

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

TONBRIDGE CENTRAL AREA ACTION PLAN

POSITION STATEMENT No TON02

Transport Issues

Policy 4.4

Mr. J.W.H. Rutland (SS/328.03)

Policy 4.5

Mr. and Mrs Blackler (SS/111.01)
Mr. and Mrs. Fraser (SS/309.01)
Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell (SS/314.01)
Mr. J. Bartram (SS/315.01-05)
Mr. P.L. Wilson (SS/316.01)
Mr. P. Freeman (SS/317.01)
Miss H. Faux (SS/320.01)
Ibbett Mosley (SS/321.01)
Mrs. L. McCloy (SS/323.03)
Mr. D. Bragg (SS/324.01)
Mr. and Mrs. Webb (SS/325.01)
Mr. J. Dorling (SS/327.02)
Mr. J.W.H. Rutland (SS/328.04)

Policy 4.7

Highways Agency (SS/069.27)
Highways Agency (SS/069.61)

Policy - General

Tonbridge Civic Society (SS/101.02)
Mr. R. Ford (SS/326.05)

Policy – TCA11

Highways Agency (SS/069.30)
Highways Agency (SS/069.60)

Policy – TCA12

Hildenborough Village Preservation Association (SS/052.04)
Tonbridge & District Railway Travellers' Association (SS/055.05-07)
Hadlow Road Neighbourhood Group (SS/057.01)
Mr. G. Harrison (SS/318.01)
Dr. C. Black (SS/319.01)

Policy – TCA16

Highways Agency (SS/069.31)
Highways Agency (SS/069.59)

Policy – TCA18

Highways Agency (SS/069.32)
Highways Agency (SS/069.58)

TONBRIDGE & MALLING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Position Statement No TON02

Transport Issues

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Position Statement addresses issues relating to Transport Policy and is prepared by the County Council as local Highway Authority on behalf of, and in partnership with, the Borough Council as Planning Authority.

2 Context/Background

- 2.1 The Transport Strategy for Tonbridge was approved by the County Council in May 2000 following the 1999 Tonbridge Urban Transportation Study (TUTS). This was taken forward by the 2002 Tonbridge High Street Studies (Babtie Group) and the work by David Lock Associates in advance of the LDF process.
- 2.2 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Kent County Council have jointly commissioned Jacobs to assist with the detailed aspects of Transport Strategy delivery and option testing related to development proposals contained with the Area Action Plan.

3 Response to Representations

Will the proposals to reduce traffic in the High Street cause unacceptable problems elsewhere on the local highway network?

- (1) Paul and Jackie Web [325.01] are generally concerned about the transport strategy including the widening of pavements in the High Street. Lisa McCloy [323.03] is most concerned about seeking to reduce traffic in the High Street without other works being done to improve the network. The Hildenborough Village Preservation Association [52.04] does not believe there should be any restraint on traffic in the High Street until the London Road/Hadlow Road Link is in place. Mr J F Dorling believes that the High Street should remain open to traffic with only left-in/left-out turns into the High Street. Most of the more specific concerns about the transport strategy dealt with below hinge around the wider impact of limiting traffic in the High Street at off peak times.

Response: *The Transport Strategy approved in May 2000 has been taken forward through the LDF process. The underlying principles of this promote sustainable forms of transport, a mix of development in the town centre that reduces the need to travel and measures to improve the safety and the environment with the town centre particularly the High Street where there is a designated Air Quality Management Area*

Recent work commissioned jointly by the Borough and County Councils has focussed on delivery of the strategy and detailed option testing. As a result of this work the Planning and Highway Authorities have confirmed that the additional traffic generated by the

development and associated with proposed environmental improvements in the High Street can be managed subject to the funding and delivery of the proposed Transport Strategy. See Jacobs Technical notes relating to Option Testing¹ and Strategy Delivery².

Reductions in traffic flow in the High Street will need to be balanced with the impacts elsewhere in the network. The Option Testing Report demonstrates how this can be achieved. The construction of the London Road/Hadlow Road link facilitates local environmental improvements and it is important that at funding package including contributions from development should be secured to provide for the completion of this scheme and other local improvements on the Eastern Relief Road.

The tables contained within the Option Testing Report show variations in peak hour traffic flows and the capacity to flow ratios at the various junctions. It is not proposed to repeat the details of this in this response but in general terms scenarios 1 and 2 including the proposed London Road/Hadlow Road link provide some relief to the High Street and other environmentally sensitive streets such as the Bordyke, Yardley Park Road and The Ridgeway. The 2016 capacity to flow ratios around the network generally compare well with the 2006 base and 2016 “do nothing” situation.

