

2 Sustainable Transport

2.1 Introduction and Overall Strategy

Improvement and monitoring of local and regional connectivity to Tonbridge by public transport, principally train and bus can play a key role in ensuring the sustainability of future development in Tonbridge and Malling.

This section identifies a number of actions that can be taken to do this.

2.2 Railways

2.2.1 Access to Central London

It is recommended that accessibility planning be used to illustrate the access time to London termini for residents of Tonbridge and the Tunbridge Wells urban areas. The aim of this is to illustrate the connectivity of bus services to the key railway stations, and show areas where bus services to railway stations are lacking. It is proposed to do this for arrivals at Cannon Street/ Charing Cross between 0700 and 0900 and departures from London between 1700 and 1900.

2.2.2 Station Car Parking Catchment Areas

If the information is available it would be useful to analyse the catchment area of car park season ticket holders at Hildenborough, Tonbridge, High Brooms and Tunbridge Wells stations. This would demonstrate the amount of rail heading to Tonbridge and Hildenborough stations from areas in High Brooms and Tunbridge Wells. Car parking capacity is greater at Hildenborough (285 spaces) and Tonbridge (718 spaces) making them more attractive for rail heading.

With Southeastern taking the opportunity to double frequency between Tunbridge Wells and London via Sevenoaks from 2009, this will provide some information on which passengers may transfer to rail services from High Brooms or Tunbridge Wells stations. Hildenborough station should also be included in this assessment in view of the increasing pressures demonstrated by parking overflowing significantly onto the neighbouring local roads and lanes.

Site visits have confirmed that the car parking available at High Brooms and Tunbridge Wells stations is limited, with few spaces available:

- *High Brooms – 36 of 52 spaces used at 2pm.*
- *Tunbridge Wells – 46 of 65 spaces and all 23 season ticket permit holder spaces used at 3.30pm.*

The *Regional Planning Assessment*¹⁴ for the Southeastern railway recognises that these are frequently at capacity, and this may be a factor in encouraging people to drive further than they need.

There are other options available for commuters, with widespread on street parking around High Brooms station likely to be rail related. At Tunbridge Wells, multi-storey town centre car parks are available but many of these are aimed at shoppers and

¹⁴ **Department for Transport (2007):** *South Eastern – Regional Planning Assessment for the railway.*

tourists to the town with punitive long stay charges to deter use by rail commuters (e.g. £1.90 for less than 6 hours and £8 for all day at the Torrington car park adjacent to the station). Only the Crescent Road long stay car park with 1,085 spaces at £4 is near enough to the station to be patronised by commuters. This is more expensive than the £3.10 daily charge levied at Tunbridge Wells station car park.

Site visits have confirmed that there is a lack of space available for further parking at either station. The only possibilities at Tunbridge Wells are:

- *A deck on the station car park, providing a modest increase in spaces, but at high cost for the car park operator;*
- *Redevelopment of the vacant Morrisons' site with some commuter parking provided.*

The Tunbridge Wells Local Plan 2006 makes reference to potential to increase parking at Ashurst (London to Uckfield line) and Paddock Wood (an additional 55 spaces) to provide alternatives to High Brooms and Tunbridge Wells.

2.2.3 Station Interchange Facilities

A key component of bus access to railway stations is the ease of interchange. Site visits have been made to each of the three stations.

Tunbridge Wells has reasonable facilities with bus shelters and taxis on Mount Pleasant Road accessed via Platform 2. A pelican crossing provides access to the southbound bus stops. Disabled parking, cycle parking and motorcycle parking are provided on Station Approach.

Morrisons on Vale Road/ Station Approach closed its doors during 2006, and the site is currently vacant apart from the 243 space multi-storey car park. Any redevelopment of the supermarket site would provide the opportunity for improved interchange facilities and better utilisation of Station Approach for railway related business. Previously the road was also used for superstore deliveries. Possible improvements could involve:

- *Taxi facilities could be moved from Mount Pleasant Road to Station Approach opposite Platform 1;*
- *The northbound bus shelters on Mount Pleasant Road could be moved outside entrance to Platform 2;*
- *Additional cycle parking would be beneficial on Station Approach. Currently is well patronised with little spare capacity.*

High Brooms has a new bus shelter, bus boarder and lay-by in the southbound direction. The shelter promotes the 281 service to the town centre with clear and bold branding. The northbound direction only has a bus stop flag, with no bus boarder, shelter or timetable information.

