

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

26 February 2007

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure
and the Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation**

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Key Decision

1 PARKING MANAGEMENT - PROGRESS REPORT

Summary

The finishing phases of the Tonbridge Local Parking Plan and parking management works at Blue Bell Hill are described. The Board is invited to reconfirm the next stages of the programme focussed on Hadlow, Borough Green and Snodland. The Board is invited to endorse an adjustment in the pricing structure on Saturdays for the long stay car parks in Tonbridge. Endorsement is also sought for changing the long stay charge in Borough Green car park to reinstate the price mechanism aimed at discouraging commuters from parking there.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This report provides the Board with an update on progress in implementing the Parking Action Plan since the last meeting in October. Then, work on the Tonbridge Local Parking Plan was coming to a head, activity had started on parking management proposals for Blue Bell Hill and consideration was given to controlling season ticket issuing in Tonbridge.

1.2 Tonbridge Local Parking Plan

1.2.1 Implementing the wide variety of measures that comprise the Tonbridge Local Parking Plan is now at an advanced stage. Unless there is persistent poor weather in the next few weeks, the works should be substantially complete by the date of the meeting. The status of the work in the various zones is as follows:

- Zone J – Slade Area > fully complete
- Zone D – Barden Road Area > fully complete
- Zone K – Dry Hill Area > fully complete

- Zone P – Hecorage Road Area > the revised Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for this zone was advertised in November. No objections were received and it should be complete by end of February
- Zone L – Mill Crescent Area > fully complete
- Zone M – Baltic Road Area > fully complete
- Zone G – Douglas Road Area > should be complete by end of February
- Zone N – Priory Street Area > the TRO for the zone was advertised during November and it prompted an objection in the form of a petition. The signatories did not want an additional hour in the afternoon of restricted waiting except for permit holders only in Lavender Hill. This petition was given the same careful consideration as the many other representations received during the course of implementing the Tonbridge Parking Plan. In this case, residents of Lavender Hill were reconsulted and this demonstrated that the existing parking management arrangement should remain in place unchanged. New parking arrangements in the rest of Zone N should be completed by early March.

- 1.2.2 Parking management is dynamic and ever-changing. Consequently, most of the reports to the Board include reference to operational matters needing an adjustment in some form to meet fresh circumstances. For example the last time the Board met, it endorsed controls on issuing season tickets.
- 1.2.3 In recent weeks, there has been feedback about the operation of the long stay car parks in Tonbridge town centre on Saturdays suggesting that the one to three hour flat rate charge merits reconsideration. When the short stay car parks are full, the overflow can be readily accommodated in the nearby long stay car parks. The case made is that there is reluctance by many drivers to do so because the ticket in those car parks is a minimum flat rate charge of £1.50 for any stay up to three hours long. Anecdotal evidence and observations by Parking Attendants suggest that this discourages some drivers from using the car park because they only wish to stay a short time so they drive elsewhere and their trade is lost to the town.
- 1.2.4 The financial implications of introducing a range of charges in the long stay car parks for the first three hours (on Saturday only) identical to the short stay car parks is likely to be broadly neutral. There might be increased patronage but this is likely to be offset by less income from those who currently purchase a three hour ticket who in future would opt for a shorter stay.
- 1.2.5 Given the neutral financial impact, the main consideration has to be the feedback suggesting that car park users want to be able to purchase one and two hour tickets in the under-utilised long stay car parks on Saturdays. The Parking Action Plan is being implemented on a basis of refining detailed proposals to respond to

the parking needs of the local community. That being so, changing the pricing structure as described in the long stay car parks for Saturdays is justified.

- 1.2.6 Looking at the Tonbridge Local Parking Plan as a whole, it is pleasing to be in a position to report the culmination of such a major project. It has involved considerable technical administration. There has been a strong emphasis on public consultation throughout the period of implementation and the detailed proposals have been readily adjusted in the light of local comment to achieve community support for them. All the careful effort has been worthwhile because the work now completed represents a solid foundation for future parking policy and operational management in Tonbridge. There will inevitably be demands to consider further minor amendments as the full effects of all the changes are experienced. These can continue to be dealt with through the routine and continuing package of minor interventions in the next phases of the Parking Action Plan.

