

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**16 May 2012**

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

**Part 1- Public**

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

**1 AYLESFORD PARKING REVIEW**

**Summary**

**Parking conditions in the village of Aylesford were recently reviewed with the assistance of a local Steering Group. The Group is recommending that some measures should be introduced on street to deal with concerns about highway safety and obstruction and provide some additional parking opportunities. In the two public car parks, the Group's recommendation is that the current management arrangements should be retained, subject to continued monitoring, and one of the car parks extended subject to agreement with the Parish Council on cost sharing.**

**1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 In recent months the planned review of parking in the village of Aylesford has been taking place. This is a response to requests from the local community for action to deal with a range of concerns about parking conditions in the village, in particular Rochester Road and neighbouring side roads.
- 1.1.2 The review also included consideration of the use and management of the two public car parks. These are critical assets for the village where many of the old historic buildings do not have their own parking and no scope to create any. Consequently, given the limited on street capacity within the village, many local residents and businesses are completely dependent on the spaces in the public car parks. One of the aims of the review was therefore to explore the desire for some preferential management of the car parks in favour of local people.
- 1.1.3 The context and scope of the review was set out in a report to the meeting of the Board last November. The part of this report relevant to Aylesford is reproduced at **Annex 1** because it still provides a relevant template for the work of the review.

## 1.2 Steering Group

- 1.2.1 The previous report draws particular attention to the setting up of a Steering Group (SG) to guide the work of the review and this has become settled and successful good practice in all the local parking planning exercises that the Borough Council has carried out over the years.
- 1.2.2 The Aylesford SG first met shortly after the November P&TAB and it endorsed the scope and content of the subsequent public consultation exercise. It met once again to consider the analysis of the consultation response and this paper sets out the recommendations emanating from the Group. These fall into two distinct categories: on-street proposals and proposals related to the management of the two Borough Council car parks. These are now considered in their turn.

## 1.3 On-street proposals

- 1.3.1 The on-street suggestions in the consultation exercise focused on solutions to parking problems at the following eight locations in the village.
- Powell Close junction with Rochester Road;
  - Unwin Close junction with Rochester Road;
  - Rochester Road; adjacent to the Old Church and the village club;
  - Bush Row junction with Rochester Road
  - High Street, adjustments to limited waiting bays;
  - High Street, near the steps at the west end;
  - Station Road adjacent to the old bridge.
  - Forstal Road
- 1.3.2 The suggested approach for each of these locations is shown on the drawings in **Annex 2**. The response to the consultation exercise for each of the locations is summarised in **Annex 3**. The SG also considered some other feedback from the local community. There were concerns that the height restrictions barriers unnecessarily constrained car park access for drivers with slightly larger vehicles. Also, the lack of any specific provision for motor cycle parking had been raised in the consultation and the SG sought to address this without any adverse impact on car parking spaces. The recommendations of the SG for the on-street proposals are as follows.

Location	SG Recommendation
Powell Close junction with Rochester Road	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/4/A endorsed.
Unwin Close junction with Rochester Road	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/3 endorsed.
Rochester Road; adjacent to the Old Church and the village club	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/5 endorsed.
Bush Row junction with Rochester Road	Leave the area as it currently is. The details set out on Dwg No DD/559/7/A were <u>not</u> endorsed (save for the removal of the redundant disabled parking place)
High Street, adjustments to limited waiting bays	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/6/A endorsed based on altering the 20 minute bay to one hour/no return within one hour.
High Street, near the steps at the west end	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/8 endorsed.
Station Road adjacent to the old bridge	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/2 endorsed.
Forstal Road	Details set out on Dwg No DD/559/1/A endorsed subject to consideration of some further adjustment to facilitate access to the allotments.
Bush Row & Powell Close disabled parking bays	Remove the redundant bays from the Traffic Regulation Order and on-street.
Height restriction barriers	A general presumption in favour of leaving the hrb's open unless there was a localised imminent threat of itinerant incursion.
Motorcycle parking in the car parks	Remodel the currently unused area in the western car park to accommodate motorcycles without the need to reduce the numbers of car park spaces.

