

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

20 September 2021

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters For Information

1 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY

1.1 Summary

- 1.1.1 This report provides an update on progress and next steps in the preparation of a new Tonbridge and Malling Active Travel Strategy.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 An update was last provided to Tonbridge and Malling Members regarding this matter at the Council's June 2020 Planning and Transportation Advisory Board (PTAB). This was included in a Transportation Update; the report can be found [online](#). This reviewed the outcomes of the current Tonbridge and Malling Cycling Strategy and advised that a replacement draft infrastructure plan would be finalised for public consultation following the conclusion of the Local Plan examination hearings. The intention being to ensure that route proposals remained relevant to the delivery of strategic and other development allocations, as well as to support existing communities. The report further advised that this would be submitted to PTAB and subsequently the Tonbridge & Malling JTB for consideration, to confirm support to progress the document for a period of public consultation.

1.3 Recent Progress

- 1.3.1 Due to the current position with the Local Plan, it is now necessary to progress the preparation of the 'Active Travel Strategy' ahead of the Local Plan. This is required to provide an up-to-date evidence base to support development management negotiations, infrastructure funding bids and to inform projects which are led by other partners including KCC Highways. Officers have therefore undertaken to prepare a Strategy that takes account of current government guidance, alongside and to inform an update of the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- 1.3.2 Consultants DHA were appointed by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) in December 2019, initially to undertake a programme of walking and

cycling route audits inform the Strategy. The focus of the audits was to review and seek to further develop:

- the borough's network of cycle urban routes.
- cycle routes connecting with the proposed strategic sites in the submitted Local Plan.
- routes that are otherwise of benefit to the enhancement of the National Cycle Network, and
- walking infrastructure within Tonbridge, West Malling and Snodland town centres.

1.3.3 Four board cycle route audit areas have been defined in response to these objectives, comprising the following:

- Tonbridge
- Kings Hill and West Malling
- Borough Green, and
- Medway Gap

1.3.4 It was initially intended that the audits would be completed by the end of March 2020; however, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the necessary site visits could not be undertaken until late-2020 and early-2021, and as such the programme has been set back by approximately 12 months.

1.3.5 The audits have been completed in accordance with Stages 3 and 4 of the Department for Transport (DfT)'s Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) technical guidance. The key outputs of these stages will be network maps detailing preferred walking and cycling routes for further development, taking into account criteria including directness, gradient, safety, connectivity and comfort. Consideration has also been given to the need to link key trip attractors including stations and schools as wells to complete existing routes. Other feasibility considerations including potential engineering requirements, highway land and third-party ownership constraints have been considered at a high level.

1.3.6 The route audits have been overseen by an officer steering group, which includes officers from leisure services and parking as well as KCC highways and public rights of way. Several meetings of the group have taken place over the past 18 months, to ensure that key opportunities and constraints have been identified and that cross-boundary connectivity has been considered.

1.3.7 The routes considered to be viable will be set out in a prioritised schedule in the Strategy. They will also be mapped using GIS software, this work is currently ongoing and will be complete shortly to inform the public consultation.

1.3.8 Key opportunities for route delivery are associated with planning negotiations for strategic sites (including South West Tonbridge, Borough Green Gardens, Bushey

Wood and Broadwater Farm), due to the scale of these developments and the need to mitigate their impacts. It is recognised that retrofitting cycling infrastructure into existing urban areas and public open spaces is more challenging to achieve. Opportunities remain for the consideration of 20mph zones and segregated infrastructure within existing urban areas, to provide better infrastructure for cyclists (subject to robust advance consultation and the availability of funding).

- 1.3.9 The Strategy intends to provide mode choice for local journeys but does not actively discourage the use of private vehicles and other traffic. Therefore, Low traffic neighbourhood and filtered permeability measures have not been considered, due to the potential for displaced traffic and the requirement to model impacts arising. This can be reviewed in the future if demand for the use of private vehicles changes.

1.4 Next Steps

- 1.4.1 Area based Member workshops have been held during August and September 2021, to review progress achieved by the current Cycling Strategy, consider the factors that require a greater focus on active travel e.g., climate change, local growth, updated legislation and guidance, and to discuss the routes audited and local priorities. Feedback from these workshops will be taken into account in refining route priorities.
- 1.4.2 DHA has been further appointed to prepare the Strategy document, this will cover stages 1 and 2 of the DfT guidance and other matters that are relevant. The draft Strategy document is being prepared alongside material for the related public consultation. This will be hosted online and will include background information and plans showing the routes audited and route priorities for each audit area, as well as relevant questions for respondents.
- 1.4.3 Due to the need to progress the consultation before the next Planning and Transportation Advisory Board in November 2021, it has been agreed that a representative cross-party group of Borough and County Members will meet together to discuss and agree consultation material before this is published. This approach will ensure that the context and expectations are clearly understood, and that Members have further opportunity to raise local issues and concerns, so that these can be considered and where possible addressed.
- 1.4.4 It is currently intended that a full draft Strategy will be informed by the feedback received, and that this will be presented for Member consideration to adopt/endorse by TMBC and KCC through relevant committees in spring 2022.

1.5 Timetable

- 1.5.1 The following dates are indicative for the remaining stages of the project.

- September 2021 - Member review group to approve draft Strategy materials for public consultation.
- October 2021 – Launch public consultation for a period of 6 weeks.
- March 2022 – PTAB report outlining consultation feedback and a final draft Strategy for comment.
- March 2022 – JTB report outlining consultation feedback and a final draft Strategy for endorsement by the board.
- Spring 2022 – Separate consideration of the final draft Strategy by the TMBC Cabinet and KCC Transport and Environment Cabinet Committee for adoption/endorsement by both authorities.

1.6 Recommendation

- 1.6.1 The Joint Transportation Board is asked to note the content of the report.
- 1.6.2 A report outlining the feedback from the public consultation and detail of the final draft strategy, will be brought to a future meeting of this board.

Background papers:

Nil

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