

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

30 March 2015

Report of the Head of Transportation (KCC) and

the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters For Decision

1 TONBRIDGE HIGH STREET SCHEME – PHASE 1

Summary

This report provides an update on progress with regard to the proposed Highway development of Tonbridge High Street Scheme, including the 20mph Traffic Regulation Order as well as the results of the public engagement and recommends approval to proceed to detailed design and implementation.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 As reported to the Joint Transportation Board in September and December 2014, the outline design for the Tonbridge High Street scheme has been progressed and a public engagement carried out to gain views from the public regarding the proposal.

1.1.2 £2.65 million pounds of funding is available for the overall project made up of £2.4 million from the Government's Single Local Growth Fund and £250,000 from capital receipts towards the aims of:

- Boosting the local economy
- Providing a more attractive environment
- Reducing traffic congestion
- Improving air quality
- Providing improved pedestrian and cycle facilities
- Improving bus journey times

1.1.3 A briefing was held for local County and Borough Members on 21st January 2015 to ensure they were informed prior to the start of the public engagement. The

team taking forward the scheme were introduced and details of the proposed scheme were explained.

1.1.4 The scheme is being developed in partnership with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC), key elements of which are:

- Widened footways and a raised speed table
- Defined delivery areas level with the footways
- A 20mph speed limit
- Environmental improvements
- Quality street furniture

1.1.5 As part of the briefing, Members were informed of the intended communications strategy to support the public engagement. The intention of which being to raise awareness locally to ensure as many could put forward their views on the proposed scheme. A summary of the public engagement follows below.

1.1.6 The proposed High Street scheme is shown in **[Appendix 1]** and the extent of the advertised 20mph speed limit is shown in **[Appendix 2]**.

1.2 Public Engagement

1.2.1 Media

1.2.2 Two advertisements were taken out in the Tonbridge Courier in the weeks prior to the engagement events to inform the public of the scheme and upcoming exhibitions.

1.2.3 The local Press also followed up with their own newspaper, web and radio articles.

1.2.4 Web Site

1.2.5 A web site was produced which detailed the public engagement events, hosted the scheme proposal drawings with artists' impressions and providing a contact form for queries and comments.

1.2.6 Links to this site are hosted on both the TMBC and KCC websites.

1.2.7 Business Interviews

1.2.8 On 4th and 5th February, officers visited all the businesses on the High Street within the proposed scheme (approximately one hundred properties) as well as those in the Angel Walk and Pavilion shopping centres. This allowed officers to discuss the scheme directly with business owners and managers, obtain their

contact details for futures updates and enquire about each business's delivery and loading needs.

1.2.9 The proposals were well received by businesses, many of whom were enthusiastic about improvements for the High Street.

1.2.10 **Public Engagement Event**

1.2.11 An exhibition was held at Tonbridge Castle on 5th, 6th and 7th February where the public could view large scale drawings of the proposed scheme and see artists impressions.

1.2.12 The project team were on hand to meet the public, explain the proposals and answer queries.

1.2.13 All sessions were well attended and the advanced press releases had helped boost awareness and attendance at the exhibition.

1.2.14 After the engagement event at the Castle ended, the exhibition displays were moved to the Library where comment cards were available for the public to leave their views.

1.2.15 **Business Surgeries**

1.2.16 To cater for those business managers who did not have time to discuss the proposals during the door to door interviews or had thought of any further queries, business surgeries were made available.

1.2.17 Three days spread over three weeks were set aside to allow businesses to book one to one surgeries with officers to discuss the scheme further and any concerns they may have.

1.2.18 Only four business surgery sessions were booked, however from these useful feedback was received from businesses, a mobility charity and the Freight Transport Association.

1.2.19 **Town Team**

1.2.20 A meeting was held with representatives of the Tonbridge Town Team on 5th March where the scheme was discussed in detail.

1.2.21 The scheme was viewed positively and the Town Team are enthusiastic about improvements to the High Street, especially regarding the opportunity areas of Botany and River Walk which will be explored further in Phase 2 of the scheme.

1.3 Results

1.3.1 33 people left comments in the visitor book at the public engagement event at the Castle, 28 replies were received via the web site and 31 comment cards left at the Library (92 replies in total).

1.3.2 Comments were received on a wide range of issues, which have been grouped for ease of reference and listed below, along with an appropriate response.

