

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

07 March 2011

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matter for Recommendation to Borough Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 **PARKING ACTION PLAN**

Summary

This latest progress report on the Parking Action Plan focuses on a draft list of locations for Phase 6 of the general programme and the East Malling Local Parking Plan. We are now working towards implementing the East Malling Plan and we have received Objections to the formal advertising of the on-street Traffic Regulation Order. The Board is invited to consider these objections and resolve how they should be responded to.

1.1 **Parking Action Plan - Phase 6**

- 1.1.1 Our work on the parking action plan has consisted of two separate approaches. Groups of requests for parking interventions within a discrete area have generally called for a local parking plan treating the area as an integral whole. East Malling, discussed later in this report is one such neighbourhood. Then there are other requests that are more 'stand-alone' in character and these can be dealt with individually, albeit as part of a suitably sized package of sites so that we are able carry out the work practically and economically.
- 1.1.2 Our latest group of schemes in this phased programme is set out in **Annex 1**. This is Phase 6 and it contains some 67 separate locations where either residents, businesses, local Members or Parish Councils have come to us with a parking concern.
- 1.1.3 I think it important to explain what this list represents but before doing so I should emphasise this is not the sum total of approaches we have received. Besides those listed, there are many other day-to-day requests that have not been recorded for a variety of reasons. For example, the basic problem might not be one that can be addressed or resolved through parking management or where parking may not be the fundamental problem but there are other issues at play.
- 1.1.4 Discounting such cases, we are left with the 67 locations listed in the Annex and each of these has been monitored or assessed to provide an initial view on what

action or response might be appropriate. This has resulted in a total of 40 of the locations going forward as the preliminary package for Phase 6. The balance of sites drops from consideration as part of Phase 6 for a variety of reasons. Some, such as the locations listed in Aylesford, should be dealt with as part of a local parking plan treatment for the village at a future date. Others, even on initial examination, cannot justify further consideration because the problem raised with us is not as persistent as alleged.

- 1.1.5 What happens now, subject to the Board's endorsement of the Phase 6 package, is that we need to do some further site assessments and then conduct an initial round of informal consultation on our recommendations for each location. We will be seeking local views, including from local Members, on our outline suggestions. The timing of this consultation has not yet been finally programmed but once it has taken place, I will be reporting the results to a future meeting of the Board.

1.2 The East Malling Local Parking Plan

- 1.2.1 After over a year of detailed consultation and consensus building, the Board approved the East Malling Local Parking Plan at its last meeting and endorsed its implementation. An important characteristic of all of the work to date is that it has all been "informal". It has consisted of several stages of engagement with local residents and businesses to assess parking problems in the parish and to work out jointly how these could best be resolved. There has been a considerable degree of local involvement and interest in this project, exemplified by the large numbers of local people who attended the 'drop-in' sessions during the public exhibition last autumn.
- 1.2.2 However, implementing the Plan is the first "formal" stage of this project and it involves carefully going through statutory procedures to introduce the constituent road traffic regulations needed to make the plan work in practice. This is the opportunity for those who have retained fundamental concerns about the contents of the Plan to register formal objections. We have received nine objections, although three of these are not strictly relevant since they are responding to a car park order that has not yet been advertised. I am presenting these objections at **Annex 2** so that the Board can duly and fully consider them and determine its response. Also, in Annex 2, there is a list of the statutory consultees and it will be noted that few of them have offered a response to this formal stage of the process. The explanation for this is that they have all been kept well informed of the emerging proposals through all the earlier stages of the project and I would not have expected any adverse comments at this late stage.
- 1.2.3 The statutory public consultation for this on-street part of the Parking Plan took place between 23 January and 14 February 2011. The proposals for the car park have not been formally advertised contemporaneously with the highway Order since it is imperative that the arrangements to manage highway parking are in place and operational before the Order for the car park is introduced. It is inevitable that there will be some displacement of commuter cars and this will

have adverse effects on-street if the proposed management scheme is not already in place.

