

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

21 February 2012

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 BOROUGH TRANSPORTATION MATTERS

This report provides an update on a range of current transportation issues affecting the Borough.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 At its last meeting the Board considered extensive reports on transportation issues currently affecting the Borough. This report provides an update on matters previously discussed and provides some initial information relating to the Estuary Airport proposals.

1.2 Rail

- 1.2.1 Following the letters sent to the Minister of State for Rail and to the Managing Director of Southeastern Railway in respect of the then pending increase of 8% (RPI + 3%) I was pleased to be advised that the Department for Transport instructed that the increase would be revised to 6% (RPI + 1%). Southeastern's stakeholder letter dated 29 November can be found in **Annex 1**.

- 1.2.2 The enhancement works at Tonbridge Station are now underway. I understand their programme has slipped a little following some unexpected works, and they now anticipate finishing the project by the end of April.

1.3 A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling Scheme

- 1.3.1 At the last meeting of this Board Members requested that a further letter be sent to the Transport Minister supporting the KCC proposal regarding the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling Scheme. This was done (**Annex 2**) and the Minister's reply is reproduced in **Annex 3**. He advises that the Secretary of State for Transport will be considering further which transport schemes might best support regenerating the Bexhill and Hastings area and this includes examining the A21. A decision is expected this spring and I will update Members further as and when we know more.

1.4 West Malling Station

- 1.4.1 Members will recall that the officer level working group had agreed a brief for some design work for an improved station forecourt and approach road layout. KCC has engaged Jacobs to undertake this work and, at the time of writing this report, they are consulting with stakeholders including local members, the bus companies and the Parish Council.
- 1.4.2 The design will provide enhanced access for buses, taxis and those arriving by car. Securing funding for the scheme in the current period of financial constraint will be a major challenge however there is considerable potential funding from a range of developer obligations in this area that could contribute towards a budget sufficiently large enough to allow the scheme to be implemented. KCC will report on progress with this project to the Joint Transportation Board on 12 March.

1.5 Local Parking Studies

- 1.5.1 Local Steering Groups are currently engaged in a review of the local parking plan for West Malling and the formulation of proposals for Aylesford. The steering groups have involved local members, Parish Councils and most constructively in the case of West Malling, the local Chamber of Commerce. Both of these projects will now be the subject of public consultation prior to further consideration by the Steering Groups and presentation of proposals for this Board. Meanwhile, phase 6a of our parking works programme will be submitted to the JTB for approval in March and, subject to representations to be considered, will be implemented thereafter.

1.6 Access to Pembury Hospital

- 1.6.1 The situation regarding access to Pembury Hospital remains complex and has not yet been finalised. In essence, things have not changed significantly since the last report to this Board. One substantive development has been the commencement of the six month interim bus service, which provides four buses per hour between the Hospital and Tonbridge Station, six buses per hour to Tunbridge Wells Station, and two buses per hour to Maidstone via Paddock Wood. The NHS Trust is not proposing to provide all services required within the planning consent (notably, those to Hadlow, Borough Green and West Malling) but is likely to apply to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for permission to have the planning obligation altered so that it may continue to provide this revised network of bus services after the temporary arrangement ends in May this year.
- 1.6.2 The Trust seems to have reacted positively to suggestions from the West Kent Partnership and the Borough Council to investigate the feasibility of incorporating a plan of rural community transport services into the longer-term package in lieu of providing economically unsustainable services to rural areas. A sub-group of the West Kent Partnership has been set up to consider this issue and KCC has been participating in these discussions. However they are not party to the legal agreement between the NHS Trust and Tunbridge Wells Borough

Council and so the ultimate responsibility for providing transport services does not rest with them. KCC's first priority will inevitably be to support the existing commercial bus network.

- 1.6.3 The NHS Trust will ultimately need to reach an agreement with the various parties as to what the longer-term bus network serving the Hospital will look like after May as a matter of urgency, as time is running out to submit a formal application to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to alter the planning condition.