## 1.4 Off-street – the Public Car Parks

- 1.4.1 The consultation leaflet posed a question concerning the charging for use of the public car parks. It invited people to comment on whether they thought that people using the car parks should pay directly to do so, or whether they believed that cost of these car parks should continue to be met by the Borough Council. The question was prompted by two separate considerations.
- 1.4.2 First, there are clear local frustrations about the way these car parks are used. There are occasions when residents are faced with a forced crossing of Bailey Bridge Road to reach the more remote of the two car parks because the one nearest the village centre is full and allegedly, used by many non-locals. If the Borough Council were to introduce an operational policy based on preference for any particular group of drivers such as residents it would require, of necessity, a management approach supported by a charging regime. It is therefore a proper part of the consultation exercise to test the extent to which the desire for resident preferential use in the car parks is matched by an acceptance of the charging that would inevitably be needed to make it work effectively.
- 1.4.3 Secondly, the Borough Council is confronting financial challenges that require consideration of how costs can be abated across all service areas. Car parks require a revenue commitment to support the maintenance and rates. In addition, the costs of providing CCTV, much valued by the local community, are considerable. Car parks therefore cannot be isolated from these wider financial pressures and it is legitimate to consider whether direct users should contribute towards some of the cost of the facilities.
- 1.4.4 As it is, the response on the possible introduction of a charging regime was inconclusive as shown by the following table.

Distributed	Replies		In favour	Not in favour	Neutral replies
426	86	20%	40	41	5
As a percentage of the replies			46.5%	47.6%	5.8%
As a percentage of the circulated questionnaires			9.4%	9.6%	1.1%

- 1.4.5 Set against this, the SG noted that the Parish Council had expressed itself opposed to any charging in the car parks as had a number of local businesses. Additionally, the Parish Council had organised a public meeting attended by about 70 people during the consultation period and this too revealed little support for the principle of charging.

- 1.4.6 The SG was therefore faced with a difficult set of mutually incompatible aims. It recognised that the wish for a degree of resident preference in the car park nearest the village centre is not supported by any appetite for the management tool, charging, that would enable this to take place. It also acknowledged that the ongoing revenue costs of the car parks in Aylesford amount to approximately £22K per annum. It was not really surprising that those currently benefitting from free use of the car parks would want them to remain free while also wishing to retain the level of maintenance, especially CCTV as this is a high local priority for most residents.
- 1.4.7 Faced with this dilemma, the SG has focused on a particular and further issue raised during the public consultation concerning the need for more parking, as a way of removing pressure on available spaces and how this could be addressed by extending the eastern car park onto what has become effectively an over-flow area. It considered that this could be the catalyst for some innovative partnership working by the Parish and Borough Council to promote a scheme to extend the car park and to bring the Parish Council on board as a funding partner to contribute to the capital cost of the work (estimated at this stage to be approximately £55K) and the annual revenue costs of running the car parks, thereby helping to retain the current free to users status.
- 1.4.8 The SG's thoughts have been shared with the Parish Council (letter attached at **Annex 4**) and its response is awaited. If it comes back with a positive answer the broad 'in principle' approach can be worked up into the appropriate detail for report to the next meeting of the Board. For the moment, the SG is recommending that this partnership approach be endorsed and explored further. It may be that the Parish Council will have considered this matter before the night of the meeting. If it does so, I will endeavour to convey it to the Board when it meets.

## **1.5 Legal Considerations**

- 1.5.1 None at this stage.

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

- 1.6.1 The on-street proposals would be met within current capital plan budget provisions for implementing the Parking Action Plan. Any capital requirement for the Council towards an extended car park would need to be drawn from the current Capital Plan allocations.

## **1.7 Risk Assessment**

- 1.7.1 The risk of no intervention in local parking management is that problems highlighted within the village would not be addressed. The partnership arrangements with the Parish Council will reduce the risk of parking conflict in the car parks and will defray the costs of service provision.

## 1.8 Equality Impact Assessment

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

## 1.9 Policy Considerations

1.9.1 Community

## 1.10 Recommendations

1.10.1 The SG's recommendations for the on-street proposals set out in this report **BE APPROVED**;

1.10.2 The partnership approach with the Parish Council as described in the report **BE ENDORSED** and the detail **BE REPORTED** to the next meeting of the Board.

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

Nicolas Heslop  
Cabinet Member for Planning &  
Transportation

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 different groups in the community?	No	n/a
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	The proposals are neutral in terms of equality impact.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		n/a

*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.*