- 1.2.4 As mentioned, some of the objections received relate to Parking Plan proposals for the village car park and concerns by commuters that they may in future have to pay for parking in one of the nearby station car parks where there is charging. Strictly procedurally, these are not valid objections that the Board need consider now because the Order for the car parks has yet to be advertised. This is programmed to take place over the next few weeks and the results, if these objections are formally submitted during the notice period, will be reported to the next meeting of the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board for its consideration since this is off-street parking management and not within the remit of the JTB.
- 1.2.5 There were a number of sporadic objections from locations throughout the village but three locations in particular generated interesting issues. These were The Rocks Road, Mill Street and Chapman Way and it is worth briefly describing the context for the proposals in at these sites.
- 1.2.6 **The Rocks Road.** The Parking Plan proposal is to extend an existing section of single yellow line and introduce a length of double yellow lines to prevent obstructive parking at the junction with Gilletts Lane. It prompted one objection on the grounds that the proposed extension to the existing single yellow lines (Monday – Friday 10 am to 10.30 am) will encourage commuters and residents to park further along the road. The objection also describes the inconvenience of the proposals which will compromise one householders personal roadside parking arrangements that involve parking directly on a junction.
- 1.2.7 A general rule in our parking plan work is that it is very difficult to predict precisely where drivers will choose to relocate to after we introduce parking restrictions or how long this will continue. Good practice is to let the scheme settle down for a period, we usually allow about 18 months, and then take any necessary action to deal with any unintended consequences that might arise.
- 1.2.8 **Mill Street Area** – we received an objection based on the premise that what is being proposed by way of waiting restriction is not nearly enough. The text describes various locations in the area where parking should be further restricted. However, in the course of the consultations for the Parking Plan, we received no groundswell of representation that would suggest that the opinion expressed in the objection is anything other than an isolated one. If anything, the prevailing sentiment appeared to be that as much roadside parking as possible should be retained or made available. As a result, I am recommending that we continue to monitor scheme and allow about 18 months for parking patterns to settle down. If after this time there is evidence demonstrating a need to increase the extent of waiting restrictions, the situation can be reassessed as part of a wider reconsideration of the overall effectiveness of the Parking Plan.

- 1.2.9 **Chapman Way.** When the new primary school opened in Chapman Way the former school buildings were retained to offer a range of community and family services. The Woodlands Childrens' Centre opened in March 2010 funded by KCC under the Sure Start Scheme and offers valuable services and facilities provided by various user groups and organisations. These have gradually developed alongside the primary school and daytime nursery, on adjoining sites, to offer a wide range of opportunities for parents and children.
- 1.2.10 At the start of the parking review the Childrens' Centre had not yet opened and the first round of public consultation attracted surprisingly little comment about parking related issues in this section Chapman Way. One of the main factors for this was that the primary school manages to accommodate staff and visitor parking and has a dedicated drop-off and pick up point within the school site. Consequently, its impact on the road outside has been minimal.
- 1.2.11 The second consultation exercise in October 2010, revealed increasing concerns about the growth of parking along Chapman Way generated by the new facilities on the school site, exacerbated by a lack of on-site parking. The aims of the adopted Parking Plan proposals were to retain safe access for the bus service and also to maintain a safer environment around the school site for school children.
- 1.2.12 Notwithstanding how valuable the facilities offered by the various organisations on the site are, the lack of operational on-site parking has contributed to overspill parking on the road that is hazardous and a genuine road safety concern. To illustrate this point, the Childrens' Centre has only a limited number of off-street parking spaces and there was no requirement to provide additional capacity when the use of the site was permitted by the County Council. The opening of the Childrens' Centre resulted in a gradual increase in the number of cars that need to park on the road throughout the day; for example, on some days, up to 17 cars park along this section of road. Drivers park too close to junctions, around a sharp right hand bend, obstruct the bus stop and pedestrian and vehicular access points. In addition, drivers now regularly park opposite Temple Way junction. These locations compromise safety in an area where there is a high number of children, other pedestrians and public transport services.
- 1.2.13 Before the last meeting of the Steering Group, the original proposals were carefully adjusted, to the extent that it was possible, in an attempt to maximise the amount of parking that could be allowed on street bearing in mind the need to preserve highway safety. Local Members and KCC Engineers contributed their thoughts on the need to amend the original proposals. The revised plan approved by the Steering Group and endorsed at the November meeting of this Board represented the best balance achievable to address the safety concerns.
- 1.2.14 The Childrens' Centre Manager and the proprietor of the private day-care nursery remain unhappy with these proposed measures despite clear explanation of the safety reasons for the proposals. They, along with the Daycare Nursery and

Maidstone & Malling Twins Club, submitted formal Objections to the East Malling Parking Plan on behalf of their organisations. All representations have been acknowledged and wherever possible the objectors have been advised if any misleading or incorrect information has formed the basis of their representation.