1.7 Thames Estuary Airport Proposals

- 1.7.1 Building a new airport on the Thames estuary is one of a number of options for tackling the capacity shortage in south east England. It is understood that the Government will be considering holding a formal consultation on this and two sites are currently 'on the radar'.
- 1.7.2 One of these is known as 'Boris Island'. This is an embryonic idea for an airport in the estuary to the north of the Isle of Sheppey that takes traffic away from London. If this went ahead this would be a major engineering feat.
- 1.7.3 The second is a Lord Foster designed solution which would be located on the Isle of Grain. This transport hub would be built partly on reclaimed land with aircraft approaching over the water.
- 1.7.4 This will inevitably run for some time and I have reproduced (**Annex 4**) the text from an open letter from Medway Council to Justine Greening, the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport, strongly urging her to follow government policy and continue looking at fully utilising the existing capacity of existing airports. Additionally, members may be aware of an approach to ministers by six Kent MPs opposed to the principle of an international airport in these locations.
- 1.7.5 The proposal at Grain in particular, raises again many of the issues considered previously when a site at Cliffe Marshes was put forward as a potential site for a major airport in 2002. At that time considerable reservations and objections were raised by many in Kent concerned with issues relating to environmental issues, habitat protection, infrastructure capacity, development pressures and economic unsustainability. No doubt these and other issues will need to be considered should formal consultation be launched.

1.8 Legal Implications

- 1.8.1 None.

1.9 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.9.1 None directly for the Borough Council.

1.10 Risk Assessment

1.10.1 Not required

1.11 Equality Impact Assessment

1.11.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.12 Policy Considerations

1.12.1 Community

Background papers:

contact: Mike O'Brien

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport 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?	n/a	
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

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.



29 November 2011

Dear Stakeholder

Re: 2012 fare increase

Following the Chancellor's autumn statement today, I am pleased to inform you that we have been instructed by the Department for Transport that the fare increase effective from 1 January 2012 will be 6% (RPI + 1%) and not the RPI + 3% (average 8%) increase announced by the Secretary of State for Transport last October.

In light of the Chancellor's statement we are currently re-calculating our 2012 fare increase and will be able to tell you the revised fare from your station within the next few weeks.

Yours sincerely

Mike Gibson

Public Affairs Manager

Mike Penning MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Roads and Motoring)
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

25 November 2011

Dear Minister

A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling Scheme

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council has been robustly advocating the case for the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury dualling scheme for many years. In the past few weeks there have been three substantial events that provide fresh and powerful vindication of the case that this Council has been consistently advocating.

The first of these relates to the work that Kent County Council (KCC) has been doing this year to value engineer the project in conjunction with the Highways Agency. We realise from correspondence that you are well aware of this work and the recent results which have abated the costs from the estimated £117M to a figure just under £70M. Furthermore, the County Council is offering to contribute to the cost of developing the scheme further. This is in parallel with further funding commitments from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership which is offering to underwrite the cost of the stalled public inquiry.

We would like to confirm the Borough Council's wholehearted support for the County Council initiative and we would urge that you give it serious consideration as part of the imminent review of future schemes in the pre-budgetary processes.

We will avoid restating the points already well made by Paul Carter, KCC Leader, and the A21 Reference Group except to say that we should also emphasize the urgent need for this scheme to support the new regional hospital that has just opened at Pembury and to resolve the dire safety record on this stretch of single lane highway. A graphic demonstration of this could be heard only yesterday morning on Radio Kent when there was a live report from the A21 describing standing traffic in both directions on Castle Hill and the difficulties that an ambulance was having in making any progress towards the hospital despite sirens sounding and lights flashing. The situation there is indeed life-threatening for significant parts of each day.

The second event relates to the Confederation of British Industry's (CBI) 'Time is Right for Plan A Plus' announcement on 9 November. This covered a wide range of proposals to 'kick-start' growth within the economy and included the positive impact that road schemes could have both during directly during the construction phase and thereafter when the wider economic benefits would be realised. It is urging the government to re-instate 14 major road projects delayed in the 2010 spending review to fill the gap created in the pipeline from 2013 and suggesting analysis of whether or not private sector investment could be used. The 14 schemes include the Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling project.

The CBI's plea to bring forward road schemes to promote growth in the wider economy is given further impetus by the third event, the publication by the RAC Foundation of its report 'Keeping the Nation Moving'. It is a wide ranging critique of transport investment policy in this country with numerous proposals suggested to deal with current challenges. The A21 Tonbridge to Pembury dualling scheme is identified as number 1 in the top ten unfunded projects based on published benefits. These are all projects that have potential to deliver strong economic benefits but the A21 scheme is quoted as having a benefit/cost ratio of 11. Here is the critical thing. This is based on the HA cost for the scheme of £117M. Given that the County Council and the LEP are guaranteeing delivery at a level of £70m, the cost/benefit ration for this scheme sores to nearer 20 mark and makes the case for building the scheme now inescapable. Set this against the cost/benefit ratio of HS2 between London and Birmingham that the Department for Transport estimates at 1.6.