1.3 Blue Bell Hill Area

- 1.3.1 The Blue Bell Hill area suffered historically from the parking by commuters in the local streets while they travelled to work along the M2 up to London by car sharing or coach. The Borough Council, in partnership with the Highways Agency, took the opportunity of extending the existing car park at Blue Bell Hill, thereby providing suitable alternative arrangements for any parking displaced by a more rigorous regime of management on the neighbouring residential streets.
- 1.3.2 Extensive consultation resulted in proposals for a range of different interventions to deal with the commuter parking problems. A traffic order was advertised for the scheme across November and December. It received no objections and the scheme is currently being implemented. It should be fully complete by the date of the meeting.
- 1.3.3 Already there is a substantial sign that the scheme is having an effect. The number of cars regularly using the car park had been slowly increasing over the past year and had reached about 100 users. This has immediately increased by about 50% to the 150 mark as a result of implementing a substantial part of the proposed scheme of parking management in the nearby residential roads. Even at this early stage, this is a good indication that the scheme is set to achieve its key objective of freeing up the streets in the neighbourhood from commuter parking.

1.4 Hadlow Local Parking Plan

- 1.4.1 Discussions with local members and the Parish Council have started to identify the scope, extent and range of local parking problems in Hadlow village. This will shortly be accompanied by a consultation exercise to find out the views of local businesses and residents. All responses will be analysed to devise a comprehensive set of proposals aimed at managing parking opportunities in the

village as effectively and fairly as possible. This work will be one of the Parking Action Plan priorities over the next three to four months.

1.5 Borough Green Local Parking Plan and Snodland Local Parking Plan

- 1.5.1 In parallel with the work in Hadlow, the two other priority areas for investigation in the context of the Parking Action Plan are Borough Green and Snodland. Work on these projects will begin as soon as the final commitments from Tonbridge and Blue Bell Hill are completed and these will be a focus of attention over the next few months.
- 1.5.2 Before that work gets underway, there are already signs of a potential problem in Borough Green car park. Observations from the parking attendants and feedback from local members, the Parish Council and residents show that this car park has recently become over-utilised. The main concern is to avoid a return to the unacceptable situation of many years ago when this car park became for a short period a free commuter car park for the train station. This was resolved by introducing graduated charges set at a level slightly above the cost of the station car park for long stay (over nine hours) use.
- 1.5.3 The natural preference would be to hold back any consideration of managing demand through altering car park charges so that the operational policy in this car park could be reviewed in the round as part of the overall strategy for Borough Green. That is what we recommend should be done for all but the long stay band.
- 1.5.4 Over time, the long stay price has crept out of line with the cost of parking in the station car park. The Borough Council car park costs £2.20 for an all day ticket and the station charges £2.70. There is some evidence based on the number of nine hour plus tickets issued that commuters are starting to reuse Borough Green car park and this constitutes sound grounds for closing and reversing this differential forthwith.
- 1.5.5 For this reason, we recommend that all other charges in this car park should remain as they are but that the long stay (9hour+) be set £3.00 for an all day ticket. The Chairman of the Car Parking Charges Advisory Board has been consulted on the proposed adjustment and is content to support this as a change justified on important car parking management grounds.

1.6 West Malling

- 1.6.1 The West Malling Local Parking Plan has been operating since the spring of 2004. An integral part of all the parking plans will be that these be regularly reviewed to ensure that they continue to provide fair and effective management of local parking. The West Malling Local Parking Plan was the first such plan and it contains a commitment to revisit it to see whether any adjustment is needed.
- 1.6.2 The survey, assessment and consultation work for the review will be timed to follow on from the project work in Hadlow, Borough Green and Snodland, towards the middle of the year. As a precursor to that, initial consultation has already

started in the form of a recent newsletter/questionnaire to all residents in the New Town part of the West Malling (Offham Road/Norman road area). This seeks views on a broad range of traffic and parking management issues. Feedback on concerns about traffic will be useful in advocating interventions by the County Council as highway authority. Comments on parking will be directly relevant to the programmed review and will throw light on whether there is any encroachment of parking from the town centre or any “over-spill” issues which may now be materialising.

1.7 Legal Implications

1.7.1 Processing and signing of traffic regulation orders is carried out by Kent County Council under powers contained in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.8.1 The revenue and capital costs of the continuing work on parking management described in the report are included in current budgets.

1.9 Risk Assessment

1.9.1 The significant risk in all parking management work is that the interventions might not have the support of the local community. This is being mitigated by a strong focus on local consultation and a willingness to refine and adapt proposals based on the feedback received together with a commitment to review schemes regularly in the future.

1.10 Recommendations

1.10.1 That

- 1) Cabinet be recommended to approve the changes to Saturday charging and the long stay charge in Borough Green car park described in the report and;
- 2) The programme of Parking Action Plan commitments and priorities be noted and endorsed.

Background papers:

Nil

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