

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

4 June 2013

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 UPDATE ON TRANSPORT ISSUES

This report provides an update on a range of current transportation issues affecting the Borough.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 At its last two meetings, the Board considered extensive reports on transportation issues currently affecting the Borough. This paper provides an update on some of matters previously discussed and introduces some new ones relating to the M25 Junction 5 slips, the emerging Cycling Strategy and the consultation process for the Lower Thames Crossing.

1.2 Local Parking Studies

1.2.1 Phase 6B of our parking programme will be implemented by the end of June which includes the agreed changes in Nevill Court, Water Lane and St Leonards Street, West Malling.

1.2.2 Reviews of existing Local Parking Plans in West Malling, Snodland, East Malling and Borough Green will continue during the next few months in liaison with local Members and any proposed changes emerging from these reviews will be brought forward to the Joint Transportation Board for approval to be included within the next phase of works – Phase 7.

1.3 Tonbridge Transport Strategy

1.3.1 Earlier reports from the Director of Kent Highways & Transportation and me to the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) have outlined a proposed shift in the transport strategy for Tonbridge Town Centre away from the aspiration to redistribute traffic from the High Street. The intention now is to provide better management of the current road structure through improved signalling, signing and some relatively modest and more achievable engineering works which would ease the flow of traffic in and around the town centre. A second briefing session was held for local Members in May outlining some ideas to progress this work. Further reports will

be made to the JTB as the initiatives are developed and are presented for Member approval.

- 1.3.2 I anticipate that the scheme will be broken down in component parts and priced up for each component for Members to prioritise depending on the budget available at the time.

1.4 A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling Scheme - Public Inquiry

- 1.4.1 The long awaited A21 Public Inquiry opened on 14 May. The Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and KCC all support the proposal. Ian Bailey, Planning Policy Manager, will represent the Borough Council at the Inquiry giving evidence in support of the proposal. Cllr Nicolas Heslop and the four local MP's will also address the inquiry giving support for the proposal.

- 1.4.2 This is a welcome step forward in delivering this key project but it is important to note that advancing this scheme through a public inquiry does not guarantee its construction; this decision will be taken at the next spending review and we will need to ensure that appropriate representations are made at the right time.

1.5 Rail Issues

- 1.5.1 KCC's Fifth Rail Summit is due to be held on 20 May but after this report was written. Presentations were expected from James Conway (DfT), Charles Horton (Southeastern) and Mike Smith (Network Rail). An oral update of the key messages will be given at the meeting.

- 1.5.2 The Tonbridge Line Commuters AGM was held on 16 May. There were presentations from Network Rail and Southeastern. Andy Edwards, Principal Engineer, attended and reported back on a number of key issues for Tonbridge commuters as summarised below:

- In 2015 work will commence at London Bridge station to demolish and replace all platforms sequentially.
- During the construction phase of these station improvements there will be significant disruption to commuters wishing to get off or on at London Bridge. From Jan 2015 through to Aug 2016 any trains going to Charing Cross will NOT stop at London Bridge. This will affect the majority of the London bound trains running from Tonbridge Station. Cannon Street trains will continue to stop at London Bridge during this period.
- From Aug 2016 through to 2017 any trains bound for Cannon Street will NOT stop at London Bridge but the Charing Cross service will stop during that time.
- Network Rail is liaising with Transport for London (TfL) to improve localised links during these works.

1.6 'Pinch Point' Bids

- 1.6.1 At the last meeting of this board I alerted Members to the Department for Transport (DfT)'s Local Pinch Point Fund which is designed to promote economic growth through the rapid deployment of ready-to-go schemes that remove transport barriers or prevent the emergence of new transport barriers.
- 1.6.2 KCC submitted three bids for this funding, two of which were in West Kent. One on the M20 at Junction 4 and the other at North Farm, adjacent to the A21 on the outskirts of Tunbridge Wells. The North Farm bid has been fast-tracked and has been successful. It includes dualling of Longfield Road and roundabouts at either end. It is programmed to be completed by March 2015 and importantly coordinates timings with the pending A21 improvements to maximise benefits, subject to the A21 funding being confirmed.
- 1.6.3 We are still waiting to hear whether the bid for M20 at Junction 4 is successful.

1.7 Junction 5 Slips

- 1.7.1 The M26, the M25 and the A21 converge at Junction 5 of the M25. This junction does not have full connectivity in all directions and would significantly benefit from the construction of east facing slip roads which would reduce traffic volume and allow for some relief for those who live and travel along the A25 corridor through Borough Green, Ightham and Seal.
- 1.7.2 There are also likely to be significant commercial and Air Quality benefits following any re-routing of local and long distance HGV and other traffic away from the rural A and B network if full access is provided from and to the A21 and the M26.
- 1.7.3 This issue is of significant importance to several communities of the borough and further afield. A fully working junction 5 would also be a considerable benefit, locally and strategically, to economic development prospects. The time may now be right for a coordinated lobby approach from affected District and Parish Councils together with the County Council. We hope to be in a position to discuss how this could best be approached shortly.

1.8 Cycling Strategy

- 1.8.1 KCC have just commenced the public consultation on the draft Cycling Strategy for Tonbridge and Malling.
- 1.8.2 Details can be found at this link
www.kent.gov.uk/tonbridge&mallingscyclingstrategy
- 1.8.3 The consultation closes on 30 June. All comments already made by Members have been captured by the County officers and will be fully considered along with any new comments received.

1.9 Lower Thames Crossing

1.9.1 The Lower Thames Crossing is a planned new crossing designed to relieve the Dartford Crossing.

1.9.2 There are three options under consideration.

- Option A: At the site of the existing A282 Dartford – Thurrock crossing
- Option B: connecting the A2 with the A1089
- Option C: connecting the M2 with the A13 and the M25 between junctions 29 and 30

1.9.3 In addition the DfT has considered a variant to Option C which would additionally widen the A229 linking the M2 with the M20.

1.9.4 Clearly there will be many strategic issues raised for the Borough Council in respect of this major infrastructure proposal. We will need to understand how the scheme in the various options might affect transport and development pressures as well as economic prospects. Importantly, we will need to assess any impact on the borough and the communities on the A228 corridor and generally in the north part of the borough which may be particularly affected by Option C.

1.9.5 Subject to DfT officials obtaining the necessary internal consents for the consultation documents and arrangements, the consultation they are now working towards in respect of the above is:

- launch - 20 May
- briefing sessions - 20/21 May;
- public exhibitions - weeks commencing 10th June and 17th June; and
- end of consultation - 15 July.

1.10 Legal Implications

1.10.1 None

1.11 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.11.1 None directly for the Borough Council.

1.12 Risk Assessment

1.12.1 Not required.

Background papers:

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Nil

Steve Humphrey

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