

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

12 March 2012

Report of the Director of Highways and Transportation and the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters For Information

1 TONBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE – TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Summary

The aim of this report is to inform the Board that work is in progress to review and update the Transport Strategy for Tonbridge town centre and at this stage to set a broad context for the work over the forthcoming months.

- 1.1.1 The Transport Strategy for the town centre is contained in the Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan (TCAAP) adopted in April 2008 as part of the Borough Council's Local Development Framework. A key objective of the Transport Strategy review is to seek ways to improve traffic flows and pedestrian movement in the town centre and specifically to ease congestion and reduce traffic levels in the High Street in order to improve general environmental conditions and address issues such as poor air quality.
- 1.1.2 The measures identified to achieve this in the current strategy include the updating and improvement of various junctions on the network around the Town Centre together with the possibility of the proposed London Road to Hadlow Road Link Road. The Link Road itself is a long standing proposal that has been unable to be realised, even during more optimistic economic times and it is fortunate that its absence has not prevented some good development opportunities coming forward in the town centre. The recent and current economic climate indicates that there is very little realistic prospect of the link road attracting the required funding and the time has come to consider the implications of this position for the town centre and how a range of other measures can be proposed and advanced to mitigate the loss of the prospect of the link road construction. That should only be assessed in the light of a review of the overall approach to the Transport Strategy.
- 1.1.3 Initial work has taken place on options for amendments to the Transport Strategy and on emerging outline design work undertaken by Jacobs on behalf of the County Council for some of the junction works shown in Figure 3 of TCAAP (**Annex 1**). Some scoping has also taken place to identify other possible initiatives that have not, to date, formed part of any strategy, but nevertheless have been raised through other channels and mentioned in reports to the Board in the past.

- 1.1.4 The intention is that all these prospective improvements are assessed and worked up over the next period and that briefings are held with local County and Borough Council members in order to come to an informal view about acceptability and deliverability. It is then envisaged that a report outlining the draft proposed amendments to the Transport Strategy will be presented to Board in June with more detailed recommendations on these matters. This is clearly a most important stage in the future approach to transport in Tonbridge. In the current climate it will be important to adopt an approach that is smart about how traffic can be managed and how public transport, cyclists and pedestrians can be best accommodated, within the likely resources available to the County Council and within the constraints of the existing highway network.
- 1.1.5 On the latter, we are conscious that a local campaign supporting the pedestrianisation of part of the High Street has been put forward by the group PATHS (Pedestrian Action for Tonbridge High Street). Part of the review of the Transport Strategy will assess this proposition both in terms of cost and practicality. Previously, such an approach has been found to be undeliverable in both senses even though in principle it may be considered as a worthy aspiration by some.

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 The County Council as Highway Authority are responsible for the operation of the network and in doing so have a clear role in advising the Borough Council as Planning Authority on future strategy in Local Planning terms.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 None at this stage.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 None.

Background papers:

Nil

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