- 1.2.15 After the end of the notice period for receiving objections we received a petition signed by 107 signatories about the parking proposals in Chapman Way. This was later presented as an objection to the proposals for Chapman Way on the grounds that the proposed restrictions will severely hamper access to the services provided by the Childrens' Centre.
- 1.2.16 The proposed "School Keep Clear" markings were supposed to be installed earlier this year as part of the highway improvements associated with the access to the new school and St James Centre. There were some operational difficulties with these adjustments so we agreed with KCC that we would subsume this task and install them as part of the parking plan.
- 1.2.17 These safety features are enforceable and in place around most schools throughout the country. Yet even these essential safety markings have been subject to objection. I hope the Board shares my view that it is unacceptable to block or obstruct these access points at the school site so that the safety of vulnerable children is compromised using lack of parking provision within the site as a justification for doing so.
- 1.2.18 Additionally, parking now occurs in the bus stop opposite Temple Way leading to safety and access problems for the bus driver and passengers. The proposal to mark out the bus bay will remind drivers that they should not park on a bus stop.
- 1.2.19 It is worth bearing in mind that double yellow lines are used specifically to reinforce the rules of the Highway Code and for no other purpose. They are needed in some locations to prevent parking that would otherwise create danger for other road users. In the case that we are dealing with here at Chapman Way, drivers have taken to parking right around the bend and this is creating a worrying hazard because cars are having to manoeuvre on the wrong side of the road around parked vehicles on bend with no view of oncoming traffic.
- 1.2.20 It is clear that the Childrens' Centre cannot currently accommodate all its parking needs within the site. However, it is equally clear that Chapman Way cannot safely support all these vehicles parking in the way that they are currently doing without causing a danger to other road users. There is some legitimate parking opportunity on the road where drivers may park without causing problems for others and these areas will remain free of restrictions so that parking can be allowed where it is safe to do so. There is also a free public park car park within easy walking distance at Twisden Road that could help to absorb some of the long stay parking from Chapman Way. It is also suggested that the attention of Kent County Council be drawn to the current problem and requested to consider providing further on-site operational car parking provision.

1.3 Traffic Management Issues

- 1.3.1 During the course of our parking management work a number of suggestions regarding traffic management were raised. A petition has also been received. It is not appropriate to consider these within the context of making formal Parking Orders but they have been captured and have been referred to Kent Highway Services with a recommendation that they be examined as described elsewhere in this agenda.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The on-street parking service is undertaken by the Borough Council on behalf of the County Council under the terms of the formal legal agreement

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 Funding to implement the parking action plan is provided within existing approved Borough Council Budgets

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The assessment and consultation process applied to parking management should provide the assurance that the Borough Council has the will and ability to adapt the Parking Plans in the light of comment and circumstances to ensure that it achieves a best balance of local parking needs. A regular review of the schemes is crucial to ensure that we can correctly and effectively manage on street parking in these areas as the proposals are either introduced for safety reasons or to provide a more appropriate balance of parking needs
- 1.6.2 A major risk is that scheme proposals encounter significant lack of local support. This risk is mitigated by the considerable effort devoted to ensuring there is widespread consultation on proposals through two stages of informal consultation before any formal stage of consultation is reached. There is also care given to ensuring that schemes are adjusted and adapted in the light of comments and observations received from the local community without compromising safety of the Councils commitment to deal appropriately with identified safety concerns

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 That the recommended actions for Phase 6 of the Parking Action Plan, set out at **Annex 1 BE ENDORSED.**
- 1.8.2 That the recommended responses to the objections to the East Malling Parking Plan, as set out in **Annex 2 BE APPROVED**, the Objectors be advised accordingly and the Order as advertised **BE INSTALLED.**

1.8.3 That the Petition received be noted and the lead petitioner **BE ADVISED** of the decision on proposed parking arrangements in Chapman Way.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Karole Reynolds

East Malling TRO Statutory Consultation Response
File

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning Transportation and Leisure

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The decision does involve an element of discrimination but not against the protected characteristics identified in Equalities legislation. To free up parking opportunity for the local community, there is a clear aim of removing some commuter parking from the area. There is more opportunity for commuters to park at West Malling Station given the recent completion of the new 281 space car park.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The East Malling Parking Plan makes specific provision for additional disabled persons parking bays.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?	N/A	

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.