

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

23 February 2010

Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING ISSUES

Summary

A report to bring together some important strands of Regional and National Planning Policy.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This report brings Members up to speed with what is happening about the review of the South East Plan in the form of a Single Regional Strategy. It also updates Members on the Examination in Public into the Partial Review of the South East Plan dealing with Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Finally, it lets Members know what is happening with the suite of National Policy Statements that the Government is in the course of preparing.

1.2 Single Regional Strategy

1.2.1 The current South East Plan was adopted in May 2009 following a Public Examination and consultation on the Government's report on the Examination Panels report. Members may be aware that the Plan is currently the subject of various legal challenges relating to housing provisions which are yet to be resolved. Nevertheless, the South East of England Partnership Board (SEEPB) is commencing work on a new single Regional Strategy that will eventually replace both the South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy and plan for the next 20-25 years.

1.2.2 The SEEPB has proposed a draft project plan and has sought comments from local authorities on what authority groupings would be preferred for providing information and advice to inform the Regional Strategy. The response to this has been mixed. I have attached a copy (**Annex A**) of my initial letter on this subject to SEEPB which I hope will accord broadly with the view of the Members and I would welcome the Boards support.

1.2.3 I have also attached a copy of a report to the SEEPB Planning Panel which gives a broad picture of the issues to be addressed by the new Regional Strategy. Although this identifies Kent as a whole for the purpose of initial evidence

gathering, importantly it recognises that other areas may be more appropriate for the provision of advice or policy development.

- 1.2.4 It remains to be seen how the new Regional Strategy will progress during the next Parliament. Further reports will be made as and when key stages are reached.

1.3 Partial Review of South East Plan – Gypsies Travellers and Travelling Showpeople – Examination in Public

- 1.3.1 I last reported on this matter to your meeting in July 2009 when the Council agreed its position on the Preferred Option for pitch distribution in Kent. We objected to the Regional Planning Body's suggestion that the pitch requirement for Tonbridge and Malling should be 18 and argued that it should be 12 based upon an overall reduction in the Kent figure which allowed for some redistribution of pitches elsewhere in the region.
- 1.3.2 The Examination in Public commenced on 2 February 2010. For this we submitted a joint Statement together with KCC and most other districts arguing that the County total should be 262 rather than 281. We also submitted another joint statement prepared on behalf of the four authorities that prepared the GTAA for West Kent which sought to address some of the questions asked in advance by the EIP Panel. These joint statements were augmented as necessary by our own position statements which indicated as a fall-back position our support for KCC's option E which allocates 13 pitches to Tonbridge and Malling. A copy of the Council's submissions to the EIP is attached at **Annex B**.
- 1.3.3 The Council was represented at officer level on the day that Kent-specific issues were discussed. The main issue for Tonbridge and Malling turned out to be the level of pitch requirements for Travelling Showmen. The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain put forward a proposal that the level of pitch provision in a district should have regard to whether land is owned in the district by Travelling Showmen. In our case, the argument was that, because the site for 8 families at Couch Lane Platt had been refused on appeal, the pitch requirements for Tonbridge and Malling should be set at 8 so that the Council would effectively be obliged to accommodate them somewhere in the Borough. Your officer strongly resisted this approach at the Hearing and followed this up with a written response (see **Annex C**).

1.4 National Policy Statements

- 1.4.1 Government is currently preparing a series of National Policy Statements (NPSs) covering matters and development of strategic interest. A key function of these statements will be to provide a framework within which the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) will make decisions on major development proposals that fall within its remit. Until NPPs are in place the IPC will proceed by way of recommendations to the Secretary of State.
- 1.4.2 The Government has currently issued a variety of draft NPSs on Energy (via Department of Energy and Climate change) and Ports (via Department for

Transport) in November 2009 for adoption in early 2010 (February). It is programmed to issue others as follows:

- Road/Rail –publication and adoption in 2010
- Aviation – publication and adoption 2011
- Water supply – publication 2010 and adoption 2012
- Waste water – publication 2010 and adoption 2011
- Hazardous waste – publication 2010 and adoption 2011

1.4.3 The draft Ports NPS has some tangential relevance to TMBC as any proposal will be required to provide a multi-modal transport analysis of the access options to the proposed port. As was witnessed by the debate at the recent KIG Inquiry access to railhead facilities for ports is a matter on some relevance. The draft Ports NPS goes on to say that rail accessibility assumes that at least W10 gauge access is available for rail freight vehicles. Such a gauge cannot be accessed in the Borough at present other than via HS1 which is not actually accessible from within the Borough but only at Ashford or in North Kent.

1.4.4 It is envisaged that the NPS on Road/Rail, due to be published later this year, will be the most relevant to the consideration of any emerging proposals for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange.

1.5 Legal Implications

1.5.1 All of the matters in this report will be material policy considerations in the Councils consideration of development proposals in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Acts.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.6.1 None.

1.7 Risk Assessment

1.7.1 None as a direct result of this report. The outcome of the Gypsy and Travellers Partial Review of the SE Plan will have a critical effect on the Councils ability to plan and manage the planning of this form of development.

1.8 Policy Considerations

1.8.1 All the matters discussed in this report will have a bearing on the Councils decisions on relevant planning proposals and LDF preparation and review.

Background papers:

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Nil

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