TABLE 1

Public comments (number received)	KCC response
<p>1, Cycling:</p> <p>i, Narrowing traffic lanes will make it more difficult for cyclists (3).</p> <p>ii, No cycle routes are shown on the High Street (1).</p> <p>iii, Cycling on the footway is already bad, this scheme will make it worse (1).</p>	<p>i, As part of the High Street scheme a 20mph speed limit is going to be implemented. Within this slower speed environment, cyclists become integrated within the traffic.</p> <p>The ban on all vehicles stopping on street outside of the loading bays will make a safer environment where cyclists do not have to repeatedly overtake parked vehicles.</p> <p>There is not the space to provide a segregated cycle facility as well as wider footways.</p> <p>ii, No dedicated cycle lanes are proposed within the High Street and within a 20mph speed limit they are not necessary.</p> <p>To provide separate cycle lanes adjacent to traffic lanes would widen the road and tempt drivers to park short term, obstructing both the cycle lane and traffic which is against the objectives of this scheme.</p> <p>The implementation of additional cycle routes in line with the Tonbridge Cycling Strategy are being developed in Phase 2 of the scheme. This will possibly include a link parallel to the High Street (to the west across the sportsground) so that cyclists who want to travel north/south but do not need to use the High Street.</p> <p>iii, Cycling on the footway is illegal and is a matter for Kent Police to enforce. However if cyclists are uncomfortable being within traffic, the development</p>

<p>iv, More cycle parking is needed in the central High Street (1).</p>	<p>of the parallel cycle route as detailed above may help.</p> <p>iv, The installation of additional cycle parking is proposed as part of the High Street scheme. It is intended that this should be spread out along the High Street making the whole area more accessible for those wishing to visit by bicycle.</p>
<p>2, Bus Issues</p> <p>i, The southern bus stop (northbound service) should be within a layby so as not to delay traffic (4).</p> <p>ii, School buses should be made to use the Cannon Lane by-pass route (2).</p> <p>iii, Additional bus stops should be installed in the central High Street area to access supermarkets (2).</p>	<p>i, At present this does not have a lay-by. Northbound traffic can only overtake a parked bus at this location when there is minimal oncoming traffic. As a result of the proposed scheme traffic will be no worse off than the present situation.</p> <p>Lay-bys would take up potential footway improvements space and bus service providers do not like the use of bus laybys within busy trafficked areas as very often they face delays trying to re-join the traffic flow as many drivers do not allow them to pull out.</p> <p>ii, This is only a minor issue in terms of the total traffic flow, however it is acknowledged that removing any non-service buses from the High Street which do not need to pick up or drop off there would reduce the overall number of vehicles in the area.</p> <p>KCC Commercial Services and the schools will be contacted to enquire whether it is possible to divert any of the school specific buses via Cannon Lane.</p> <p>iii, As two of the key objectives for the High Street scheme is to improve traffic flow and reduce air pollution, additional bus stops in both directions would increase stationary traffic, making these factors worse and as such additional bus stops are not included in the proposed scheme.</p>
<p>3, River Walk</p> <p>i, River Walk is an asset to the town, cars should be excluded and this area developed for use by café's and the community (11).</p>	<p>i, We recognise River Walk as a key opportunity area for improvement and proposals to improve and upgrade this area will be explored with TMBC and the KCC design team.</p> <p>Any changes within River Walk are proposed as</p>

	being part of Phase 2.
<p>4, Alterations to traffic flow</p> <p>i, Concerned that the narrowed High Street will be wide enough for large vehicles.</p> <p>ii, Please make the High Street one-way (5).</p> <p>iii, The High Street should be closed or part closed to traffic. (6)</p>	<p>i, The proposed 6.5m carriageway is of sufficient width for two large vehicles to pass. The narrower nature of the road will encourage lower traffic speeds.</p> <p>ii, iii, Pedestrianisation and one way traffic proposals have been investigated previously. Traffic modelling work has been carried out which has shown that the diversion route in the long term would not have the capacity to take the extra traffic.</p>
<p>5, 20mph speed limit</p> <p>i, Do not want the 20mph speed limit (1)</p> <p>ii, The 20mph speed limit is a positive thing and should be extended (7).</p>	<p>i, The introduction of the 20mph speed limit is an important element of the scheme. A lower traffic speed coupled with the raised table area in the vicinity of Bradford Street will work together with the widened pavements and narrower carriageway widths to lower speed environment which is more pleasant for pedestrians.</p> <p>Although we acknowledge that during peak traffic times the traffic speed will rarely reach 20mph, the new speed limit will be relevant outside of these times.</p> <p>ii, The 20mph speed limit as currently advertised is simply a starting point. Various requests to extend the speed limit reduction have been received and we are willing to consider all requests and where practical alterations will be made in the future. Any proposed extension of this area would be reported back to the Joint Transportation Board.</p>
<p>6, Landscaping and materials</p> <p>i, More trees should be added to the scheme (4).</p>	<p>i, There are high concentrations of statutory undertakers equipment (gas, electricity etc) within the footways along the High Street. These make it very difficult to excavate and install tree pits. We are however investigating the feasibility of providing additional trees and landscaping with the opportunity areas of Botany and River Walk.</p>

