

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**22 May 2006**

**Report of the Director of Planning & Transportation**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision**

**1 TONBRIDGE LOCAL PARKING PLAN**

**Summary**

Since September 2005 there has been a phased implementation of the new and revised permit parking Zones approved by the Board through the Tonbridge Local Parking Plan. Zone K in the Dry Hill Area was formally advertised on 3 March 2006 but it generated a number of objections. To accord with Kent County Council traffic regulation order protocols, the Joint Transportation Board will consider how to respond to the objections at its next meeting. Beforehand, the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board is invited to review the proposals for Zone K, assess the objections and consider a number of requests for amendments and then to recommend to the Joint Transportation Board how this matter should be resolved.

**1.1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1 Protocols agreed after the end of the Kent Highways Partnership in 2005 require proposals for Traffic Regulations Orders (TRO) to which objections have been received to be considered by the relevant Joint Transportation Board (JTB). At the formal order stage for one of the proposed permit parking schemes in the Tonbridge Local Parking Plan objections have been received and these will be reported to the next meeting of the JTB. This paper provides an opportunity for the Board to offer its advice and recommendation to the JTB when it considers the matter.
- 1.1.2 The Tonbridge Local Parking Plan was adopted during the autumn of 2005 and is being introduced incrementally across the town centre. In February 2006 the programme for implementing each of the zones was reported to the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board and the Joint Transportation Board in March. Zone K is the third of eight new or revised zones arising from the Parking Plan.
- 1.1.3 During the preparation of the Parking Plan in 2005 detailed surveys and extensive consultation were carried out. The work was undertaken in close

consultation with local members coordinated through a Member Steering Group for the project. This identified a number of potentially competing parking problems and needs across the town centre from which we developed a set of parking proposals for the area. Given how extensive and careful the work in surveying the problems and engaging the local community was, there was every reason to believe that we had a package of proposals with a large measure of public support.

1.1.4 The particular parking problems cited for Zone K were identified as follows

- Parking pressures generated by all day parking by pupils of Tonbridge School
- Safety concerns about parking on and around junctions and across driveways
- Parking by parents of the other schools in the area at each end of the school day
- Parking pressures generated by all day parking by commuters and workers

1.1.5 To address these problems, the following measures were adopted in the Parking Plan for Zone K.

- The introduction of a resident preferential parking zone to include Ashburnham Road, Dry Hill Park Road, Dry Hill Road, Dry Hill Park Crescent, London Road, Old London Road, Manor Grove, Portman Park (western end), Shipbourne Road and a short section of Yardley Park Road.
- Waiting to be restricted for non-permit holders from 9 am to 10 am and 1 pm to 2 pm with waiting limited to 30 minutes, return prohibited for 30 minutes.
- To introduce double yellow lines to improve sight lines access and junction protection and to retain existing daytime waiting restrictions.
- Retain existing short stay limited waiting for non permit holders to assist with the use of local shops.

## **1.2 Implementing Zone K**

1.2.1 Formally processing a TRO to give effect to the approved Parking Plan requires that the Order be advertised in the local newspaper, Notices of Intent be displayed on and around the site for a period of 21 days and documents showing the specific details be deposited and available for public inspection at the Borough Council offices and with the Kent County Council. In addition to these

standard requirements, residents in Zone K were posted an individual copy of the Notice with an A4 coloured plan of the area.

- 1.2.2 No matter how much time and effort is devoted to consulting on traffic proposals it is possible that objections will be received during the formal stage of the process from those who either may be unaware of what was being proposed in earlier consultations or who were aware but disagree with the adopted proposals. That has been the case with Zone K. The Notice period ran from 3 March up to noon on 27 March 2006. **151** letters and emails were received in response. Some correspondence contained comments and declarations of support. Others asked for additional information or requested amendments to the scheme. The balance, some 113 submissions, were initially categorised as objections. Subsequently, as described below many of these were withdrawn.
- 1.2.3 At **Annex 1** there is a table summarising the current state of play on objections, comments and letters of support from across Zone K. During the notice period, no objections were received from the Emergency Services or other Statutory Consultees
- 1.2.4 Throughout development of the Tonbridge Local Parking Plan the aim has been to achieve effective parking management in a way that best meets the potentially competing needs of different groups of drivers including residents, visitors, businesses and shoppers, in a balanced way and with local support and consensus where possible. The level of objection and the nature of comments raise questions about that level of support and confirm the need to reconsider Zone K proposals before proceeding any further.
- 1.2.5 In doing so, further work has been carried out on two parts of the plan that had engendered the most controversy. These relate to Ashburnham Road/ Manor Grove and to the area around Hilden Oaks School.