This 281 service enables residents of Powder Mill Lane and Upper Grosvenor Road to use the bus to quickly access High Brooms station.

Cycle facilities at High Brooms are well used, with few spare places available. The provision of new cycleways through the Sandhurst Park development linking with the residential areas of Ferndale will provide attractive cycle route to the station. It will be important to provide more cycle storage to cater for the increased demand that this should foster.

High Brooms station also lacks disabled parking facilities and step free access to the downside Platform 2.

Tonbridge station has a bus bay in front of the station entrance for those travelling in the northbound direction. Some northbound buses also stop outside Lidl, 100 metres to the south of the station.

Buses in the southbound direction stop 100 metres south of the station to the south of Priory Road. Hence rail passengers have to cross two side roads and use the pelican crossing to reach this bus stop. The previous study¹⁵ found that it was not feasible to have bus stops directly opposite the station on the railway bridge. Hence the current location is the most realistic. Short-term improvements to the walking route to the bus stops could involve measures such as:

- *Road narrowing and raised crossing points across Waterloo Road and Priory Road. The raised tables could use the same materials as the footways to demonstrate the route.*
- *The pelican crossing could be converted to a zebra crossing to give more priority to pedestrians. This should give pedestrians more flexibility and aid in connecting between rail and bus.*
- *The width of the road crossing at this point is an issue, and could be improved through the provision of a central traffic island or by narrowing the road at this point. The presence of central right turn lanes either side of the junction would make the latter difficult unless these were removed.*

Some pedestrians may walk to the station from bus stops in the southern end of the High Street. This route could be improved through widening of the western footway on Railway Approach. If sufficient width is provided this could act as a shared use cycle lane for access to the station. It is envisaged that the section adjacent to the station and bus interchange would be merely a footway with cyclists asked to dismount until Waterloo Road.

Cycle access from the south could be improved through the use of Waterloo Road as an on road cycle route. This is generally a lightly trafficked road, except in peak hours and this would link up the existing cycle route from Brook Street with the railway station. It is envisaged that this route could be created through appropriate signing and white cycle markings on the road at frequent intervals to remind cyclists of the route. There would be no need to mark out mandatory or advisory cycle lanes.

In the medium term (to 2016), SEERA note the possibility of a new railway bridge, station and interchange improvements associated with redevelopment of railway land for housing¹⁶.

This could enable the existing bridge to be used by buses, taxis, pedestrians and cyclists with southbound bus stops adjacent to the station. This would also have implications for the nature of any junction improvements at Vale Road/ High Street.

¹⁵ **Babtie Group (2002)**

¹⁶ **SEERA (2006):** "Annex 3, Sub-regional Investment Framework" in *Delivering the South East Plan*

Hildenborough station is located some 2km from the centre of the village to the west. Pedestrian access from B245 Tonbridge Road is via Noble Tree Road and Rings Hill. While this route is lit, the long distance makes it unattractive for many walking trips.

It is suggested that further work should be done to identify and promote interchange improvements at Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Hildenborough and High Brooms stations.

2.2.4 Pedestrian access to High Brooms station

Access to High Brooms station from the east via Sandhurst Road is poor. Pedestrians have to use a narrow footpath under the railway bridge, which is badly lit and damp.

Pedestrians on the east side of Upper Grosvenor Road have to cross Sandhurst Road at the mini-roundabout junction, where facilities are very limited. It would be desirable to improve the environment for pedestrians at this location, especially given the construction of new homes immediately to the east of the railway line on Sandhurst Road.

Figure 2-1: Access to High Brooms Station from Sandhurst Road



Kent Highway Services have examined the impacts of providing traffic signal control at the junction of Sandhurst Road and Upper Grosvenor Road with the original idea that this would enable the footpaths under the bridge to be widened by moving the stop line to the east of the bridge. However junction assessments found that this was unworkable in practice, and therefore only limited widening of one footpath under the bridge is possible.