<p>ii, Do not like the choice of paving material (2)</p> <p>iii, The existing paving outside the Castle is slippery (2)</p>	<p>There is the opportunity to introduce some planters to the area, however these will have to be carefully considered regarding size and location so as not to obstruct too much of the newly widened footway or be a barrier to the partially sighted.</p> <p>Any trees, landscaping and planters etc will be carefully selected by way of an Asset Maintenance Plan developed during the scheme's detailed design. This will ensure the species and designs chosen allow for future maintenance. A local gardening group has expressed an interest in being involved via the Town Team.</p> <p>ii, The Ketley clay pavers as specified for the scheme were selected in co-operation with TMBC and the Conservation Officer to match in with the existing paving in the northern end of the High Street.</p> <p>iii, KCC will be carrying out tests on the existing paving to ensure it meets the standard for slip (skid) resistance.</p> <p>KCC will also discuss the slip resistance of the clay paving with the provider to enquire if anything can be changed during the manufacturing process to increase the paver's texture.</p> <p>Should the Ketley clay pavers not be considered as having sufficient skid resistance, then an alternative block/paver of a similar style and colour will be selected.</p>
<p>7, Medway Wharf Road junction</p> <p>i, Additional signing should be provided to reinforce the right turn ban (there used to be a large sign fixed to the wall of the pub). (2).</p> <p>ii, A physical traffic island would prevent vehicles queuing to turn left and right into the High Street at the same time. This is important to traffic flow locally and should not be removed (2).</p>	<p>i, Additional signing will be incorporated into the scheme.</p> <p>ii, Although the introduction of a physical island may create a small extra delay locally in exiting onto the High Street, the reinforcement of the right turn ban into Medway Wharf Road takes priority as this has been an on-going problem for a number of years.</p>

<p>iii, The right turn out of Medway Wharf Road should be banned (1)</p> <p>iv, A zebra crossing should be installed across the junction of Medway Wharf Road (1).</p>	<p>iii, Current traffic flows allow right turning vehicles to exit Medway Wharf Road without issues. There is no personal injury crash record relating to this movement and as such it is not intended to introduce any more restrictions.</p> <p>iv, It is not safe to install zebra crossings directly on give way junctions, however the proposed layout should reinforce the right turn ban, which should improve pedestrian safety at the junction.</p>
<p>8, Parking issues</p> <p>i, Do not agree that disabled parking should be excluded from the High Street (6).</p> <p>ii, The existing parking restrictions are not enforced so do not believe the restricted access to the loading bays and no parking on the High Street will work (4).</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that preventing disabled parking in the High Street may be seen as controversial. It is important to remember that one of the key objectives of this scheme is to improve the free flow of traffic which will in turn improve air quality.</p> <p>The surrounding roads of Medway Wharf Road, Botany, Bradford Street, River Walk, River lawn Road and Angel Lane all have a small capacity to allow for disabled parking just a short distance from the High Street.</p> <p>The car parks adjacent to the High Street area do have disabled parking provision already and TMBC have confirmed that they can allocate additional bays for disabled parking if there is sufficient demand.</p> <p>Appendix 3, drawing 4300127/000/09 shows locations and numbers of parking available for disabled badge holders (Both potential on street parking and existing designated bays within car parks).</p> <p>ii, Safeguarding the authorised use of the loading bays and preventing parking elsewhere on the High Street is key to ensuring the success of the scheme and maintaining free flow of traffic. TMBC has confirmed that they will provide targeted enforcement to reinforce the scheme.</p> <p>Feedback from local businesses regarding any specific problem areas or times will assist TMBC in</p>