### **Ashburnham Road/ Manor Grove**

- 1.2.6 Ashburnham Road/ Manor Grove we received strong representations that some of the residents
- did not wish to be included in a permit parking scheme
  - did not wish a permit parking scheme to proceed anywhere else in Zone K because of concerns that there would be a knock on effect on both roads
  - did not wish to be considered for a special sub zone to protect the limited on-street parking space in the cul de sacs.
  - objected to the loss of the current informal arrangements of parking across driveways and in the turning head of the cul de sacs

- 1.2.7 We immediately reconsulted all of the residents in these two roads to see if there was a consistent view that we could adapt into the Zone K proposals. A copy of the correspondence, additional survey and results are attached as **Annex 2**. This indicates a majority view of residents in favour of leaving things as they are in Ashburnham and Manor Grove but there is also a strong concern that permit arrangements elsewhere in Zone K would adversely affect parking conditions in the two roads. Consequently there is pressure from some of the residents to block permit arrangements in Zone K generally.

### **1.3 Dry Hill Park Road - Hilden Oaks School**

- 1.3.1 81 Objections were received from parents of Hilden Oaks School who generally formed the view that the scheme would deprive them of over 40 car parking spaces and they would not be able to find anywhere to park and take their children to school.
- 1.3.2 A meeting between local Members, Officers, the head teacher and representatives of the school provided an opportunity to explain that the additional lengths of waiting restrictions in the neighbourhood were essential from a road safety point of view and did not represent anywhere near the loss of spaces first imagined. Additionally, amendments are now proposed to allow for a small drop off point in front of the school at each end of the school day. This is to support the other traffic management initiatives already in place and under consideration by the school. Once the scheme proposals had been explained, the objections generated by the parents of Hilden Oaks pupils were withdrawn.
- 1.3.3 In parallel with the other parking management measures, there has been a request for a Disabled persons parking bay in the vicinity of the Dry Hill Rest Home. We are recommending that this be accommodated within the Zone K proposals.
- 1.3.4 Dealing with the objections and other comments has introduced a procedural problem. The majority of local residents in favour of the proposals, and who have endured the parking problems patiently for some considerable time, would have had no direct knowledge of the objections made. They would be expecting the scheme to be implemented forthwith after the end of the formal notice period. With that in mind a news-letter has been prepared explaining what was happening, and why, and informing all residents and local businesses that we would be reporting to this Board and to the JTB. A copy of the news-letter will be circulated with the Agenda papers.

### **1.4 Comments on Other Areas**

#### **Portman Park**

- 1.4.1 Neither earlier surveys nor the public exhibition indicated a particular parking problem at the eastern end of Portman Park. However, during the notice period

for the TRO, 12 out of the 16 residents at this end of the road requested to be included in the scheme, if it goes ahead.

### **London Road/Old London Road**

- 1.4.2 9 Objections were received from drivers who park in the area and either commute to London or work in the town. Their main objection centres on the lack of available car parking in the town along with the cost to the workforce and businesses of paying for permits or using the car parks.
- 1.4.3 Requests were received for proposed parking bays in Old London Road to be altered to provide 2 hour limited waiting bays (except for permit holders) to assist client appointments for local businesses.

### **1.5 Miscellaneous Issues**

- 1.5.1 A number of other issues have been raised and these are addressed in the newsletter.

### **1.6 Consideration of Objections**

- 1.6.1 Valid objections relate to those received during the formal notice period between 3 and 27 March. Since then we have received a number of further representations, some in favour of the proposals, others not, prompted among other things by the news-letter.
- 1.6.2 Following the distribution of the news letter an additional 29 letters have been received. 17 are letters of support from residents. 10 are comments on the proposals. 2 are objections and include a 100 signature petition from a mix of residents and people who do not live or work within the area and are repeating their objections to using a car park or paying for a permit.
- 1.6.3 We have taken the view that all of these representations merit consideration if we are to promote a scheme that is of value to and has the support of the local community. All representations received will be available for member inspection on the night of the meeting.

### **1.7 Analysis of Options**

- 1.7.1 Consistent pressure from residents of Zone K over many years confirms the need for something to be done on road safety grounds to provide for the reasonable convenience of local residents. Faced with the need to address this, there is not an option to do nothing. Parking behaviour, especially at school drop off and pick up times falls well below the guidance provided in the Highway Code and the minimum action required is the package of measures in the advertised TRO, subject to some additional adjustments that have come out of the formal consultation, consisting of no waiting at any time restrictions to promote free flow

of traffic, access to property, and to prevent obstruction and dangerous parking at junctions.