The ultimate frustration will be that this scheme fails to secure a priority in the coming review of the road building programme only because it is not 'ready to go' and therefore would not be able to contribute immediately to growth in the national economy. It is not 'ready to go' simply because it is trapped in limbo by Crichell Downs principles that mean it cannot proceed through a compulsory purchase process without there being a clear timetable and guarantee of funding. This 'chicken and egg' situation seems completely ridiculous for a scheme with the highest cost/benefit ratio in the forward programme. Whatever else results from the coming review of the roads programme, it is absolutely essential that the Public Inquiry takes place to remove this fundamental constraint to making progress on this urgently needed project. We count on your support in helping to achieve this.

Yours sincerely

Mark Worrall
Leader of the Council

Nicolas Heslop
Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation

cc: The Rt Hon Sir John Stanley MP
Michael Fallon MP
The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Co Cllr Paul Carter



Department for
Transport

From Mike Penning MP, Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State

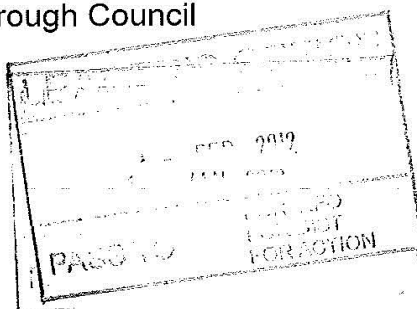
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31 JAN 2012

Dear Mark

Thank you for your letter of 25 November about the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury dualling scheme.

I note the Borough Council's wholehearted support for the A21 scheme and desire for it to progress through a Public Inquiry as soon as possible.

Following the announcement of schemes in the Autumn Statement the Department is currently considering the allocation of development funds for those remaining improvement proposals identified for future delivery. This would see investment in a small number of proposals, to progress their pre-construction work and maintain a pipeline of major investment in the strategic road network.

In the Secretary of State's statement on 14 December 2011 on Local Major Transport Schemes she indicated that she wanted to consider further which transport schemes might best support regenerating the Bexhill and Hastings area and this includes looking at the A21, the proposed Bexhill to Hastings Link road and other options such as the A259 and local rail. A decision on this additional consideration is expected in spring 2012.

*Regards
MP*

MIKE PENNING

Open letter from Medway Council.

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you as a matter of urgency to seek a meeting between yourself and representatives of all political groups from Medway Council.

We do this following the news on today's media that the government proposes to consult in March on an airport in the Thames estuary.

Medway Council jointly runs a campaign against this pipe dream of an airport scheme along with Kent County Council and the RSPB.

And all Medway councillors unanimously back this campaign against an airport on or near the estuary. This was reaffirmed as recently as last week during a vote at our Full Council meeting on 12 January.

It would appear to us – in light of today's news - that the Mayor of London's office have been privately briefing the government on its plan and we think a meeting with yourself at the earliest opportunity would provide a good, and much needed, opportunity to discuss face to face the ramifications of such proposals for Medway, the historic county of Kent and all communities near the Thames estuary.

We feel it is important to point out that 76 per cent of the UK public say they are against the airport proposal as are many major airline industry leaders.

If it were to go ahead it would have a huge affect on the lives of hundreds of thousands of residents in Medway, as well as across Kent and the wider Thames estuary, and would devastate an area of global environmental significance providing a home for around 250,000 migrating wildfowl annually.

An airport would cost up to £70billion, would require huge highways and infrastructure and would cut great swathes off the green belt and countryside.

We strongly urge you to keep to government policy and continue looking at fully utilising the capacity of existing airports – such as the five London already has (which is two more than New York) and others such as Manston and Birmingham – which could both be joined to London by high speed rail.

We look forward to meeting with you at the earliest available opportunity to discuss this urgent matter further.

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR RODNEY CHAMBERS
LEADER- MEDWAY COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR PAUL GODWIN
LEADER OF LABOUR GROUP – MEDWAY
COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR SHEILA KEARNEY
DEPUTY LEADER OF LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP – MEDWAY COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR ANDY STAMP
LEADER OF THE INDEPENDENT GROUP – MEDWAY COUNCIL