

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

26 July 2016

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

This report updates Members in respect of two recent transportation studies; one exploring the economic case for improving the connectivity between the M25 and M26; the other establishing baseline data for the capacity of the A20 Corridor between the A228 and the Coldharbour Roundabout.

1.1 The Economic Case Report for M25/M26 Connectivity

1.1.1 Background

1.1.2 During 2015 the Borough Council together with Kent County Council (KCC) and the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) agreed to jointly commission consultants to revisit the economic case for delivering east facing slip roads at Junction 5 of the M25 near Sevenoaks. The aim of the project was to support ongoing bids for regional investment funds for improvements to the strategic highway network in west Kent and to support future Government lobbying to alleviate some of the adverse impacts associated with traffic attempting to access the motorways via the local road network, particularly the A25 corridor.

1.1.3 Following a tendering exercise coordinated by KCC the consultants SYSTRA were subsequently appointed in November to review the previous study carried out in 2009 by Parsons Brinkerhoff and also carry out a further qualitative and quantitative analysis of the potential wider economic benefits. The final draft of the report was circulated to the commissioning bodies at the end of June. When complete a copy will be uploaded to the Local Plan evidence pages on Council's website.

1.1.4 Summary of Findings

1.1.5 The consultants found there to be some limitations in revisiting the 2009 model partly due to its age and also because of the limited coverage of the study area to the west of the A21 and Sevenoaks. The original study for east facing slips at the A21/M25/M26 junction identified a benefit to cost ratio (BCR) of 2.23 based on comparing transport user benefits in the form of time savings with scheme costs.

The review found that this ratio had fallen to between 1.03 and 1.66 (or 1.13-1.76 with additional savings based on reductions in the number of accidents).

- 1.1.6 An additional option of east facing slips located at Otford on the A225 was also tested for comparison purposes. The capital costs were almost half of those for the original option, but the benefits were also reduced resulting in a BCR of 1.79 (with or without accident reduction).
- 1.1.7 The consultants found that a number of enhancements and corrections to the original model were necessary. The fall in the BCR is mainly a result of corrections to the underlying network model. The Department for Transport guidance identifies a BCR of between 1.13 and 1.76 as medium value for money, before wider economic and non-monetarised benefits are taken into consideration.
- 1.1.8 The study confirmed that there would be environmental benefits associated with reductions of traffic noise and emissions as a result of the east facing slips primarily along the A25, although there were likely to be some localised disbenefits in the vicinity of the slip roads themselves. In Borough Green this was estimated to be a reduction of up to 250 vehicles an hour or 20% of estimated traffic flows in 2031.
- 1.1.9 In terms of estimating the potential wider economic benefits, the consultants considered how much growth could be unlocked by the improvements, including the delivery of dependent housing; the uptake of employment land; and improved labour market connectivity within the study area. Dependent housing is defined as proposals that could only be delivered if the proposed improvements were to be implemented.
- 1.1.10 The consultants reviewed the current commitments and firm proposals for future major housing schemes in the Districts of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells, but concluded that there were no schemes currently identified or sufficiently advanced through emerging Local Plans to calculate a value contribution to the scheme.
- 1.1.11 The high level of planning constraints in the area, such as the Metropolitan Green Belt, were recognised as a limiting factor on the amount of future major development that may be located in the study area, but for illustration the consultants suggested a dependent housing development of 2,500 dwellings could generate a value contribution of approximately £70m (based on a present value at 2010 prices).
- 1.1.12 Similarly, the consultants concluded that there were few major employment sites either identified in current or emerging Local Plans, although an extension of the study area west could see some increased investment at Westerham or Biggin Hill.

1.1.13 Conclusions

- 1.1.14 The estimated transport benefits of £70-95m compared with engineering costs of £50-65m represents a modest performance. Overall, the study concludes that while there is an economic case for investment in east facing slips at junction 5 of the M25, that this is a relatively weak. It also acknowledged that there may be some risks associated with the assumptions around scheme costs.
- 1.1.15 The study concludes that the wider economic case may be enhanced when Local Plans in the area are further advanced and there is more certainty over future allocations for housing and employment. The consultants also recommend that in the event of any future reviews being considered that the study area be extended to the west of Sevenoaks and the A21.
- 1.1.16 Local Parish and Town councils were consulted as part of the study, but the responses were inconclusive with 6 providing general support, 3 objecting and 6 neither expressing support nor objecting. KALC will be sending copies of the summary report to the Parish and Town Councils in Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone with full copies available on request from KCC.

