

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

4 June 2014

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

Summary

This report provides an update on two current transportation issues affecting the Borough.

1.1 A21 Public Inquiry

- 1.1.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) has recently announced that the much-needed scheme to provide additional capacity on the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury will now go ahead following the Public Inquiry held last year.
- 1.1.2 The scheme relates to a 2.5 mile section of the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury which will be upgraded from single to dual carriageway, adding a lane in each direction, upgrading junctions and improving the road layout. This major road scheme should make journeys on the A21 safer and more reliable. There are further legal formalities to complete but we understand advance work could start in autumn 2014 with main construction as early as spring 2015.

1.2 KCC Rail Summit

KCC held their 6th annual Rail Summit at the end of April with speakers from KCC, Southeastern, the DfT and Eurostar.

- 1.2.1 **Ashford to Gatwick Link** - KCC confirmed that the potential Ashford to Gatwick link was not viable and "no longer on the table". The idea of an hourly service to Gatwick airport was publicised in Kent County Council's Rail Action for Kent, published in 2011. However consultants brought in to test the viability of the service have found that it would cost five times as much as it would bring in. This is regrettable as the idea was for trains to run from Ashford through Paddock Wood, Tonbridge, Edenbridge and Redhill to Gatwick.
- 1.2.2 **Thameslink** - On a positive note the Thameslink Programme, which finishes in 2018, should improve journeys from Maidstone East to Blackfriars and St Pancras with more spacious trains. The £6.5bn government-sponsored programme also includes the rebuild of London Bridge station to create more space, with great

facilities, making it easier to use. Inevitably there will be disruption at London Bridge for commuters during construction and full details can be found on the Transport for London website <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/london-bridge-rail-station>

- 1.2.3 **Direct-Award contract** - The DfT confirmed that they were looking to see improvements in sustainability and customer satisfaction in the new Direct-Award contract with Southeastern which will run from October 2014 until September 2018. Southeastern advised that they had submitted their proposal; the details of which will remain confidential until the contract is signed.
- 1.2.4 **Eurostar** – We were advised that their services are becoming more popular with 10.1m passengers during 2013. They are looking to introduce new routes and are currently considering a year round service to Provence and in 2016 a daily direct route to Amsterdam will be in place. There is a programme of refurbishing existing trains and new replacement Siemens trains are currently being track tested.
- 1.2.5 **High Speed Service** - In response to a question from County Councillor Mrs Hohler, Southeastern advised that they are drawing up plans to re-open the ticket office at Snodland Station with the view to stopping the High-Speed trains there. Concerns remain over car parking availability and we will be proposing a partnership approach with Southeastern and land owners to see what opportunity there is for more provision locally.
- 1.2.6 **Aviation Issues** - Members will be aware from my last report to the Board that the Davis Commission is currently appraising the short listed options for addressing airport runway capacity in the south east. A further period of consultation is due to be held in the Autumn regarding the assessment of the options and that will present an important time for the Borough Council and many others to express a balanced view on the Commission's findings and conclusions.
- 1.2.7 There are three short listed options under consideration by the Commission; two variants for a third runway at Heathrow and an option for a second runway at Gatwick. Clearly the implications of the latter will be of keen interest to the Borough Council and to some of our communities and businesses.
- 1.2.8 The Commission has also not yet ruled out the prospect of a new 'Inner Thames Estuary hub airport'. Although this is not a shortlisted option the Commission has stated that further studies, to be completed by September, will determine whether this is a "credible" option. The Borough Council has taken the view previously that it is not a credible option for a range of significant practical reasons. This is generally a quite common view held amongst Council's in Kent and Medway. Recently the Leaders of Kent and Medway have been working collectively on a submission to the Commission to draw attention to the many disadvantages and the detrimental effect that a Thames Estuary airport would cause. I suggest that it would be prudent for the Borough Council to also submit a concise view to the Commission on this subject to draw attention to the impact that such a proposal

would have on our Borough particularly concerning the significant infrastructure inadequacies and major development pressures such a proposal would cause.

- 1.2.9 In the meantime I have been in liaison with the County Council on other matters, such as the recent consultation on flight paths by the National Air Traffic Service (NATS) and night flight restrictions by the DfT, in order to assist our understanding of any local impact of these matters.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 None

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 None directly for the Borough Council

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 Not required.

Background papers:

contact: Mike O'Brien

Nil

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health