The Transport Strategy, including the construction of the London Road/Hadlow Road link, local junction improvements, public transport improvements and other measures aimed at reducing traffic movements will need to be considered alongside development proposals in the Area Action Plan as they come forward.

Is there a case for a greater level of demand management?

- (2) Mr Tim Wilson [316.01] argues that the strategy should include more sustainable traffic management and restraint measures and that all ideas of new road building should be abandoned. Dr Black [319.01/02] suggests that the Transport Strategy is based upon inadequate traffic studies and should take greater account of demand management and smarter choices. The Tonbridge and District Rail Travellers Association [55.07] whilst supporting the concept of a Quality Bus Partnership is sceptical about its abilities to change people’s habits. The Highways Agency [69.27/30/31/32/58/59/60/61] supports the proposals for development with good access to public transport and the requirement for Travel Plans and would prefer to see a reduction in parking as part of an overall strategy which provides sustainable transport alternatives.

Response: *The Local Planning Authority has adopted maximum parking standards and these will be applied to all future development proposals. The report titled “Tonbridge Urban Transport Strategy Delivery” sets out a range of measures to promote sustainable travel and improve public transport. The objective of these proposals is to reduce peak hour traffic movements by up to 14%.*

The Borough Council is implementing a significant programme to review on and off street parking in the town centre and in this context is taking the opportunity to rebalance parking stock from long stay to short stay operation. This includes management and charging regimes in the public car parks and the introduction of Residents Parking

¹ RD 7.32 – Tonbridge Town Centre Master Plan – Technical Note: Option Testing

² RD 7.31 – Tonbridge Urban Transport Strategy - Delivery

Schemes and restrictions on long stay parking on street. This policy will encourage commuters to use alternative modes of transport in the critical AM and PM peaks.

In line with Core Policy CP2 all significant new development proposals in the town centre will be required to include a Transport Assessment and Travel Planning proposals aimed at minimising the impact of the development and contributing to the wider objectives to reduce traffic levels in the town centre. Mixed use development convenient to transport interchanges that reduce the need to travel will be encouraged.

*Although not considered to be essential the Inspector may think that it would be helpful if Policy TCA12 was modified to give more weight to sustainable modes of transport as mentioned in the text of paragraph 7.7. (See **Annex A**)*

Has proper account been taken of the effects on air quality?

- (3) Both Dr Black [319.01/02] and Mr Wilson [316.01] express concerns about the effect of the Strategy on air quality. The Hadlow Road Neighbourhood Group [57.01] express concern about the effects on air quality of the diversion of traffic from the High Street.

Response: *The High Street has been designated as an Air Quality Management Area. The Transport Strategy is aimed at reducing the overall flow of through traffic in the High Street. The outputs from the Option Testing report have been feed into an air quality model. The report produced by Bureau Veritas³ shows that with improvements to vehicle emissions during the life of the LDF there are not expected to be any long term breaches of the national air quality standards either in the High Street or other parts of the network.*

How crucial to the overall strategy is the proposed London Road/ Hadlow Road Link?

- (4) Mr Charles Kinloch of Ibbett Mosley [321.01] argues that it is essential for the London Road/Hadlow Road Link to be completed because the Bordyke is unsuitable to carry increased flows and ideally should become access only and The Ridgeway and Yardley Park Road are used at rat-runs. Simon Frazer [309.01], Guy Harrison [318.01] and Paul and Kate Mitchel [314.01] share the concern that Bordyke needs to be relieved of traffic. The Tonbridge and District Rail Travellers Association [55.05] is concerned that the network to the east of the town does not have sufficient capacity to take traffic diverted from the High Street and that pollution levels in Bordyke are already too high.

Response *The London Road/Hadlow Road link does provide significant potential environmental benefits for the High Street, The Bordyke, Yardley Park Road and The Ridgeway. Furthermore, the capacity of the link will be restrained by the proposed traffic signal junctions at each end and hence the scheme is unlikely to generate new traffic. There are also opportunities to provide bus priority at these traffic signals and overall the inclusion of the link shows a marginal benefit in terms of network operation.*

Improving the environmental conditions in the High Street is a key factor in the regeneration of the town centre and the reduction of traffic in the Conservation Area (Bordyke) and in the residential roads nearby represents a good opportunity to improve

³ RD 7.33 – Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan - Air Quality Assessment – Bureau Veritas

environmental quality in other sensitive areas. Consequently, it is considered appropriate for this scheme to be included in the package of transport measures to be taken forward in the lifetime of the LDF. There is limited scope for Local Transport Plan funding of this scheme and the bulk of the cost will need to be met from The Central Area Regeneration Fund and other development contributions (Policy TCA19).

