summary

The Local Environmental Management Advisory Board recently made a number of suggestions related to transportation matters when it adopted new Air Quality Management Areas along the A20. These suggestions have prompted consideration of how best air quality management measures can be built into the Integrated Transport programme that underpins the Local Transport Plan. A joint officer group has recently formed to address this and the report outlines for the Board the context for the group's work and provides an initial view of what it hopes to achieve.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 places a statutory duty on local authorities to review and assess the air quality within their area and take account of Government Guidance when undertaking such work. The Borough Council has recently completed its third review and assessment of local air quality.

1.2 Air Quality Review – First Round

1.2.1 The Borough Council undertook the first round of review and assessment between 1998 and 2001. This concluded that it was necessary to declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulates (PM₁₀) near to the M20 at Larkfield, Ditton and Aylesford owing to road traffic emissions. An Air Quality Action Plan is in place to improve air quality within the M20 AQMA, in partnership with the Highways Agency.

1.3 Air Quality Review – Second Round

1.3.1 The Borough Council then completed its second round of review and assessment of air quality during 2003 and 2004. The findings led to the declaration of three additional AQMAs on 1st June 2005:

- The High Street (southern end), Tonbridge;
- A26 Tonbridge Road/Red Hill junction, Watlington; and
- A20 London Road/Station Road junction, Ditton.

1.3.2 Road traffic emissions were identified as the major contributor to exceedances of the annual mean NO₂ objective in the three AQMA areas.

1.4 Air Quality Review – Third Round

1.4.1 The third round of review and assessment began in April 2006 and the Borough Council has resolved to declare further AQMAs in relation to exceedances of all NO₂ annual average objective on the A20 (London Road) at Larkfield, Ditton and Aylesford.

1.4.2 In considering the outcome of the latest review and assessment, Borough Members, at the Local Environmental Management Advisory Board (LEMAB), identified the following issues relating to transportation:-

- the potential for opening Bellingham Way as an alternative local route to reduce the amount of traffic on the A20;
- the importance of proceeding with plans for bus lanes along the A20 only if air quality will be improved and not worsened by such action;
- the need for a review of the impact on air quality of abandoning bus lay-bys on the A20; and
- plans for cycle ways along the A20 should not be implemented in areas where air quality is poor and solutions off the main route should be sought.

1.5 Air Quality Management and the Local Transport Plan

1.5.1 At an overall level, Air Quality Management features in the Second Local Transport Plan for Kent (the LTP). However, it does not contain a detailed template of exactly what should be done to deal with traffic generated poor air quality. The observations from LEMAB demonstrate the need to establish a practical programme of actions through the LTP process to improve air quality and reduce air pollution so that the management areas are no longer required.

1.5.2 We have made a start on that process and County and Borough officers have established a working group that will have as its main focus building air quality management more fundamentally into the LTP process and identifying proposals that can best achieve the necessary improvements. It will also address the specific points from the LEMAB listed above including the potential for opening up Bellingham Way. On this item, some very preliminary discussion has taken place with the landowner to gauge whether this is at all feasible and the initial position is that it is not completely out of the question if the circumstances were right. It will

clearly require extensive traffic modelling to assess the wider impacts on the local highway network and the cost of such modelling will, in itself, be a factor in assessing the feasibility of the proposal. There is also the potential for any eventual scheme to come with a significant capital cost. Consequently, it is not possible to make any comment on scheme feasibility in advance of a process that will clearly require a phased approach to assessment.

1.6 Context - Existing Plans

- 1.6.1 The officer group is not starting from scratch since a context for transportation improvement in a substantial proportion of the Borough exists. In 2003, the JTB endorsed a **Medway Valley Public Transport Strategy (MVPTS)** (copy reproduced at **Annex 1**). More recently, the **Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan (TCAAP)** was adopted and this incorporates a transportation strategy for the town.
- 1.6.2 As far as the MVPTS is concerned, although it is not all that old, much has happened in recent times to change the transportation environment in the area, not the least the opening of the Leybourne Bypass. Events have moved on to such an extent, that it is absolutely essential that it be revisited and refreshed in the light of all current circumstances.
- 1.6.3 An important consideration driving a reassessment of the MVPTS is the significant funding commitment from development contributions; some £7million for improved bus services and enhanced infrastructure, especially the bus priority provisions along the A20. It is also expected that over the next two years £1million will be secured from the LTP Integrated Transport (IT) programme. This year £200k was approved and a further £760k has been bid for in 2009/10.
- 1.6.4 Given that improving air quality is one of the important factors when scheme priority is evaluated using the current PIPKIN assessment process, it is likely that such schemes will continue to secure further funding in future years from the LTP Integrated Transport programme.
- 1.6.5 Consequently, the context for the work of the joint officer group is the prospect of considerable funding for transport improvements that can help towards achieving a range of sustainable transportation objectives and, in particular, support improvements in air quality in those areas that have been categorised as having specific air quality management problems.

1.7 Next Steps

- 1.7.1 As far as Tonbridge is concerned the TCAAP already provides a fresh and relevant analysis of what is required. The work of the group will therefore be to translate the TCAAP into a programme of specific, achievable and costed proposals and to identify how these can be funded.

- 1.7.2 For the MVPTS, the details of the strategy need to be refreshed and endorsed and that will be the group's first task. Following on from that will be a similar exercise to that which will be required for Tonbridge; identifying a programme of specific works that are both feasible and affordable and can achieve the objectives of the LTP, particularly in improving air quality.
- 1.7.3 At this stage, it is too early to provide a detailed programme of what the group will produce and when it will be produced by. However, there are time constraints that mean this work needs to proceed expeditiously. The developer funding already mentioned is time-bound and will become available based on a range of trigger points for each of the contributing developments. Additionally, the LTP scheme bidding procedure has a longer lead time than previously so that, for example, we really need to be refining candidates for inclusion in the 2010/11 programme over the next six months or so. For schemes thereafter, the more certainty that can be put on the programme through advanced design work the better.
- 1.7.4 The intention therefore is to alert the Board this time round to the scope and context of the Integrated Transport programme and its relevance in resolving the air quality issues indicated by Members of the LEMAB and then, at the next meeting, to provide more detailed information on the expected outputs and timing of the work of the joint officer group. Of course, we will be happy to accommodate any steers that the Board wishes to offer at this stage.

1.8 Legal Implications

- 1.8.1 None at this stage

1.9 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.9.1 As described in the report

1.10 Risk Assessment

- 1.10.1 Not relevant at this stage.

Background papers:

Nil

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