

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

24 July 2006

Report of the Director of Planning & Transportation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

1 CAPITAL PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Summary

This is a regular report to advise members of the progress with the schemes contained in the Planning & Transportation section of the Capital Plan.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Engineering and transportation schemes of various types make up a substantial part of the Council's overall capital plan and consequently it is important that progress is kept under regular review. One of the key reasons for this is to ensure that resources available for design and construction management of capital works are flexible to changing needs and focus on priorities.

1.1.2 This report therefore deals with Planning & Transportation schemes, but also with the other capital works which are handled by the Projects Team. In that context, there are sectional reports below of two schemes which originated within Leisure Services, but which are corporately important and require engineering expertise.

1.1.3 Members may have particular project matters to raise and officers will be able to deal with these at the meeting. It would be helpful, to ensure as full a response as possible, if queries could be raised in advance so that any required research, investigation or analysis can be carried out.

1.2 Parking Schemes

1.2.1 **Car Park Enhancement Programme Phase 1** - The Capital Plan List C evaluation undertaken last year identified a five year programme of work to improve, upgrade and update the borough car parks. The work involves:

- Surfacing, kerbing, lining, lighting and drainage
- Height restriction barriers, street furniture and signs
- Boundary fencing, railings and landscape/planting areas

- Better cycle and motorbike parking
 - Updated disabled parking to comply with DDA obligations
- 1.2.2 This first phase of works is currently being planned and prioritised so that similar works in different locations are grouped together and also co-ordinates with all other current off street parking initiatives such as replacement & relocation of ticket machines and backboards.
- 1.2.3 **Ryarsh Lane Car Park, West Malling** – Since my last report, the site has been surveyed and designs for the extended parking area and pedestrian link to Ryarsh Lane developed in consultation with local residents.
- 1.2.4 To meet planning consent requirements, the initial design of the path and steps to Ryarsh Lane was revised to protect the privacy of the residents living opposite and to reflect Disability Discrimination Act requirements as far as practicable. Consent has now been obtained for the revised proposals, and also for the removal of two of the original planning conditions to enable residents to use the car park for overnight parking.
- 1.2.5 Tenders have been sought and the contract awarded, and it is intended that construction work will begin in early August and be substantially complete by early September.
- 1.2.6 Some delay in completing the site clearance has been caused by the need to liaise with Network Rail over the removal of a large sycamore tree which overhangs railway land. An acceptable method of work having finally been agreed, we are now waiting for Network Rail to confirm a suitable date. Whilst every effort will be made to remove the tree before the start of the construction works, its position means that it will be possible, although less convenient to carry out the works with the tree in place and remove it at a later date.
- 1.2.7 The final part of the scheme will be the planting of trees to enhance the appearance of the car park and replace those which have been lost in extending the parking area. This will be carried out during the autumn planting season.
- 1.2.8 **Car Park Action Plans** - Separate reports on progress with various schemes appear elsewhere in these papers.
- 1.2.9 **Larkfield Leisure Centre Car Park Improvements** – The design and implementation of this scheme is being managed by my Projects Team. This is a major improvement scheme designed, in conjunction with other improvements to the centre's facilities, to make the leisure centre more accessible and attractive to present and potential customers.
- 1.2.10 The proposals, which have an estimated value of £100,000, include improved pedestrian routes and disabled parking facilities, re-surfacing and lining of the parking areas, drainage improvements, and new signs and street furniture.