<p>iii, Short term free parking should be introduced to the High Street area (1).</p>	<p>ensuring their enforcement is effective.</p> <p>iii, The existing pay and display car parks surrounding the town centre allow for short term visits. The introduction of free short term parking is not practical as it would be require a high amount of parking enforcement staff time to ensure the length of stay by users is not abused.</p>
<p>9, Pedestrian crossings</p> <p>i, The central pelican crossing should not be removed, this will make it more difficult to cross the road (13).</p> <p>ii, Please upgrade the Vale Road zebra crossing, it causes long traffic delays at the weekend (2)</p> <p>iii, Please install a pedestrian crossing at the junction of Avebury Avenue with The High Street (2)</p> <p>iv, The scheme does not seem to be any improvement for wheelchair users (1).</p>	<p>i, It is acknowledged that some users may be uncomfortable with the removal of the central pelican crossing. This element of the scheme is important to improve the free flow of traffic over the current situation.</p> <p>The construction of the raised table in this area will slow traffic speeds further and the raised level of the carriageway with no kerb face will allow pedestrians to cross anywhere in this section more easily.</p> <p>Although the removal of the pelican crossing is aimed towards improving the traffic flow, the other two pedestrian crossings and southern (north bound) bus stop should provide breaks in the traffic, coupled with slower traffic speeds should provide sufficient opportunities to cross the road.</p> <p>ii, The upgrade of the existing zebra crossing by replacing it with a Puffin crossing will be included in this scheme. If practical, this will be included within the Phase 1 works, however subject to programming it may have to be included in Phase 2.</p> <p>iii, It is not safe to install zebra crossings directly on give way junctions, however the alignment of the junction will be examined to establish if it can be narrowed or the alignment altered to reduce traffic speed on the approach from the roundabout.</p> <p>iv, The widening and resurfacing of the footpaths (including improving the gradient in some areas), upgrades to pedestrian crossings as well as the table junction raised carriageway (with no kerb face) and improved side junctions are all positive steps to help wheelchair users.</p>

- 1.3.3 Full comments will be available for Members to review if they wish.
- 1.3.4 Other feedback and comments were received which concerned issues outside of the scope of the proposed scheme and funding. These issues will be passed on to the relevant officers within KCC and TMBC.
- 1.3.5 General comments were received both in favour (15) and against (17) the scheme implementation. The majority of the negative comments were in relation to the cost of the scheme and that this funding would be better spent elsewhere.
- 1.3.6 **More generally the proposals have received some positive coverage which is satisfying with a scheme such as this which commonly attracts a degree of caution or concern. It seems that there is a reasonable level of support for this investment in the public realm and in traffic management in the High Street.**

1.4 20mph Traffic Regulation Order

- 1.4.1 The advertisement for the Traffic Regulation Order to reduce the speed limit in the High Street area to 20mph closed on 28 February. No objections to the Order were received. The Slade Area Residents Association, via Richard Long, requested that the 20mph limit be extended to include The Slade area. The intention of this Order was to concentrate on the High Street in the first instance, hence the area advertised. The second phase of the scheme will look at the wider issues in Tonbridge and an extension to the 20mph limit can be considered as part of this.
- 1.4.2 It is recommended that the Order be made as advertised and that an extension to the zone into other adjacent areas be considered in Phase 2.

1.5 Future Phase 2 Works

- 1.5.1 Additional areas for improvements for Tonbridge town centre will be explored in Phase 2, such as:
- River Walk and Botany open spaces
 - Pedestrian and cycle links to the Railway Station
 - Improved cycle links (Tonbridge Cycling Strategy implementation)
 - Improvements to the 5 ways, Bordyke and Cannon Lane traffic signal junctions
 - Potential extensions to the High Street 20mph speed limit.

These improvements are planned to be implemented in 2016/17.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 As the Highway Authority, the County Council has power to implement changes and alterations to the road network in accordance with the appropriate Legislation and Regulations.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 A Project Board has to be set up to monitor progress and budgetary control, reporting to SELEP (South East Local Enterprise Partnership).

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 A risk register has been developed and monthly monitoring reported to the Project Board.

1.9 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.10 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.11 Recommendations

- 1.11.1 That the Board **NOTE** the results of the public engagement and **APPROVE** the High Street scheme and 20mph speed limit proposals to progress to detailed design and implementation, the construction of which, subject to the views of the Board, should be programmed to begin in late July 2015.

Background papers:

Nil

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