

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

16 November 2011

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 PARKING ACTION PLAN

Summary

An assessment of parking management in Aylesford and West Malling has started. It is recommended that consideration of the detailed proposals for public consultation be delegated to local Steering Groups for each exercise. The aim will be to present proposals approved by the Steering Groups for each area to the next meeting of the Board in February and the JTB in March.

1.1 Context

- 1.1.1 The Parking Action Plan includes a commitment to assess parking management in the village of Aylesford and a general intention to revisit each of the established Local Parking Plans from time to time. This is to ensure that they continue to provide a proper balance between capacity and competing demand and that any changes in circumstances are reflected through appropriate adjustments to the Plan.
- 1.1.2 If we go back to the beginnings of work on the Parking Action Plan some ten years ago, it is possible to see the origins of the two-streamed approach we adopted for dealing with parking requests in the Borough. At that time there were a considerable number of requests from locations across the Borough and these have continued to come forward. Many of these had the character of one-off problems that could be addressed independently from the surrounding neighbourhood. These have been dealt with through a phased programme that has currently reached its sixth stage.
- 1.1.3 However, many others were grouped in self contained areas that warranted a more comprehensive treatment leading to a 'local parking plan' approach. To date we have carried out such Local Parking Plan work in fourteen areas across the Borough starting with West Malling during 2003/04 and culminating in East Malling during this current year. The final area based project in the programme focuses on Aylesford village.

1.2 Aylesford Village

- 1.2.1 Many years ago, we had recorded a range of disparate and relatively discrete requests from Aylesford, concentrated particularly around the Rochester Road area. At the time, we had no opportunity to assess the situation anything more than superficially. Initial thoughts were influenced heavily by concerns about the risk of transferring problems to neighbouring areas without properly dealing with the underlying causes. This leads us to conclude at the time that a parking plan approach was the best way to deal with parking management matters in the village.
- 1.2.2 From time to time, we have dealt with some critical and particular parking issues in the village as part of the phased programme of work, introducing waiting restriction in Mount Pleasant associated with school drop-off activity is an example of such work. The success of these individual interventions might help explain the absence of serious pressure over time for a wider parking plan. Nevertheless, in recent weeks this work has started and the results from initial assessments are that the matters we are being invited to address in Aylesford do not really merit consideration as a full scale Local Parking Plan. Rather, they fall somewhere in between this and the phased programme.
- 1.2.3 Either way, it is not going to overly influence the process we need to go through. It simply means that the scope of the work can be much more focussed than first envisaged and the end result will be a simpler and more self-contained set of recommendations and proposals centred primarily on Rochester Road and the management of the Council car parks.

1.3 Next Steps

- 1.3.1 Given the scope for the exercise, I am recommending a streamlined approach involving a degree of delegation to a local Steering Group to expedite this project between now and the next meeting of the Board. This Group would be similar to those that have provided the steer on all the previous local parking plans, even if the end product in this case is a more selective and concise schedule of actions rather than a 'Local Parking Plan' document.
- 1.3.2 The group would consist of local Borough and County Council Members and a representative from the Parish Council and be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation.
- 1.3.3 The series of steps between now and the next meeting of the Board are as follows;
- parallel report to the JTB
 - meeting of the Steering Group to approve a draft set of proposals;

- public consultation exercise focussed on the immediate area likely to be influenced by the proposals;
- reassessment of proposals in the light of the feedback received;
- further meeting of the Steering Group to endorse the revised proposals;
- report to the next meeting of the PTAB and the JTB for endorsement of the proposals.

1.4 West Malling

1.4.1 The West Malling Local Parking Plan was the first of the 14 plans now in place. It will be the first to be revisited so that it can be adjusted, as necessary, in the light of any changes to the local parking environment or to address deficiencies that have become apparent since the plan was first adopted in 2004.

1.4.2 Since then, we have also carried out some important work that has been beneficial for the town. We purchased the freehold of the Ryarsh Lane car park land. This included some additional land that allowed us to extend the car park from 100 to 124 spaces. More recently, in response to request from the local Chamber of Commerce, the time at which free non-permit use of the car park starts was reduced from 4pm to 3pm.