- 1.2.11 Detailed design work is well underway and close liaison with the leisure centre management at all times is a key feature of the project. The works are programmed for construction during November/December, the least busy period for the centre, requiring completion of the designs by late August in order to seek competitive tenders in early September. The tight project programme is resource-intensive but this is justified by the corporate importance of the works.
- 1.2.12 **Vale Road Car Park Extension** – The essential preliminaries to extending the car park, boundary fencing to the Bowls Club and site clearance were completed towards the end of last year. Whilst there is clear potential to expand the parking facilities and gain the resulting revenue, I do not feel that the time is quite right to proceed with this work in the context of the Town Centre Master plan and so I propose to put this on hold for the time being.
- 1.2.13 **Residents Car Parking, Eccles** – This scheme is being progressed to both alleviate the shortage of car parking in ‘The Square’ (Alma Road, Belgrave Street, Cork Street, Varnes Street & Victoria Street) and to ensure adequate access for emergency and service vehicles. An initial scoping consultation was undertaken last October and a List C evaluation subsequently completed. A Capital Plan allocation of £150,000 has been made for 2007/8.
- 1.2.14 It is understandable that practical solutions to the current problems are extremely difficult to identify at present. Various approaches including offsite provision, rear access and a range of parking management techniques are being investigated in consultation with local members, residents and the Parish Council.

1.3 Community Security Schemes

- 1.3.1 Two Tonbridge footway lighting schemes, **Hugh Christie to Cage Green & Ridgeway to Town Acres** appear in the Plan this year following List C Assessments at Capital Plan Review. These two schemes will be designed and implemented during the current financial year.
- 1.3.2 The scheme for lighting the path between **Upper Castle Fields & Tonbridge Pool** has now been approved as a fast track assessment for implementation this year in view of its status as a safety improvement. The design has been progressed and submitted for Ancient Monument Consent as it falls within the bounds of Tonbridge Castle. An illustration of the proposed lighting will be available for members at the meeting.
- 1.3.3 Also in the Plan for this year is the ‘legacy’ scheme for the **Byrneside to Leigh Road Footpath** in Hildenborough which has separate allocations for lighting and surfacing work. In the knowledge that the surfacing has already been completed by the Parish Council, the Parish were consulted on the remaining lighting proposal and their response was that they would be opposed to lighting the path.
- 1.3.4 I therefore recommend that no further action be taken to progress this scheme and the allocations be deleted at Capital Plan Review stage.

1.4 Transportation Schemes

- 1.4.1 **LTP Programme** - Through the Capital Plan the Borough Council is promoting a number of highway and traffic related proposals and it is worth a few words to explain the context for this. Following the ending of the Kent Highways Partnership last year the Borough Council acknowledged that the primary responsibility for carrying out traffic and highway improvements rested with the County Council and it decided that such schemes would no longer be scheduled specifically in the Capital Plan.
- 1.4.2 The main funding route for highway improvement schemes is through the Local Transport Plan (LTP). Nevertheless, the Borough Council wished to continue to promote and advocate some highway and traffic improvements because of their recognised local significance and priority. This approach involves continuing the practice of using borough funding to contribute towards partnership initiatives with the County Council and, where appropriate, parishes or developers. Within the Capital Plan, there are allocations specifically aimed at promoting such opportunities, the Local Transport Plan Partnership (LTP) Programme and also the Community Partnerships Initiatives fund.
- 1.4.3 A regular paper to the Joint Transportation Board provides an update on current status and expected progress on the complete schedule of highway improvement schemes in the programme for this year. Some of these are funded solely from the LTP; others are funded from a number of sources including the Borough Council's Capital Plan. It is the schemes in this latter category that are covered in this report and **Annex 1** lists all the scheme proposals for which there is an approved contribution.
- 1.4.4 To complete the picture, two further commitments have been added. The first of these, a potential contribution to a scheme to replace the unsightly railings along the stream-side at Rochester Road, Aylesford, reflects the review of the Capital Plan just before the demise of the Kent Highways Partnership when what had been a List C assessment item was removed from the Plan. This was done on the basis that this was highway authority work and it was passed on to the County Council for its consideration. The need for this work to be designed and carried out in a way that respects the Conservation Area setting justifies its consideration for a contribution to ensure design quality. This will be considered again once detailed proposals have been prepared and costed by the County Council. The other commitment consists of traffic modelling work for the transportation strategy included within the Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan. This is a matched funded project with the County Council to provide a model capable of assessing the detailed impacts on the network when specific development proposals are being considered in the context of the Area Action Plan. There is sufficient funding within existing Capital Plan allocations to cater for this and the Board is invited to endorse it on the schedule of approved contributions.