1.2 **The A20 Corridor Study**

1.2.1 Background

- 1.2.2 Following a series of meetings with local parish councils and Kent Highways during 2015 to discuss the capacity issues and associated impacts along the A20 corridor it was decided that a baseline study to confirm the anecdotal evidence would be required as a starting position for further modelling work and future bids for funding. The baseline study and any future modelling will also form part of the Local Plan evidence base.
- 1.2.3 Kent Highways commissioned the consultants Amey to carry out the survey work, which took place earlier this year. The study area runs along the A20 between the A228 to the Coldharbour roundabout. The purpose of the study was 'to provide a robust evidence base of 'typical' traffic conditions along the A20 road corridor and to identify potential improvements that will enhance conditions for all users and enable future growth to be accommodated'.
- 1.2.4 The draft report was completed at the end of May and a further meeting with Parish and local Borough Councillors held on the 7th June to share the findings. A final version is being prepared incorporating some of the comments made at the meeting. When complete a copy will be uploaded to the Local Plan evidence pages on the Council's website.

1.2.5 Summary of Findings

1.2.6 In terms of traffic conditions along the A20 corridor the study found that the eastern end had significantly higher traffic demand than the rest of the corridor. In particular the movements between the M20 (Junction 5), Hermitage Lane and Quarry Wood Retail Park. All of the junctions along the study corridor were scored as being at red or amber, with the junctions at Coldharbour Lane, Hermitage Lane and Hall Road/Mills Lane being the most congested.

1.2.7 In addition the junctions at Station Road, New Hythe Lane and Lunsford Lane were all found to have an issue with excessive queuing of traffic.

1.2.8 The study also considered road safety, bus provision and pedestrian and cyclist accessibility along the corridor. It found that there were no significant issues with road safety with an average crash rate below the average expected for the type of road with no hotspots. Bus provision was considered to be adequate to cater for existing patronage levels, although there is scope for improvement. It was felt that the A20 corridor caters well for pedestrians and cyclists, although again there was room for improvement.

1.2.9 The study noted that the corridor environment is car dominated and that there are limited opportunities to significantly improve the operation of the existing junctions without reducing the level of anticipated traffic demand or increasing the size of the junctions.

1.2.10 The study recognised that the new Local Plan will have to determine where future development will be located and that some of the sites may be in close proximity to the A20 corridor. This will form the basis of further modelling work building on the baseline data and provide crucial evidence for the Local Plan.

1.2.11 Recommendations and Conclusions

1.2.12 Recommendations were included for potential 'quick wins' in advance of more significant improvements that can only really be considered through the Local Plan process. These include minor improvements to bus stop facilities; reviewing bus priority measures at Hermitage Lane and New Hythe Lane; improvements to pedestrian access and general maintenance to paths and crossings; and addressing some gaps in the cycle provision, to encourage greater use.

1.2.13 Other recommended quick wins arose as a result of the stakeholder consultation and the meeting with Local Parishes held in June and include reviewing the road markings at the Station Road junction, right turn movements from the A20 into Preston Hall and extending the exit from Quarry Wood to three lanes. The opportunity to explore further measures presented by the redevelopment of the Aylesford Newsprint site by opening up Bellingham Way would also be considered further.

- 1.2.14 For the longer term, it was recommended that a potential scheme to provide a strategic link between Hermitage lane and the Quarry Wood Retail Park and possibly further west be explored through the Local Plan process to remove traffic movements from the most congested part of the A20 corridor.
- 1.2.15 The study confirms and clarifies the capacity issues along the A20 corridor and provides useful evidence both for the Local Plan going forward and also to support bids for further funding to deliver more minor improvements or 'quick wins'.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 There are no legal implications arising from this informative report.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 There are no Financial and Value for Money implications arising from this informative report.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Ian Bailey
Planning Policy Manager

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health