1.4.3 In overall terms and given the obvious parking tensions and capacity issues and constraints that occur in a vibrant historic town, the parking plan provisions have worked well.

1.5 Scope of the Review

1.5.1 Based on representations we have received from the Parish Council and the Chamber of Commerce, the central focus of the review will be the short and long stay car parks. We will address concerns about misuse of the short stay car park by people staying more than the stated maximum permitted time of four hours and deal with issues related to enforcement by the parking attendants. We will also consider what we can do to resolve a perceived shortfall in long stay car parking capacity and where possible identify some fresh opportunities. This will include consideration of Ryarsh Lane car park and the extent to which the current terms of use align with the needs of the town overall.

1.5.2 Other off-street possibilities are likely to be difficult to exploit in the confines of an old historic town such as West Malling. Nevertheless, thought will be given to viable and affordable ways of doing so, including constructive ways of mobilizing some of the private non-residential parking in the town. The Chamber may be able to provide useful assistance in this aspect of parking planning.

1.5.3 These are important points to be focussing upon and they set the scope of the review. It indicates that the major exercise completed in 2004 has settled down

quite well and the broad schedule of what was introduced has achieved a reasonable balance across the competing local parking needs. As a result, this is an exercise involving fine adjustments to what is already broadly in place albeit with a major focus on the two car parks and how they can best operate to support the vitality of the town.

1.6 Next Steps

- 1.6.1 If there are other matters that need to be addressed but which we are currently unaware of, then these can come naturally out of the work we are about to undertake with a newly reconvened local Steering Group.
- 1.6.2 In the meantime, there is one item, the issue of permits in Ryarsh Lane car park that merits urgent consideration. We have recently been giving some additional priority to enforcement in the High Street car park in response to concerns from the Parish Council and the local Chamber of Commerce about the number of cars parking longer than the four hour maximum period. This has resulted in further applications for permits in the long stay car park at Ryarsh Lane.
- 1.6.3 There are currently 256 issued for this 124 spaced car park. From a management point of view this is unsatisfactory and it creates considerable frustration for many permit holders because the car park fills up early each day and they have no chance of finding a space. However, we introduced this system of unlimited permit issue and 'first-come-first-served' in consultation with local traders when the Local Parking Plan was implemented in 2004. An essential element of the parking review will be to devise a better way of managing the use of this car park and refining the contribution it makes to the parking capacity of the town. However, we have the urgent problem of increasing demand for permits that I recommend be dealt with by placing a hold on further issues pending the results of the review work that will be taking place over the next few weeks.
- 1.6.4 For the same logistical reasons outlined above for the Aylesford work, I am recommending that the West Malling review be focussed. The schedule of items that have to be considered in the review tends itself to some short term consideration and implementation. Therefore, I am recommending that the Steering Group be delegated to press on with the review as expeditiously as possible, taking the proposals that emerge through an appropriate level of public consultation and assessment, with the aim of presenting the Board with proposals for endorsement at its next meeting in February.
- 1.6.5 The steps to reach that goal are identical to those set out above for Aylesford and I would hope to be able to convene a meeting of the Steering Group as soon as possible after the JTB at the end of November. This group will again be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation and made up of local County and Borough Council Members together with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce.

1.7 Legal Implications

1.7.1 None at this stage.

1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.8.1 Funding for the scale of work expected to come from each of the exercises is already contained within the Capital Plan.

1.9 Risk Assessment

1.9.1 The risk that emerging proposals might not fully reflect local sentiment is being addressed through an overview of the work by a local Steering Group in each case.

1.10 Equality Impact Assessment

1.10.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.11 Policy Considerations

1.11.1 Community

1.12 Recommendations

1.12.1 That local Steering Groups **BE DELEGATED** to expedite progress on parking management schemes for Aylesford and West Malling including approval of proposals for an appropriate level of public consultation.

1.12.2 That issue of permits for Ryarsh Lane car park be temporarily suspended pending the results of the parking review.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Michael McCulloch

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against	No	The recommendation seeks delegation to a Steering Group for proposals yet to be devised.

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
different groups in the community?		
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	See previous answer
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.