

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

10 March 2015

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 various significant transportation issues affecting the Borough.

1.1 A21 Public Inquiry

1.1.1 Members will be aware that the Department for Transport has engaged Balfour Beatty to upgrade the 2.5 mile section of the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury in Kent from single to dual carriageway, adding a lane in each direction, upgrading junctions and improving the road layout.

1.1.2 The main construction starts in the spring and is programmed to be complete by December 2016.

1.2 Funding for Transport Schemes

1.2.1 Members will be aware that the Tonbridge town centre regeneration scheme was awarded a share of the Government's Single Local Growth Fund (SLGF), attracting an allocation of £2.37m. The total budget for this scheme is now £2.62m which includes £250k from KCC.

1.2.2 KCC are leading the implementation of this project as Highway Authority but your officers will maintain a strong input to the emerging detailed design and implementation stages, continuing the partnership approach we have adopted for the scheme.

1.2.3 Local Members have been kept updated through briefing sessions. There has been a well-attended exhibition in the Castle on the proposed scheme, one to one meetings with traders who may be affected by the project and ongoing public engagement throughout February where feedback has been encouraged on the proposals.

1.2.4 Works are programmed to commence this summer and will continue until next spring, with a break in December in order to minimise disruption to shoppers and traders over the Christmas period.

- 1.2.5 There will be a full report on this project, including the key matters arising from public engagement, to the Joint Transportation Board on 30 March.
- 1.2.6 In addition to this there are funding streams for West Kent available through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). This funding totalling £4.5m (but subject to additional match funding) is available for the West Kent Authorities of Tonbridge & Malling, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells together with Maidstone Borough Council (for the purpose of this award) between 2015 and 2021.
- 1.2.7 TMBC are preparing bids for funding to support improvements to the bus, car and pedestrian interface at some of our key railway stations. Southeastern is currently developing plans for some improvements to the facilities for buses, pedestrians and cyclists serving Snodland station together with additional parking. Although Southeastern have access to some funding streams, a contribution from the LSTF would ensure we achieve prompt delivery of a quality scheme here, which will support the “High Speed” service which now stops at Snodland. We are also looking to bring forward some proposals for improvements at Hildenborough and Tonbridge stations. The latter will be an opportunity to build upon the improvements to the High Street and pedestrian linkages between the station and the rest of the town centre.
- 1.2.8 Junction 4 of the M20 has also been awarded funding (£2.19m) from the Single Local Growth Fund. This scheme to widen to the eastern overbridge will be progressed by the KCC Major Projects team with a start date programmed for March 2016.

1.3 A228 Colts Hill Bypass

- 1.3.1 The case for the A228 Colts Hill bypass, which would assist in providing a high standard of route between the M20 and the A21, has been pursued by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC), with our support and that of the local Parish Councils, for a number of years. At present the route is not of an appropriate standard and has a poor accident record. The Rt. Hon. Greg Clark MP chairs a local group which looks to improve safety and traffic congestion along Colts Hill, preferably by constructing a new bypass. The group includes officers and councillors from TWBC, TMBC and KCC.
- 1.3.2 Realistically, it may be many years before funding can be identified for a bypass, and local measures to improve safety at the pinch points along Colts Hill may be the best that can be practically achieved in the short term.
- 1.3.3 We will maintain a presence on this group and report back as and when anything significant emerges.

1.4 Rail Issues

- 1.4.1 As a consequence of the continuing major investment in the rail network, particularly the enormous project at London Bridge Station (itself part of the

Thameslink Programme), and the new commitments by Southeastern Railway in their franchise extension, there will be significant changes to rail services until the summer of 2018.

- 1.4.2 The most significant change is that Charing Cross trains will not now stop at London Bridge until August 2016, with some stations services being transferred to Cannon Street.
- 1.4.3 On a more positive note, high speed trains to St Pancras from Maidstone West now stop at Snodland in the morning and evening peaks.

1.5 Lower Thames Crossing

- 1.5.1 The project to consider options for a Lower Thames Crossing has gained a new momentum. The Highways Agency (HA) has now been charged by the Department for Transport with taking the project forward and is currently reviewing all the options previously considered and some further variations.
- 1.5.2 The HA are working on the basis that 'do nothing' is not an option. Work is being undertaken on a variety of technical areas in order to move towards public consultation on options and proposed solutions at the turn of this year.
- 1.5.3 A stakeholder advisory panel has been established, chaired by the HA and including representatives from the local authorities and others affected by the project. I have been representing the Borough Council on this technical group, although it is still early days in the emerging work.
- 1.5.4 A key issue for us in consideration of options will be the potential impact on the transport corridors through the Borough (A20/M20, A228, A229, A227) and the communities along those routes, as well as the economic development issues that might arise. I will ensure that Members are kept informed of progress by the HA and that we are in a position to respond to consultation at the appropriate times.

1.6 Junction 5 (M25) Slips

- 1.6.1 KCC will shortly engage a consultant to undertake a high-level economic study to examine the case to support the provision of east-facing slips at Junction 5 of the M25. TMBC will make a proportionate contribution towards the cost of this initial study because of the clear potential benefits of reduced traffic congestion and improved air quality along the A25 through the communities of Ightham, Borough Green and Platt.

1.7 A20 Corridor

- 1.7.1 I am conscious that various local Members have been engaged in some discussions about traffic conditions on the A20 and adjoining routes. The A20 from the Borough boundary to Leybourne has been in focus due to peak time congestion, particularly at key junctions. We have been in initial contact with KCC Highways and Transportation about the prospect of a study to consider the

optimum approach to traffic movement along this corridor. This will be primarily a matter for the County Council and for the Joint Transportation Board. However, inevitably this work will be necessary in the Local Plan process so that any proposals that might emerge can be assessed in a meaningful context.

1.8 Legal Implications

1.8.1 None.

1.9 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.9.1 None directly for the Borough Council.

1.10 Risk Assessment

1.10.1 Not required.

Background papers:

contact: Mike O'Brien

Nil

Steve Humphrey

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