Improvements to the junction could be made with an upgraded traffic island on the Sandhurst Road arm featuring bollards and appropriate tactile paving. It is understood that improvements are planned as part of the Sandhurst Park

development including a new footway on the southern side of the road and uncontrolled pedestrian crossing facilities on the Upper Grosvenor Road arm.

Improvements to walking routes to the station from the west could be made with resurfaced footways, tactile paving and dropped kerbs.

It is suggested that further work should be done to identify and develop possible improvement schemes here.

2.3 Buses

2.3.1 Bus Quality Partnership

The potential for a bus quality partnership between the local authorities and the main bus operator – Arriva - should be examined as a means to improve bus services. This could include the operator providing improved vehicles, better frequencies, improved coverage into the evenings and at weekends while the local authorities invested in supporting infrastructure such as real time information at key bus stops and bus priority measures.

2.3.2 A26 Corridor Infrastructure (Tonbridge Wells – Southborough – Tonbridge)

Existing bus services on this corridor, including a number of recent improvements to services, are discussed in Section 1.6.1 above

Additional improvements that could be made to the 218/219 service include:

- *Branding of the 218/219 service, with information on frequency and destinations on the side of the bus.*
- *Providing details of rail connections in the bus timetable.*

Improvements to evening and weekend services could also be made.

In addition, the Tunbridge Wells Borough Transport Strategy identified a number of improvements that have been taken forward in the Local Transport Plan. These include more bus lanes, improved shelters and real-time information (although the latter is yet to be provided).

2.3.3 Access to Pembury Hospital

It is recommended that accessibility planning be used to illustrate the catchment area of Pembury Hospital, if this has not already been done by the Developer.

Reference should also be made to the proposed Travel Plan for the new PFI Hospital to assess what other improvements can be made to sustainable access to the hospital from Tonbridge.

The S106 agreement with the new PFI Hospital at Pembury provides £300,000 for bus services. This could be used to strengthen the 208 Pembury Road service between Pembury and Tonbridge to a half hourly frequency. There may be potential to review the routing of the service enabling a diversion via the Knights Park leisure complex off the A21.

Realistically the service to the hospital is most likely to be strengthened with improved frequencies to Tunbridge Wells town centre offering connections with bus

services along the A26 and Southeastern train services. In this case, and if a direct service from Tonbridge cannot be provided, information, promotion and branding of the service via Tunbridge Wells will be especially important to the perception of public transport as an attractive option for Tonbridge residents.

2.3.4 Access to Retail Centres

It is recommended that accessibility planning be used to examine the accessibility of Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells town centres and Knights Park/ Longfield Road by public transport, and illustrate any gaps in service catchments.

Currently little use is made of potential links between High Brooms railway station and the site. The Arriva 274 runs every hour from 0900 to 1400 on Monday to Friday only. The service is primarily a local service for residents of Southborough to access Longfield Road and Tesco for some limited shopping. The last service is at 1430 and a lack of a Saturday service mean that it has little relevance to the leisure facilities at Knights Park which tend to be busier during the evenings and the weekends.

It is suggested that possible proposals for improvements could be examined.

2.3.5 Tonbridge Town Circular services

Currently the 211 service is procured by the County Council to cover the gaps in the commercial services in Tonbridge. The service covers many different areas of the town albeit at irregular intervals. Apart from school times, the service is effectively comprised of the following one-way routes

- *Barden Park to Molescroft Way;*
- *Molescroft Way to Town Centre;*
- *Town Centre to Tonbridge Cottage Hospital*
- *Tonbridge Cottage Hospital to Barden Park.*

Ways to improve the service should be reviewed. These could include splitting the service into two numbered routes to improve the public's awareness of the services. The buses could also be branded with both routes' number, an easily recognisable name (e.g. Town Circular, South Tonbridge Shopper, Hospital Hopper, etc.) and a summary of destinations on the side or rear of the bus, as used by Arriva on its 281 service from High Brooms to Tunbridge Wells.