*It is accepted that Policy TCA19 should be modified to make it clear that the London Road/Hadlow Road link will need to attract funding from the Tonbridge Central Area Regeneration fund and other development contributions. This will provide more certainty that it will be provided. See **Annex A**.*

Is there a case for the construction of an A26 Hadlow Road Relief Road?

- (5) The Hadlow Road Neighbourhood Group [57.01] believe that before traffic can be restricted in the High Street and before the London Road/Hadlow Road Link can be built there is a need to construct a bypass to Hadlow Road that should be afforded high priority. Hazel Faux [320.01] is of the opinion that nothing should be done in the town until it has a proper road infrastructure which should include a long relief road to the east of the town from Three Elms Lane to Woodgate Way. The view that there should be some form of relief road to the east Hadlow Road is shared by Mr Peter Freeman [317.01] and Mr & Mrs Blackler [111.01].

Response: *There is no prospect of such a major highway scheme being funded within the lifetime of the LDF and such additional highway capacity would only be likely to generate additional car traffic. A Hadlow Road Relief Road would simply transfer traffic congestion rather than make any significant contribution to the aims of the transport strategy. There is no approved alignment for such a scheme and it is not included in the Local Transport Plan or the Kent and Medway Structure Plan. A road would also have to pass through the Green Belt, the flood plain and environmentally sensitive areas. The cost of this scheme was estimated to be in the range £6m - £12m at 1999 prices depending on the chosen alignment. At current prices such a scheme would cost between £8m and £16m.*

Furthermore, there are proposals for the progressive upgrading of the A228 corridor including the construction of the Colts Hill link, which will enable some through traffic to be diverted away from the A26 through Hadlow, Tonbridge and Southborough. (See paragraph 7.7.1 of the Action Plan and Figure 6-2 of the Transport Strategy Delivery Report)

Is there a case for the construction of east facing slip roads connecting the A21 with the A26 at the top of Quarry Hill Road and a one-way system at the northern end of the town?

- (6) Mr Rutland [328.04] suggests that traffic congestion needs to be addressed by the provision of a seamless through route from Maidstone to the Vauxhall interchange with additional slip roads at Quarry Hill. A one-way system using Yardley Park Road/Dryhill Park Road and Shipbourne Road needs to be considered.

Response: *As mentioned in paragraph 4.2 of the Context Statement during the 1980's the A26 eastern relief road was augmented by a new interchange at the A21 Vauxhall*

junction so that this would be the main approach to the town centre from the primary road network. Traffic has therefore been encouraged to use the eastern relief road away from the main residential areas. The introduction of east facing slips would attract more traffic into Quarry Hill Road, Tonbridge town centre and the A26 through Southborough. This is not considered to be desirable from an environmental point of view and additional slip roads onto the A21 Trunk Road are very unlikely to be supported or funded by the Highways Agency.

It is not clear how a one-way system based on Yardley Park Road/Dry Hill Park Road and Shipbourne Road could aid the flow of traffic or provide environmental benefits. Generally one-way systems such as this add to vehicle mileage and tend to result in increased vehicle speeds in off-peak conditions. Dry Hill Park Road is particularly sensitive because of the schools situated alongside. It is considered that the London Road/Hadlow Road link provides a better solution to the environmental issues in this area.

Should traffic be diverted from the High Street via Medway Wharf Road, Sovereign Way and Avenue de Puy?

- (7) Guy Harrison [318.01] and the Tonbridge Civic Society [101.02] suggests that it might be better to divert traffic around the High Street via Medway Wharf Road and Sovereign Way to Avenue du Puy rather than via Bordyke.

Response: It is preferable for through traffic to be directed to the A26 Eastern Relief Road. The use of Medway Wharf Road, Sovereign Way and Avenue de Puy as suggested by Mr. Harrison would mainly be used to access town centre car parks and as such would be likely to attract more traffic in the northern section of the High Street and The Bordyke. One of the key objectives of the Transport Strategy is to reduce the level of traffic in the High Street and it is considered that this could be aided by accessing the town centre car parks solely from the eastern relief road and closing the High Street/Medway Wharf junction.

Are the development proposals (in Policy TCA11) acceptable in terms of the capacity of the transport network?