- 1.4.5 **Fairfield Road, Borough Green** – Members may recall that the aim of this scheme is to provide a short pedestrian link between the Fairfield Road estate and the station yard, thus providing a more direct access to the co-op and High Street beyond and avoiding Wrotham Road. The route is already in regular use but is somewhat tortuous and risky.
- 1.4.6 This small but beneficial scheme has been developed in conjunction with the Parish Council and Russet Homes, but requires use of a small strip of private land to establish a standard width footpath. The land owner, whilst initially in favour of the proposal, is now less co-operative unfortunately.
- 1.4.7 I have again written to the land owner and await a reply. In the event that the strip of land cannot be used however, I intend to proceed with the footpath but designed to a narrower width to make this route safe for those that use it.
- 1.4.8 **New Hythe Lane to Chaucer Way, Larkfield, Footpath/Cycle Track** – This was List C assessed during the last Capital Plan review and included in List A for implementation during this current financial year 2006/07. Detailed design work will start shortly.
- 1.4.9 **Station Road/Priory Grove Footway, Ditton** - This highway scheme remained on List A of the Capital Plan following the ending of the Kent Highways Partnership, subject to a detailed analysis of its feasibility and a report back to members to decide on its future.
- 1.4.10 The budget, currently £22,000 in 2006/07, was originally included in the Capital Plan as a purely pump-priming provision for a scheme for which the bulk of the funding would have to come from the highway authority, Kent County Council. It was clear many years ago that no such contribution would be forthcoming because of the schemes low priority relative to other footway works across the county. Consequently the cost benefit of this proposal has for some time been doubtful. Just as critically, for a scheme to progress at all, there would have to be unanimous support and participation by all the residents. This means that there is also doubt as to whether a scheme is achievable.
- 1.4.11 Work is currently underway to bring all the elements needed to analyse scheme feasibility together with a view to reporting on this to the next meeting of the Board. This will include the results of a focused consultation with all the residents to test what degree of support there is for a scheme.
- 1.4.12 **Wouldham Traffic Management** - Detailed proposals for traffic management measures have been produced working closely with members of Wouldham Parish Council. The proposals deal with the management of the approaches to the village, Knowle Road, School Lane & Rochester Road. The scheme is only partially funded at present relying solely on developer monies from a Section 106 agreement. At this stage, neither the Borough Council nor Kent County Council has considered the scheme for additional funding although, depending on the outcome of design discussions with the Parish Council, there may be a case to

justify the consideration of additional funds. Whatever the outcome, programming this scheme is constrained by the time-bound nature of the developer funding and the site work will need to be carried out by the middle of next year, that is, the summer of 2007.

- 1.4.13 Copies of the detailed drawings have been supplied to the Parish Council for consideration and I am awaiting feedback before considering how best this scheme should proceed.
- 1.4.14 **Aylesford Table Crossing** – This gateway/raised pedestrian crossing facility is a developer funded initiative which has been progressed by the Borough Council in order to scope and define works referred to in a Section 106 agreement.
- 1.4.15 The Council's role has been to develop the design of the facility as far as possible in response to consultation with the emergency services, Kent Highway Services and the Aylesford Parish Council.
- 1.4.16 I anticipate that the scheme will shortly be returned to the developer to obtain necessary approvals and implement.
- 1.4.17 **LTP Programme: West Malling Station Northern Access** – The detailed design for the northern access was submitted to Network Rail for approval in February. Rather than working in partnership with Network Rail as one might reasonably expect, co-operation to date has been secured only via a 'basic services agreement' for which this council is liable to pay fees up to £1000. Whilst I objected strongly to this approach, it was the pragmatic way to progress the scheme.
- 1.4.18 It was with much disappointment that I have recently been advised that Network Rail has made minimal progress with the approval of the design and furthermore that the Council is being urged to enter into a 'Basic Asset Protection Agreement' with a fee of £10,670 to enable to scheme to proceed further.
- 1.4.19 I have written at length to Network Rail seeking a reconsideration of their approach to the scheme and hope to be able to update members at the meeting. All other matters being resolved this scheme could be delivered shortly so the resolution of the issues with Network Rail are now critical.

