

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

08 June 2015

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 LOCAL PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

This report provides Members of the Board with an update on progress made towards the preparation of the Local Plan and any relevant Transportation matters since the last meeting in March.

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 Since the Board last met in March work has continued towards preparing the evidence base for the Local Plan and progress has also been made in respect of the strategic transportation matters that are usually reported in the form of an update for this meeting. In addition there were a number of further Government planning reforms introduced or proposed prior to the General Election on the 7th May. This report will summarise the main points.

1.2 Local Plan Progress

1.2.1 Progress has continued to be made in preparing the evidence base for the Local Plan. One of the key pieces of evidence, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which identifies the objectively assessed needs for new housing for the plan period up to 2031, has been revisited in the light of the latest version of the Government Household Projections published in February. This is to ensure that the SHMA remains as up to date and robust as possible, in accordance with National Planning Practice Guidance. The three original commissioning Local Authorities (Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Ashford) have sought further advice from the consultants G L Hearn and Partners on the implications of the new projections.

1.2.2 At the time of writing, a final version of the report had not been received but the draft findings suggest that the objectively assessed housing need for Tonbridge and Malling has risen slightly from 665 to 673 net, new dwellings per annum.

1.2.3 It is worth noting that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council have recently appointed G L Hearn and Partners to prepare a SHMA. This

will complement our SHMA as the remaining part of the West Kent Housing Market Area will have the same methodology and approach.

- 1.2.4 Meanwhile, work has continued in-house in preparing the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) with work focussing on the assessment of sites submitted through the Call for Sites exercise.
- 1.2.5 A review of public open spaces is also underway which will inform the preparation of planning policies in the Local Plan for the protection of existing open spaces and the requirements for future open space provision associated with new developments (either on-site or through contributions for the enhancement of existing provision nearby).
- 1.2.6 Officers are still awaiting the results of the Environment Agency's Middle Medway Modelling work before refreshing the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The modelling is now expected to be completed during July.
- 1.2.7 In addition to the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan, the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (KMWLP) being prepared by Kent County Council (KCC), will, once adopted, form part of the development plan for the area. Members may be interested to know that the KMWLP is currently at the examination stage, with the third and final week of hearings taking place from 26th May. Although there has been slippage in the timetable as published in July 2014, Kent County Council anticipates adopting the Plan within approximately 6 months of the examination (i.e. by the end of the year).
- 1.2.8 Any adopted Neighbourhood Plans would also form part of the development plan for the Borough. Since the last meeting of the Board, the first application to register a Neighbourhood Planning Area has been received from Ditton Parish Council. This has been published on the Borough Council's website for a four week consultation period, ending on the 8th June. The application will be considered by the Cabinet meeting on the 24th June.

1.3 Government Planning Reforms Latest

- 1.3.1 The Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act (2015) received the Royal Assent on the 26th March, although commencement orders have not been made to date so the Act has not yet come into force. Members will recall that this is legislation that was introduced as a private Member's Bill by the Rt Hon Richard Bacon MP. It is also known as the 'Right to Build'. The Act places a duty on Local Authorities to keep a register of individuals and community groups who have expressed an interest in acquiring land to bring forward self-build and custom-build projects and to take account of and make provision for the interests of those on such registers in developing their housing initiatives and their local plans.
- 1.3.2 Further legislation is anticipated during the current Parliament that will require Local Authorities to make available serviced plots with planning permission to those on the register.

- 1.3.3 The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order (2015) also came into force on the 15th April. It consolidates a number of Government proposals to amend permitted development rights. This means that in most cases changes of use, for example from shops or offices to residential, no longer require planning permission, although prior notification procedure is still necessary.

1.4 Transportation Update

1.4.1 A21 Dualling – Tonbridge to Pembury

- 1.4.2 As reported at the last Board meeting, construction work has begun to upgrade a 2.5 mile section of single carriageway to dual carriageway. The latest information on the Highways England (formerly the Highways Agency) website is that the works are due for completion in spring 2017.

1.4.3 Funding for Transport Schemes

- 1.4.4 The Tonbridge Town Centre Regeneration scheme, which has been awarded £2.37m from the Government's Single Local Growth Fund and together with funding from KCC has a total budget of £2.65m, is due to commence this summer. The scheme will be delivered in two phases between 2015/16 and 2016/17 and will be led by Kent Highway Authority. The scheme has been developed in partnership with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.
- 1.4.5 Phase 1, beginning this summer, will include widened footways, a raised speed table and new street furniture. After a programmed break in works in December to minimise disruption for shoppers and businesses, Phase 2 will commence in 2016/17 to include further pedestrian routes and cycle links to the Railway Station and improvements to the Fiveways, Bordyke and Cannon Lane/ Hadlow Road traffic signal junctions and potential extensions to the High Street 20mph speed limit. The works are expected to be completed by spring next year.
- 1.4.6 The scheme will provide a more attractive environment to boost the local economy, reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. A consultation has been undertaken and reported to the Joint Transportation Board (JTB).
- 1.4.7 There is also £4.5m available (subject to match funding) for West Kent through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). This is available to the West Kent Authorities of Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks and also Maidstone between 2015 and 2021.
- 1.4.8 There is a package of proposals, each costing under £1m, focussing on improving sustainable access to town centres and public transport interchanges. Schemes to be implemented in 2015/16 include Snodland Station forecourt improvements, in partnership with Southeastern, complementing the new High Speed Rail Service from the station, a *Wayfinding* pedestrian signage scheme in Tunbridge Wells linking to the town centre shared space/public realm improvement, extension of the local cycle network, bus stop access upgrades and grants to schools and businesses to implement measures in combination with their Travel Plans. The package is being developed by KCC in consultation with Maidstone, Tonbridge &

Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Borough Councils and will be subject to future reports to the JTBs.

1.4.9 Rail Issues

1.4.10 The 7th Rail Summit hosted by KCC was held at County Hall on the 18th May. Presentations were made by Southeastern, Network Rail, High Speed 1 and KCC and there was a lively discussion over the future of rail services in Kent and the wider south east.

1.4.11 Other Items

1.4.12 For information, previous reports have included updates on other items such as the Lower Thames Crossing, Junction 5 (M25) Slips, the A20 Corridor and the Airports Commission. These items have not been included this time as there is little to update at the time of writing.

1.5 Legal Implications

1.5.1 None.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.6.1 None directly for the Council.

1.7 Risk Assessment

1.7.1 Not required.

Background papers:

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Nil

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