- (8) The Tonbridge and District Rail Travellers Association [55.06] argues that the town cannot support the additional traffic generated by the proposed new development in the town. This is a general concern expressed by many of the respondents in relation to the development proposals.

Response: The Option Testing report has considered the likely impact of the proposed developments contained within Policy TCA11 in 2016 when most of the sites are assumed to have been completed. This shows that the operation of the network in 2016 (Scenarios 1 and 2 with development) compares quite favourably with the 2016 (Do nothing) Scenario. Situations where particular arms of junctions are over-capacity are relatively limited, but the need for improvements at the Railway Approach/High Street/Vale Road junction and the A26 Vale Rise roundabout is confirmed. The Hadlow Road/Cannon Lane junction also remains a critical junction particularly in the PM peak. The design options for the London Road/Hadlow Road link will require further detailed consideration as the scheme is progressed. However, the wider environmental benefits of this scheme need to be recognised.

It is essential that the developments collectively bring forward the Transport Strategy particularly measures to promote alternative modes of transport to the private car and that the form and location of the developments reduce the need to travel. Policy TCA19 relating to the Central Area Regeneration fund is fundamental to the acceptance of the scale of development proposed and recognises the Borough Council's strategy to improve transport and environmental conditions in parallel with the implementation of appropriate levels of new development to regenerate the town centre.

Other Matters

- (9) Tonbridge Civic Society [101.02] believe that consideration should be given to a circulatory bus service in the town centre using small vehicles. The proposals at the Station should include the widening of the station approach, improved access for parking, covered bus stops and a sheltered drop-off point for passengers.

Response: *Bus services on the north-south corridor along Shipbourne Road, the High Street and Quarry Hill Road through to Southborough and Tunbridge Wells are currently quite frequent and further improvements are proposed (see paragraph 1.6.1 of the Urban Transport Strategy Report. However, it is accepted that there is the need to develop other local services such as the 211 as part of the Transport Strategy (see paragraph 2.3.5 of the same document). It is further agreed there needs to be improved bus/rail interchange at various stations (see paragraph 2.2.3).*

- (10) Mr Rutland [328.04] suggests that Hildenborough Station could be used on Saturdays as a park-and-ride station and that Mabledon in Tunbridge Wells Borough could also be used as a park-and-ride site.

Response: *There may be some scope for Hildenborough Station to be used as a park-and-ride site but for park-and-ride to be effective overall there would need to be additional sites on other key corridors into the town. Sites for such car parks are difficult to find and there are often overriding Green Belt or environmental considerations. Care needs to be taken that such park-and-ride sites do not act as a magnet for additional car journeys. The use of the site at Mabledon was been ruled out as result of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan Inquiry in 2005.*

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 The County and Borough Councils are satisfied that the Transport Strategy that underpins the development proposals in the Central Area Action Plan is sound. Proposals for substantial new road building are not proposed and will not receive funding. The London Road/Hadlow Road Link provides the last link in the highway network that will enable the full environmental benefits of the strategy to be achieved. It therefore continues to be safeguarded by the County Council but will require significant development funding.

- 4.2 Measures to improve conditions for pedestrians in the High Street will be progressively brought forward compatible with its continuing role as a through route for traffic in the peak hours. Measures to improve public transport and cycling, manage car parking and generally reduce reliance on the private car, including Travel Planning, will also be introduced. None of the representations put forward a realistic alternative to what the Councils are proposing.

4.3 **Annex A** sets out some suggested changes to the wording of the plan in the light of the representations aimed at clarifying certain matters. They do not go to the heart of the strategy and in the opinion of the Councils do not so change the content of the document that further public consultation or sustainability appraisal is necessary. If the Inspector thinks the changes would be helpful then the Councils would have no objection to their inclusion.

Annex A

Suggested Changes to Wording

Policy TCA12 - Insert the following new section at the beginning of the Policy:

- 1. The mix of town centre development will be aimed at reducing the need to travel and each development site will be required to bring forward proposals that are complementary to the Transport Strategy. The emphasis will be on measures to support sustainable forms of transport.**

Existing paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Policy TCA12 would then be renumbered 2, 3 and 4.

Tonbridge Central Area Regeneration Fund

Para 7.8.2 revise the end of the paragraph to read:

The fund would permit the pooling of contributions which could be ring-fenced for specific projects aimed at raising the environmental quality of the Central Area and addressing the needs of its users. This will encompass the transport strategy including contributions towards the provision of the London Road/Hadlow Road Link that lies outside the Central Area.