1.5 Environmental Schemes

- 1.5.1 **Woodlands Parade Shopping Parade Enhancement** – Since my last report further attempts have been made to encourage the majority land owner, on whose co-operation the scheme depends, to agree to the proposals and to lease the land at each end of the Parade to the Council for customer parking. I have now personally written to the landowner, emphasising the value the scheme and its potential benefits both to him and to the local community, and hope to be in a position to report further at the meeting.

- 1.5.2 I am very conscious of the public support for the project that has been expressed. I am also aware of the environmental problems at the site which have given cause for intervention by the Council. Consequently I am very keen to make progress and I still remain hopeful that agreement can be reached.
- 1.5.3 **Town Lock Area Enhancement** - During our recent public consultation on the Town Lock proposals, a major concern raised was the impact of any works on local wildlife. In response to this, Kent Wildlife Trust have been commissioned to carry out an ecological survey of the overgrown area of land between the Lock and the Mill Stream (Area B(i)) which forms one of the two areas identified for enhancement. The results of the survey will be used to inform the development of proposals for this area and also to ensure that future works are carried out in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- 1.5.4 The other area identified for enhancement is the largely hard-surfaced area between Medway Wharf Road and the River Medway (Area A), and surveyors from the Royal School of Military Engineering have kindly surveyed this area for us as part of their programme of professional training activities. This survey will form the basis of detailed designs for this area to be developed by your engineers.
- 1.5.5 A key issue in progressing this major environmental enhancement project is the need to assemble a package of funding to meet the estimated costs implementation: £400,000 for Area A and £550,000 for Area B(i). Members will be aware that the sum of £100,000 is allocated in the Capital Programme to Tonbridge Environmental Schemes. Our partners in this project, the Environment Agency, have submitted a portfolio bid to the Big Lottery fund which includes the sum of £250,000 for Town Lock Area A, and expect to learn in September whether this bid has been successful. If so, this together with the Council's contribution and smaller contributions from the Environment Agency and other sources including developer funding, may make the first phase of the project, the enhancement of Area A, viable in the near future. In parallel with this, Environment Agency and Council officers are continuing to research and pursue alternative sources of external funding including developer contributions.

1.6 Land Drainage & Flood Defence Schemes

- 1.6.1 **Pen Stream** – Two actions from the Grange Farm estate flood investigation were incorporated into this scheme and take preference over the other possible environmental improvements to the stream. The first concerns improvement to the watercourse between Carroty Wood and the Towngate Wood caravan park. The work involved, whilst important, is not extensive and I aim to implement this improvement within the next two months.
- 1.6.2 The second improvement is not so straight forward and involves potential changes to the Pen Stream to improve the discharge of the main surface water sewer on the estate. The challenge is to procure limited modelling work in a proportion to the overall budget of the scheme. I intend to discuss this with consultants already

working for the Council to see if economies of scale can secure the outcome at an affordable price.