1.7.2 The additional adjustments comprise:

- Amendment to the parking bays in Old London Road to include limited waiting for up to 2 hour with exemptions for permit holders to assist with local businesses
- Inclusion of a drop off area in front of Hilden Oaks School
- Inclusion of Disabled Persons Parking bay outside Dry Hill House rest home
- Inclusion of the eastern end of Portman Park

1.7.3 With or without a permit system, these are all additions that will promote the aims of the parking plan and we would be happy to recommend that these be included in the TRO.

1.7.4 The major question to be answered is whether the minimum scheme response should be accompanied by a residents preferential permit arrangement throughout Zone K as envisaged in the Parking Plan. To support this approach at this stage would require sufficient evidence that the amenity of local residents is being degraded by all day commuter parking and parking by people working in the town centre to such an extent that permit parking is fully justified. It would also need to address the key focus of many of the residents parking behaviour during the school drop-off and pick-up times.

1.7.5 A permit scheme will not address the latter concern. Therefore we need to seek reasons and support based on the effects of parking on local amenity if we are to justify over-ruling objections and bringing in the permit scheme.

1.7.6 Clearly, all day parking in this neighbourhood does take place in this zone and to a degree impacts on local amenity. This is what was found in the earlier surveys and is confirmed by the good level of support for parking management control from local residents. However, we also found that there is certainly capacity on-street to support long stay parking. The question is whether the parking that does take place impacts to such a degree to make a compelling case for introducing a resident preferential scheme.

1.7.7 There is a risk that a permit scheme might simply shift the long stay parking a short distance to locations as yet unforeseeable, perhaps less able to accommodate it, and become a problem for another group of residents. More critically, there is the concern echoed by a number of businesses in Zone K that their staff would be prejudiced by a permit arrangement. Through the Parking Plan we are seeking to enhance, not compromise, the economic vitality of the town so this is a material factor. The conclusion from all this analysis is that

conditions to justify a permit system in Zone K may not currently exist. That is why the Board is recommended to consider suspending the permit parking proposals but to keep conditions monitored in Zone K so that this part of the Tonbridge Parking Plan can be revisited should the situation deteriorate.

- 1.7.8 There is a high degree of subjectivity in this judgement based as it is on observations of site conditions and the comments received from residents, businesses and workers. It is a matter of balance which could equally and reasonably be made to the contrary and the view formed that the objections be over-ruled. However, the balance of factors seems to support not proceeding with the permit parking scheme at this time. If, however, members are minded to go ahead with it, it is recommended that the eastern end of Portman Park should be included in Zone K in line with the wishes of local residents and that Ashburnham Road and Manor Grove should be excluded from Zone K also in response to the wishes of the residents.

## **1.8 Legal Implications**

- 1.8.1 None directly since this is a matter for decision by the JTB.

## **1.9 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.9.1 There is a requirement to re-advertise details of any roads where additions to the original amendments are approved. The cost of re-advertising the amendments to the scheme is estimated at £600 for which there is current budget provision within the Capital Plan.

## **1.10 Risk Assessment**

- 1.10.1 The proposals, other than the permit scheme, represent good highway safety practice and should be implemented to reduce safety risk.
- 1.10.2 The option to defer any permit scheme represents the lower risk approach, continuing with what currently takes place as far as long stay parking is concerned but addressing the road safety issues that residents have informed us about.
- 1.10.3 Introducing the permit arrangements would seem to be a higher risk alternative because of potential effects on local businesses. In this respect the strength of opposition from people who park in this neighbourhood during the business day is intense. On the other hand a significant number of local people did lend support to the proposed RPP and will be surprised if it does not proceed at this time. However the objections made are of a nature and degree that it is difficult not to take very seriously particularly bearing in mind the efforts made to date to secure local consensus and understanding for the elements of the Parking Plan.

## 1.11 Recommendations

1.11.1 That Joint Transportation Board **BE RECOMMENDED** to approve and implement all elements of the advertised order for Zone K except for those parts of the order related to permit parking arrangements but including changes to cater for

- Amendment to the parking bays in Old London Road to include limited waiting for up to 2 hour with exemptions for permit holders to assist with local businesses
- Inclusion of a drop off area in front of Hilden Oaks School
- Inclusion of Disabled Persons Parking bay outside Dry Hill House rest home

1.11.2 That all day parking patterns within Zone K **BE MONITORED** so that the principle of introducing a permit parking arrangement can be reconsidered should conditions deteriorate to the extent that such a proposal is warranted.

1.11.3 That objectors **BE ADVISED** accordingly.

Background papers:

File - Zone K Objections and Comments

File - Zone K Documents on Deposit and associated Consultation documentation

Additional Consultation letters and comments from residents of Ashburnhan Road and Manor Grove Newsletter

contact: Karole Reynolds

File ref: P3/Zone K

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning & Transportation