- 1.6.3 **East Peckham Flood Defence Scheme** – The contractor has now completed all ‘snagging’ work on the dam and it is fully operational in its role of protecting the village from flood flows in the Coult Stream.
- 1.6.4 Although the Coult Stream is classified as ‘main river’ and the Environment Agency is therefore the land drainage operating authority, the dam is currently within the ownership of the Borough Council. The transfer of the asset from the Council to the Agency will however take place shortly.
- 1.6.5 Whilst I feel that there have been many pleasing and successful aspects to this project such as partnership and securing of funding, it is particularly good to see how a structure of this scale is blending into the landscape. This has been acknowledged, as members will already know, by the Brassey Award for Conservation & Environment presented by the Institution of Civil Engineers.
- 1.6.6 Negotiations with the contractor on the final cost settlement are continuing and it is envisaged that this will be resolved shortly. If it is not then an arbitration process may be necessary.
- 1.6.7 **Aylesford Village Flood Alleviation Scheme** – Two separate events have dictated a change of strategy for the Aylesford Scheme. The first was when Cemex revised the route of the new access road to their Aylesford Quarry such that a single dam solution, as at East Peckham, was no longer a practical option. The second was the transfer of the role and powers of land drainage ‘Operating Authority’ from the Council to the Environment Agency.
- 1.6.8 The implications of the quarry access road are that flood storage can no longer be accommodated at one location, but must be devolved along the upper reach of the stream. This solution requires a more accurate and detailed mathematical model than was used previously.
- 1.6.9 The outcome of the latter event is that we are now happily able to work in partnership with the Environment Agency. The EA has already committed resources to the scheme and carried out preliminary cost/benefit analysis to test the probability of grant assistance. It is intended that a local partnership be formed if the scheme proves viable as the model that has been used at East Peckham.
- 1.6.10 Bureau Veritas Consulting Ltd are being re-engaged on a jointly funded basis to progress design up to grant application stage. Their first tasks are to gather further topographical information and to build the improved model.
- 1.6.11 At this stage I cannot predict when the scheme could be implemented but the earliest possible time would be summer 2007.

1.7 List C Assessments

- 1.7.1 The following assessments will be completed and reported to the appropriate meeting of the Finance & Property Advisory Board as part of the 2006/7 Capital Plan Review.
- 1.7.2 **Tonbridge Castle, East Curtain Wall Footpath & Railings** – This assessment is being carried out to address slope stability issues which have created problems for the footpath and railings beneath the wall for several years. This scheme is now being managed within Planning & Transportation Services, by the Projects Team.
- 1.7.3 The investigations necessary to complete the assessment are being funded from a revenue allocation of £13,200. To date, the appointed architect has commissioned a geotechnical investigation and a structural engineer to recommend solutions to stabilise the embankment.
- 1.7.4 **Stone Lock Conservation, Haysden** - The history, construction and condition of Stone Lock have already been the subject of discussions with members of the Inland Waterways Association, and this will be followed up by further site visits and investigations, the results of which will inform the project List C Assessment.
- 1.7.5 Work is already underway on the assessments for **Bone Alley Footpath Lighting** and **New Hythe Lane Residents Parking**.
- 1.7.6 Assessments for **Bailey Bridge Footway & Conservation Area Enhancements** will be completed during the coming year as resources and commitments allow.

1.8 Future Years' Work

- 1.8.1 The Capital Plan contains allocations for environmental improvements in **Mereworth** and **Wateringbury** and in the absence of specific initiatives in these Parishes, there is a strong case to link the allocations to the future programme of conservation area appraisals. There is also an allocation for the Wrotham Heath road junction with the aim of softening the visual impact of the large area of tarmac.
- 1.8.2 Similarly the allocation for **Tonbridge Town Centre Enhancements** is available for initiatives linked to the Town Centre Master Plan.

1.9 Legal Implications

- 1.9.1 A number of the schemes will require legal interventions at the detailed implementation stage. These will be dealt with at the time in conjunction with the Chief Solicitor.

1.10 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.10.1 Value for money is a key consideration for all the schemes when these are being assessed for inclusion within the Capital Plan. Financial provision is contained in the approved Capital Plan.

1.11 Risk Assessment

1.11.1 Not applicable

1.12 Recommendations

That :

1.12.1 progress on Planning & Transportation capital plan schemes **BE NOTED**;

1.12.2 a matched contribution towards traffic modelling work for the transportation strategy in Tonbridge **BE ENDORSED**;

1.12.3 the proposal not to progress further the scheme for Byrneside to Leigh Road Footpath **BE APPROVED**;

Background papers:

contact: Stephen Medlock

Nil

File ref: C1

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning & Transportation